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RESEARCH PAPER

The Role of Religion in the Public Domain in Egypt After the January 25 Revolution

Khalil al-Anani | April 2012

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Series: Research papers

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Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies

PO Box 10277

Street No. 826, Zone 66

Doha, Qatar

Tel.: +974 44199777 | Fax: +974 44831651

www.dohainstitute.org

Abstract

The role of religion in the public domain represents one of the main features of the Egyptian post-revolutionary phase. This aroused some concern, not only because it has led to disagreement and tension between Islamic groups and the liberal and secular groups, but also because some view it as a setback, undermining the gains made by the civil revolution, which expected an increase in secularity at the expense of the religious in the political and social spheres. According to some, this may disrupt the process of democratization in Egypt. Others believe that the fall of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's regime and the end of the dominance of his ruling party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), have led to the emergence of greater diversity in the political life of Egypt and the influence of players. Since Mubarak stepped down, many new political parties and forces that belong to differing intellectual and ideological movements have appeared. The most prominent shift was represented by the fragmentation that affected the Islamic movements and parties' map after the revolution. The number of political parties that were based on religious tenets exceeded fifteen, with the possibility of this number increasing if the current state of political openness continues.

This study argues that religion will have an important role in determining the form and nature of the democratic transition in Egypt during its next phase. It also demonstrates that there is no longer a dominant Islamic force in the public domain. Instead, some kind of fragmentation has occurred within the Islamic movement. The study shows that the more Egypt moves toward democracy, the more there is a shift in the rhetoric of new and old Islamic parties and movements, and diversity in their ideologies and practices.

Table of Contents

Research Problem	1
The Study's Objectives	1
The Importance of the Study	1
The Hypotheses	1
The Methodology	2
The Relationship Between Religion and Revolutions	2
The Centrality of Religion in the Egyptian Revolution	6
Religion in the Post-Revolutionary Period	9
The Issue of Identity	12
Islamic-Secular Polarization	15
Islamic Players in the Post-Revolution Period	19
Conclusions and Results	50

Research Problem

The main question this study seeks to answer is: To what extent can the role of religion determine the future of democratic transition in Egypt? Two sub-questions arise from this. The first is: what is the nature of the role of religion in the post-revolutionary phase? The second is: what are the features and influences of Islamic actors in the post-revolutionary phase?

The Study's Objectives

This study seeks to accomplish three basic objectives: first, to analyze the role of religion in the Egyptian public sphere after the fall of Mubarak's regime; second, to monitor the most important transformations that have affected the Islamic map in Egypt during the last period and analyze it; and third, to attempt to predict the role of new Islamic parties and their fates.

The Importance of the Study

The importance of the study originates from its focus on exploring the role of religion in the Egyptian public sphere in the post-revolutionary phase, analyzing it, and trying to examine the features of the new religious Islamic map of Egypt during the post-revolutionary period. This study also presents a comprehensive analysis of the role of religion and its future in determining the path of the democratic transition in Egypt.

The Hypotheses

This study starts from three basic assumptions:

- The presence of the religious component in the Egyptian public sphere during the post-revolutionary phase was normal and expected. Any attempt to marginalize or remove religion from the public sphere will have a negative impact on the democratization process in Egypt.
- The more the level of political openness increases, the more there is diversity and fragmentation among the Islamic actors, and that means that there won't be a monopoly over the Islamic arena by a particular faction.

- The more established democracy becomes in Egypt, and new Islamic movements integrate into the political scene, the more significant intellectual, ideological, and organizational shifts occur within the structure of the political and religious rhetoric of these movements and vice versa.

The Methodology

This study uses the political opportunity structure approach, which is a structure that provides an explanatory model for the rise of political and social movements within authoritarian contexts or during conditions of sudden democratic openness, as is the current situation in Egypt. This approach is based on the idea that any political force or social movement that suffers from repression and exclusion will expand its influence and role in the public sphere whenever there is any kind of openness and flexibility in the political climate, allowing them freedom of movement. During the openness phase, the movement promotes its ideas and ideologies and mobilizes its proponents and supporters, in order to increase the pressure on rival powers, and gain acceptance as a new player in the public sphere.¹

This study will not deal with Islamic movements as dogmatic religious movements, but as socio-political movements that interact and are affected by the surrounding environment, and have a social representation that cannot be denied.

The Relationship Between Religion and Revolutions

The Western model of modernity has been based on a principal thesis that can be summarized as the inevitability of the decline of religion in the public sphere in favor of the extension of rational thinking that is based on maturity and free choice. According to this thesis, religion was dealt with as a creed and a social values system, and as a remnant of the European Middle Ages synonymous with superstition, ignorance, and supernatural thinking.² This thesis has been the main influence on the theory of

¹ Tarrow, p. 77.

² To learn more about these theses, review the writings of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Anthony Giddens, and Jurgen Habermas (despite the latter backing down on his stance after the publishing of his famous article in 2005, "Religion in the Public Sphere," which was a significant shift in the theory of secularism.) For example, Emile Durkheim says that "all religions are born old or are already dead," for more information see: Durkheim, 1915, p. 15.

Western secularism over the past four centuries. However, since the beginning of the 1980s, this thesis had been in significant decline as a result of the extension of religion in the public sphere, not only in the East, but also in the Western world. This has happened in light of a rise in religious fundamentalism and the increase in the political influence of the conservative religious right in the United States, and the radical right in other countries like India and Israel. This prompted many secular thinkers and strategists to review much of their terminology and theories, something that served as an inauguration of postmodernism.³

Without going into the transformations in Western philosophy and where it has recently reached regarding the role of religion in the public sphere, it can be said that the relationship between religion and revolution was and still is controversial. The French Revolution (1789) was implicitly interpreted as a victory of the ideas of enlightenment and modernity, which pioneers of French philosophical thought like Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, and Montesquieu, struggled for, over religious ideas consolidated by the church, producing centuries of intellectual darkness, political struggle, and religious wars.⁴ In contrast, religion – or rather, the religious establishment – was an influential factor in the success of some of the European revolutions against systems of oppression and tyranny, as was the case in Spain and Portugal (mid-1970s), Iran (early-1970s), Brazil (mid-1980s), and Poland (early-1990s). In Spain, the church adopted liberal policies in the late 1960s under the rule of General Francisco Franco (1939-1975) and made demands for fair and transparent elections within trades and labor unions. The Spanish Catholic church also demanded transparent elections to choose the bishops to represent the church in the Vatican. Throughout the first half of the 1970s, the church increasingly opposed Franco's policies and provided an important refuge for his opponents to organize demonstrations and strikes. This was a moral cover provided by the church to all of Franco's opponents. At the same time, the Christian Democratic movement in Spain adopted the option of constitutional

³ To learn more about the critique of the theory of secularism and the return of religion to the public sphere, please see: Berger, 1999, p. 6, and Casanova, 1994.

⁴ British historian Eric Hobsbawm argues that the French Revolution led to the secularization of society and the elite because the new bourgeoisie was in the vanguard of secularism that contributed to the success of the revolution and the redrawing of the relationship between religion and society. To find out more, see Chapter XII of Hobsbawm's book *The Age of Revolution* (1962).

monarchy and called for the need to restrict the powers of the king and increase the powers of the parliament.⁵

In Portugal, the church played a vital role in the management of the democratization process through its cooperation with the military who ruled the country after the fall of Prime Minister Antonio Salazar in 1974. It is true that the Catholic church was seeking to serve its interests in the post-Salazar era; however, it also helped in the mobilization of strikes and organizing sit-ins that demanded the application of fair economic policies, as well as freedoms and democracy.⁶ In Iran, religion was the primary engine of the revolution, which was considered by the French thinker Michel Foucault to be the first religious revolution of the modern age⁷.

In Brazil, the Catholic Church was one of the biggest supporters of the leftist Workers' Party that led the democratic transition process in the second half of the 1980s. This support was done through the recommendations made by the church for the voters to vote for this party during parliamentary elections. The church had an increasing role in the Brazilian public sphere in the period after the democratic transition through its defense of the rights of the poor and the marginalized, and its opposition to any policy that would harm social justice.⁸ In Poland, which is one of the strongholds of Catholicism in Europe, the church was the guardian of the strikes and protest of the poor farmers and workers in the early 1980s. It also supported the Solidarity Movement that was established in the early eighties, and led the democratic transition in Poland during the 1990s.⁹ Religion was, therefore, present – in a sense – in many European revolutions, as well as in Latin America, and it was a presence that did not cause anxiety and tension, as is currently the case in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, and Yemen. Just as the church was used as the headquarters for mobilization, massing, and demonstrators and strikers' protection, mosques in the Arab revolutions were the main centers for the mobilization and massing of protesters, and sometimes for their aid and

⁵ To learn more about the Church's role in the democratic transition in Spain, see: Preston, 1986.

⁶ The Catholic Church represented one of the strong sides of the triangle (with the army and the nobility) in the period after the Carnation Revolution of 1974. For more, see: Wiarda and Mott, 2001.

⁷ Michel Foucault visited Iran twice after the revolution of 1979 and met with several Iranian intellectuals and politicians. Foucault wrote that he had found in Iran the beginning of a new religio-political spirit that was unprecedented since the French Revolution, and that it would not only inspire the Middle East, but also Europe, which fiercely applied secularism. To learn more about Foucault's two visits to Iran, please refer to: Afray and Anderson, 2005.

⁸ Hewitt, 1990, pp. 139-152.

⁹ Johnston and Figa, 1988, p. 36.

protection from the oppression of the authorities. Bringing the role of the mosque into play in the Arab revolutions was not out of romanticism, nostalgia, the desire to establish a religious state or impose a theocratic system of governance – as some Arab intellectuals believed¹⁰ – but mainly because it represented a practical alternative for the traditional activist groups, like the political parties, organizations, and social movements that had been suppressed and exhausted over the past decades, and were no longer able to mobilize protesters and recruit them to confront the authorities. In a country like Syria, which has not experienced political and partisan pluralism and freedom of assembly and demonstration, mosques have provided almost the only window for protest. It was not strange for the Syrian uprising in Daraa to start from the Omari Mosque not simply because of its religious symbolism, but also because of its mobilizing and protective role for the protesters who were tortured and could not find a shelter except within the precincts of the mosque. The mass protests for change that shook the ruling regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Libya would not have succeeded or had a major impact on uniting the protesters and cementing their primary ties to the new nationalism, without their clever and effective utilization of Friday prayers, which carried symbolic names and titles (like “Friday of Rage,” “Friday of Departure,” “Friday of Dignity,” “Judgment Friday,” and “Cleansing Friday”), acting much like a postal service delivering the protesters’ messages to the regimes.

Rather than blaming religion, religion should be credited as a symbolic and mobilizing force that can be used in favor of promoting the values of freedom and democracy and stopping injustice. There should be a review of what some Arab intellectuals and thinkers have been repeating about the mosque being in decline and a regressive factor, when commenting on the use of mosques to mobilize, recruit, and advance the causes of the demonstrators. This thought process demonstrates the same logic that has been abandoned by secular theorists as noted above.

¹⁰ The position of the Syrian writer Ali Ahmad Said (Adonis) reflects the degree of Arab intellectuals’ duplicity regarding the Arab revolutions. Adonis considered what is happening in the Arab world to be insurgencies because it came out of the mosque. His position drew the criticism of many Arab intellectuals and writers. On this controversy refer to: Ahmed al-Shariqi, “Adonis... transcendental ego and the blood of the Syrians,” *Al-Jazeera.net*, May 11, 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/061B41F7-22D2-442A-A4D8-3179FBCF24CC.htm>; Radwan al-Sayyid, “The Arab intellectual, progressive movements, and bygone times,” *Al-Hayat*, June 25, 2011, <http://international.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/281414>; and Maher Massoud, “Revolution and the mosque,” *Al-Hayat*, June 27, 2011, <http://international.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/282038>.

The Centrality of Religion in the Egyptian Revolution

The favored slogan for the Arab revolutions, particularly the Egyptian revolution, was that it was a “peaceful and civilian” revolution. This is true since the intention behind it was that these revolutions are not aimed at building a religious or military state to replace authoritarian and dictatorial regimes. However, this does not mean in any way that religion – in both the symbolic ontological (identity) and the dynamic political – was absent in these revolutions. On the contrary, religion was and still is present at the heart of these revolutions whether negatively or positively.

Religion’s presence in the Egyptian revolution took many forms. These varied between symbolic, political, and tactical presences. The tactical presence was the most visible and influential in the course of the revolution. Egyptian mosques, as is the case now in Syria and earlier in Yemen, were places for organization and mobilization for tens of thousands of the disaffected and angry, places to assemble and protest against the Egyptian regime. “Friday of Rage” on January 28, 2011, which was the apex of the Egyptian revolution, is still remembered. The revolutionary youth showed great wit and awareness when they symbolically made the link between demonstration, a purely political act, and Friday prayer, a purely religious ritual and duty. This was a strong cause for the mobilization and massing of tens of thousands of Egyptians who had never been involved in politics or participated in a political demonstration. The revolutionary youth only resorted to this tactic (using the mosque for demonstrations) because they were aware of its important symbolism and its enormous potential for mobilizing the silent mass of Egyptians. Over the days of the revolution, the names of big mosques that embraced tens of thousands of angry citizens emerged, like the Omar Makram Mosque in the southern part of Tahrir Square that housed Muslims and Christians throughout the days of the revolution and beyond, as well as Qaed Ibrahim Mosque situated in the Mahattat ar Raml area in Alexandria. It is noteworthy that these two mosques have a symbolic and political place in history. The former is associated with the national leader Omar Makram (1750-1822), who resisted the French, and along with the rest of the Al-Azhar scholars led the “Caro II” revolution in 1800 that ousted the Ottoman viceroy, Khurshid Pasha, and replaced him with Mohammed Ali as ruler of Egypt in 1805. The second mosque carries the name of Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Mohammed Ali, and it was built to mark the centenary of his death in 1948. The mosque’s imam, Sheikh Ahmed al-Mahalawi – an opponent of the former Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat’s regime – had an important role in arousing feelings of

resentment and anger among the revolutionary youth in Alexandria. It was the same role played by Sheikh Hafiz Salama, hero of the popular resistance and a national icon in the city of Suez; he led the politically and socially marginalized people of Suez, to participate in the revolution from its beginning on January 25, 2011. The fall of the first martyrs in the city of Suez were behind the eruption of the Egyptian revolution and its spread to the rest of the provinces. The Martyrs' Mosque in Suez was a meeting point and a center for managing the demonstrations against the Egyptian security forces throughout the revolution.

On a symbolic level, religion was strongly present in the official stances of the religious institutions toward the Egyptian revolution. Al-Azhar did not support the revolution of January 25 at the beginning and even considered fatwas calling for the support of the demonstrators to be seen as "sedition (*fitna*) that is forbidden by God and His Messenger".¹¹ The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayyib tried to "hold the stick from the middle" so as not to upset the regime or appear to be in the position of defending the revolution. Instead of Al-Azhar issuing a statement condemning the killings of the demonstrators and protesters in Tahrir Square, it asked both sides to calm down for the sake of the country's unity, something that pushed the revolutionary youth to demand al-Tayyib's resignation.¹² The position of the Egyptian Coptic Church was worse as Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch of Saint Mark's Episcopate, announced his support for Mubarak to remain in power, rejected the demonstrations of January 25, and called for the Copts not to participate in them. The Pope's remarks prompted anger and complaints among many Coptic priests.¹³

At the political-active level, religion had an unmistakable presence. It is true that the Egyptian revolution did not carry a religious slogan and did not adopt religious demands like the application of Sharia and the formation of an Islamic state, but religious movements, with all their spectrums, had a presence in the revolution and an influential role in some of its stages. The Islamic movements, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, participated, albeit in a non-institutional and undeclared way, in the revolution, after a few days of its beginnings, specifically starting with the "Friday of Rage" on January 28,

¹¹ To review the statement of al-Azhar on the Egyptian revolution, please check this link:

<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/F078559B-78CB-45CB-A261-982924564EA9.htm>.

¹² "The revolutionary youth demand the resignation of the imam of Al-Azhar in protest against the injustice of the rulers," *Al-Shorouk al-Jadid*, February 9, 2011, <http://www.shorouknews.com/ContentData.aspx?id=387714>.

¹³ "Escalation in (angry protests) against Pope Shenouda's position toward the demonstrations," *Al-Shorouk al-Jadid*, February 2, 2011, <http://www.shorouknews.com/ContentData.aspx?id=384376>.

2011. At the time, when the Brotherhood's position was ambiguous and confused, before January 25, its youth wing still had a strong individual presence from the first day of the revolution, something that led the Brotherhood to make a public decision to actively participate in the revolution over the ensuing weeks.¹⁴ Over the revolution's first three weeks, the Brotherhood maintained a strong presence in Tahrir Square, and a Brotherhood leader, Mohammed Beltagy, was one of the most influential figures in the field, not to mention the official Brotherhood representation within the Revolution Youth Coalition through the participation of Islam Lotfy, Mohammed al-Kassas, and Mohammed Abbas, despite the differences that emerged later between the Brotherhood leadership and the Brotherhood's youth wing.

The Salafists, a broad movement that includes several groups and organizations, had a role in the last weeks of the revolution and in the post-revolutionary phase. Although most Salafist leaders and clergymen refused to participate in demonstrations, not only based on religious and doctrinal excuses that forbid revolution and invalidate it, but also for political and security reasons, some prominent Salafist figures – like Safwat Abdul-Ghani, Sheikh Mohammed Yusri, Sheikh Nashat Ahmed, Sheikh Fawzy al-Saeed, and Hisham Oqda – participated in the revolution from the beginning. However, the position of Al-Daawa al-Salafiyya (The Salafist Call), the official Salafist organization, toward the revolution was hesitant and unclear.¹⁵ In other words, there was no unified position for these groups during the revolution of January 25. However, their presence was significant in the post-revolutionary phase as will be discussed later.

With regard to former jihadists, despite the absence of Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group) from official participation in the revolution and even its implicit preference for the survival of Mubarak in power, as can be understood from an article written by the group's founder Nageh Ibrahim and published on the eve of Mubarak's second speech

¹⁴ The Brotherhood's youth to *Al-Shorouk*: "We are awaiting a revolution within the Brotherhood in the coming days," *Al-Shorouk al-Jadid*, February 27, 2011, <http://www.shorouknews.com/contentdata.aspx?id=397930>.

¹⁵ Egyptian academic Hossam Tammam distinguishes between two types of Salafism in Egypt. The first is the Wahhabi Salafism that adopts the same thoughts and principles as Saudi Salafism, prohibiting demonstration and challenging the legitimacy of the revolution and protesters and incites against it. This trend was embraced by the Egyptian government and was given space in the audio-visual media. The second is the Egyptian Salafism represented by the Salafist groups that originated in Egypt, have a certain degree of organization, and were not connected to the Egyptian regime. The most important of them is Al-Daawa al-Salafiyya in Alexandria, a group that did not support the revolution even though they were suffering under the security and political repression of the Mubarak regime. For further information see: Hossam Tamam, "What Salafists want from the revolution," *Al-Shorouk al-Jadid*, March 6, 2011, p. 6.

on February 1, 2011,¹⁶ some of the group's leaders and members participated in the revolution in a personal capacity. This was the reason for the emergence of differences between Ibrahim and cadres from the second tier of the group, which later led to his resignation from Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya's Shura Council.

Religion in the Post-Revolutionary Period

Religion was not the main engine of the Egyptian revolution, but the revolution was not directed against religion or its political and social representative bodies. This alone does not justify the overwhelming presence of religion in the public sphere after the revolution. This is the point at which the initial hypothesis of this study is reached; the expansion of religion's domain – in its identity and political sense – in the post-revolutionary period, is natural and expected. The presence of religion after the revolution is in fact an extension of the role it played during the revolution, which was pointed out earlier in the study, but it did not draw attention to itself for two reasons. First, it had a positive presence that was consistent with the mood of consensus that existed during the revolution. What happened in Tahrir Square will continue to be one of the most symbolic scenes in Egyptian memory for decades to come, particularly when the *Salat al-Ghaeb* (prayer for the absent) and Sunday Mass for the souls of the martyrs of the revolution were made on February 6, 2011, and the Muslims and Copts protected each other during prayer, fearing attack from the Egyptian security forces.¹⁷ The second reason is the spontaneous harmony that occurred among different political and social groups during the revolution, making them focus on a single goal of overthrowing the regime, without regard to political and ideological differences. This is perhaps one of the main reasons for the success of the Egyptian revolution.

Having achieved their primary common goal of overthrowing Mubarak's regime, the post-revolutionary period saw religious groups becoming more visible and vocal,

¹⁶ Nageh Ibrahim wrote an article on the Islamic Group's official website entitled, "Have mercy on a people's, dear" in which he called for the survival of Mubarak in power after he vowed not to run for a new presidential term. He writes: "despite all that marred President Hosni Mubarak's era, the many harms and grievances, exclusion of everyone and particularly the Islamists [...] we cannot forget that he spent thirty years of his life fighting for his country... and that power came to him and he did not request it." See the article at this link:

<http://www.egyig.com/Public/articles/scholars/13/96664750.shtml>.

¹⁷ "Demonstrators have a Sunday Mass in Tahrir Square in honor of the martyrs," *Al-Yaoum al-Sabee*, February 6, 2011, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=347068>.

something that makes sense as political and social groups returned to highlighting their identities and primary affiliations. The symbolic presence of religion in the public sphere turned from a quiet presence to a vocal one that took different forms. This set alarm bells ringing about the implications of this on achieving the goals of the Egyptian revolution. A question arises here: why did this shift happen? Or why did the presence of religion increase – in its identity, political, and active sense – in the Egyptian post-revolutionary period?

Perhaps one of the answers to this question lies in what is referred to at the core of this study, the political opportunity structure approach. The main hypothesis of this approach is that oppressed political and social ideas, groups, and movements exploit the opportunities of political openness in order to expand their influence and presence in the public sphere. The methods of expansion range from affirming their identities to increasing their ideological and organizational mobilization and seeking formal recognition from other forces and parties. Without getting involved in proving the centrality of religion and its importance as one of the major components of Egyptian identity, as in many Arab and Islamic countries, it is clear that the repression practiced by the Egyptian regime against many Islamic trends and movements is essential in understanding and interpreting the flux and volatility the Egyptian Islamic movement has witnessed since the revolution. Mubarak dealt with religion as if it had a monopoly over the Egyptian state and its official institutions, and made sure that its use in the public sphere did not exceed the limits of the symbolic and ritualistic. Religion was employed to support the regime's legitimacy and reinforce it internally and externally. Mubarak did not invent this; rather, it was a tradition from the days of former President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who subjected Al-Azhar to the executive power and deprived it of the independence it had held for more than ten centuries.

Furthermore, Mubarak used religious movements against each other in order to weaken them, and prevented any rapprochement among them that could threaten the existence of his regime. In the early 1980s, Mubarak allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to play a significant role in order to be able to confront violent groups like Egyptian Islamic Jihad and Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya who threatened his rule. Having succeeded in this, he tightened the screws on the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the 1990s, when many of the group's prominent leaders were court-martialed for the first time since the era of Abdel Nasser.¹⁸ Over the last decade, the regime used the Salafi movement to

¹⁸ Hassanayn, 1998, p. 12.

marginalize the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly after its surprise victory in the parliamentary elections of 2005.¹⁹

Over the three decades that Mubarak ruled Egypt, his main battle was against Islamic movements and trends. Mubarak benefited from the mistakes made by his predecessors (Abdel Nasser and Sadat) in dealing with these movements and did not try to destroy them, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, though he did not give them the freedom to fully practice their activities as did Sadat, who paid for it with his life for it.

Mubarak sought to manipulate Islamic movements in a way that would guarantee that they did not become too powerful or expand too far into the community. He did not try to uproot them in a way that would have led to a violent reaction that would have threatened the stability of his regime. He did not give the Islamists any opportunities for legitimate representation in political life. While a political and partisan presence for liberal, leftist, nationalist, and secular movements was allowed, there was no legitimate political or partisan representation for moderate Islamists. The Muslim Brotherhood's political and trade unionist practices were the exception to this rule. The Brotherhood, therefore, committed itself to the rules of the game as set by the regime as whenever they tried to increase their political influence, they were met by repression from the security forces, political exclusion, and social harassment.²⁰

Mubarak's dilemma with the Islamists stemmed not only from his personal negative experience with them (miraculously surviving when Sadat was assassinated, and the assassination attempt on his life by the remnants of the Islamic Jihad in Addis Ababa in 1996), but also from his conviction that any expansion of their influence and legitimacy would mean, in return, the erosion of his influence and his regime's legitimacy.²¹ What's more, Mubarak was able to use the "bogeyman" analogy of the Islamists in order to obtain the foreign legitimacy that guaranteed his survival. He tried again to use this

¹⁹ al-Anani, n.d., p. 56.

²⁰ For more information about the 30-year relationship between Mubarak's regime and the Muslim Brotherhood, please refer to the writer's study that was published in the files of Al-Jazeera Center for Studies: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/3DE54291-4A6E-4AFA-AFD0-3DC2DF4F2D7B.htm>.

²¹ According to WikiLeaks documents, Mubarak was described by US Ambassador to Egypt Margaret Scobey as "a classic Egyptian secularist who hates religious extremism and interference in politics. The Muslim Brothers represent the worst, as they challenge not only Mubarak's power, but also his view of Egyptian interests." See the text of the document on the following link: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/207723>. For more information on the legitimacy between Mubarak and the Islamic movements, refer to: Al-Awadi, 2004.

during the revolution but failed.²² It is, therefore, reasonable that the fall of the Mubarak regime would remove the barrier that stood in front of the Islamists, and other movements that were suppressed over the previous decades, and allow them to strengthen their presence in the public sphere.

After the revolution, the presence of religion in the Egyptian public sphere materialized in three main forms: the issue of identity, Islamic-secular polarization, and a broadening in the Islamic movements' map, which will be covered in a special section in this study.

The Issue of Identity

Egyptian identity has not been in a contested or controversial position over the past three decades since many Egyptians were comfortable with the idea that Egypt is an Arab and Muslim country with a deep-rooted society that seems to have homogeneity of race, language, and culture. It is true that, historically, there was disagreement and bickering between the Islamic and nationalist movements – particularly in the pre-independence period – that developed and intensified during the Nasserite era, but the authoritarian policy experienced by both movements during Mubarak's era pushed them to refine their ideological and political stances after discovering that their real enemy was represented by the authoritarian system, a factor that made it possible for them to unite.²³

After the revolution, the identity issue became one of the hot topics of controversy and disagreement, as a result of two factors, with the first being the negative legacy of the Mubarak era. Mubarak did not leave any space for dialogue or constructive discussion about issues central to the Egyptian nation, including the relationship between religion and the state and the space that religion takes in the public sphere. Secondly, he weakened the relationship between Muslims and Copts in a way that sometimes looked

²² Mubarak reiterated this argument during his interview with Christiane Amanpour on ABC on February 3, 2011, when he said that he was ready to leave power, but that he was afraid of the chaos and violence that could be carried out by the Muslim Brotherhood. See the interview's transcript on the following link:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/03/christiane-amanpour-mubarak_n_818260.html.

²³ Counselor Tariq al-Bishri points out that despite the depth of historical disagreement between the Nationalist and Islamic movements, modernists from both sides recognized the inevitability of coexistence and convergence over the principles and fundamentals of the Egyptian nation, through what he calls the "National University". For more information refer to: al-Bishri, 1998.

intentional. There was also an attempt to politicize this issue and use it as a tool in the political battlefield, in order to mobilize support and loyalty for one political faction against another.

Over the past three decades, the Egyptian nation's cultural well was drained, opportunities for intellectual and moral communication diminished, and instruments of dialogue – like conferences, salons and the media – turned into tools to promote the official policy of the government, and support the regime's legitimacy. This led to the fragmentation of the cultural elite, a marginalization of their more serious elements, and the disruption of opportunities to establish national agreement over these thorny issues. Raising the issue of the relationship of religion with state or society was like a powder keg that nobody dared approach. Matters like the freedom of belief, the right to choose a religion, circumcision, and personal status were processed through sterile official policies that led to a great deal of confusion and dispute. In particular, these were issues where the religious was mixed with the political and the cultural was mixed with the social.

It was natural for these issues to erupt in the post-revolutionary period, when the opportunity finally arose to discuss them in the open without any restrictions, although this caused a lot of confusion and chaos. The first serious test for these issues was the referendum on the constitutional amendments on March 19, 2011, when there was a clear vertical division between supporters and opponents of constitutional amendments, and when the referendum – intentionally or unintentionally – turned from being a mechanism to organize the process of managing the transitional period in Egypt, to a referendum on the identity of the state and the form of its political system. Both supporters and opponents of constitutional amendments resorted to the same tools to mobilize supporters and proponents of their choice of vote.²⁴

The most noticeable thing about this division is perhaps not that it started a few weeks after the Egyptian revolution, which embodied unity, agreement, and national consensus, but the fact that it did not happen because of real excuses that would justify its occurrence. The issues on which there was a referendum did not address the identity of the Egyptian state, the relationship between religion and the state, or any of the

²⁴ For more information on the polarization between supporters and opponents of constitutional amendments, refer to: Khalil al-Anani, "Egypt, from conflict to agreement," *Al-Hayat*, March 23, 2011, <http://international.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/247259>.

other issues that might bring to bear a difference in views or directions. Rather, the issues brought forth related to procedural or transitional matters in preparation for the new phase. As a result of the political and ideological divisions that occurred after Mubarak's departure, each political faction tried to reshape the political system and the nature of the state according to its visions and intellectual and ideological convictions, without genuine regard to the idea of national consensus.

It was clear that all political movements (represented by liberals, Islamists, secularists, and leftists) misbehaved during the post-revolutionary period with respect to the political use of the identity issue, and all made the same mistakes. All of them dealt with the referendum on constitutional amendments from the perspective of narrow interests and bias toward certain points of view without being ready to accept differences. This aroused public opinion, led to increased divisions and made them more susceptible to polarization. The referendum on constitutional amendments was like a mirror that reflected the size of the disagreements that had remained dormant during Mubarak's time era and surprised everyone with their depth and how easily they could be activated. Although the referendum on constitutional amendments was a technical matter related to organizing the procedures for the transitional period and its steps, and not related to the identity of the state or the relationship between religion and the society, some tried to employ this in order to achieve certain political and ideological interests. Similarly, the disagreement between the political groups remained even after the referendum that resulted in favor of organizing parliamentary elections and creating a founding committee to draft a new constitution.²⁵

²⁵ According to *Asharq Alawasat* newspaper, "a state of controversy controlled the Egyptian street, particularly the elite and the religious institutions, around the second article of the constitution, which stated that Sharia was the main source of legislation. There were several campaigns by Salafi groups, including the Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyya group, the Salafi Front in Mansoura, the Egyptian Legitimate Association, a section of the youth who created a page on Facebook called "Islamic Egypt," and the website "I the Salafist," to keep the second article of the constitution. Prominent Salafist figures like Mohammed Ismail al-Muqaddim and Abdel Monim al-Shahhat held conferences in Alexandria and the Delta provinces warning against those they described as ambushers and those attempting to change the Islamic identity of Egypt, warning televised sheikhs, such as Mohammed Hassan via Al-Rawda and Al-Rahma television stations, to avoid discussing a change in the Islamic identity of Egypt. In contrast, many intellectuals signed a statement that called for taking inspiration from the constitution of 1923 that considered Egyptians equal in civil and political rights in contrast to the current constitution. The statement, entitled "Towards a Secular State," emphasized the need to make an amendment to the second article and demanded abolition of the text that mentions the Islamic identity of the state in the constitution. Church leaders also demanded that the second article be included with the amended articles that will be discussed by the committee: *Asharq Alawasat*, Issue 11769, February 17, 2011.

Islamic–Secular Polarization

Islamic-secular polarization is not new in the political and intellectual arena in Egypt. Over the first half of the twentieth century, polarization was a feature that distinguished the Egyptian and Arab intellectual condition. This polarization was centered on two main trends, the secular liberal movement and the religious reform movement.²⁶ This polarization reflected the identity crisis that Egyptian nationalist groups suffered from throughout the first half of the twentieth century. This is represented by the chasm between an unlimited openness to the West and a literal adherence to religious identity as the backbone that would protect the nation from Westernization and imperialism.²⁷ The founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 was a manifestation of this polarization.²⁸

If this polarization was previously limited to an intellectual and cultural aspect in the form of arguments and debates, it took a more serious and intense shape after the early 1970s, which led to the spread of radical movements and different kinds of symbolic and material violence throughout the 1980s and 1990s. During the Mubarak era, intellectual and cultural salons were closed and suppressed in a way that left no opportunity for any intellectual, cultural, and social dialogue concerning many controversial issues, such as the relationship between the different ideologies. Because of this, it was no surprise that the intellectual and ideological polarization between Islamic and secular movements was reproduced after the demise of the Mubarak regime, with more intensity and division.²⁹

Open clashes between the Islamic and secular movements in the post-revolutionary period have occurred on several occasions; the most obvious being the referendum on constitutional amendments that took place in March 2011. The Islamist movements dealt with the amendments as a matter of survival, and many religious reasons were

²⁶ al-Bishri, 1996, p. 21.

²⁷ Daly, 1998.

²⁸ In one of his letters, Hassan al-Banna points out that the signs of decadence that dominated the nation were brought about by its withdrawal from religion and non-adherence to the teachings of Islam. He says: “History has witnessed that Muslims who clung to the teachings of Islam prevailed, developed, built, lit the road of achievement for humanity, and delighted the world with a civilization that still and will still be the joy of life... after that they denied their religion, forgot and ignored it, and wore it inside out like fur... so they reached where they are and will stay there until they get back to their religion.” al-Banna, 2001, p. 34.

²⁹ For more information on the Islamic-secular polarization throughout the 1980s and 1990s, refer to: Maguid, 2003.

invoked to justify voting in favor of the amendments. The liberals and secularists tried to mobilize the masses to vote against the amendments as they felt they would lead to an Islamist takeover of the parliament and this parliament would then choose the committee to draft the new constitution.

Polarization increased over the nature and shape of the Egyptian state and whether it would be a religious or civil state. It is a matter where the religious mixes with the cultural and social. In addition to the blurriness of these concepts and the absence of a systematic framework and discipline for them, both the Islamic and secular sides previously used these points, politically speaking, in a way that created much controversy and confusion among public opinion.³⁰ Al-Azhar took a stance on the issue and issued an important document on its vision of the shape of the Egyptian state, a document that was welcomed by many intellectuals and in political circles.³¹

It is noteworthy that the parties represented in this renewed polarization are those that recently entered the world of politics in Egypt. Those that will be discussed here are the new liberal parties – mainly the Liberal Egyptian Party that was founded by Coptic businessman Naguib Sawiris, and the Freedom Egypt Party that was founded by a group of liberal activists – that were established after the revolution, and the Salafist bloc that has gained notable political and media presence during the post-revolutionary phase. It is as if there is a re-cloning of the process polarization where none of the sides seeks to explore points of agreement with the other side as much as try to push its own ideological agenda in the political market.³² The Salafists' entry into politics and the agitation that the liberals and secularists felt about their religious and ideological

³⁰ Sameh Fawzi, "Exiting the polarization tunnel," *Al-Shorouk*, June 4, 2011.

³¹ For the text of the document please see the link: <http://www.jusur.net/index-Dateien/image/azhar.pdf>.

³² The most notable features of the polarization were represented through the dispute over the issue of prioritizing either drafting a constitution or running elections. Despite the political nature of the dispute, it reflects a strong ideological polarization between the liberals and the Islamists. Those who called for postponing elections belonged to the liberal movement whose supporters feared that the Islamists would sweep the parliamentary elections (which actually took place), and have a greater chance to choose the establishing committee that would draft the new constitution. On the other hand, the Islamists saw that insisting on drafting a new constitution first represents a rebellion against legitimacy and paves the way for manipulating the identity of the state and the form of its political system. The confrontation became an exchange of insults through the media, particularly after one of the representatives of the new liberal movement (Naguib Sawiris) published cartoons on his Twitter page that some Muslims found offensive to Islam, a matter that led to a media campaign against his companies. On the other hand, one of the most prominent representatives of the Salafist movement, Yasser Burhami, declared that his main battle was with the liberals in order to stop the "constitution first" campaign. See *Al-Shorouk al-Jadid* newspaper, <http://www.shorouknews.com/contentdata.aspx?id=493776>.

rhetoric were some of the factors that fed the polarization to an extent where the two sides entered into intellectual and ideological debates in which the media was used in a crude way as each side tried to tarnish the image of the other.³³

Perhaps there is no problem in having an intellectual and ideological conflict about issues that were previously forbidden to discuss, such as the relationship between religion and state, and civil and religious matters in the public sphere, but the danger lies in two things: the first is if this conflict spills into political and procedural issues that need consensus rather than disagreement, something that could hinder the democratic process in the post-revolutionary period (this would certainly be in the interest of the military whose legitimacy is able to extend as a result of this conflict). The second is if this conflict shifts from the elite and intellectual spheres to the media and popular ones. If this would happen, the difference would turn into a dispute, and the conflict into confrontation, and the street would be factionalized and mobilized in a way that could threaten the social fabric of the Egyptian nation.

The past months have seen some manifestations of this conflict, set against the backdrop of raising the procedural issue that is related to the matter of drafting a new Egyptian constitution and its mechanisms. The dispute between the secular and Islamic movements has moved from rooms and meeting halls to the media, and taken over the daily conversations of the public, something that has resulted in a deep confidence of crisis between the parties that will not be easy to overcome.

³³ Many accusations were made against the Salafists that they had demolished shrines in some areas and used symbolic and material violence against some citizens. The Salafists condemned this and considered it an organized campaign to tarnish their image in the Egyptian media. See Sheikh Mohammed Hassan's statements, <http://digital.ahram.org.eg/articles.aspx?Serial=441815&eid=1184>; also see, *Asharq Alawsat*, <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11813&article=615379&research=%C7%E1%D3%Ea%D%D%ED%C9&state=true>; finally, for the Salafist opinion, see: "War against Salafism is a war against Islam," *Al-Mesryoon* online newspaper on May 18, 2011, <http://www.almesryoon.com/news.aspx?id=60407>. In this, liberalism was accused of being synonymous with heresy and atheism and was called by al-Shahhat an "evil" that should be avoided. For more information on the confusion over the concept of liberalism after the revolution of January 25, see the investigation by Mohammed Abdo Hassanein, "Egypt: liberalism in the dock," *Asharq Alawsat*, June 10, 2011, <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11882&article=625901&search=%C7%E1%DD%ED%C9&state=true>.

Some of the study's most important observations about Islamic-secular polarization in the post-revolutionary period are:

- This polarization reflects a degree of recklessness and loss of wisdom on both sides after the revolution. The truth is that the blame lies primarily with the liberal and secular trends not only because they are considered to supposedly be more open and accepting of others than the other movements, but also because they have expressed resentment and indignation about the Islamists' strong presence in the Egyptian public sphere after the revolution. This has sometimes led to demands for the exclusion of the Islamists on the basis that they are a threat to the revolution. It is true that some Islamist slogans (from those who are not an ideologically and politically homogeneous bloc) seem disturbing, but it should be borne in mind that they have been excluded and deprived from the political arena for the past six decades. The adoption of further exclusion will lead to more ideological factionalism and retrenchment. The result has been a great deal of confrontation and heated debate between the two sides that has tarnished the splendor of the Egyptian revolution.
- The most dangerous thing about the current ideological division and Islamic-secular polarization is not that it has arisen at a very early stage in the revolution, but that it has crossed what is procedural and temporary to what is essential and permanent. If the disagreement between the political and religious trends surrounding the transitional period's arrangements continues, this will involve everyone in issues that will need years or decades to resolve, such as the relationship between religion and state, religion and society, and the size of the civil and the religious in the public sphere, to name a few.
- The differing parties have forgotten that they are not alone in the public sphere and that there are different groups and classes that share this space with them and could rise to defend their interests if the conflict between the two disputants continues. This could increase the tension between all the sides and threaten the peaceful transition to democracy.
- As much as ideology seems to be dominating the current divisions, it actually reflects a class struggle over the social and political interests of the post-revolutionary period. The liberals and the secularists represent to a certain degree the rich class and the upper middle class, who had an undeniable role in the Egyptian revolution. While the Islamists often represent the poor and the lower-middle class, some of them participated in the revolution from the beginning; ultimately, each side is defending its interests and position in the new phase.

Islamic Players in the Post–Revolution Period

One of the virtues of the revolution is that it dismantled the system of political stagnation that has prevailed in Egypt since the 1950s and was based on the ruling party's domination of political life and the freezing out of the opposition to make them insignificant. This is what usually happens in the wake of a popular revolution when the creation and establishment of political organizations are the most significant features of the political scene after the revolution. This is what happened in Egypt after the fall of the Mubarak regime, as the features of the political map changed significantly. There is now a state of political flow that will reshape the balances of actors and identify their presence in the public sphere over the coming years.

The Islamists' share of gains from the current political changes in Egypt was much greater than that of their counterparts from the liberal, leftist, and secular movements. This can be explained by the size of oppression, persecution, and exclusion practiced by the Mubarak regime against Islamists throughout his period in office, as compared to what other ideological movements were subjected to. In other words, the reaction of the religious movements over the fall of Mubarak seems to be more vocal, present, and perhaps influential than others.

This leads to the second hypothesis in this study that assumes that the more there is political openness in Egypt, the more there is diversity – and possibly fragmentation – in the map of Islamic actors, there will be an absence of a monopoly of a particular faction over the Islamic arena. This is perhaps what is currently happening in Egypt, as the Islamic movement is witnessing the greatest expanse and development in its history. It is perhaps clear that the current Islamic condition in Egypt is witnessing pluralism and diversity (the intellectual and active dimensions of pluralism) to a degree that could lead to fragmentation within the Islamic movement.

One of the results of the political stalemate consolidated by Mubarak was the hindering of opportunity for the development and multiplicity of the Islamic condition. This led to its confinement within two major movements. The first is the pragmatic (peaceful) movement, who was forced to accept the rules of the political game set by the Mubarak regime, and who made its agenda, discourse, and movements within the confinements of these restrictions. This trend includes the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafists, and the independent Islamists. The second trend includes the radical movements that sought to

confront the government using violence. When they failed to achieve this, because of continuing attacks and repression by the security forces, they surrendered and were forced to reconsider their intellectual and ideological positions whereby they renounced violence and stopped the use of arms to achieve their political objectives. This compulsory duality led to a distortion of the idea of Islamic activism, as it established in the public mind the idea that belonging to any Islamic group – even a moderate one – meant opposing and confronting authority. This stopped many from joining these groups because they preferred to remain on the non-politicized religious side of things.

In the post-revolutionary period, there was some kind of an explosion in the political formations that used religion as the source of its inspiration. Political work became the preferred route for many of those belonging to Islamic movements including those that rejected – and probably prohibited – political practice and partisan activity on the basis of religion and ideology, such as the former Salafists and Jihadists, in order to implement their religious and political projects and obtain a legitimate space in the public sphere. In the intellectual dimension, there were significant changes in the political and ideological discourse of the Islamic groups after the revolution. Although these changes will be discussed later in the section discussing each movement separately, there are three general observations that can be observed. First, that democracy has become the reference governing the structure of the discourse, at least procedurally. There is some kind of an agreement between the different Islamic movements over resorting to democratic rules in the management of political conflicts and differences. This has meant the renouncing of violence in form and substance, on one hand, and accepting the results of the democratic process and its outputs, on the other. The second observation is that discourse is commenced upon from the basis of political pluralism, as there is a conviction among all political movements that they need to accept the other without excluding anyone and to resort to the ballot box. The third is the shift of rhetoric from ideological slogans to pragmatic political programs in order to gain public support.

In general, the map of Islamic actors after the revolution – the movements and personalities that are engaged in political work with an Islamic reference, in addition to their social and religious activities – can be divided into three groups: historical actors, new actors, and independent actors.

Historical Islamic Actors

The map of historical Islamic actors includes the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic groups that renounced violence during the last decade and are now ready to play an active role in politics.

The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood's share of the fruits of the Egyptian revolution was clear. The Brotherhood has made, and still makes, many obvious gains, most notably in obtaining the legitimacy that it deprived of since it was banned in October 1954. On June 6, 2011, approval was given for the establishment of the Freedom and Justice Party that emanated from the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁴ Although there were some questions raised concerning the establishment of the party, its program, and its future relationship with the Brotherhood, it represents a significant step toward integrating the group into the political process in a legitimate way.³⁵

Many see the Muslim Brotherhood as a major force in reshaping the new political system in Egypt, particularly after the group announced its intention to compete for half of the seats in parliament in the elections that are supposed to take place next October.³⁶ The political presence of the Brotherhood after the revolution raised fears of the possibility that they would take control of political life, specifying the identity and direction of the Egyptian state, prompting the group to call for the establishment of a national consensus to consider priorities for the next stage and determine the position toward problematic matters like the issue of the new constitution.³⁷ However, as a result of a long legacy of distrust between the Brotherhood and other political groups,

³⁴ For more information about the establishment of the Freedom and Justice Party see the following websites: the official site for the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan Online*), <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/new/Article.aspx?ArtID=85590&SecID=211>; *Al-Masry al-Youm*, June 6, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/465378>; BBC Arabic, http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2011/06/110606_egypt_muslim_brotherhood_party.shtml; and *Al-Ahram*, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/Al-Mashhad-Al-Syiassy/News/82329.aspx>.

³⁵ For more information on the relationship of the Freedom and Justice Party with the Muslim Brotherhood, refer to: Khalil al-Anani, "The Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party: Independence obsession," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 1, 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/arb/?fa=show&article=44329&lang=ar>.

³⁶ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, May 1, 2011, <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=295380>.

³⁷ Mohammed Abdo Hussein, "Consensus document for the sake of Egypt," *Asharq Alawsat*, issue number 11894, November 22, 2011.

the matter ended up with an electoral alliance between the Brotherhood and Al-Wafd Party, as well as other marginal parties after many new groups withdrew from this alliance.³⁸

The Brotherhood did not hide its delight with its new status on the post-revolutionary scene, something that has been clearly reflected in its political discourse and has sometimes led to accusations of arrogance. Its leaders issued statements that reflected this feeling and this created concern among other political groups.³⁹ It seems that the current priorities of the group are to ensure its representation in the structure of the next political system whether through elections or making a contribution toward selecting the new government. The group's insistence was clear concerning the arrangements for the transition of power in Egypt. It announced that it was against the drafting of a new constitution before conducting parliamentary elections and considered this a violation of the popular will and the establishing committee that is supposed to draft the new constitution.⁴⁰

Repentant radical groups

What is meant by this term are groups, such as Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya and Islamic Jihad, who renounced violence, issued many revisions in this regard, and have decided to participate in political life through a partisan framework. Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya has experienced politicization and has a clear tendency toward public activity since their leaders were released from prison over the past decade. The group decided to form a political party, calling it the Building and Development Party. Tareq al-Zumr, who was accused of assassinating former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, was released along with his relative Abboud al-Zumr after the revolution, and was chosen to be one of the

³⁸ The alliance of Al-Wafd with the brotherhood raises international and local questions, *Arabiyya Net*, November 15, 2011, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/06/15/153424.html>. Also: "The withdrawal of al-Adl and al-Jabha from the democratic alliance," *Al-Masry al-Youm online*, June 26, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/471894>.

³⁹ For example, Sobhi Saleh, a member of the Brotherhood's Shura Council and the group's former representative in parliament, made controversial statements such as not recognizing liberals, leftists, and secularists. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, issue number 2534, May 22, 2011; also see his talk about the establishment of an Islamic government as the next target of the group, *Al-Masry al-Youm*, issue number 2537, May 25, 2011. After this talk, he was forced to go back on what he said and apologize after his remarks caused uproar against the group, *Al-Masry al-Youm*, issue number 2538, May 26, 2011.

⁴⁰ The Muslim Brotherhood statement concerning the issue of "elections first," *Ikhwan Online*, November 23, 2011, <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/new/Article.aspx?SecID=118&ArtID=86476>.

leading representatives among the founders of the new political party along with former Jihadi leaders Safwat Abdel Ghani, Ashraf Tawfik and Shazli al-Sagheer.⁴¹ The party has developed six main principles for action: justice, equality, freedom, pluralism, *Shura*, and social solidarity. The party's source of authority – as laid out in its founding statement – is "Sharia law and its purposes and principles, as a main reference to insure the maintenance of the nation's identity, the rule of law, security and stability for all citizens, and balanced relationships with the outside world."⁴² Importantly, the group has refused the idea that a Copt or a woman can become president of the republic because, in the words of one of the group's leaders, Osama Hafez, Egypt is an "Islamic state".⁴³ The Egyptian Political Parties' Affairs Committee initially rejected the party's legal license because of criminal convictions that were issued against two leading members of the party, Tareq al-Zumr and Safwat Abdel Ghani, and decided to deprive some of them of their political rights because they had been convicted of criminal offenses. The reasons for refusing the establishment of the party also included the domination of its religious dimension over the program, which contradicts with the text of the third paragraph of the fourth article of the updated Political Parties Law number 40 of 1977.⁴⁴ However, the founders of the party succeeded in obtaining a ruling from the Supreme Administrative Court granting the party a license because it does not violate the second article of the provisionally declared constitution that was issued on March 30, 2011, which states that Sharia law is the main source of legislation. The court noted that the party does not distinguish between the members belonging to it according to their religion as it was discovered that founding members included Muslims and non-Muslims, and that the party did not denigrate the status of women and their right to practice all activities, particularly political ones.⁴⁵

Islamic Jihad also decided to establish a political party called the Safety and Development Party, and one of the founders of Islamic Jihad (a known scholar) during the late 1970s, Kamal Habib, was chosen as leader of the party. It is notable that the

⁴¹ "Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya officially announces the selection of the name 'Building and Development' for its new party," *Al-Youm al-Sabee online*, June 20, 2011, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=438709&SecID=97>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya chooses the name 'Building and Development' for its party and rejects having a Copt or a woman as president," *Al-Masry al-Youm online*, June 20, 2011, <http://www.almasyalyoum.com/node/469809>; also see *Al-Dostor newspaper*, <http://www.dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/june/22/45804>.

⁴⁴ "The Political Parties' Affairs Committee approves the establishment of 'Al-Wa-ih' and 'Al-Ittihad' and rejects 'Building and Development,'" *Tahrir online newspaper*, <http://tahrirnews.com>.

⁴⁵ *Al-Youm al-Sabee online*, October 10, 2011, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=509795&>.

initiative to establish the party originated from Al-Azhar mosque. Members of the political bureau include: Osama Kassem, Nizar Ghorab, Nabawi Ibrahim, Kamal Habib, Sayyid Hasan, Majdi al-Demiri, Ashraf al-Sisi, Ali Farraj, and Mohammed Abdulla.⁴⁶

The party's political program revolves around revitalizing political life in Egypt, activating the role of the judiciary, and reducing the power of the president of the republic and increasing parliament's jurisdictions and abolishing the Shura Council. The party's economic policy calls for the need to promote public and private sector investment and level progressive taxes on the rich to gain funds that will support the poor; additionally, they seek to introduce tax exemptions for young people, employees, laborers, craftsmen, farmers, and those who earn a wage lower than the international average. The party's foreign policy calls for the development of the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the African Union, as unions for Arab, Islamic, and African peoples, with the goal of taking collective responsibility for defense and solving political differences among them without resorting to war. The most remarkable thing about the party's program is its call for a reassessment of the Camp David agreement in order to ensure the full and complete sovereignty of Egypt over Sinai, its sea, sky and land, as well as wealth, without conditions, linking the normalization of relations with Israel to the end of the occupation of Arab territories.⁴⁷

New Islamic Actors

These are the parties and social and political movements that derive their intellectual and ideological authority from Islam. They define themselves as "civil parties with an Islamic background". Perhaps the most prominent of these parties are the following:

The Center Party (Hizb Al-Wasat)

The establishment of the Center Party is considered the most important product of the revolution of January 25, as the party gained legitimacy after almost 15 years of conflict with the Mubarak regime. The Supreme Administrative Court issued a decision to establish the party on February 19, only about a week after Mubarak's removal from

⁴⁶ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, issue 2506, April 4, 2011.

⁴⁷ To view the program of the Safety and Development Party, refer to *Al-Shorouk al-Jadid*, <http://www.shorouknews.com/contentdatat.aspx?id=439122>; *Al-Dostor al-Asli* online, <http://www.dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/june/2/44020>; *Original Constitution newspaper*,

power.⁴⁸ The leader of the party, Abul Ela Madi, confirmed the relationship between the approval and Mubarak's removal, saying: "The approval for establishing the party came from the winds of liberation brought by the revolution."⁴⁹

The Center Party is not new on the Egyptian scene. It has been politically active since the second half of the 1990s and has had an influential presence in the political and public sphere over the past decade though the party did not gain official status until after the revolution of January 25.

The Center Party has its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood in the mid-1990s though the leadership of the party, Abul Ela Madi and Essam Sultan, broke away with the Brotherhood organizationally, ideologically, and politically soon after and has taken a different path over the past 15 years. Without going into too much detail, it's possible to say that the political and intellectual discourse of the Center Party is derived from Islamic culture in its broader sense.

The Center Party's program focuses on principles of democracy, freedom, equality, citizenship, and social justice. These principles represented a quantum leap in the discourse of Islamic movements in Egypt, when the party was launched, leading some to consider the Center Party as evidence of Egyptian Islamists' open-minded outlook and liberal views.⁵⁰ An examination into the principles of the Center Party clearly shows the differences between their principles and those of the Muslim Brotherhood. The most important difference between the two viewpoints lies in the Center Party's belief in full equality between Egyptians regardless of religion and gender. It is seen as almost the only party that would give the right to become president of the republic to both Copts and women.

Salafist groups and parties

Salafism represents one of the most prominent newcomers on the political scene in Egypt, and has developed a large presence in politics and the media, in a manner that

<http://www.shorouknews.com/contentdata.aspx?id=439122> and
<http://www.dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/june/2/44020>.

⁴⁸"The Supreme Administrative Court agrees to establish the Center Party," *Al-Ahram*.

⁴⁹*Al-Masry al-Youm*, issue 2443, February 20.

⁵⁰Norton, 2005, p. 13.

has surprised many people. Before discussing this group, however, one must understand the many difficulties that surround defining the specific concepts of this movement. To avoid falling into generalizations, the following is a discussion on the part of the group that has decided to go into politics and remained apart from, even if slightly, the role of preaching in the religious sense.⁵¹ If this part of the group's sudden shift from purely religious work into the political sphere is surprising enough, it becomes even clearer when reviewing the intellectual and ideological shift in its political discourse. Here, it is possible to refer to the five main activist groups who came from under the Salafist movement's mantle, including:

The Salafist Calling

The Salafist Calling in Alexandria represents the most prominent Salafist force acting in the political sphere.⁵² The group belongs to what is known as the movement of "Scientific Salafism," which does not pay much attention to political action. However, it is no secret that they are interested in public affairs, such as issues of freedom, governance of women and Copts, and some personal status matters.⁵³ Perhaps this is what led to their persecution by security forces and the arrests that this group has been subjected to throughout its history, even though it didn't engage in any organized political activity.

After the revolution, the Salafist Calling became one of the main actors in the Egyptian Islamic movement, and one of the most influential players directing Salafi and conservative public opinion in Egypt in general. Although the group did not formally participate in the activities of the revolution, its presence in the public sphere was clear. It launched its presence with a conference that attracted nearly 100,000 of its supporters just two days before the departure of Mubarak. At the conference, the group warned of interference with the "Islamic identity" of Egypt, in the shadow of what they

⁵¹ To find out more about the Salafist movement in Egypt and its different ideological branches, see: Nasirah, 2011.

⁵² To learn about the historical origin of the Salafist Calling, and the most important features of its ideas, refer to the distinct study completed Ali Abdel Al, "Salafist Calling in Alexandria: The origin and the most important features" (four parts): <http://www.almesryoon.com/news.aspx?id=57714>; <http://www.almesryoon.com/news.aspx?id=57854>; <http://www.almesryoon.com/news.aspx?id=58010>; <http://www.almesryoon.com/news.aspx?id=58137>.

⁵³ One of the phrases that carries a clear indication of this group's political orientation was stated by one of its most prominent leaders, Yasser Borhami, in a conversation with Ali Abdel Al two years ago: "we get caught up in politics and do not work in politics." Available at: <http://ali-abdelal.maktoobblog.com/1234389/>.

called some people's "harassment" of the second article of the Egyptian Constitution.⁵⁴

On March 21, 2011, the group decided to formally engage in political action, and issued its first statement with regard to this. It was a statement that some considered an unprecedented event in the group's history.⁵⁵ Some denounced the shift in the group after the revolution, and considered it a kind of political opportunism, while others saw it as some sort of adjustment to the new situation.⁵⁶ A more accurate analysis of the situation, however, is that the group was not engaging in politics in either a dogmatic or ideological way, but in a pragmatic way. Some of the group's leaders, such as Yasser Borhami, Abdel Monim al-Shahhat, and Sheikh Mohammed Ismail al-Muqaddim, pointed out that politics is considered to be under the scope of "the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice," as understood by the group. The negative experience of Islamic movements under Mubarak had a clear impact on the Salafist Calling's refusal to engage in direct political action.⁵⁷

Since then, the political presence of the group in the media and the public sphere has increased, and its political viewpoints have become clearer. Despite the group's denial that they have become a political party, as confirmed by its spokesman, Abdel Monim

⁵⁴ Ali Abdel Al, "Salafist Calling warns of interference with the Islamic identity of Egypt," *Islam Online*, February 9, <http://www.onislam.net/arabic/newsanalysis/newsreports/islamic-world/128475-q-q-----.html>.

⁵⁵ The Salafist forums and websites celebrated the statement read by Sheikh Ali Hatem, one of the Salafist Calling's leaders, and considered it something positive. Review the statement on the "Salafi Voice" website, which belongs to Sheikh Yasser Borhami: <http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=5236>.

⁵⁶ Based on its ideological and pragmatic perspectives, the general line towed by many leaders of Salafism was the prohibition of demonstrations. As an ideological principle, some Salafist elders looked at demonstrations as "heresy" because of the presence of both men and women. They also represent a defiance of the governing ruler, which is one of the abominations that may lead to the occurrence of evil. Pragmatically, demonstrations may lead to a collision of power, and thus may disrupt the activities of the group and have a negative impact on its preaching activity. Perhaps one of the most prominent anecdotes in this regard came from Sheikh Ahmed Farid, one of the founders of the Salafist Calling in the 1970s, who tried to justify Salafist participation in politics after the revolution, despite the fact that they considered it a religious taboo before it. He said, "the *fatwa* varies according to time and place, and the obvious method of expression right now is through demonstrations, and these are allowed by the constitution, and do not constitute a defiance of the governing ruler as long as the ruler is unjust and tampering with the laws of God." Ironically, the sheikh stated that since democracy means that people govern themselves by themselves, he permitted the followers of the movement to participate in the parliamentary and presidential elections, even though "democracy is *haram* (forbidden)". See: *Sunrise* newspaper's interview with Sheikh Ahmed Farid, March 5, 2011, <http://shorouknews.com/contentdata.aspx?id=401860>.

⁵⁷ Ali Abdel Al, February 9, op cit.

al-Shahhat, the group generally supported Islamic parties in elections.⁵⁸ The group placed three conditions for supporting a candidate in any election: the candidate's belief in Islamic Sharia law, their efficiency, and their integrity.⁵⁹ Some interpreted these conditions to be more applicable to candidates from Islamic movements, whether in presidential or parliamentary elections.

The most significant presence of the Salafist Calling was through the formation of what became known as the Salafi Scholars' Shura Council, which was created after the revolution, and included most Salafist sheikhs, such as Sheikh Mohamed Hassan, Sheikh Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, the former president of Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah, Jamal al-Marakbi, and Sheikh Abdullah Shakir.⁶⁰ The Council announced political positions, the most important of which was the refusal of the principles proposed by some liberal and secular groups that went over the constitution, as well as their support of participation in the mass demonstration in Tahrir Square on July 29. These positions gave liberal and secular people some cause for concern.⁶¹

The Al-Nour Party

The Al-Nour Party is considered to be the first Salafist party in Egypt. It was born out of the heart of the Salafist movement, and obtained its legal legitimacy in June 2011, after the number of its founding members exceeded 7,000; currently, Emad al-Din Abdul Ghafoor, the cofounder and head of the party, leads the party.⁶² The party's political program represented a turning point in the political discourse of the Salafist movement in general. The party proposed an agenda for political, social, and educational reform, with an emphasis on its commitment to Sharia law as the highest authority. It doesn't

⁵⁸ al-Shahhat, interview with newspaper, "The Salafists will not turn into a political party or faction in Egypt," <http://www.almesryoon.com/news.aspx?id=53079>.

⁵⁹ "The Salafist Calling: 'The first condition to support parliamentary candidates is the belief in Islamic law,'" *Middle East Newspaper*, April 15, <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issue=11826&article=617333&search=%C7%E1%D3%E1%DD%ED%C9&state=true>.

⁶⁰ Website of the *Seventh Day newspaper*, July 17, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=456308&SecID=97&IssueID=168>.

⁶¹ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, July 19, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=304357&IssueID=2201>.

⁶² Hamdi Dabsh, "The Salafist Al-Nour Party launches with 7550 powers of attorney," *Al-Masry al-Youm*, issue 2558, June 15, 2011.

vary much from the agendas of other parties. With regard to political reform, the party calls for reaching democracy through “the framework of Sharia law”. This can be achieved through “the people exercising their right to freely form political parties, and ensuring the freedom of political parties to pursue their activities with a constant commitment to the constitution and the nation, and the peaceful transfer of power through free, direct and fair elections, and for people’s freedom to choose their deputies and rulers, and monitoring the government control and holding it accountable, isolating it in case it proved deviant.”⁶³

The party’s economic policy is based on a vision of supporting and encouraging the private sector. However, it sees the necessity of replacing an Islamic finance system based on profit and production sharing with a system of interest-based banking.⁶⁴

Despite the fact that the party is not organizationally linked to any other Salafist group, it is closest to the Salafist Calling, not only because the party’s main headquarters is in Alexandria, which also hosts the Salafist Calling’s headquarters, but also because of the backing and support the party receives from the group’s leaders. This was confirmed when some Salafist Calling leaders declared their support for the party in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.⁶⁵

Despite this party’s young age and the nature of its ideological background, their politics so far seems flexible and pragmatic, at least compared to those of the Salafist Calling. This is reflected by a few examples. First, the party sees no harm in cooperating with all political parties and movements from different ideological backgrounds, in contrast to the traditional Salafist discourse, which takes a strict ideological stance toward some secular and liberal groups.⁶⁶ Second, the party seems open to the West, with its leaders accepting an invitation from the European Parliament in Brussels to identify the ideas, principles, and policies of the party.⁶⁷ Third, the party had a clear role in the political and popular movement during the post-revolution

⁶³ See Al-Nour Party’s program on the party’s website: http://www.alnourparty.org/page/program_headers.

⁶⁴ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, issue 2543, dated May 31, 2011.

⁶⁵ *Al-Dostor al-Assli* website, June 9, 2011, <http://www.dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/june/9/44607>.

⁶⁶ Mohammed Ismail, “The Salafist, Al-Nour: We welcome the cooperation of all political forces and movements”, *Al-Youm al-Sabee*, June 12, 2011, <http://youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=433849&SecID=97>.

⁶⁷ Mustafa Hashim, “The Salafist: Al-Nour receives lessons on party politics in Europe”, *Al-Shorouk al-Jadid*, <http://www.shorouknews.com/contentdata.aspx?id=494690>.

period, which meant that the party transitioned from an ideological, closed sphere to a broad political one. Fourth, the party shows a surprising boldness in its rhetoric because it has recently entered politics. For instance, the spokesman of the party, Yusri Hammad announced it would have a strong presence in the parliamentary elections that will be held later this year to ensure the formation of the next government.⁶⁸

These positions have led to a degree of tension between the party and some leaders of the Salafist Calling. Sheikh Said Abdel Azeem, one of the group's leaders, issued a stern warning to the party, saying that it should not blindly follow liberals and secularists, or try to imitate them. This statement made the leaders of the party take back statements they had made in praise of democracy, claiming that these statements were misunderstood and misrepresented by the media.⁶⁹

The Al-Asala Party

This is the second party that emerged from the heart of the Salafist movement. It was formed after a group of members from the Al-Fadila Party separated from the organization, led by the Major General Adel Abdel Maksoud (step-brother of Sheikh Mohammed Abdel Maksoud, the founder of the Al-Fadila Party). The founders of the Al-Asala Party justified these steps as being due to a change in Al-Fadila's approach and a moving away from principles that had previously been agreed upon, the most important of which are "a commitment to legitimacy, the sovereignty of law, and the moderate Salafist Islamic approach," according to the establishing statement of the Al-Asala Party.⁷⁰ The party gained official status on August 29, 2011.⁷¹

The founding of the party is considered to be the first instance of a split within the Salafist movement. This split is said to have come because some of the founders of the Al-Fadila Party belonged to a Salafist Jihadi movement who had called for resistance against the ruler by force and whose members had a marked presence in the revolution of January 25, as indicated previously. The founders of the party announced that they

⁶⁸ Ali Abdel Al, "The Salafist Al-Nour Party: We seek a parliamentary majority to allow us to form the next government in Egypt," *Al-Dostor al-Assli*, <http://www.dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/july/6/47341>.

⁶⁹ Sheikh Saeed Abdel Azim: "A wake-up call for Al-Nour Party ... the Salafist Calling is a river and the party is one of its branches," *Shabakat Al-Fath al-Islami*, <http://www.al-fath.net/artical.php?request=524>.

⁷⁰ *Al-Youm al-Sabee*, July 11, 2011, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=452334>.

⁷¹ *Al-Shorouk al-Jadid*, August 29, 2011, <http://www.shorouknews.com/ContentData.aspx?id=531468>.

had received the backing and blessing of Salafist sheikhs, such as Sheikh Mohamed Hassan, Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, and Sheikh Mamdouh Gaber, among others.⁷²

Despite the absence of an integrated party agenda so far, what has emerged in statements and news indicates that the party is committed to its Salafist background in principles and ideas. It seems that many followers of the Salafist movement see Al-Asala as the closest to the movement's direction and its objectives, especially with regard to its commitment to peaceful political action, and applying an Islamic vision to both state and society.

The Al-Fadila Party

The Al-Fadila Party is considered the third party linked to the Salafist movement in Egypt. Although there were no formal links between the party and any of the Salafist groups, the founders of the party claim that the party has the support of senior Salafist sheikhs, including Sheikh Mohamed Hassan and Mohamed Hussein Yacoub.

The party calls for the establishment of a secular state within an Islamic framework in its agenda. According to journalist Ali Abdel Al, an observer of the Salafist movement, the party is considered "the Egyptian Islamic power that most calls for dialogue, understanding, and alliance between the spectra of Islamic movements, starting at the top with the Muslim Brotherhood and all other groups and parties with an Islamic background, under the banner of establishing, implementing, and activating Sharia in constitution and governance."⁷³ This was confirmed by the party's founder and one of the most prominent advocates of the Salafist movement, Sheikh Mohammed Abdel Maksoud, before he separated from Al-Fadila, and joined the Al-Asala party. Maksoud, at the founding conference of the party, declared that he did not mind an alliance with other Islamic groups, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, in order to "confront the secular movement".⁷⁴ However, conflict soon took place between Al-Fadila and Al-Asala, as noted earlier, because the latter gained records of Al-Fadila party members from the founders of Al-Fadila, though this was denied by Adel Afifi, leader of Al-Asala, who accused Al-Fadila of recruiting former jihadists.⁷⁵

⁷² *Al-Gareda*, July 11, 2011, <http://www.algareda.com/2011/07>.

⁷³ Journalist Ali Abdel Al's blog, June 11, 2011, <http://ali-abdelal.maktoobblog.com/>.

⁷⁴ *Al-Youm al-Sabee*, June 7, 2011, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=429753>.

⁷⁵ "Troubles increase between the two Salafist parties of Al-Asala and Al-Fadila in the party records theft case," *Al-*

So far, an ideological character that is not far from that of the Salafist movement, especially regarding controversial issues, such as women's rights, personal status matters, and applying Sharia law dominates the political discourse of the party. Perhaps this is what drove a group of the party founders to defect and establish Al-Asala (this will be explained later). This is considered the first split in the ranks of the Salafist parties. It is an indicator that the deep transformations the Salafist movements are undergoing are not entirely different from what is happening with other political and ideological currents.

The Al-Islah Party (currently being established)

The Al-Islah party is the fourth party that emerged from the Salafist movement and represents the younger generation within it. Its founders are not known Salafist leaders. Instead, most are young men who actively participated after the revolution and who wanted to escape, in one way or another, from under the traditional Salafist umbrella, including the former Salafist parties and the Salafist Calling. It was, therefore, striking that the founders of the party confirmed that the background of the party's intellectual ideas emanates from Al-Azhar, and not from the Salafist movement, which is usually the case.⁷⁶

Also according to journalist Ali Abdel Al, the most significant part of the party's agenda is the text about *dawa al-hisba* – when a Muslim individual volunteers to interfere once others in the community commit a crime against God or against the people – is the function of promoting virtue and preventing vice in the community. The party's program emphasizes that an individual, as well as the community, can carry out this function. The initial draft of the party manifesto called for "the abolition of all restrictions to prevent citizens from practicing *dawa al-hisba* since it is considered part of the right of an ordinary citizen practicing his role in protecting the constitution, public rights, public property, national heritage, religious sanctities, or issues of high national interest. It is important that the confusion surrounding the concept of *hisba* among certain sections of intellectuals is dealt with, since they perceive it as a way to intimidate intellectuals or

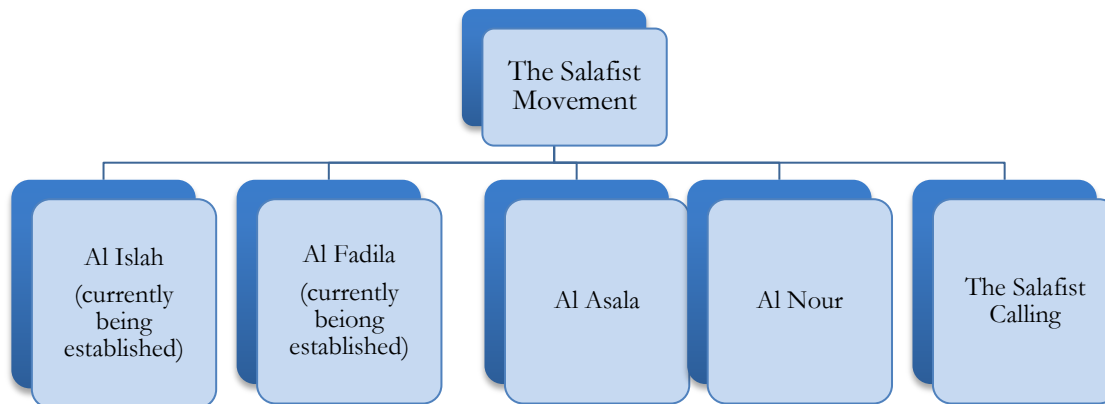
Masry al-Youm, September 2, 2011,

<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=309308&IssueID=2246>.

⁷⁶ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, September 15, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/496090>.

others in areas in which they are active or creative.”⁷⁷

Figure 1
Map of the Political Activity of Salafist Groups and Parties



Islamic Parties that Split from the Muslim Brotherhood

A number of Islamic parties split from the Muslim Brotherhood group for a number of reasons. Some of these were related to organizational problems within the group, which weakened its ability to accommodate those with different visions, while others had to do with the fact that the Brotherhood didn't show enough "revolutionary" spirit during the period that followed the revolution of January 25, resulting early on in a collision between the group's elder members and its youth wing, who favored secession rather than remaining chained to the organization's constraints. All of these parties are still in the process of being established. However, there is another explanation for the appearance of these Brotherhood splinter parties, related to the third hypothesis of this study, which considers that the continuation of political openness in Egypt will undoubtedly lead to the creation of organizational and ideological shifts in the structure of the Islamic movements, a premise that can be witnessed in most Islamic movements, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, from whose camp four parties have

⁷⁷ Ali Abdel Al, "The Salafi state as offered by the parties' agendas," *January 25 electronic newspaper*, <http://www.25jan-news.com/article.php?id=5587>.

emerged, so far, and are currently in the process of becoming established, in addition to the al-Hurriyah wa al-Adala party (the Freedom and Justice party), which is the political arm of the group.

Perhaps the most important parties that have broken away from the Brotherhood are the following:

Al-Nahda Party

The first party to emerge from under the umbrella of the Muslim Brotherhood was Al-Nahda, which was founded by Dr. Ibrahim al-Zafarani, a prominent second-generation leader of the Brotherhood who resigned from the group in early April 2011.⁷⁸ The party succeeded in attracting some of the Muslim Brotherhood experts and leaders. Perhaps the most notable of whom was Mohammed Habib, vice-president to the former leader of the Brotherhood, Mahdi Akef, who resigned in mid-July 2011, and announced that he was joining Al-Nahda after being a member of the group for nearly 35 years.⁷⁹ The party also includes Magdy Ashour, a former Muslim Brotherhood parliamentary representative who was removed from the group when he decided to take part in the parliamentary elections of 2010, thus violating the group's decision to boycott the second round.⁸⁰ Zafarani confirmed that his party is not the Muslim Brotherhood "renegade and outlaw party," and that the majority of its members are not related to the Muslim Brotherhood.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Zafarani is considered one of the most prominent reformers of the Muslim Brotherhood. He belongs to the so-called "seventies' generation" that played a great role in the re-establishment of the group after the clash with Abdel-Nasser's regime. He contributed along with others of his generation, such as Essam al-Erian, Abdel Monim Aboul Fotouh, Hilmi al-Jazzar, and Abu al-Ala Madi, in building up a university and political presence of the Brotherhood throughout the seventies and eighties. He was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood Shura Council before his resignation, and before his membership was frozen due to the criticism he made of the group's leaders after the crisis of choosing the current Brotherhood supreme guide, Mohammed Badie, in late-2009. That crisis raised a lot of controversy about internal democracy and transparency within the Muslim Brotherhood. To find out more about Zafarani's views on the group, you can read his interview with *Al-Masry al-Youm* newspaper at the following link: <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/383581>. Also read news of Zafarani's resignation from the Muslim Brotherhood and the text of his resignation at: <http://www.dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/april/2/39338>, http://www.masrawy.com/news/egypt/politics/2011/april/2/musl_brth.aspx?ref=rss, and <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=292372>.

⁷⁹ "The resignation of Mohammed Habib from the Brotherhood and his joining of Al-Nahda party," *Al-Youm al-Sabee*, July 13, 2011, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=453684>.

⁸⁰ *Al-Youm al-Sabee*, May 23, 2011, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=419080>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Zafarani points out that the party's agenda and ideas emphasize the idea of a civil state, and the citizen's freedom to run for any position, regardless of religion or race (Muslim or Christian, male or female). In doing so, he is, in an indirect way, criticizing the Muslim Brotherhood's attitude toward Christians and women. He also demands that the maximum period of leadership in all positions and institutions must not exceed two terms, that each term must not exceed five years, and that selection must be done through direct free elections.⁸²

It was stated in the party's agenda, parts of which were published in *Al-Masry al-Youm* newspaper, that it seeks to "build a democratic sovereign state where Egyptians live in freedom, by building a state of institutions that can choose its ruler and officials, and can hold them accountable in a climate of freedom, democracy, justice and equality. Furthermore, citizenship is a genuine principle where all citizens are equal in both rights and duties."⁸³ Therefore, the agenda itself confirmed that the nation is the source of authority, and that the state's religion is Islam, and that Sharia is the main source of legislation, while recognizing the right of other religions to practice their religious rituals freely.

The party's political structure, according to Al-Nahda, sees that a democratic, presidential, and parliamentary system is the appropriate choice for Egypt because it gives specific powers to the president while avoiding the weakening of the government in cases where the parties are in conflict with the parliamentary system. The party's economic policy recognizes the need to develop legislation to prevent corruption, monopoly, and the theft of public money. It also emphasizes the need to build strong systems (industrial, agricultural, commercial, touristic, administrative, and financial), while focusing on the comparative advantages citizens in each of these fields enjoy. In agriculture, the party insists on the need to educate and train farmers in modern farming methods, and to secure Egypt's quota of Nile water to ensure that they will be enough for future needs. In industry, it believes that enormous development hinges on several basic elements: looking after the infrastructure provided by the state, as well as research and development centers, giving room to the private sector without compromising the public sector, and looking after projects that encourage production

⁸² "Dissidents from the Muslim Brotherhood: the multiplicity of parties splitting from the Brotherhood eliminates religious slogans," <http://www.hoqook.com/index.php/2011-04-18-10-46-03/11896-2011-06-26-12-30-02>.

⁸³ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, issue 2578, July 5, 2011.

instead of consumption.⁸⁴

Al-Nahda attaches particular importance to women and their role in the renaissance of the country. It confirms that women are full and equal partners in terms of citizenship, legal status, political rights, and financial eligibility. It also sees the necessity for women to hold office in all aspects of life, whether political or administrative, and that regulations and laws should be passed that allow women to participate in different fields. It also emphasizes the role of young people in creating a new society, and calls for their greater involvement in leadership and administration and in the labor market in general.⁸⁵

As was expected, Al-Nahda entered into several ideological and media clashes with the Muslim Brotherhood due to their differing political viewpoints. Zafarani sharply criticized the Brotherhood and Al-Hurriyah wa al-Adala because neither is independent of the other. He also strongly criticized many of the political attitudes of the Brotherhood.⁸⁶

Al-Riyada Party

As is the case with Al-Nahda, the founders of the Al-Riyada party are some of the most prominent leaders of the middle generation within the Muslim Brotherhood, including those who were considered reformists in the group, such as Khalid Daoud, a Brotherhood member who is a prominent businessman, as well as those who played a significant role during the crisis in choosing the present supreme guide of the Brotherhood, Mohammed Badie, in late 2009. The team that founded the party also includes the former Brotherhood leader, Haytham Abu Khalil, known for his harsh criticism of the Brotherhood before resigning at the end of March 2011.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ To learn more, review the party's agenda at the following link:

<http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=302713&IssueID=2187>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Zafarani's interview with *Al-Masry al-Youm*.

⁸⁷ Abu Khalil, in his explanation of his decision to resign, mentioned that it was the result of what he called a "secret meeting" between the Brotherhood and Major General Omar Suleiman, who took over the post of vice president, and aimed to abort the revolution, according to Abu Khalil. However, the fact is that Abu Khalil's relationship with the Brotherhood has been strained over the last two years because of his objections to the internal situation in the group, and his repeated calls to bring about real reforms. This caused many problems with the leaders of the group. See Haytham Abu Khalil's statements:

http://www.masrawy.com/news/egypt/politics/2011/march/31/mus_brth.aspx.

In its political vision the party seems more advanced than the Muslim Brotherhood, which is why Khalid Daoud described it as a “Center Left party,” as it completely separates political and preaching activity.⁸⁸ Haytham Abu Khalil pointed out that Al-Riyada is a civil party, “seeking to return the Egyptian spirit to political life after the revolution of January 25.”⁸⁹

According to Daoud, there are considerable differences between his party and Al-Huriyah wa al-Adala of the Muslim Brotherhood, which he believes has put the source of authority in a position of uncertainty because it states in the first paragraph of its agenda that “the principles of Sharia are the main source of legislation,” when the Egyptian constitution has resolved this issue, and there is no need to go over it further. Daoud also rejects the attitude of the Brotherhood and its party toward the issue of women and Copts.⁹⁰

It seems that the party has been struggling to gain the minimum number of members required by the new law governing political parties, which states that a party must have 5,000 members in order to obtain a legal license. This might explain what has been published about the leaders of the party entering into negotiations to merge with the Misr al-Mustaqbal (The Future Egypt) party, which the preacher Amr Khaled seeks to establish, possibly forming a single party under the suggested name Al-Riyada – Misr al-Mustaqbal.⁹¹ Al-Riyada did, in fact, merge with Masr al-Mustaqbal, publicly announcing their merger on September 24, 2011.

Figure 2

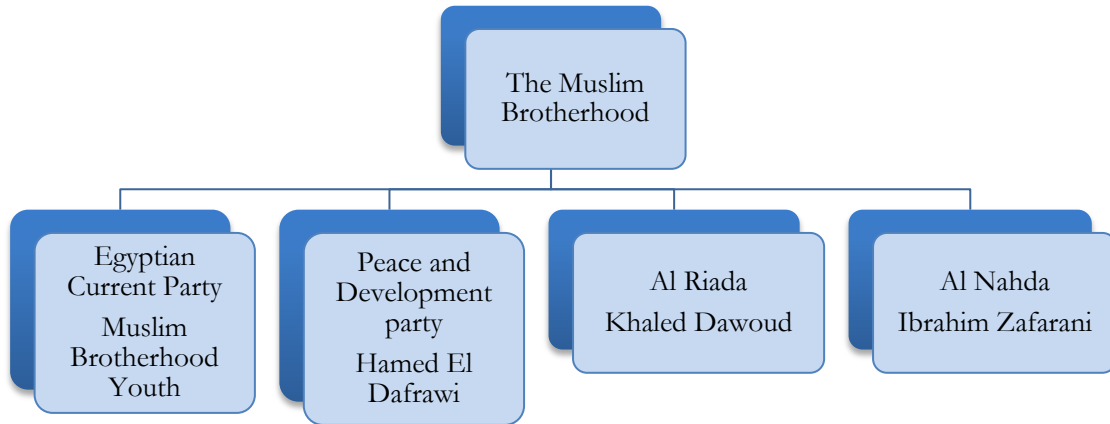
Islamic parties that split from the Muslim Brotherhood

⁸⁸ Amira Howeidi, “Will the Brotherhood’s pact fall apart?,” Lebanese *As Safir*, issue 11926, July 2, 2011.

⁸⁹ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, September 25, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/471439>.

⁹⁰ *Al-Safir*, July 2, 2011.

⁹¹ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, September 4, 2011.



The Peace and Development Party (currently being established)⁹²

The Peace and Development Party is the third party to come from under the mantle of the Muslim Brotherhood and is currently seeking to obtain a legal license. The call for its establishment came from Hamed al-Dafrawi, the leader who defected from the Brotherhood after playing an integral part in the counseling office crisis in 2009. Along with Khalid Daoud and Ibrahim al-Zafarani, he formed what was known as the Muslim Brotherhood Opposition Front.⁹³

El Dafrawi sought to establish this party because he fell out with the Brotherhood, whose leadership did not agree with him after the revolution, like the rest of the dissident leaders. El Dafrawi introduces his party as a “national, social party that calls for the unity of the Nile Valley, the Arab and the Muslim worlds”. There are no obvious features to the party’s political agenda, though its focus is on achieving social justice among the various Egyptian sects.⁹⁴

⁹² There are many names for this party, including “Al-Salam wa al-Tanmiah Movement” party, and “Mujtama al-Salam Movement,” as well as “Al-Islah wa al-Tanmiah” party, but we have adopted the party’s name on its page on the social networking site (Facebook) at: <http://www.facebook.com/>

⁹³ Hamed al-Dafrawi belongs to the seventies generation, those who revived the Muslim Brotherhood in Egyptian universities. He is considered one of the reformists in the Brotherhood, even though he was the most daring and critical in calling for reform. Along with Ibrahim al-Zafarani, Khalid Daoud, and Haitham Abu Zeid, he formed the so-called Muslim Brotherhood opposition front. He made a striking objection, challenging the election results of the General Guidance Office of the Brotherhood held in late 2009. To read the text of this objection, see the following link: <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=233284&IssueID=1590>.

⁹⁴ Review the party page on the social networking site Facebook.

The Egyptian Current Party

This party is one of the most prominent attempts at defection from the Muslim Brotherhood, not only for its seriousness and visibility in politics and media compared to other Muslim Brotherhood parties, but also because of the nature of its founders and supporters. The party founders are a group of Muslim Brotherhood youth, who played a leading role in the revolution of January 25. This group represented the Brotherhood in the "Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution," which is the most important coalition to come out of the Egyptian revolution. Among the prominent leaders of this party are: Islam Lutfi, Mohammed al-Kassas, Ahmed Abdel Gawad, Sameh al-Barqy, Musab al-Jamal, and Hany Mahmoud, in addition to many other young Muslim Brotherhood members.

The establishment of the party came as a reaction to the way the Brotherhood dealt with the young people who got involved with the events of the revolution at the beginning. They felt that the Brotherhood did not appreciate the role they played during the revolution; additionally, the Brotherhood was accusing them of abandoning the Brotherhood's decisions and stepping out of line.⁹⁵ The establishment of this party was

⁹⁵ The relationship between the Brotherhood and many of the young reformists has been characterized by a lot of ups and downs over the past three years. The gap between the Brotherhood and these young people increased after the revolution. In spite of the commitment of the Muslim Brotherhood's youth to the group's decisions and representing it within the Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution, the Brotherhood was unable to absorb the youth organizationally and politically, causing this schism. We believe that the basic dispute between these parties involved three things: first, the Muslim Brotherhood youth believed that the group did not appreciate their efforts enough in the post-revolutionary stage, especially since they had preserved the Brotherhood's reputation by deciding to participate in the revolution of January 25. For example, none of these young people gained a position in the Brotherhood's regulatory framework. Second, the group failed to make internal reforms often demanded by the youth, which became obvious at a conference held by young people in April 2011, where they demanded some regulatory and administrative reforms and nobody listened to them. Third, the Brotherhood's harsh attitude toward any of the young members joining new parties, especially since the Al-Hurriyah wa al-Adala party had failed to absorb these young people. This pushed them to seek external regulatory and political frameworks. To learn more about the phenomenon of reformer youth within the Muslim Brotherhood, please review this study:

<http://www.arabinsight.org/aiarticles/186.pdf>.

To learn more about the behind the scenes participation of the Muslim Brotherhood youth in the revolution of January 25, and how it affected the Brotherhood's decision to participate in the revolution organizationally, see:

<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/323286>.

To learn more about the highlights of the Brotherhood Youth Congress, please check the link:

<http://www.dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/april/1/39276>.

announced on June 22, 2011, after the Brotherhood's decision to expel a number of its younger members on the basis that they did not show commitment to their decision to ban participation in the activities of any other parties. The young people however, attributed their decision to establish a separate party to the inability of Al-Hurriyah wa al-Adala Party to reach out to them and to the same group's insistence on combining preaching with political activity, which the younger members rejected.⁹⁶

Islam Lutfi, spokesperson for the party founders, described the Egyptian Current Party as a civil, democratic party that stands in the middle between the different movements. It is closer to the liberal trend, which applies the criteria of social justice, and is proud of its Arab and Islamic identity, and of geographically belonging to Africa.⁹⁷ Lutfi confirmed that the door to join the party was open to all, and included a large number of the youth activists from the revolution of January 25, whether they are part of coalitions and alliances, or independent. The party succeeded in attracting some non-Muslim youth leaders as well, such as the activists Asma Mahfouz and Abdul Rahman Faris.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ "Muslim Brotherhood Youth Party established The Egyptian Current party, and the Brotherhood reacts by dismissing them," *Al-Youm al-Sabee*, June 22, 2011, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=439866>. For example, Mohammed al-Kassas, the most prominent of the young faces in the Muslim Brotherhood, feels that the reason many young Brotherhood members did not join the Al-Hurriyah wa al-Adala party was because they didn't feel the party was really independent from the Brotherhood. Islam Lutfi has pointed out that the Brotherhood divided into two groups: the first established a politically active group, and the second continued its preaching activity. Even though he belongs to the Brotherhood because it is a religious movement for reform, he refuses to join its political wing. See al-Kassas and Lutfi's remarks in *Al-Masry al-Youm* at: <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/470329>.

⁹⁷ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, June 21, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/470329>.

⁹⁸ Islam Lutfi indicates that the decision to establish the party was made just after Mubarak stepped down, when he held several meetings with the Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution and the Muslim Brotherhood among others, in order to reach common ground for the newly born party. Lutfi explains that the significance of the name "Egyptian Current" is that it is a practical representation of the ideas of the scholar Tariq al-Bishri, who spoke of the vast majority of Egyptians who are not politicized, or are known as the silent majority. Lutfi hopes his party will be the one that can represent this group. For more information, see Lutfi's interview in the Egyptian *Al-Akhbar* newspaper on June 25, 2011 at: <http://www.akhbarelyom.org.eg/issue/detailze.asp?field=news&id=41684>.

However, Lutfi's decision to establish the party in June came after a severe crisis with the Brotherhood's leader, and after his remarks to one of the satellite channels about the decision of Mohammed Badie, the Brotherhood's supreme guide, to withdraw from what is known as the "Al-Jamal Battle" on February 2, 2011. Lutfi denied this and considered that his remarks had been misinterpreted. To find out more about this issue, please check the website of *Al-Youm al-Sabee*: <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=426721>, as well as Lutfi's statements to *Islam Online*: <http://www.onislam.net/arabic/newsanalysis/special-folders-pages/new-egypt/tahrir-square/131012-2011-06-02-15-54-45.html>.

The Muslim Brotherhood's reaction to the establishment of the Egyptian Current Party was to cancel and freeze the membership of nearly 4,000 members, mostly young people, because they had joined the party. The most significant of those frozen out: Islam Lutfi, Ahmed Abdel Gawad, Mohammed al-Kassas, and Ahmed Nazili, the son of Sayed Nazili, who is in charge of the Brotherhood's administrative office in Giza.⁹⁹

The founding members indicated that the purpose of establishing the party was to "look after citizens' basic needs, adopt values of freedom, implement the democratic alternating of power, empower civil society, and apply standards of social justice in various aspects of life. It is also proud of its Arab and Islamic identity, as well as of its African one, as these are an important facet of their movements and part of their identity and background."¹⁰⁰ According to the party's agenda, found on its page on the social networking site Facebook, it seeks to promote the gains made by the revolution and to follow up on the implementation of the revolution's demands. It also seeks to be part of a true democratic life, and to enable the poor and the marginalized to gain their rights.¹⁰¹ The party also emphasizes its distance from ideological categorizing. According to Lutfi, this is a party that "rejects stereotypes, and gives priority to programs providing practical and innovative solutions, surpassing ideological problems. The divisions of liberalism versus socialism, and Islamic versus secular do not concern us."¹⁰²

Regardless of the new parties' success in forming strong, coherent political entities, it remains difficult to see them as serious competitors to the Brotherhood. These parties seek to create an organizational, political, and perhaps ideological break with the "mother" group because they are still faced with the challenge of self-assertion, and the ability to present a model for an Islamic party that represents a quantum leap in the direction of Islamic movements.

If the effects of the splitting off of these parties from the group do not seem drastic at

⁹⁹ To learn more about the decision to dismiss and isolate the youth of the Muslim Brotherhood, see: *Al-Masry al-Youm*: <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/477432> and <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/323286>.

¹⁰⁰ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, June 22, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/470528>.

¹⁰¹ To learn more about the party's agenda, refer to its Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/TMParty>.

¹⁰² Lutfi's interview with *Al-Akhbar*, op cit.

this point, the Brotherhood and others will see that the persistence of political openness and the inability of the Brotherhood to adopt reforms that are visionary, or that conflict with those of the Brotherhood leadership, will make joining the Brotherhood less attractive. Some Brotherhood leaders have announced the possibility of Al-Hurriyah wa al-Adala coordinating with these parties, in a similar way to that which has occurred with liberal and secular parties. This could be interpreted by some as a smart move on the part of the Brotherhood to silence its critics.¹⁰³

Independent Islamic Parties

There are a number of independent, Islamic parties with religious backgrounds that use this background as a valuable political framework, but did not come out from the mantle of Islamic groups and organizations, such as the Brotherhood, the Salafists, or radical movements that have become more moderate. Perhaps the most important of these parties are:

Al-Islah wa al-Nahda Party (Reform and Renaissance Party)

The Reform and Renaissance party is one of the first independent Islamic parties that received legal standing in July 2011. It presents itself as a political, social party that seeks to preserve the nation's Islamic cultural identity. The founders insist that they are not organizationally or ideologically related to any of the current Islamic movements and groups. The party is a reflection of the phenomena of independent Islamists that have grown and developed over the past decade. Its most prominent representatives are new preachers, such as Amr Khaled, Mustafa Hosni, and Moez Masoud. It is also a manifestation of a new institutionalized social current that has grown under the wing of the emerging new preachers, using social media as a tool to spread its message, in addition to focusing on the development of individuals in order to enable them socially and politically. It is an experiment closer to the Turkish Fethullah Gulen's movement, which uses social and educational action to achieve its objectives.

It seems that the founders of the party have been engaged in domestic and social action for a while, something that has allowed them to achieve a significant presence in some social circles and among young people, and enabled them to establish the party

¹⁰³ "The Al-Hurriyah wa al-Adala party declares its readiness to cooperate with the Brotherhood dissident parties," *Al-Masry al-Youm*, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/474381>.

within a few weeks. This position is reflected in the statements of the party leader, Hisham Mustafa, who indicates that his party is closer to the “middle ground” between social and political activities;¹⁰⁴ additionally, this is what the party’s vision, posted on its website, refers to, stating that Al-Islah wa al-Nahda is “the ripe fruit of a seed that we worked hard to plant, working tirelessly for more than ten years in social work, engaging in community activities, developing significant teams in various fields, and overcoming many difficulties and constraints that could have been enough to nip the social reform project in the bud.”¹⁰⁵ Perhaps many young people have joined the party as a result of the role it has played over the past years with the middle class.

The party’s agenda highlights a commitment to defend the Egyptian Islamic cultural identity, and to protect freedom, respect human rights, support citizenship, and not discriminate between citizens on a religious, ethnic or sectarian basis. It also calls for the establishing of a new social contract between the state and its citizens.¹⁰⁶

Al-Tawheed al-Arabi Party (Arab Unification Party)

The call to establish this party came from some Islamic leaders who had previously been members of the Islamic Labor party, whose activity was frozen during the late 1990s. These leaders were: Mahfouz Azzam, former Labor Party leader, Salah Abdel Metaal, and Mohammad al-Damati.

The party adopts an Islamic ideology that stretches beyond the borders of Egypt to include the rest of the Arab and Islamic countries. According to Abdel Al’s statement, the main purpose of the party is to “change and cleanse the country from external and internal colonialism.”¹⁰⁷

The party’s agenda does not differ much from the programs of other parties with Islamic backgrounds, all of whom consider Islamic identity as an integral pillar for rebuilding Egypt after the revolution. The party, however, has emphasized in the prologue

¹⁰⁴ Refer to an interview with the leader of Al-Islah wa al-Nahda on Al Jazeera’s program “Egypt Live,” at: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=7FVO514VMnY>.

¹⁰⁵ Refer to the website of the Al-Islah wa al-Nahda party: http://eslahnahda.org/eslah/?page_id=119.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *Al-Dostoor al-Asli* website, June 3, 2011, <http://www.dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/june/3/44056>.

to its program, that it disagrees with secular movements, describing them as the “atheist” trends, and opposing them because they “seek to build an Egypt that is separated from its faith, and replace it with a strategy that follows the materialistic Western model.”¹⁰⁸ In this sense, the party calls for a cultural renaissance project that goes beyond Egypt and the Islamic world, including the whole world.

The party sees *Shura* as the basis for any ruling political system: “any ruling not based on *Shura* is essentially tyrannical and has no legitimacy.”¹⁰⁹ It believes that the “parliamentary” model is the best one to apply, given the condition that it “provides a free and fair opportunity for citizens to compete for parliamentary representation, in the context of raising political awareness among citizens, and imposing a climate far from the influence of the supremacy of capital and media disinformation, a climate that is not bound by racism, tribalism, sectarianism or factionalism.”¹¹⁰ The party calls for respecting political pluralism, the devolution of power in accordance with standards prescribed by the constitution, the separation of authorities, and full equality between Muslims and Christians.

The party calls for an active foreign policy for Egypt after the revolution, which aims to restore Egypt’s leading role in the Arab world. Therefore, the party openly calls for the removal of the Camp David Accords because it “represents an obstacle in the way of Egypt’s entrusted role, and because the enemy is violating this agreement in a manner that enables us to freeze it, along with all forms of normalization, and any commercial or economic agreements, or any relation in any form.”¹¹¹

Al-Hadara Party

The party was founded in early October 2011, led by a young engineer, Hatem Azzam, and represents a young Muslim generation that is not associated with Islamic organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, or more moderate jihadist

¹⁰⁸ To review to the party’s agenda, visit the party’s official site on the link: http://altwhedalarby.com/?page_id=2.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

movements. It is the closest to the active social movements that moved toward political involvement after the revolution, and is similar in its aims to Al-Islah wa al-Nahda, referred to previously. Azzam sees Al-Hadara as “a modern middle party with an Islamic, Egyptian identity that emerged from the womb of the revolution of January 25.”¹¹² He indicated that the party seeks to be a middle party, apart from political tension, to represent the mainstream in Egypt, which tends to prefer moderation and reject extremism.¹¹³

The agenda of the party is to endorse full equality among all Egyptians, regardless of religion, race, or gender. Therefore, it calls for the need to give all Egyptians the right to run for all government positions, including the presidency, with no distinction to be made between man or woman, nor Muslim or Christian, as long as the framework is national partnership. Through this, the civil, modern and democratic state can be built, raising the values of the Islamic, Egyptian civilization, which is based on tolerance, according to the statements of the party leader.¹¹⁴

The basic function of the party, as its name says and its agenda supports, is to “bring about a modern Egyptian civilization, and to find solutions to the Egyptian people’s daily problems that are based on scientific methods, the empowerment of the Egyptian individual, activating civil society, and creating consensus among the community. Faith in God is a driving force that should be invested as an energy to build with.”¹¹⁵

In terms of foreign policy, the party seeks to make Egypt a leading country among its Arab, Muslim, and African neighbors. The issues that take priority in the party’s discussion of its foreign policy are the Palestinian cause, the problem of resources of the Nile, and regaining Egypt’s leading role in the region.

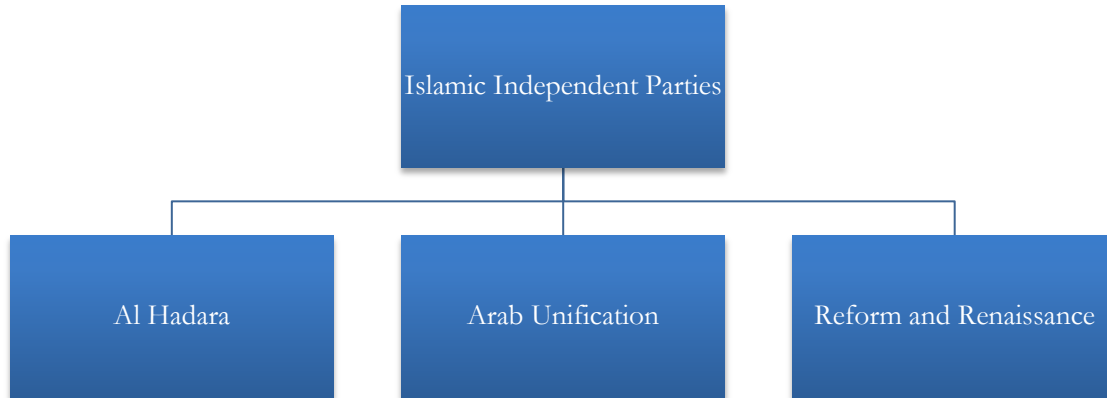
Figure 3 **Islamic independent parties**

¹¹² *Al-Jareedah* website, October 3, 2011, <http://www.algareda.com/2011/10/>.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.



Sectarian Religious Parties

The sectarian religious parties in Egypt are those that came from under the mantle of religious groups that had never practiced politics, and whose activities were confined to the spiritual and religious dimensions, such as the Sufis and Shiites. These have appeared as a reaction to the other religious and sectarian movements with whom they have intellectual and ideological differences, such as the Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood.¹¹⁶ It is helpful to look to parties belonging to Sufi and Shiite currents:

Al-Tahrir al-Sufi Party (Sufi Liberation Party)

Egypt has a large Sufi presence, including different denominations of the order, reaching, according to some estimates, about 75 Sufi orders and movements. Even though the Sufis were never directly involved in political action, the Mubarak regime employed them in order to achieve a balance of power with the other religious groups. The ruling party used to pressure Sufi sheikhs to support the party at all electoral events, which led to a degree of polarization and discord within the Sufi movement over the last two years, and amounted to a division within the hierarchy of the Sufi orders.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Dr. Ammar Ali Hassan indicates that the primary motive behind the entry of Sufism into the field of politics is their fear of Islamic forces controlling the public sphere. He confirms that the Sufis would not have established a political party if the Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood hadn't established their political parties, and didn't seek to marginalize other powers. To learn more see: Ammar Ali Hassan, "The political role of the Sufi Orders in Egypt after the revolution of January 25," *Al-Jazeera Center for Studies*, July 30, 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/21FA3618-C1B2-4D1B-82E6-00699D58A650.htm>.

¹¹⁷ To learn more about Sufi movements in Egypt, please review: Hassan, 2009.

The primary results of this division are represented in the appearance of what has become known as the "Sufi Reform Front" (Jabhat al-Islah al-Sufi), which is led by Sheikh Mohamed Alaa Abul Azayem of the Azeemia Sufi Order. He had entered into, and is still in, a bitter struggle against Sheikh Abdul Hadi El Qasabi, who was appointed by the Mubarak regime as the "Chief Elder of the Sufi Order" in Egypt, against the wishes of the Supreme Sufi Council, which includes members from all Sufi orders. It is customary to select the eldest sheikh among the members to become the chief elder but that was not allowed to occur.¹¹⁸

The idea of establishing a political party for Sufis in Egypt did not emerge after the January 25 revolution, but had started earlier when Sheikh Mohammed Abdul Majeed Sharnoubi, general sheikh for the Al-Sharnoubiya and Al-Borhamiya Orders, called for the establishment of a party to represent Sufi orders that would not limited to religious goals, but would also have political, social, and cultural objectives, and bring together Muslims and Christians. He suggested making Sheikh Mohamed Alaa Abul Azayem the representative of the party founders. Azayem refused, not only fearing the suppression of the Mubarak regime, but also the possible clashes with the Muslim Brotherhood and other religious movements.¹¹⁹

After January 25, the idea of establishing a political party to represent the Sufi order emerged. Eighteen Sufi orders and movements expressed their desire to create a political entity that represented their demands after the revolution.¹²⁰ The calls to establish a party increased as the relationship between Sufis and Salafists became more strained, eventually reaching an unprecedented level of tension and the public exchange of accusations. First, Azayem announced the establishment of the "Social Forgiveness" party, as an effort to defuse tension with the Salafists, and to calm the fears of the Copts over the rise of religious movements in Egypt.¹²¹ Not long after that, the establishment of the "Egyptian Liberation Party" (Al-Tahrir al-Masri party) was agreed, led by Azayem and Ibrahim Zahran. This party appeared in early September

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ *Al-Youm al-Sabee*, May 2, 2011 entry, <http://youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=403643>.

¹²⁰ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, March 3, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/338369>.

¹²¹ "Sufi elders declare the establishment of the Social Forgiveness party," *Al-Masry al-Youm*, February 17, 2011, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/322049>.

2011.¹²²

Azayem and Zahran do not hide the reasons behind their forceful establishment of a political party. Their fear of the expansion of the Salafist movement in the public sphere increased, and it reached its pinnacle after the supporters of the Salafists organized their march of millions in Tahrir Square, in late July 2011, which Azayem entitled, "Kandahar Friday".¹²³

Azayem and Zahran confirm that the nature of the party is that of a secular reform party, "which calls for a civil state, and rejects all forms of violence, terrorism and extremism in thought. It believes in citizenship, equality and respect for human rights and public and religious freedoms, along with adherence to the principles of Islamic Sharia law, as the main source of legislation. It also believes in the spiritual values of the three monotheistic religions and the right of their followers to the special laws of personal status."¹²⁴ Although about half of the party's members belong to the Sufi order, Zahran refuses to describe the Liberation Party as being a Sufi party. He confirms that his party is open to all Egyptians, regardless of their religion or political and ideological beliefs.¹²⁵

Shiite Al-Wihda wa al-Tahrir Party (the Shiite Unity and Freedom Party)

As is the case with the rest of the parties with a religious background, the Shiites in Egypt have sought to establish a political party that represents their interests and their intellectual orientation. The position of Shiites in Egypt is considered a thorny issue, partly due to the absence of official estimates regarding the numbers of Egyptian Shiites, and partly due to the result of the conflict between the Mubarak regime and the Shiites, which is a result of the regional, and historical, conflict with Iran and

¹²² "Party Affairs agree on the Sufi Egyptian Liberation," *Al-Mashhad*, September 4, 2011, link:

¹²³ *Al-Youm al-Sabee*, August 8, 2011, <http://www.al-mashhad.com/>.

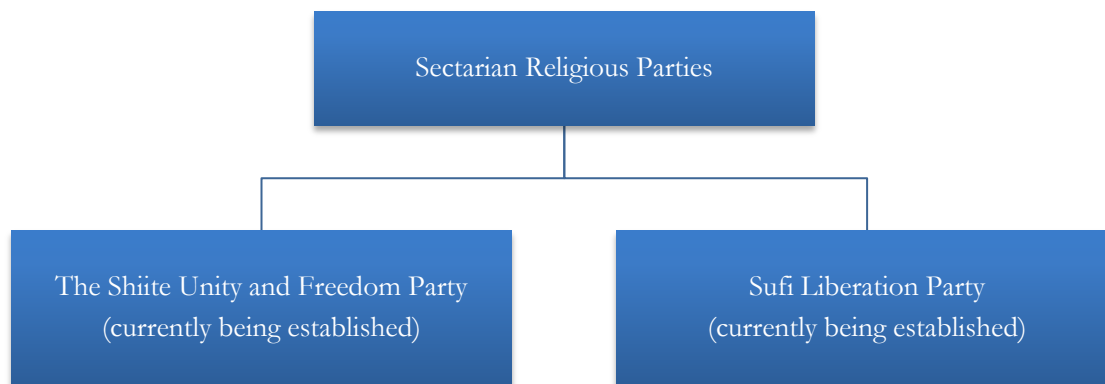
¹²⁴ *Rose al-Youssef* magazine, issue 4339, August 6, 2011.

¹²⁵ Egyptian Liberation Party, "We are not a Sufi party," *Islam Online*, September 7, 2011 entry, <http://www.onislam.net/arabic/newsanalysis/special-folders-pages/new-egypt/egypt-after-the-january-25/134294-2011-09-07-12-21-23.html>.

Hezbollah.¹²⁶ Similar to what happened with the Sufis, the idea of creating a Shiite political party was born a few years ago, when a number of Shiites in Egypt called for setting up the "Al-Ghadeer" party. This call received a remarkable degree of rejection from some Shia activists, like Ahmed Rasim al-Nafis, who denounced the idea from both the sectarian and religious standpoints.¹²⁷ Ironically, al-Nafis is the founders' representative to the new Shiite party, Unity and Freedom, after the revolution. He submitted its establishing papers to the party committee in early September 2011.¹²⁸

Nafis points out that his party is not limited to Shiites, and that it includes Copts and Muslims from all segments of society. He emphasizes that his party is civil, and believes in freedom, equality, a secular state, and freedom of faith. In foreign policy, the party seeks, according to Nafis, to remove American and Israeli hegemony in the Arab Region.¹²⁹

Figure 4



¹²⁶ To learn more about this subject, please check the following link:

<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/47A486D5-DBD1-446E-A6C1-F4AEE3580299.htm>.

¹²⁷ Dr. Ahmed Nafis, "Egypt's Shiites renew their rejection to create a political party that carries their name," personal website, March 12, 2011, <http://www.elnafis.net/%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1/4494.html>.

¹²⁸ "Shiite activist submits papers for the establishment of the 'Al-Tahrir' Party," *Al-Dostor al-Asli* newspaper, October 24, 2011, <http://www.dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/october/24/59152>.

¹²⁹ Dr. Ahmed Rasim al-Nafis: "We are a civil party that believes in the civil state, and in equality and freedom of faith," *Al-Ahram*, September 23, 2011, <http://digital.ahram.org.eg/Policy.aspx?Serial=647461>.

The motive behind the establishment of the Unity and Freedom party is hard to ignore. It is a reaction to the Salafist movements that take a tough stand against Shiites, which are reflected former president of Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah, Sheikh Jamal al-Marakbi's statements, when he warned against the establishment of a Shiite political party, saying: "We will call on people to fight the supporters of this current, and we will not allow them to establish a party."¹³⁰

Conclusions and Results

Through this study, a number of results can be deduced regarding the role of religion in the Egyptian public sphere after the revolution of January 25, and the future of the Islamic condition in Egypt. The massive presence of religion in its various forms, whether it is an ideological, identity, or a political, organizational presence, is an expected one for two reasons: first, this presence has never strayed far from the political and intellectual scene in Egypt throughout the past three decades, although the ruling regime tried to nationalize this role in order to serve its interests and support its legitimacy. Therefore, it is more accurate to talk about a change in the shape of this presence, and the appearance of its manifestations more clearly than before the revolution. Second, religion in the public sphere was employed through politics and the media in order to make political and social gains between the various parties and powers whose intellectual and ideological rhetoric was based on a religious background. In other words, there is a growing tendency for movements to exploit religion in the public sphere in order to achieve "social power" that will bring them political and popular rewards. This means they will achieve "legitimacy" by intensifying the use of religious discourse in the public sphere.

As for the current and future map of Islamic movements in Egypt, it seems clear that the state of sudden political openness that followed the fall of the Mubarak regime has drawn these movements, which suffered repression and severe exclusion over the past three decades, to seek legal status that would allow them, on the one hand, to enter the public sphere legally, and on the other would give them a role in determining the form of a new political system in Egypt. However, these movements and currents have seen an unprecedented amount of political and organizational division because of

¹³⁰ "A Salafist leader is warning against establishing a Shiite party in Egypt, and he vows to fight it," *Al-Masry al-Youm*, issue 2537, May 25, 2011.

internal, political, or intellectual disagreements, in addition to disagreements resulting from a generational conflict. It is expected that as political openness increases, and Egypt moves toward building a democratic, pluralistic system, these schisms and divisions will increase.

In general, five preliminary findings about the Islamic scene in Egypt and its future can be drawn:

First, the absence of a religious movement or group dominating the public sphere contrasts the past three decades, where the Muslim Brotherhood dominated. There has been a disintegration and dispersal of the Islamic bloc between different currents, movements, and parties. The chances of conflict and disagreement between these currents are more likely than cooperation and alliance in the long term.

Second, a marked shift has taken place across the ideology of some Islamic currents, movements, and parties. They have moved from the ideological peripheries to the political center, which shows that there is the possibility to rationalize the political and intellectual discourse of these currents and guide them. Therefore, the new Islamic parties are expected to focus on providing real political and economic programs and move away from slogans and empty rhetoric.

Third, any attempt to marginalize or exclude the new Islamic currents and parties will be doomed to failure, not only because these movements have a strong impact politically and socially, but also because of the legitimacy they gained after the revolution, which makes it difficult to isolate them without entering into violent conflict with their supporters.

Fourth, with the resumption of political openness and fluidity, the number of Islamic parties and movements is expected to increase. This means the end of the traditional form some of these movements have held, such as social or charitable associations that focus on social issues. These will turn into political powers as they seek to strengthen their presence and influence the public sphere.

Fifth, entering into an intellectual and ideological confrontation with the new religious powers and movements would have a negative impact on the political scene, and disrupt the process of democratic transformation in Egypt. This could lead to an unprecedented inflaming of religious and sectarian conflict. It is, therefore, better to

deal with these movements and parties as representing segments of society that have political aspirations and economic interests that they are working toward instilling and maintaining, like other political powers and parties.

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