MAPPING ISLAMIC ACTORS IN EGYPT

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Executive Summary

This report was created within the project 'Islamic Actors and their Discourses in the Public Domain: Islamic Preaching and the New Media', commissioned by the Project Office Islam Research Program on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It aims to be an extensive survey of Islamic actors, organizations, their discourses and activities in the Egyptian public sphere, with the purpose of providing a background and starting point for researchers and policy makers who are engaging with this sector in Egypt.

In this study we decided to use a classification of Islamic actors in accordance with their primary objectives and fields of activity. We use the following categories: official actors, social actors, political actors and intellectual actors. For each actor, the report describes their background and relation to the government (blue margin), their organizational structure and main activities (green margin), the main points in their discourse (orange margin) and their communication strategies (purple margin). We focused the description of the discourse on issues of citizenship, human rights, poverty alleviation and gender, since these are topics that are of importance to policy makers. This is followed by an extensive description of the use of New Media by these actors.

One of the major findings of this report is that Islamic actors in Egypt are not a monolithic and homogeneous group. Rather, the Islamic sector in Egypt is highly fragmented and diverse and the various actors which it comprises are in fierce competition with each other over who represents the correct interpretation of Islam and has the authority to speak in the name of Islam.

Moreover, Islamic actors hold very divergent views on issues of democracy, citizenship, human rights and gender, which makes it difficult to speak of a unified Islamic view on these issues. For example, some Islamic actors, such as Salafi groups, hold very conservative views on issues of citizenship, human rights and gender, rejecting them altogether as Western imports and as incompatible with the values and beliefs of Islam. Other Islamic actors, such as al-Azhar, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Sufis, have embraced the values of democracy, citizenship, human rights and women's rights but with qualifications, arguing that they must be enforced in accordance with the principles and the limits of the sharia as they understand them. A third group of actors, which may be dubbed as post-Islamist and which includes the New Preachers, the Independent Intellectuals and al-Wasat Party, have fully embraced the values of citizenship, human rights and equality with few reservations, arguing that the sharia, if properly and dynamically understood, is fully compatible with these values.

Another important finding of this report is that the Islamic sector in Egypt has become highly mediatized. A large number of actors such as the New Preachers, the Muslim Brotherhood and the

Salafi movements make successful use of new media to reach out to broader audiences, especially youth. However, while new media has been successfully utilized by a growing number of Islamic actors, traditional preaching methods and means of communication remain highly relevant – especially in rural areas and among the urban poor. Face to face encounters in mosques, the provision of charity and social services, the production of printed material and participation in electoral campaigns are still central to the activities of many Islamic actors. However, the introduction of new media has served to further fragment and deepen the competition between the various Islamic actors. There is now a race among these actors to establish TV channels, websites and blogs and to have a bigger presence on social networking sites.

In the conclusion, the report offers a brief outlook on the Islamic landscape in Egypt after the 2011 revolution, which resulted in profound and sometimes unexpected changes of activities, discourse and political participation of Islamic actors.

The Research Team, October 2011

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INTRODUCTION

With the decline of the secular nationalist ideologies of socialism and Arab nationalism, which dominated Egyptian public life during the 1950s and 1960s, and with the adoption of political and economic liberalization measures during the 1970s, Islamic actors and discourses began to occupy a more prominent position in the Egyptian public sphere. Since the second half of the 1970s, a large number of actors in the political, social, and economic spheres began to use Islamic symbols and references as a means to demarcate their identity and to label their activities. While some of these groups have adopted an explicitly Islamist agenda by calling for the restoration of the Islamic state and for the implementation of the sharia or Islamic law, other actors have shied away from politics and have restricted their activities to the social and religious spheres, focusing instead on religious preaching, charity, and social service provision.[1]

The growing Islamization of the Egyptian public sphere since the 1970s has taken several forms. On the individual level, a growing number of Egyptians have adopted Islamic forms of dress, such as the veil and the beard, and have demonstrated greater commitment to the observation of religious rituals, such as fasting and daily and Friday prayers. Egyptians are also spending more of their leisure time reading religious literature, and watching or listening to religious media.[2] In their daily life and interactions, Egyptians are making ever more frequent use of religious language and references. For example, the Islamic form of greeting *al-salam 'alaikum* (peace be upon you) has come to replace secular forms of greeting, such as good morning or good evening, in every day encounters. Other manifestations of the spread of the use of religious language and symbols include the use of Islamic ringtones and Islamic screen savers.

On the social level, the number of mosques, Islamic NGOs, religious groups, independent preachers, religious publications and religious media has increased significantly over the past forty years. According to recent statistics, the number of mosques and *zawiyas* in Egypt increased to 104,389 in 2008-2009, compared to 74,500 mosques and *zawiyas* in 2002.[3] Similarly, the number of religious NGOs has reached 16,829 in 2010, compared to 12,832 in 1991 – constituting over a third of all registered NGOs in Egypt.[4] According to one source, the number of religious NGOs has risen from

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[1] Guilian Denoeux, 'The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam', *Middle East Policy* 9 (2, 2002) 56-81.
[2] Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Dhia'a Rashwan (ed.), Guide to Religious Movements in the World (Cairo, 2006).
[3] Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, *Egypt in Numbers* (2009). See www.eip.org.eg.
[4] تقرير الحالة الدينية في مصر، القاهرة: مركزالاهرام للدراسات السياسية والاستراتيجية،1995.

17% of all NGOs during the 1960s to 30% of all NGOs during the Sadat period, and to 35% of all NGOs during the 1980s.[5]

Religious publications have also spread conspicuously over the past four decades. A vast number of Islamic publishing houses and bookshops have emerged and religious books, pamphlets and magazines now constitute a high proportion of all printed materials in Egypt. According to recent government statistics, out of a total of 2870 books that were published in 2007, 448 were religious books, coming in second place after works of literature. Moreover, religious books sold the third highest number of copies, only after language and applied science books.[6]

With the spread of new media, religious content and programming has expanded significantly in recent years. There are now tens of TV channels devoted fully to religious programming. In addition, religious content has expanded visibly in the mainstream media, with state and private TV channels devoting more air time to religious preachers and other religious content, such as religious drama. The phenomenon of new religious preachers, which will be discussed at length in this report, is very much a product of new religious satellite channels such as Iqraa and Alnas. The Internet has also been an important medium for the dissemination of religious contents and discourses. Religious websites, blogs, chat rooms and discussion forums have spread rapidly over the past ten years and constitute an important proportion of Egyptian and Arabic content on the World Wide Web.

Religious education has also grown rapidly in the past four decades, in both the private and public education sectors. According to official statistics, al-Azhar University has the largest number of university students in Egypt, with approximately 400,000 students. They constitute 16.8 percent of all university students in Egypt.[7] Moreover, al-Azhar schools and educational institutes have more than one million students. In the last four decades, there also emerged a large number of private Islamic schools, which place a heavy emphasis on religious content and religious education. Moreover, the public educational system has been significantly Islamized, with almost all female students in the public school system wearing the veil as part of their school uniform and with Islamists exercising greater influence over school curricula and over the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Education.[8]

In recent decades, religious discourses, practices, and symbols have penetrated public spaces which were previously considered secular or a-religious. Examples include the growing ubiquity of religious

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[5] المرجع السابق
[6] Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, *Egypt in Numbers* (2009). See www.eip.org.eg.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Linda Herrera, 'Islamization and Education in Egypt: Between Politics, Culture and the Market', in: John Esposito and Francois Burgat (eds.), *Modernizing Islam* (New Jersey, 2003).

activities in sports clubs, public transportation and work places. For example, most sports clubs now have large mosques and public spaces dedicated to prayer. Some also host famous religious preachers and offer Koran and religious lessons to children and adults. Similarly, religion has become increasingly visible in the public transportation system, with bus and taxi drivers often playing Koran recitations or religious sermons on their radio cassettes. The phenomenon of religious preaching in the public metro system, especially in the women's cars, has also become quite widespread in recent years. Finally, many work places in both the public and the private sectors now dedicate special public spaces for prayer. Employees often leave their workstations to pray together during the designated prayer times. Moreover, in many offices Koran recitations can be heard playing in the background and Korans and religious icons can be seen hanging on the walls.

On the political level, the past four decades have seen the emergence of a number of political movements that adopt an Islamic political agenda and who call for the imposition of Islamic law and the reconstitution of an Islamic state. Foremost among these movements has been the Muslim Brotherhood, which was reconstituted in the second half of the 1970s and which has since then succeeded in mobilizing support among important segments of the urban educated middle classes. And while the Brotherhood is the largest and most active Islamist movement in Egypt, other smaller parties and movements have emerged which have also adopted an Islamist agenda.

Signs of the Islamization of the political sphere have not been restricted to emergence of various Islamist parties and movements, but also to the growing Islamization of the state apparatus. Since the mid 1970s, the Egyptian state began to rely more heavily on religious laws, language and symbolisms to legitimate its authority and its policies. During the 1970s, President Anwar Sadat adopted the title of 'The Believer President' and often appeared donning a religious costume and performing religious rituals. He also sought religious legitimation from al-Azhar for some of his controversial decisions such as the peace treaty with Israel. Moreover, during the 1970s, President Sadat actively encouraged the emergence of various religious movements and organizations and allowed them to operate freely, in order to weaken his leftist opponents. The culmination of this process occurred in 1980 when Sadat amended article 2 of the Egyptian constitution, to stipulate that the sharia or Islamic Law is *the* principal source of legislation, rather than *a* principle source of legislation.[9]

Mubarak has followed a similar strategy by relying on religious symbolism to legitimate his authority while at the same time trying to curb the growing power of his Islamist challengers. The Islamization of the state apparatus has also been manifested in the Egyptian judiciary, which in recent decades

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[9] Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years* (New York, 2000).

has become more conservative and activist about the implementation of Islamic law. On a number of occasions, the judiciary favored Islamic versus secular positions on issues pertaining to family law or individual rights and freedoms.[10] More recently, Egyptian judges unanimously opposed a decision to appoint women into the judiciary, in spite of pressures from the executive branch and civil society organizations to do so.

The growing visibility of Islamic actors and symbols in the Egyptian public sphere over the past few decades has been perceived by many commentators as a threat to the secular foundations of the Egyptian state and to the principals of equal citizenship recognized in the Egyptian constitution. Some have even argued that the ascendance of Islamist forces, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, to a position of prominence within the Egyptian opposition has been the principal obstacle to democratic reform in Egypt. However, while the perception of a polarization or conflict between secular and Islamic forces in Egypt is partially true, in the sense that there are groups within the state and within civil society who perceive Islamic revivalism as a threat to the principals of individual liberty and equal citizenship enshrined in the Egyptian constitution. This perceived dichotomy between Islamic and secular actors competing for the hearts and minds of Egyptians masks a more complex reality. For while many observers speak of a parallel Islamic sector in Egypt – consisting of a host of independent mosques, NGOs, social and political movements, independent preachers and intellectuals, publishing houses and media outlets – as constituting a coherent and self-reinforcing sector with each of its components trying to promote a shared Islamic agenda, in reality Islamic actors in Egypt are an extremely diverse and internally differentiated group.[11]

Islamic actors, though they might share a common reference in that they all use Islamic texts, symbols and history as their source of inspiration or point of departure, do not seem to have a shared vision or a common agenda. As this mapping survey will seek to demonstrate, Islamic actors do not share a common vision regarding such basic issues as equal citizenship and human rights. The views of Islamic actors on these issues range from the very liberal to the very conservative. Some actors, such as critical and Wasatiya intellectuals and al-Wasat party activists, embracing a more progressive conception of citizenship and human rights, while other actors, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Azhar, embrace a qualified conception of citizenship and human rights. A third group, such as the Salafi movements, reject the notion of equal citizenship and human rights altogether.

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[10] Baudouin Dupret, 'A Return to the Shariah? Egyptian Judges and Referring to Islam', in: John Esposito and Francois Burgat (eds.), *Modernizing Islam* (New Jersey, 2003).
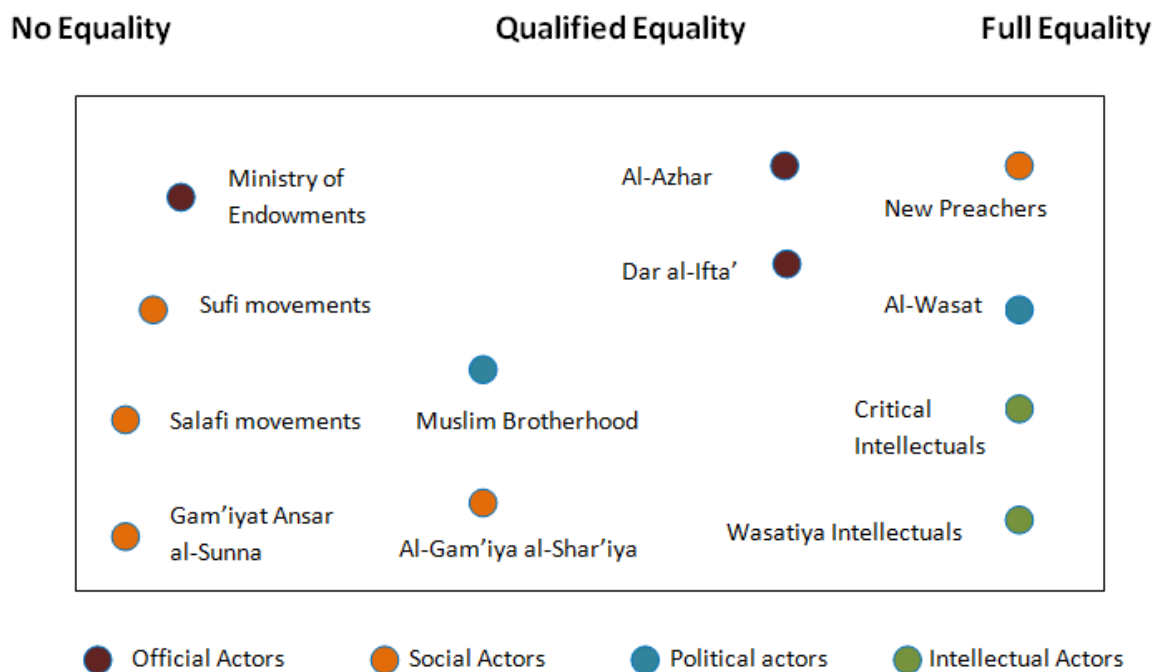[11] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam* (New York, 2002).

No Equality **Qualified Equality** **Full Equality**

Ministry of Endowments

Al-Azhar

New Preachers

Dar al-Ifta'

Al-Wasat

Sufi movements

Muslim Brotherhood

Salafi movements

Critical Intellectuals

Gam'iyat Ansar al-Sunna

Al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya

Wasatiya Intellectuals

● Official Actors   ● Social Actors   ● Political actors   ● Intellectual Actors

Figure 1.   **Position on citizenship of different Islamic actors**

Moreover, Islamic actors differ in their vision of the proper relationship between religion and politics. Some actors, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and some Salafi groups, promote varying conceptions of an Islamic state. Others, such as al-Azhar and Sufi groups, defend the existing semi-secular order. A third group, such as some Islamic NGOs and New Preachers, promote a civic conception of Islam that focuses on individual piety and social service.

Similarly, Islamic actors have divergent views on economic issues and on how best to address questions of poverty alleviation and economic development. Some Islamic actors, such as the Salafi movements, the Sufi movements, the Ministry of Endowments and traditional Islamic NGOs, adopt a charity centered approach to poverty alleviation. Their activities center on the provision of needed social services to the poor and the needy. These actors believe that through ending *riba* (usury) and through the use of *zakat* and religious endowments the needs of the poor may be adequately addressed in an Islamic society. Other actors, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Dar al-Ifta' and some of the new Islamic NGOs such as the Resala Association, combine a charity centered approach to poverty with a development centered approach. These actors focus not only on the provision of needed social services but also on the importance of social policies that promote social justice and equality. In more recent years, actors such as the Muslim Brotherhood began to incorporate an emphasis on economic and social rights and economic empowerment along with their traditional emphasis on charity and social service provision. Finally, some of the newer actors such as the New

Preachers have embraced a development oriented approach to poverty alleviation, focusing almost exclusively on issues of economic empowerment and capacity building as a means to better the conditions of the poor.
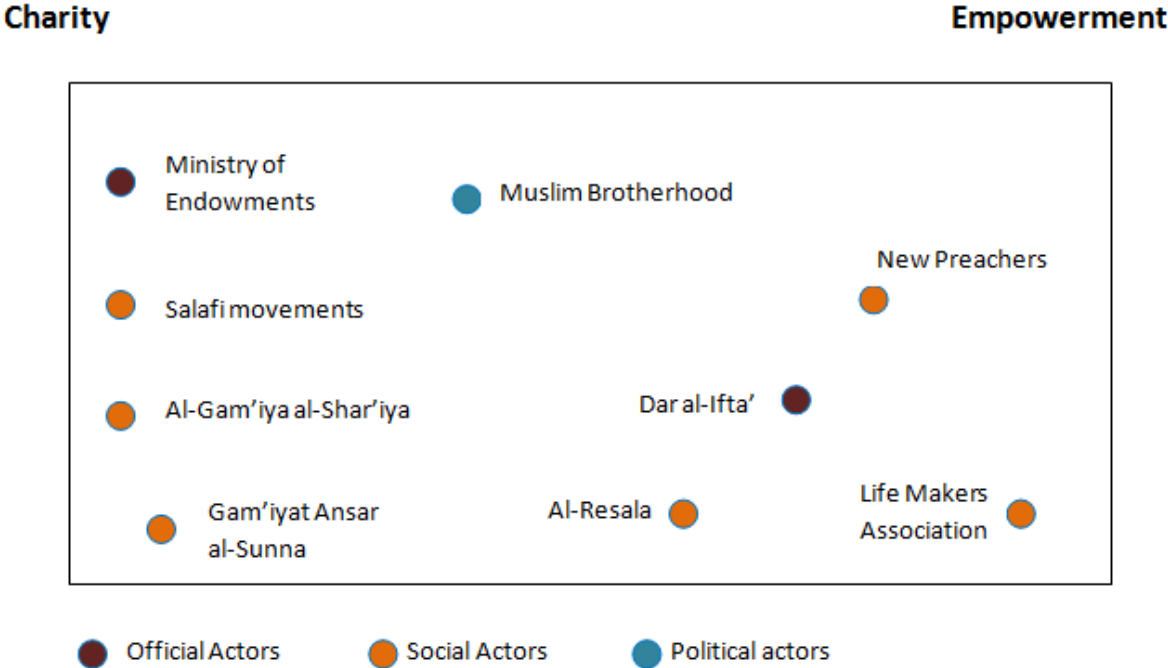

Figure 2. Position on poverty alleviation of different Islamic actors, divided by charity – providing financial assistance to poor people – and empowerment – enabling poor people to build their assets and rise out of poverty

Thus it is a misconception, based on some of the findings of this report, to speak of a coherent and self-reinforcing parallel Islamic sector in Egypt or of Islamism as a homogenous world view and ideology. In reality, the Islamic sector is highly fragmented and relations between its various components are often competitive rather than cooperative. Note for example the relationship between Sufi and Salafi movements in Egypt, which are highly conflicting and competitive. The Sufis accuse the Salafis of extremism and textualism and the Salafis accuse the Sufis of heresy and polytheism. Similarly, the relationship between al-Azhar and the Muslim Brotherhood has tended to be competitive rather than cooperative, with al-Azhar often siding with the regime in its confrontations with the Brotherhood. Thus, it is more useful to speak of a number of Islamic sectors or circuits, competing with each other over the proper interpretation of Islam and its rightful role in society and in politics rather than of a cohesive self-reinforcing Islamic sector working towards promoting a unified conception of Islam.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ACTORS

For the purposes of this survey, Islamic actors will be defined as those actors that use Islamic texts, references, symbols and language to demarcate their identity and to frame their activities in the religious, social, political and intellectual domains. And while some Islamic actors may be further defined as Islamist in that they also seek to establish an Islamic political order governed by the laws of the sharia, other Islamic actors who also use Islam as their point of reference do not embrace an Islamist agenda and seek to promote Islamic values in a manner concordant with existing social and political realities. In fact, some Islamic actors, such as the Critical Intellectuals, are avowedly anti-Islamist and use Islamic texts to demonstrate that the laws of the sharia are not immutable and that the notion of an Islamic state does not exist in Islam and that Islamic values – properly interpreted – are fully compatible with a modern liberal democratic order.

Different analysts have used different criteria to categorize Islamic actors, with some using ideological markers, other using judgments of moderation/radicalism, and others still categorizing them according their fields of activities. A commonly used categorization of Islamic actors uses the following ideological markers: traditionalists, reformists and fundamentalists. Traditionalists typically include groups like al-Azhar and Sufi *tariqas*, which tend to be status quo oriented. Reformists generally include groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and some Islamic NGOs, which seek to promote an Islamic agenda through legal and peaceful channels. Finally, fundamentalist or radical groups typically include some of the more militant organizations such as al-Jihad groups, which adopt a radical agenda and which often use violent means to implement it.[1]

A study by the Egyptian sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim has categorized Islamic actors in Egypt as follows:

1) Establishment Islam, which includes al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religious Endowments
2) Sufi Islam
3) Activist Islam, which includes the apolitical wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood, the anti-regime Muslim groups such as the Jihad Organization and the anti- society Muslim Groups such as Takfir wal-Hijra.[2]

Another study, produced by al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, uses a similar typology. It divides Islamic actors in Egypt a follows:

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[1] Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *Egypt Islam and Democracy: Critical Essays* (Cairo, 2002).
[2] Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 'Egypt's Islamic Activism in the 1980s', *Third World Quarterly* 10 (3, 1988) 632-657.

1) Official Islamic Institutions, which include al-Azhar, the Ministry of Endowments and Dar al-Ifta'

2) Non-official Islamic actors, which include the Muslim Brotherhood and some of the smaller Islamic groups

3) Islamic groups active in the civil society sector, such as Sufi *tariqas* and Islamic NGOs.[3]

For the purposes of this survey, we divide Islamic actors according to their primary sphere or area of activity. We thus divide Islamic actors into the following categories: Official Islamic actors, Social actors, Political actors, and finally Intellectual actors. Official Islamic actors include those actors or organizations that are part of the state apparatus and which are sanctioned by the state to give religious opinions and to undertake religious functions and responsibilities. These actors include al-Azhar Institution, the Ministry of Religious Endowments, Dar al-Ifta' and the Committee for Religious, Social and Awqaf Affairs in parliament. Official Islamic actors are often described as traditionalists, because they typically use religion to sanction the policies of the state and to legitimize the status quo.
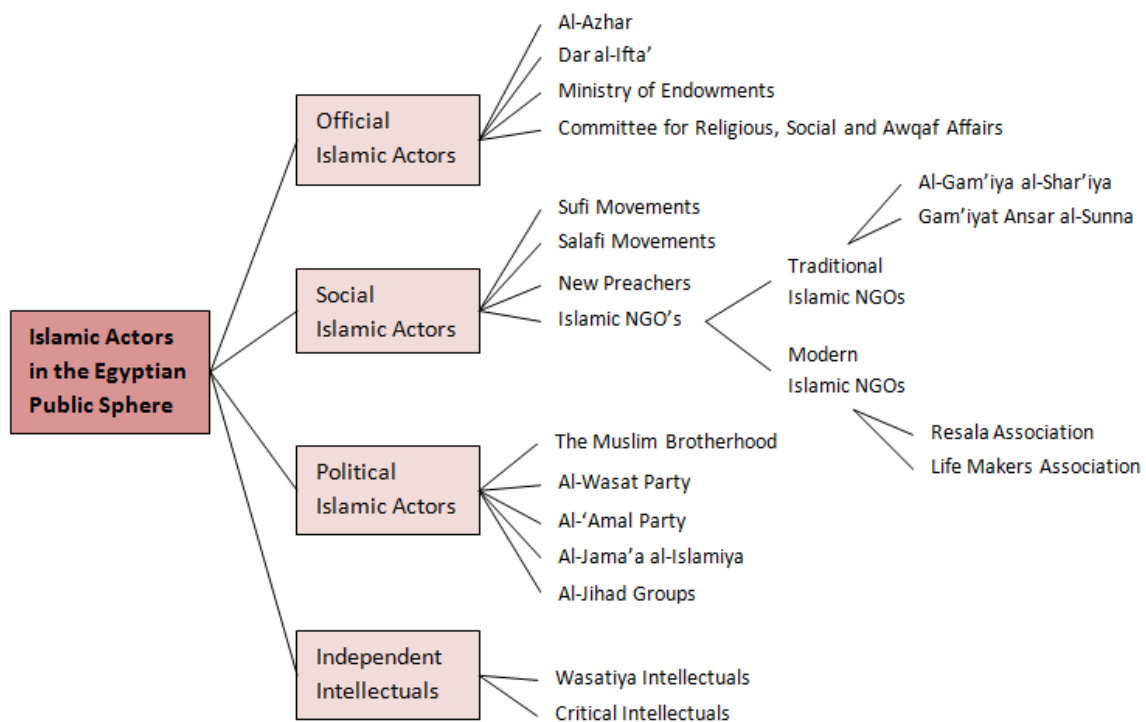
Figure 3.   Overview of the different Islamic actors in the Egyptian Public Sphere

Social actors include those Islamic groups and organizations that focus primarily on social and religious activities, including religious preaching, publishing, charity and the provision of social

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[3] تقرير الحالة الدينية، القاهرة: مركز الاهرام للدراسات السياسية والاستراتيجية، 1995.

services. These actors include Sufi movements, Salafi movements, Islamic NGOs and the New Preachers. These actors describe themselves as nonpolitical and for the most part abstain from taking positions on political questions. However, in reality some of these actors have links and implicit alliances with political movements and organizations. For example, Sufi *tariqas* have traditionally been aligned with the regime and have had close ties with al-Azhar and other official religious institutions. In contrast, some large Islamic NGOs have had close ties with the Muslim Brotherhood and their activities helped to broaden the popular base of the movement.

Political actors refers to those actors that adopt a political agenda and which participate, or seek to participate, in the political process via conventional or non-conventional channels and whose discourse and activities focus primarily on political issues. Often referred to as Islamists, these actors draw on Islamic referents – terms, symbols and events taken from the Islamic tradition – in order to articulate a distinctly political agenda.[4] These actors include the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Wasat and al-'Amal parties, and some of the former militant organizations such as al-Jama'a al-Islamiya and al-Jihad movements.
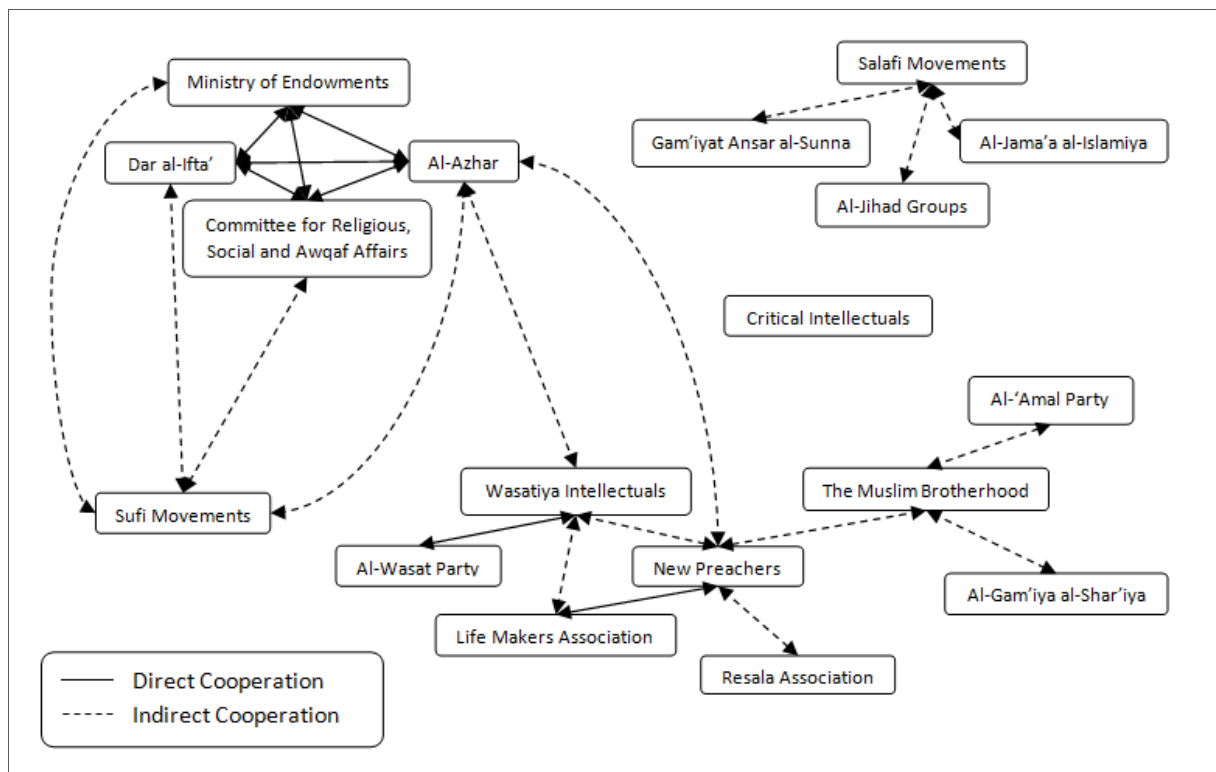
Figure 4. **Overview of the direct and indirect cooperation between the different Islamic actors in the Public Sphere**

The final category, Intellectual actors, refers to independent intellectuals who have made important theoretical contributions on contemporary issues using Islam as their referent. This category includes

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[4] Guilian Denoeux, 'The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam', *Middle East Policy* 9 (2, 2002) 56-81.

two groups of intellectuals: Wasatiya intellectuals and Critical Intellectuals. The Wasatiya Intellectuals include thinkers such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Fahmi Howaydi, Tariq al-Bishri and others. They have attempted to promote an Islamic conception of politics and of the state that is concordant with the modern principles of democracy, nationalism and equal citizenship. Critical Intellectuals, on the other hand, have used Islamic texts to refute the notion of an Islamic state and have argued against the conception of Islam as a comprehensive social and political order. In what follows, these actors will be addressed in more detail, focusing especially on the nature of their objectives and activities, on their discourse regarding issues of citizenship, human rights and poverty alleviation and finally on the communication strategies they use to reach out to their target audience.

PART ONE

OFFICIAL ACTORS

AL-AZHAR

Background and Relationship with the Government

Background

Al-Azhar Mosque was established by the Fatimid state in 972 as a beacon for Shiite learning. During that era, al-Azhar was financed by endowment (*awqaf*) revenue. After the collapse of the Fatimid state, the Ayyubid state emerged, turning the mosque into a Sunni institution.[1] During the Ottoman era, the mosque became an institution for Islamic Sunni learning, with lessons given within the mosque after each prayer.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there were major developments within the mosque. Sultan Sulaiman al-Qanuni appointed a sheikh to manage the mosque's affairs. In 1872, a law was passed to standardize the educational system in the institution, and to update the curriculum.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Sheikh Muhammad Abduh led a movement to modernize and reform al-Azhar. In 1911 Law 10 was issued, creating a new exam system and curriculum for al-Azhar. This system is still used in al-Azhar University today. In 1930 Law 49 was issued for al-Azhar, establishing its three faculties: the Faculty of Sharia, the Faculty of Theology, and the Faculty of Arabic Language.[2]

On 5 May 1961, under the Nasser regime, Law 103 was passed. The law sought to modernize al-Azhar by creating non-religious faculties, including Commerce, Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, and Arab Studies. It also established an institute for women and several entities including al-Azhar High Council, The Islamic Union, al-Azhar University and al-Azhar Educational Institutes.[3] This law also transformed al-Azhar into an official state institution, and included it in the state budget. In addition,

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[1] ضياء رشوان (محرر)، تقرير الحالة الدينية، 1995، ص ص. 27-28.

[2] http://www.azhar.edu.eg/pages/history.htm. موقع جامعة الأزهر، الدخول 1 أبريل 2010

[3] http://www.azhar.edu.eg/pages/history.htm. موقع جامعة الأزهر، الدخول 1 أبريل 2010

Law 103 disconnected al-Azhar Mosque from al-Azhar Institution, and put it under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Endowments.[4]

Relationship with the Government

The relationship between al-Azhar and political authority has changed over time. During the Ottoman Empire, al-Azhar played the role of mediator between the Sultans and the public. Al-Azhar scholars led the national resistance movement against the French Invasion of Egypt in 1798, and al-Azhar Mosque was the headquarters for the national movement.[5] During the 19th century, Muhammad Ali used al-Azhar's scholars and students as an engine for modernizing Egypt. He sent students to Europe to be educated, with the hope that they would return with ideas to develop and modernize the country.

During the first half of the 20th century, the relationship between the government and the Grand Imam fluctuated. Grand Imam al-Gizawy publically rejected King Fuad's self-appointment as Caliph in 1927. Imam 'Abd al-Magid was fired from his position after criticizing the behavior of King Faruq.[6] Imam al-Zawahiri, however, allied with King Fuad against the political opposition, making al-Azhar a political ally for the palace at the time.

Nasser formed a new alliance with the Grand Imams of al-Azhar after the July 1952 revolution. The imams were instrumental in legitimizing the regime's policies. Imam Shaltut issued a fatwa supporting Nasser, saying that his socialist policies were consistent with Islam. Nasser also made policy changes that affected al-Azhar. He shifted control of the public endowments or *waqf* from al-Azhar to the Ministry of Agricultural Reforms and the Ministry of Awqaf or endowments, thereby depriving al-Azhar of its financial autonomy.[7]

During Sadat's presidency, the alliance between the government and al-Azhar continued. Sadat used the rhetoric of Islam and al-Azhar as a source of legitimacy for his regime. He also used al-Azhar to legitimize his foreign policy. When Arab states reacted angrily to his peace deal with Israel, Sadat stated: 'Arab nations cannot work without Egypt, and without al-Azhar of Egypt. The millions of dollars that Arab states have, will not create any entity that resembles al-Azhar.'[8]

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[4] Interview with Mr. Muhammad Mansour, director of organization and management, Mashyakhat al-Azhar, 28 June 2010.
[5] Ibid.
[6] المرجع السابق، ص ص. 45-46.
[7] المرجع السابق، ص ص. 28-29.
[8] تقرير الحالة الدينية، ص. 29.

During Mubarak's presidency, the government continued to turn towards al-Azhar for legitimization. The Mubarak regime had a close relationship with al-Azhar. Mubarak regularly met with the imams and with al-Azhar ulama. The imam reciprocated this honor by inviting Mubarak to attend religious festivals such as the Birth of Prophet Muhammad.[9] However, the government did not always comply with the fatwas of al-Azhar. For example, Mubarak's government has not complied with the fatwa on bank interest rates. Generally, however, they comply with many of the fatwas on social issues.[10]

Radical and moderate Islam

In the 1990s, the regime used al-Azhar as a tool for fighting radical Islamic groups. As a result, al-Azhar had its strongest presence in the public sphere during this era. Imam Gad al-Haq (1982-1996) increased al-Azhar's role by overseeing the publication of all religious texts.[11] In response to the rise of radical Islam, he stated:

> Fighting Islamic extremism requires a fight against secular extremism as well. Religious extremism is a result of secular extremism and moral decay. The problem of extremism can be solved by implementing the sharia and reforming the educational curriculum to make sure it stays true to the Islamic perspective (…) and by entering into an objective dialogue with extremist youth.[12]

Imam Gad al-Haq rejected and publicly opposed the discourse of radical groups. This created a schism in the Islamic community. Islamic groups called al-Azhar's ulama the 'ulama of the regime', and they launched a campaign geared towards Egypt's youth to smear the image of al-Azhar.[13]

Al-Azhar considers itself a beacon of moderate Islam in Egypt and the rest of Islamic world. This message and image of moderation is one that al-Azhar wants to communicate publicly. This is an image that representatives of the state also often emphasize. For example, a former Minister of Awqaf stated that al-Azhar 'is the only scientific establishment that has continued its mission to protect Muslims from sectarianism, radicalism, and extremism. Al-Azhar is the bearer of moderation.'[14]

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[9] المرجع السابق، ص. 29.
[10] المرجع السابق، ص 29.
[11] المرجع السابق، ص ص. 42-43.
[12] تقرير الحالة، ص. 24.
[13] المرجع السابق، ص. 46.
[14] كلمة شيخ الأزهر في حفل تخريج أئمة الرابطة :
"شيخ الأزهر : علاقتنا بالاخر تواد وتكامل وندافع عن الإسلام دون تعصب وتشدد"، صوت الأزهر، 21 مايو 2010.

Organizational Structure and Activities

Since the implementation of Law 103, al-Azhar consists of the following entities:

- The Grand Imam
- Al-Azhar High Council
- Al-Azhar University
- The Islamic Research Council (Magma')
- Al-Azhar Educational Institutes
- Madinat al-Buhuth

The Grand Imam

The Grand Imam has authority over all al-Azhar entities.[15] The Grand Imam gives official fatwas (religious opinions) on contemporary social, political and economic issues. According to the Presidential Decree 281/1993, the Grand Imam has the rank of Prime Minister, and is appointed by the President. He may be selected to the position from among the members of al-Azhar's Council of Ulama or from outside the council. The current Grand Imam is Dr. Ahmad al-Tayyib, the former president of al-Azhar University.

The Grand Imam has an official bureau of directors with whom he works. It consists of the Director of the Technical Office, the Director of al-Azhar Institute, the Sheikh of al-Azhar Mosque, the Director of Public Relations and Media Department, the Director of Financial and Managerial Issues, the High Secretary for Islamic Preaching and Koranic Affairs, and the Director of the Department of Koran and Translation.[16]

Al-Azhar High Council

Al-Azhar High Council is led by the Grand Imam. It is responsible for the public policies of the institution and the educational policies of the university. It is also responsible for receiving and managing donations, grants and *awqaf* dedicated to al-Azhar.[17]

Al-Azhar University

Al-Azhar University has 67 faculties, both religious and non-religious.[18] It has branches in sixteen Egyptian governorates, a branch in Gaza, and another in Sudan. There are around 400,000 students

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[15] تقرير الحالة الدينية، ص 49.
[16] تقرير الحالة الدينية، ص 49.
[17] تقرير الحالة الدينية ، ص. 48.

enrolled in the university, both Egyptian and non-Egyptian. This represents one fifth of all university students in Egypt. There are also 11,000 professors and teaching assistants within the university system, as well as 13,000 other employees.

Dr. Abdallah al-Husayni, the current head of the university, defined the mission of the university as encouraging 'openness to cultural and Islamic institutions in the world, active participation in the dialogue between religions, and improving the quality of al-Azhar's religious studies.'[19] The university has a number of scientific research centers, including the Salih Kamil Center for Commercial Studies, the International Center for Population Studies, and the World Islamic Center for Heart Diseases.[20] In February 2008, the university founded a center for the study of foreign languages, in cooperation with the British Council in Egypt. The first class graduated from the center in the summer of 2010.[21] According to the current imam, Dr. al-Tayyib, an English-language program in the Faculty of Preaching and Sharia is currently under development.

Al-Azhar students are politically active, and often demonstrate on the university campus. Most of the issues and slogans they raise during demonstrations are relevant to Muslim issues in the world.

The university sponsors religious and cultural dialogue with western universities in order to enhance understanding and rectify misconceptions between cultures. For example, in June 2010, seventy delegates from California University (both students and staff) visited al-Azhar University and met Dr. al-Tayyib.

The Islamic Research Council (Magma')

The Magma' is considered the brain of al-Azhar. It is responsible for supervising religious affairs, and is in charge of issuing fatwas at the request of parliament or the public. The Magma' is composed of forty experts, including professionals, scholars and ulama from various disciplines. Twenty-five are specialized in the sharia, and fifteen in other sciences.[22] Members of the Magma' are nominated by the Grand Imam and appointed by the President. The Magma' is divided into the following two committees:

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[18] انظر تصريح رئيس جامعة الازهر د. الطيب في:
"لو عرفتم حقيقة الاسلام السمح لدافعتم عنه"، صوت الأزهر، 15 يناير 2010.
[19] حوار مع رئيس جامعة الازهر :"رئيس جامعة الأزهر د. عبدالله الحسني للرواق: الرابطة العالمية لخريجي الأزهر تقود قاطرة الحوار مع الاخر لتحقيق السلام الانساني"، الرواق، مايو 2010، ص. 5.
[20] تقرير الحالة الدينية، ص. 48.
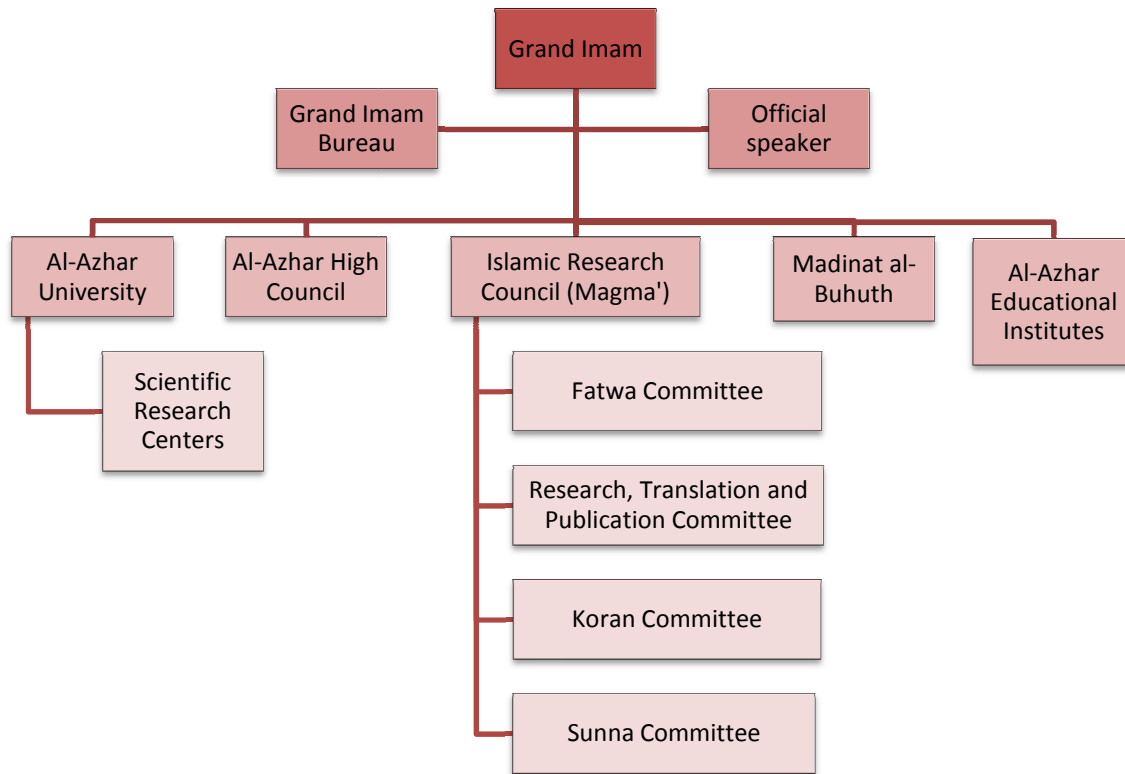[21] "مركز اللغات بجامعة الأزهر نافذة مضيئة لخلق جيل يواجه تحديات العصر" ، الرواق، عدد 6، مايو 2010، ص. 3.
[22] تصريح طنطاوي في حوار معه :
"ثورة يوليو قدمت للازهر الكثير وكل ما قدمته كان لصالحه"، منبر الإسلام ، عدد 6، أغسطس 2002، ص. 114.

The Fatwa Committee

The Fatwa Committee was founded in 1935. Its main responsibility is to provide written and verbal fatwas for the public. It also regulates the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam.[23] It is based within al-Azhar Mosque. Since the adoption of Law 103, the jurisdiction of the Fatwa Committee has been in conflict with the jurisdiction of Dar al-Ifta', as their responsibilities overlap.

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                          ┌─────────────┐
                          │  Grand Imam │
                          └──────┬──────┘
   ┌──────────────┐              │              ┌──────────────┐
   │  Grand Imam  │              │              │   Official   │
   │    Bureau    │              │              │   speaker    │
   └──────────────┘              │              └──────────────┘
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Al-Azhar University	Al-Azhar High Council	Islamic Research Council (Magma')	Madinat al-Buhuth	Al-Azhar Educational Institutes

- Scientific Research Centers (under Al-Azhar University)

Under Islamic Research Council (Magma'):
- Fatwa Committee
- Research, Translation and Publication Committee
- Koran Committee
- Sunna Committee

The Research, Translation and Publication Committee

The Research, Translation and Publication Committee issues opinions and statements on published materials in Egypt. It censors publications, reviews books, and requests confiscation of any objectionable materials. According to Law 102/1985, the committee may censor both Koran and *hadith* publications that are fraudulent or inauthentic.

Recent laws have further specified the function of the committee. In May 1995, the Egyptian Council of State issued a statement saying that the committee 'has the right to confiscate any artistic work affecting faith and religion.' On 18 July 2004, the Administrative Court in Egypt issued a statement declaring that al-Azhar is the only entity in Egypt that may decide whether an artistic work is

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[23] تقرير الحالة، ص ص. 52-53.

consistent with sharia or not. The decisions of this committee regarding any work is binding for the Ministry of Culture.[24]

The committee wields a great deal of power and authority. There are no specifications or regulations on what type of material the committee may object to. This allows the committee to exercise complete control over Islamic publications, and even allows it to control the messages of other Islamic actors.

Al-Azhar Educational Institutes

The al-Azhar Educational Institutes provide primary, preparatory and secondary education for students, with curricula that include both religious and secular subjects. The curriculum is the official Ministry of Education curriculum used in all Egyptian schools. Quality of education in these institutes is considered low, as reflected by university enrollment and performance statistics. In 1995, the Grand Imam formed a committee to evaluate and develop the curriculum, as it had remained unchanged since 1961.[25] An effort to develop the al-Azhar Educational Institutes continues today as a high priority for Imam al-Tayyib.

Discourse

Despite al-Azhar's reputation as a moderate Islamic institution, there are a variety of perspectives within its scholarship. Though all Azhar scholars have the same educational background, some of the scholars of al-Azhar are more conservative than others. This has caused divisions and inconsistencies within al-Azhar, and as a result official statements can occasionally contradict one another. The following is an overview of al-Azhar's discourse on contemporary issues.

Citizenship

With the rise of sectarian strife between Muslims and Copts in Egypt, the issue of citizenship has been increasingly important. Al-Tayyib has asserted that 'maintaining national unity' is one of his priorities, 'as all citizens in Egypt are equal, either Muslim or Copt, in their rights and obligations, without any religious discrimination.'[26]

Following the sectarian violence in Nag Hammadi in 2010, the Grand Imam visited the victims and extended his sympathy. He stated: 'Attacking innocent people is prohibited in Islam. Humanity was

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[24] قرار مجلس الدولة المصري بشأن رقابة الأزهر على الأعمال والمصنفات الفنية"، إسلام أون لاين، 18 يوليو 2004:
http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/doc/2004/07/article05.SHTML (no longer accessible).
[25] تقرير الحالة الدينية، ص ص. 57-58.
[26] http://www.moheet.com/show_news.aspx?nid=358322&pg=1. شيخ الأزهر: زواج المثليين لا يتفق وعقيدتنا"، محيط"

created from one father and one mother.'[27] During the visit, Patriarch Laham asserted that al-Azhar has an important role in fostering national unity. The General Secretary of the Magma', Sheikh Ali 'Abd al-Baqi, emphasized this position of mutual support. He stated: 'Difference in religion is God's will. And those who want to make all of mankind follow the same religion are working against God's will.'[28]

Human Rights

Al-Azhar officially supports the protection of human rights within the context of the principles of Islam. In his discourse, Imam al-Tayyib distinguishes between two sets of human rights in the world. One, he explains, is in harmony with Islam. The second set contradicts the values of Islam, and is based on Western values. This includes, for example, rights regarding homosexuality.[29] He explained: 'The meaning of personal freedom and human rights is relative and differs in its meaning from the West to the East due to the differences between civilizations.'[30]

Various issues of fundamental human rights have emerged within public discourse recently. For example, during the controversy caused by the Danish cartoons published in September 2005, al-Azhar officials made a statement regarding freedom of expression. They stated that Islam respects freedom of expression, but has boundaries when it comes to humiliating others and distorting symbols of religion. The Magma' officially stated that the cartoons were 'a campaign that crossed all limits of accepted criticisms and ethics of dialogue. It was transformed into pure libel and deliberate disrespect of a particular religion that has more than one billion followers and believers.'[31]

Another controversy regarding human rights was sparked when Dr. Tantawi, the former Grand Imam, made controversial statements at the Lailat al-Qadr festival. In his speech marking the festival, he stated: 'Rumor promoters must be whipped.' This statement coincided with the trial of the journalist Ibrahim 'Isa who had published an article in the newspaper *al-Dostor* about the health of President Mubarak. Journalists took Tantawi's statement as a fatwa directed against 'Isa. In an interview with satellite channel al-Arabiya, Tantawi explained that what he said was not directed against journalists, but against all those who promote rumors deliberately.[32]

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[27] "الإمام الأكبر: الاعتداء على الآمنين محرم شرعا والقيادات الدينية قادرة على حل أي خلاف"، صوت الأزهر ، 15 يناير 2010.

[28] "أمين عام مجمع البحوث الاسلامية يدعو المصريين للتمسك بالانسانية والمواطنة"، صوت الأزهر ، 15 يناير 2010.

[29] "شيخ الأزهر: زواج المثليين لا يتفق وعقيدتنا"، مرجع سبق ذكره.

[30] كان ذلك أثناء لقائه السفير الكندي في القاهرة فيردي كاركوف . انظر:

"شيخ الزهر : حقوق الإنسان ليست وسيلة للسيطرة على المسلمين"، اليوم السابع، 4 مايو 2010.

[31] محمد عزب، "من يحاسب شيخ الأزهر؟" ، اخوان أون لاين:

http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=17718&SecID=271 (no longer accessible).

[32] للصحفيين"، المصري اليوم، 20 أكتوبر 2007. " طنطاوي يصر علي فتواه بجلد مروجي الشائعات. وينفي إساءته

Freedom of Religion

Regarding freedom of religion, Grand Imam al-Tayyib stated that Islam respects and recognizes all other religions.[33] In a meeting with the Australian Ambassador in Egypt, he is quoted as saying: 'Education in al-Azhar University is based on studying different points of view and perspectives, and respecting these differences. Islam recognizes other religions and respects them, even if it does not agree.'[34]

Women

According to the official discourse of al-Azhar, women are to be respected as an important component of society and the family. Over the years, al-Azhar has made numerous statements in support of women. In 2002, Grand Imam Tantawi stated: 'It is important to religiously educate woman in a correct way, as the woman is the school of the generations.' Recently, Imam al-Tayyib stated: 'Women are equal to man in nature and sharia.' He explained: 'Islam liberated women from an age in which she suffered from restrictions and tyranny. In Islamic societies, women's financial rights were recognized hundreds of years before [they were recognized in] the West.'[35]

A recent controversy has arisen regarding women's eligibility to run for presidency. The former Grand Imam Tantawi declared in a speech on 31 January 2010 that women have the right to run for presidency. He justified his stance on the issue by explaining: 'Islam considers women and men as equal in seven areas: the origin of creation, religious obligation, embrace of virtue, avoidance of sins, education, honest work, and human dignity.' He added: 'You can't ask a woman to do jobs like diving or mining, as it is not fitting to her nature, but it is accepted that a woman can work in teaching, medicine, etc.'[36] Tantawi, however, later made comments that contradicted this statement. He said: 'Women have the right to work on anything, depending on the extent to which this job fits with her physiological nature. However, she is not allowed at all to have a job that will allow her to be the imam for Muslims in prayer, as in this case it will be part of grand jurisdiction.'[37] In this he meant that a woman could not run for presidency, as it would allow her to act as an imam for Muslims.

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[33] "الإمام الأكبر يستقبل سفيرة أستراليا "، صوت الأزهر، 28 مايو 2010.

[34] المرجع السابق..

[35] "الإسلام حرر المرأة ومنحها حقوقها قبل الغرب بمئات السنين"، الرواق، مايو 2010، عدد 6.

[36] هذا التصريح تكرر في حواره مع اللجنة الاسلامية العالمية. انظر:

اللجنة الاسلامية العالمية تحاور: فضيلة الامام الاكبر شيخ الازهر الشريف الدكتور محمد سيد طنطاوي حول قضايا الاسرة والمرأة و الطفل "، "
اللجنة الاسلامية العالمية للمرأة والطفل :http://iicwc.org/lagna/iicwc/iicwc.php?id=408

[37] "شيخ الأزهر يؤيد مفتي مصر في فتوى عمل المرأة مأذونا"، لهموقع أمان:
http://www.amanjordan.org/a-news/wmview.php?ArtID=18658.

Communication Strategies

Al-Azhar uses a variety of media to communicate with the public. Beyond traditional media, al-Azhar uses its strong religious educational institutions to communicate and disseminate its discourse. Additionally, the Fatwa Committee tries to maintain a close relationship with the public. The committee maintains an 'open-door' policy, and has placed its headquarters in the al-Azhar Mosque where it may be more accessible to the public. A recent decline in the role of the Fatwa Committee has been observed, however, as there has been an agreement to transfer the power of fatwa to Dar al-Ifta'.[38]

Sawt al-Azhar is a weekly Arabic-language newspaper issued by al-Azhar. It runs about 32,000 copies a week, and is distributed within al-Azhar communities. It is a nonprofit publication, and costs one Egyptian pound. Only the front page of the newspaper is available online. The publication is eighteen pages long, and its content covers the activities of the Grand Imam, al-Azhar University, and the World Association of Azhar Graduates. It also publishes articles and columns that discuss a variety of contemporary issues.

Recently, al-Azhar announced the opening of a free Fatwa Hotline to receive questions from the public. *Sawt al-Azhar* publishes the answers to these questions in their newspaper. These answers usually include evidence from the Koran and *hadith* to support them. In cooperation with al-Azhar University, the newspaper also organizes seminars that are open for the public to discuss a variety of contemporary topics.[39]

Al-Azhar has official websites in English, Arabic and French.[40] These websites contain general information about al-Azhar. The Ministry of Information owns the Holy Koran Radio Station. However, the station uses official al-Azhar discourse. Most of the guests and speakers on the program are from al-Azhar. The programs discuss social issues from the perspective of Islam and al-Azhar teaching.

Al-Azhar scholars commonly appear on state-owned channels. These channels often dedicate some of their programs to Islamic issues, and their guests are often al-Azhar scholars. Al-Azhar does not own any satellite channels. However, an al-Azhar scholar named Khaled al-Guindy launched his own satellite channel, called Azhari Satellite. He owns and manages the channel in cooperation with

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[38] تأكد ذلك عند اتصالي بمشيخة الازهر للسؤال عن أحد مسئولي لجنة الفتوى، حيث حاول مسئول الاستقبال تحويلي لدار الافتءاء لطلب الفتوى موضحا ان لجنة الفتوى لم تعد تستقبل طلبات الفتوى.

[39] احد الندوات خاصة بتحديد الخطاب الديني، التغطية في:
"اعداد الداعية يجب ان يبدأ في سنوات التعليم الأولى وليس المرحلة الجامعية"، صوت الأزهر، 30 أبريل 2010.

[40] See http://www.alazhar.gov.eg/.

Ministry of Endowments officials. However, none of them officially represent their institution.[41] The channel uses official al-Azhar discourse, and generally supports moderate al-Azhar scholars. Several other private channels air programs that represent al-Azhar discourse, such as Mehwar, Dream 2, al-Resala and al-Hayat.

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[41] تأكد ذلك في مقابلة مع د. سالم عبدالجليل، وكيل وزارة الأوقاف للشئون الدينية في مكتبه بالوزارة، 12 يوليو 2010.

DAR AL-IFTA'

Background and Relations with al-Azhar Fatwa Committee and the Government

As part of the Ministry of Justice, Dar al-Ifta' was founded in 1895 as part of a comprehensive system to standardize the issuance of fatwas.[42] The first Grand Mufti of Dar al-Ifta' was Sheikh Hassuna al-Nawawi (1895-1899). The current Grand Mufti, Dr. Ali Gomaa, is the sixteenth Grand Mufti.[43] The Grand Mufti is appointed by the president, and has the rank of a minister.[44] According to a Supreme Court judgment, 'fatwas issued by Dar al-Ifta' are opinions that aim to clarify religious verdicts, according to religious evidence.'[45] As it stands, these opinions do not have legal authority unless legislators adopt them.

The Grand Mufti

The role of the Grand Mufti depends on the personality of the mufti, and his view of his own religious authority. He demarcates his role based on his relationship with other Islamic actors and his fatwas. Dr. Gomaa said that as mufti, his role is to 'focus on the intent of sharia, to foster dignity and other core values, and to be committed to the public interest. This commitment will improve the world, not destroy it.'[46]

The former Grand Mufti, Gad al-Haq, stated: 'Dar al-Ifta' is the only authority whose fatwas are binding for all.'[47] Not all Grand Muftis have held this opinion. Grand Mufti Gad al-Haq was considered a conservative mufti, and thus his fatwas and statements must be understood within this context. He regarded women to be 'lacking in intellect and religion', because of their perceived tendency to be

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[42] Ibid.

[43] هاني السباعي، "الحصاد المر لشيخ الأزهر طنطاوي"،مركز المقريزي للدراسات التاريخية: http://www.almaqreze.net/articles/artcl027.html.

[44] Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Dhia'a Rashwan (ed.), Guide to Religious Movements in the World (Cairo, 2006) 73.

[45] Ibid. 23-24.

[46] Michael Gerson, 'The Grand Mufti's Mission', *The Washington Post* (Oct. 23, 2009).

[47] Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Dhia'a Rashwan (ed.), Guide to Religious Movements in the World (Cairo, 2006) 23.

more emotional than men. Because of this, he stated that women could not run for positions of high authority.[48]

The role of the Grand Mufti becomes controversial when Dar al-Ifta' and the al-Azhar Fatwa Committee deliver conflicting fatwas. When this happens, a discussion arises regarding who represents the superior religious authority, and which fatwa stands valid. In 1995, there was major conflict between the fatwa of the Grand Mufti and the Grand Imam regarding investment funds, interest rates on bank savings, and bank investments. The Grand Mufti stated that these were all acceptable by Islam, but the Grand Imam declared that all were forms of usury (with the exception of investment certificates). Conflicts have also arisen regarding the issues of abortion, women's *niqab*, and Israel.[49] These controversies led to a public debate on the issues and the position of each party involved. The government did not participate outright in the debate, however, their policies speak for their position on all issues. For instance, in the 1990s the government adopted policies aimed at supporting local bank investments with a fixed interest rate, thus backing the position of the Grand Mufti.

Activities

Dar al-Ifta' has a significant role in the Islamic public sphere. Its activities include:

- Issuing fatwas when requested by individuals and government entities. Dar al-Ifta' issues around 50,000 fatwas per month through email, fax, phone, and mail post.
- Giving consultative opinions on death sentences at the request of the courts.
- Setting the lunar calendar.
- Deconstructing misconceptions about Islam that cause misunderstanding. A whole section of Dar al-Ifta' official website is dedicated to this task. A team of researchers provides answers with religious evidence.
- Conducting specialized scientific research in Islam-based science.

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[48] His fatwa was published in *The Truth Newspaper* [*al-Haqeeqa*] (1 Feb. 1997). See: Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Dhia'a Rashwan (ed.), Guide to Religious Movements in the World (Cairo, 2006) 31-36.

[49] Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Dhia'a Rashwan (ed.), Guide to Religious Movements in the World (Cairo, 2006) 76, 342.

- Providing training for preachers and fatwa providers from Egypt and abroad. The Dar al-Ifta' oversees a three year training program for preachers. Those who pass the program receive a certificate which qualifies them to work at Dar al-Ifta'.[50]

Discourse

The Grand Mufti is the primary voice of Dar al-Ifta', and thus the personality of the Grand Mufti tends to affect the discourse of Dar al-Ifta' at any given time. The current Grand Mufti, Dr. Ali Gomaa, is reputed for his rationality and moderation. He often cites sacred texts such as the Koran, the *hadith* and the biography of the Prophet to support his religious positions with textual foundations. He explained this methodology in his book *al-Bayan*. In this book, Gomaa includes one hundred fatwas on contemporary issues.

Human Rights

It is the position of Dar al-Ifta' that Islam protects human rights in four main categories: life, religion, human dignity, and private property.[51] In a visit with the American Committee of Freedom, Mufti Gomaa stated: 'Homosexual rights are not part of human rights. Humankind has not agreed upon them, and they are not included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All religions have refused them, and even France, a secular state, has refused them.'[52]

Freedom of Religion

Dar al-Ifta' supports freedom of religion. Grand Mufti Gomaa has insisted that the West has misinterpreted the Dar's stance on the issue of killing those who convert from Islam. He explained:

> killing those converts is not an act against freedom of religion, and it is not applied against those who stop believing in Islam. It is an act against those who fight against Islam. The latter is considered a crime against public order in society, and it is equal to treason which is prohibited in many constitutions.[53]

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[50] All mentioned activities are stated in the official website of Dar al-Ifta': http://www.dar-alifta.org/Module.aspx?Name=aboutdar&LangID=2.

[51] انظر:

- علي جمعة،" جاءت لجنة الحريات وذهبت"، الأهرام، 31 يوليو 2004.
- علي جمعة، "لك الله يا حقوق الانسان"، الأهرام، 5 فبراير 2005.

[52] علي جمعة، جاءت لجنة الحريات وذهبت، الأهرام، 31 يوليو 2004.

[53] Ali Gomaa, *Al-Bayan* (11th edition, Cairo, 2009) 81-84.

Poverty

Dar al-Ifta' does not address the issue of poverty in its official statements. However, it deals with poverty in its many activities. Dar al-Ifta' has a number of campaigns with the goal of alleviating poverty. These campaigns work to empower the poor, and assist those who cannot work.

One such initiative is the food bank, launched by Grand Mufti Gomaa. It provides and delivers food to the poor, the elderly, widows, families in need, and those who cannot work. It is especially active during times of disaster. For example, after the sinking of al-Salam 98 ferry boat, the bank distributed 38,000 meals for families of the victims at the Safaga port. The food bank provides support for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Many Egyptian corporations and institutions financially support this initiative.

Women

In its official fatwas, Dar al-Ifta' holds men and women equal in their rights and obligations but not in their nature. One of Dar al-Ifta''s official fatwas regarding gender equality states: 'Men and women are not equal in their physiological attributes, or in their functions. Calling for equality between men and women implies a sort of tyranny, as it gives them obligations that they cannot fulfill.'[54] Dar al-Ifta' bases its position on the fact that Islam recognizes both genders as equal in their rights and obligations as human beings, but not equal in their physiological attributes.

Communication Strategies

Grand Mufti Gomaa has stated that it is the role of the scholar to bridge the gap between religious sources and everyday life. For this reason, he has established a system for Dar al-Ifta' that enables people to request fatwas more easily. This new system enables Dar al-Ifta' to use new media for communication, which include:

- The Hotline Number (107), dedicated to fatwa requests. It is operated by qualified agents, and is supported in eight languages.
- The official website of Dar al-Ifta', which includes information about the activities of Dar al-Ifta', as well as an application to make online requests for fatwa that may be answered by email.
- Several TV and satellite channels supporting programs for the Grand Mufti, such as *The Assembly of the Good* on Channel 1 and *Fatwa Concepts* on Iqraa.

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[54] نص فتوى دار الافتاء المصرية حول مساواة الجندر، 25 مارس 2004، فتوى رقم 4235.

- The *Dar al-Ifta' Bulletin*, a periodical printed in Arabic and summarized in English. The bulletin includes information regarding relevant issues and scientific studies.

THE MINISTRY OF ENDOWMENTS

Background and Relationship with the Government

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) has since the late 1950s managed the charity revenue and endowments granted to Egypt's Islamic institutions. According to Law 292/1959, 157/1960 and 238/1996, this role expanded to include the religious endowments of the country's mosques. The ministry is also responsible for the training and certification of preachers and mosques imams, most of who are employed by the ministry.[55] The ministry controls all activities in the country's mosques, *zawaya* and Islamic spaces. It is the only authority that may decide whether an activity is appropriate. In this sense, it plays a restrictive role in the Islamic public sphere. It regulates and restricts the spaces in which any face to face activity can be carried out between Islamic actors and the public.

The Ministry of Endowments supervises and manages *waqf* or endowment revenue, and is in charge of spending it. According to Law 547, the ministry is allowed to spend the revenue as it sees fit.[56] The ministry also builds, controls, supervises, and maintains government run mosques in the country. By an order issued by the ministry in 1997, it is required to get written permission from the ministry for all lessons, seminars and ceremonies performed in all mosques. These permissions are granted by The Technical Secretary of Religious Awareness. However, employees of the ministry and preachers of al-Azhar are not required to obtain these permissions.

The ministry also supervises the appointment of imams and preachers, and provides them with training.[57] It is also responsible for appointing qualified imams to run the mosques. Law 157/1960

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[55] It manages endowments of Muslims only. Non-Muslim endowments are regulated by a special law (number 214). See: Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Dhia'a Rashwan (ed.), Guide to Religious Movements in the World (Cairo, 2006) 61.

[56] Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Dhia'a Rashwan (ed.), Guide to Religious Movements in the World (Cairo, 2006) 60.

[57] "وزير الاوقاف في افتتاح الدورة التاهيلية للدعاة"، منبر الاسلام ، عدد 7 سبتمبر 2002.

regulates this role. The ministry struggles with a lack of qualified imams. It has thus turned to al-Azhar high school graduates to run smaller mosques in the country.[58]

According to Law 238, the Ministry of Endowments is responsible for appointing imams and mosque employees. It also determines the required qualifications of these imams and mosque employees. The law also established a new role for the judicial officers who monitor mosques and report violations. Some Islamic scholars' say this law reduces the independence of the imams and preachers, as it reduces preaching and *imamat* to a job that requires outside governmental permission to practice.[59]

Campaigns and publications

The ministry organizes religious awareness campaigns dedicated primarily to youth.[60] The ministry organizes the Islamic Thought Forum, held every year during Ramadan in large mosques throughout the country. The ministry also publishes books and pamphlets to make statements on social issues. In addition, the ministry provides verbal and written fatwas to the public. In 2007-2008, they issued 1,850 fatwas.[61]

Relations with other Islamic movements

The ministry has particularly restricted the activities of the Brotherhood and Salafi movements. Ansar al-Sunna and al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya are two Islamic NGOs started by those who disagreed with the policies of the ministry. Both NGOs run institutes to train preachers and imams. Since 2005, the ministry has tried to gain control over these institutes, and there has been a dialogue aimed towards reconciliation between the organizations and the ministry since then.

Organizational Structure and Activities

The Ministry of Endowments is organized along two lines: The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, and the Religious Affairs section. The latter is again divided into three departments.

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[58] Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Dhia'a Rashwan (ed.), Guide to Religious Movements in the World (Cairo, 2006) 65.

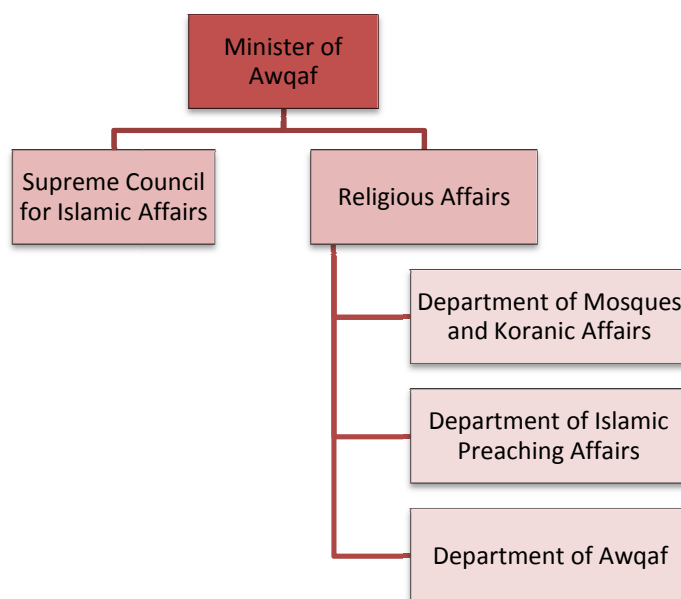[59] محمد سليم العوا، أزمة المؤسسة الدينية ، (القاهرة: الطبعة الأولى، 1998) 51-42.

[60] Statement by Minister of Youth Alei al-Dein Hilal:

منير بيومي، "قضايا ساخنة في لقاءات الوزراء والشباب الجامعات"، مبر الاسلام، عدد 6 ، أغسطس 2002، ص. 106.

[61] وزارة الأوقاف، انجازات الوزارة 2007-2008،مرجع سبق ذكره، ص.23.

Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs

The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs was founded in 1960.[62] It is in charge of printing religious books, establishing centers for Islamic study, and providing these centers with books and materials. It also organizes the Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Camp for Muslim youth every summer in Alexandria. The camp lasts for forty days, during which students meet with ministers, officials and scholars to discuss various social, political and economic issues.[63]

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                    │   Minister of    │
                    │      Awqaf       │
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   ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
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                          │  Department of Mosques    │
                          │   and Koranic Affairs     │
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                          │  Department of Islamic    │
                          │    Preaching Affairs      │
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                          │   Department of Awqaf     │
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Department of Mosques and Koranic Affairs

The Department of Mosques and Koranic Affairs is responsible for supervising and controlling mosques in the country, and for printing the Koran.

Department of Islamic Preaching Affairs

The Department of Islamic Preaching Affairs is responsible for controlling and organizing preaching activities and affairs. The department is also responsible for providing preachers salaries, accommodation, education, and books. It runs eighteen Islamic cultural centers in Egypt, which are used to educate al-Azhar graduates and those interested in Islamic Studies. From its body of students, people are selected who are qualified to work as imams in the ministry's mosques. In the 2007-2008 term, the centers supported 2,316 male students and 4,086 female students.[64]

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[62] Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Dhia'a Rashwan (ed.), Guide to Religious Movements in the World (Cairo, 2006) 65-67.

[63] منير بيومي، "الأمة الاسلامية تواجه التحديات كبيرة تتطلب منها الاخذ باسباب العلم والتقدم"، منبر الاسلام، ص ص 116-117.

[64] وزارة الأوقاف، انجازات الوزارة 2007-2008،مرجع سبق ذكره، ص ص. 29-30.

The department also organizes various religious awareness campaigns in cooperation with al-Azhar, Dar al-Ifta', the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Culture. In the 1990s, these campaigns had an important role in combating the messages of radical Islamic groups who were particularly active in rural areas. The department conducts lectures and awareness campaigns in universities, schools, security institutions, prisons, factories, companies, care-centers, youth centers, and private mosques. They reach a large audience throughout the country.

Department of Awqaf Affairs

The Department of Awqaf Affairs spends endowment revenue as directed by its donors. It generally provides financial support for students, covers burial costs for those who cannot afford it, provides loans at zero-interest rates to ministry employees, and provides aid to the poor, particularly during religious festivals.[65]

Discourse

Freedom of Religion

The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs issued the 'Cairo Statement' in 2002, stating: 'Islam accepts the diversity of religions and civilizations. This diversity is a reason for fostering understanding and harmony, and is not a reason for conflict.'[66] It went on to state: 'Islam is unique in asserting freedom of religion and non-compulsion in religion. It ensures equality between Muslims and non-Muslims in their rights and obligations, and it allows non-Muslims to regulate their personal affairs according to their own religion.'[67]

Poverty

In a speech during the celebration of Lailat al-Qadr, Dr. Zaqzuq, the former Minister of Religious Endowments, highlighted the role of religion in development, saying: 'Religion is a very important means to motivate people to work towards developing life in Egypt.'[68] This stance is reflected in the activities of the ministry, as it provides for those in need – for example, college students, the ill, those getting married, those on limited salaries, and those in need during religious festivals. In the fiscal year of 2007-2008, the department spent 14,009,310 Egyptian pounds, which reached 198,982

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[65] Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Dhia'a Rashwan (ed.), Guide to Religious Movements in the World (Cairo, 2006) 96.

[66] انظر:"كلمة طنطاوي ..."،منبر الإسلام، ص. ص 49-50

[67] المرجع السابق، ص. 54.

[68] "كلمة وزير الاوقاف في الاحتفال بليلية القدر" ، منبر الاسلام ، عدد 8، أكتوبر 2002، ص. 16.

citizens.[69] The ministry also provides educational services for orphans. It runs an institute for orphan boys in Tura and an institute for girls in Hilmiyat al-Zaytun.[70] However, there are complaints that these activities are hindered by flaws in maintaining revenue and investment, and that there is systemic corruption.

Women

The ministry conducts various activities to empower Egyptian women. Ministry officials participate in the activities of the National Council for Women, encouraging women to participate in elections. In the 2010 parliamentary elections, Dr. Salim ʿAbd al-Galil participated in training sessions for women, preparing them to participate in the elections.

Communication Strategies

The ministry uses a variety of communication methods. *Minbar al-Islam* is a monthly bulletin that discusses contemporary issues. During Islamic festivals, there is a special edition that includes a discourse on the activities of the ministry, al-Azhar, and Dar al-Ifta'. It includes eleven pages of questions and answers among readers and Sheikh Attiya Saqr and the al-Azhar Fatwa Committee.[71]

The ministry also issues a periodic bulletin called *Islamic Studies*, which is issued by the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. The Supreme Council also issues a series called *Correcting Concepts*, that represents the ministry's perspective on a variety of public issues, including family planning, female circumcision, and Salafism. These publications are disseminated in limited circles, namely in official state institutions, in mosques and in various cultural centers. They are also available on request.

The ministryuses new media outlets to announce its activities. It has an official website, using it as a platform to announce its activities and to post links to associated organizations, such as The Islamic Council, The Awqaf Agency and The Library of Islamic Manuscripts.[72] The Islamic Council website hosts both Arabic and English versions. It provides information on the council, its publications, and videos. It also provides online encyclopedias on the *hadith* and Koran. There are two pages dedicated to fatwas on social and economic issues as well.

The ministry sets up various forums in mosques throughout the country especially during Ramadan. These forums generally feature a guest speaker, who may be a minister, politician or religious

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[69] وزارة الأوقاف، انجازات الوزارة 2007-2008،مرجع سبق ذكره، ص. 37.
[70] موقع المجلس : http://www.islamic-council.org/
[71] He is the former head of al-Azhar Fatwa Committee, and currently a member of the Islamic Research Magma'.
[72] See http://www.awkaf.org.

scholar. It also fosters dialogue and lectures throughout the country in youth centers, military institutions, prisons, social centers and various corporations.

COMMITTEE FOR RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND AWQAF AFFAIRS

The Committee for Religious, Social and Awqaf Affairs is one of nineteen committees within the lower house of Parliament – the People's Assembly. Its counterpart in the upper house – the Shura Council – is the Committee for Education and Scientific Research.[73] In the 2005-2010 legislative term, forty-two elected members of the People's Assembly were on the committee, with Dr. Ahmad Umar Hashim, a former president of al-Azhar University, serving as head of the committee. The members of parliament select the committee members at the beginning of each legislative term.

Activities

The committee reviews and discusses various issues as requested by the President or the People's Assembly. According to the internal regulations of the People's Assembly, the committee may review and discuss legislative bills, draft bills, and resolutions in the following areas:

- Religious affairs, preaching, mosques, and places of worship
- Social welfare, social security, families and childhood, social rehabilitation, and the handicapped
- Social security and social relief
- Social and charity organizations
- Social planning, social research, and social development
- Vocational training, displacement, and resettlement
- Care of displaced, and families of fighters and martyrs
- Endowment and charity affairs
- Any other issue that may arise regarding social, religious, *awqaf* and al-Azhar affairs.[74]

In the previous legislative term, the committee received thirty-one requests from members of parliament to discuss religious issues, and five requests to discuss social issues.[75] The committee is

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[73] مقابلة مع أمين عام لجنة الشئون الدينية والاجتماعية والاوقاف، د. سميح متولي، 30 يونيو 2010، في مكتبه بمبنى مجلس الشعب .

[74] الأمانة العامة، مجلس الشعب، اللائحة الداخلية لمجلس الشعب، يناير 2010، ص. 26

allowed to hold public hearing sessions to discuss issues, and may invite religious scholars or the Grand Mufti to attend. The committee may also request the opinion of the Magma', or a fatwa from the Grand Mufti. It may turn towards local experts and NGOs for consultation.

The most notable activity of the Committee for Religious, Social and Awqaf Affairs was the recent consultative session held to determine a methodology for renewing Islamic discourse in Egypt. The committee held a session to discuss possible ways to renew this discourse from 13 January until 17 April, 2002. These sessions resulted in the following recommendations:

- Modernizing preaching, making it more reflective of and relevant to contemporary issues
- Employing rational arguments reflective of science, and avoiding intimidation in preaching
- Fostering a dialogue with other religions
- Interpreting religious texts in terms of their contemporary relevance
- Avoiding political issues in preaching
- Maintaining consistency in preaching on crucial issues, such as democracy, women's rights, and freedom of thought.[76]

The committee concluded that preachers hold a 'very crucial and critical' role in the public sphere.[77] It concluded that properly preparing preachers is the biggest hurdle in renewing the religious discourse in the country. The report by the committee also suggested restricting the performance of Friday ceremonies to the Grand Mosques as a way to combat the shortage of qualified imams.[78]

Discourse

The discourse of the committee is consistent with the discourse of the other official Islamic actors within the state, particularly al-Azhar and Dar al-Ifta'.

Women

The committee supports the empowerment of women within the framework of sharia law. The committee has called for the enhancement of the role of women in society, especially in terms of

[75] تقرير انجازات اللجنة خلال دور الانعقاد العادي الخامس، لجنة الشئون الدينية.
[76] تقرير اللجنة حول تطوير الخطاب الديني، التقرير الأول ، دور الانعقاد العادي الثالث، الفصل التشريعي الثامن، 2002، ص ص. 1-10.
[77] المرجع السابق، ص. 11.
[78] تقرير اللجنة حول تطوير الخطاب الديني، التقرير الأول ص. 20

their political participation and the representation of women in parliament.[79] It has supported a movement to increase the number of seats allocated for women in the People's Assembly to sixty-four seats.[80]

When reviewing the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the committee accepted it, with the reservation that it has accepted all terms of the convention as long as they do not conflict with sharia.[81]

The committee refused a bill proposed by the Ministry of Justice to restrict the right of a man to have more than one wife. The bill required that a man's first wife accept the second marriage in front of a judge. Dr. Hashim insisted that the bill was inconsistent with sharia law.[82]

Citizenship and Participation

The Committee for Religious, Social and Awqaf Affairs has maintained that political participation is not just a right of a citizen but an obligation. It issued a report in which it urged citizens to join political parties and participate in elections. This position reflects those of al-Azhar and the Ministry of Endowments.[83] During the previous legislative term, a controversy arose regarding the issue of citizenship due to the incidents of violence between Muslims and Copts in Upper Egypt. Dr. Hashim, the head of the committee, emphasized the importance of 'national solidarity between Muslims and Copts'. The committee officially condemned the clashes as 'against sharia and all the religions of the book'. It based its position on the view that 'Islam prohibits violence and rejects extremism and terrorism'. In its statement regarding the incidents, the committee urged citizens to live in solidarity, as 'part of one people, equal in their human rights, with no difference between Muslims and Copts'. It called for the preachers of both faiths to serve as 'one voice calling for national unity'.[84] Despite the fact that this issue directly affected both Muslims and Christians, the committee in its statements referred to the Koran and *hadith* for support, without referencing the Bible.

Communication Strategies

This committee does not have a strategic communication method, as it works mainly for the People's Assembly. Its discourse and positions are reflected mainly in the legislation of the People's Assembly.

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[79] مشروع خطة عمل اللجنة في ضوء بيان السيد رئيس الجمهورية ، الفصل التشريعي التاسع، ص 7.

[80] تقرير الانجازات عن دور الانعقاد الرابع ، ص. 2

[81] مقابلة مع أمين عام لجنة الشئون الدينية والاجتماعية والاوقاف، د. سميح متولي، أقر القانون في 2006

[82] "رئيس لجنة الشئون الدينية بالبرلمان المصري يرفض تقييد تعدد الزوجات"، قناة العربية، 5 مايو 2009.

[83] تقرير اللجنة حول تطوير الخطاب الديني، التقرير الأول ص ص. 18-20.

[84] بيان لجنة الشئون الدينية والاجتماعية والاوقاف عن احداث نجع حمادي.

PART TWO

SOCIAL ACTORS

SUFI MOVEMENTS

Background and Relations with the Government

Sufi thought began as an individual spiritual activity, but became popular in the third century AH (after *Hijra*).[1] Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, aims toward spiritual purification through the practice of *dhikr*, which means remembering and mentioning Allah in order to know him better. Sufis aim toward developing a direct relationship with Allah through this practice. There are several stages of Sufism. It begins through knowledge of Allah. This brings internal peace and happiness, which leads to a love for all of the creatures of Allah. Sufis believe that the universe is full of God's creatures, and that creation acts as an open book which one must read in order to grasp the divine signs of Allah. As such, all Sufis are keen on contemplating the natural world. Additionally, Sufis follow the Koran and *sunna* as sources for Islamic inspiration, but they do not believe that the study of Islamic jurisprudence and texts alone can lead to spiritual purification. Therefore, they created various spiritual activities and rituals that help to develop asceticism and spiritual devotion to enhance one's relationship with Allah.

Before the nineteenth century AD, Sufi *tariqas* were not organized as a unified institution, but rather as fragmented groups with families and communities tied to particular sheikhs.[2] In 1812, Muhammad Ali developed a law aimed at unifying all Sufi *tariqas* under the supervision of Sheikh Mustafa al-Bakri. Due to this law, the Sufi *tariqas* in the country were integrated and controlled by the state. Sheikh al-Bakri was assigned to supervise a unified council that supervised the activities of all *tariqas* in the country, and nominated several central deputies to exercise Sufi authority locally. Local sheikhs were forced to affiliate themselves with a local deputy or establish an independent *tariqa*. This caused a surge in the number of *tariqas*, as many local sheikhs preferred to establish their own *tariqa* over which they could control all administrative and spiritual activities.[3]

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[1] The third century A.H. corresponds to the tenth century AD.
[2] Takahashi Kei, 'A New Logic in the Sufi Organization: The Continuation and the Disintegration of the Tariqas in Modern Egypt', in *Asian and African Studies* 7 (1, 2007) 50.
[3] Ibid, 57.

In 1895, the state proclaimed a new law that established a council for Sufi *tariqas*. Every Sufi sheikh was a member, and the Sheikh of all Sheikhs acted as the president of the Council. According to the internal regulation the council passed in 1905, a sheikh could preside over only one *tariqa* and would be succeeded by his eldest son. Presently, Law 118 of 1976, which established The High Council for Sufi Tariqas, regulates Sufi activities in the country. Ten Sufi sheikhs are members, with additional membership of five representatives, each respectively acting on behalf of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Endowments, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Local Authority, and al-Azhar.[4] The members are elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms, and the president elects the Sheikh of all Sheikhs to preside over the Council. According to the law, the council determines the appointment of deputies for local governorates, and supervises Sufi activities. Local *tariqas* must answer to the council regarding their activities and the work of their followers.[5] Currently in Egypt, there are eighty Sufi *tariqas*, of which sixty-seven are officially registered with the Ministry of Endowments and the Sufi Council. The remaining thirteen are registered with the Sufi Council only.

The High Council of Sufi Tariqas faced a large conflict after the death of its president Sheikh Ahmad Kamil Yasin al-Rifa'i in 2008. On the day of his death, seven of the fifteen council members met outside of the council office and elected Sheikh 'Alaa Abu l-'Azayim of the Azmiya Tariqa as president. However, after three days a council meeting was held with all members of the council, and Sheikh 'Abd al-Hadi al-Qasabi of the Qasabiya Tariqa was elected president. Due to this conflict, Abu l-'Azayim felt betrayed and called the second meeting 'illegal', because the president had already been elected. Concurrently, al-Qasabi called the initial meeting illegal, because it only included seven of the fifteen members of the council. Those who had elected Abu l-'Azayim in the first meeting claimed that they had only nominated him as an interim president until proper elections could be held. Abu l-'Azayim criticized the election of al-Qasabi as president, because the Sheikh was merely forty-five years old and ran a *tariqa* that had not registered with the Ministry of Endowments. Al-Qasabi was the son of a former Sufi Council president, and ran the same *tariqa* as his father. This unprecedented conflict lasted for two years, until President Mubarak officially proclaimed al-Qasabi Sheikh of all Sheikhs and head of the Sufi Council in April 2010. Although this presidential decision ended the dispute, Sufi Sheikhs and *tariqas* still attract much media attention. Sufi activities are widely covered, and the alliance between the state and Sufism is often questioned.

Al-Shadhilya Tariqa is one of the most active *tariqas* in Egypt. It was split into a number of sub-*tariqas*, all sharing the same Shadhili values, but under the control of different sheikhs. The term 'al-Shadhilya' refers to Sheikh Abul Hassan al-Shadhili, who came from Morocco and settled in

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[4] نص القانون رقم 118 لسنة 1976 بشأن نظام الطرق الصوفية ولائحته التنفيذية

[5] تقرير الحالة الدينية، مرجع سابق، ص 274.

Alexandria in order to spread Sufism. His *tariqa* in Alexandria spread to Tanta, Gharbiya and Desouq, and soon stretched through the entire country. Its major sub-*tariqas* are al-Hamidiya, al-Hashimiya, al-Faidi'iya, al-Gazuliya, al-Gauhari'iya, al-Samiya, al-Fasiya, al-Khatibiya, al-Afifiya, al-Muhammadiya, al-Arusiya, and al-Hasafiya. The al-Hamidiya al-Shadhilya Tariqa is considered a particularly active *tariqa* in Egypt. The *tariqa* was founded by Sheikh Ibrahim Hamid Salama al-Radi in the nineteenth century, and officially registered it in 1906. Under his direction, the *tariqa* gradually became a modern social association, not just a spiritual Sufi path. The *tariqa* operates under the regulation of 329 internal articles. These regulations include a call for the complete devotion and obedience of a disciple to his sheikh. This particular *tariqa* is known for its large membership from a variety of social classes. Its membership is also considered the most educated. As a result, the *tariqa* has worked to purify its teachings and eliminate superstitions from its discourses.

Al-Khalawatiya is another large *tariqa*, with twenty-eight sub-*tariqas* working under it. Its name is derived from the word *khalwa*, or retreat, because one of its foundational sheikhs turned toward retreat for spiritual contemplation and *dhikr*. This *tariqa* is known for its large popularity among al-Azhar scholars, and Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyib, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, is one of its prominent members. In the nineteenth century, the Sheikh of al-Khalawatiya, Sheikh Mustafa al-Bakri, and the Sheikh of al-Azhar, Sheikh al-Hifni, initiated the link between their respective institutions. At the time, devotion to al-Khalawatiya was practically a precondition for any al-Azhar scholar to advance in his career. The sheikhs of al-Khalawatiya historically do not claim sainthood, divine grace or supernatural power, but instead rely on religious science, spiritual guidance and practical involvement in social life.[6]

Al-Khalawatiya yields a wide range of disciples in various governorates, with allegiances to local sheikhs. Its major sub-*tariqas* include: al-Summaniya, al-Daifiya, al-Ghanimiya, al-Suba'iya, al-Habibiya, al-Marwaniya, al-Qasabiya, al-Bakriya, al-Bahutiya, al-Dimirdashiya, al-Shabrawiya, al-Harrawiya and al-Hifniya. Al-Khalawatiya in Luxor is considered the most active sub-*tariqa*, and is headed by Sheikh Muhammad al-Tayyib, the brother of the Sheikh of al-Azhar. He enjoys large popularity and leverage among the residents of Upper Egypt.

Al-Rifa'iya is another large *tariqa*, with around six million disciples. It has not divided into sub-*tariqas*, but instead has remained unified. It was established by Sheikh Ahmad al-Rifa'i in Iraq and was brought to Egypt by Sheikh Abu l-Fath al-Wasati of Alexandria. This *tariqa* mainly emphasizes religious and spiritual activity. It holds a yearly seven-day retreat for its disciples at the beginning of

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[6] Rachida Chib, 'What is a Sufi Order? Revising The Concept through a Case Study of The Khalawatiyya in Contemporary Egypt', in: Martin van Bruinessen & Julia Day Howell (ed), *Sufism and The Modern in Islam* (London and New York, 2007).

the *Hijri* year. During the retreat, disciples practice continuous *dhikr* and eat only vegetarian food. The *tariqa* does not allow the unemployed into its membership, as its founder insisted that all members must be economically independent. Although the structure of the *tariqa* is quite flexible, each group of disciples has a presiding sheikh. The sheikhs organize into groups, and are presided over by a more experienced sheikh called the Khalifat al-Khulafa'. Furthermore, for each group of Khalifas there is a higher Khalifa. This structure has protected the unity of the *tariqa*, and has prevented it from fragmenting into multiple sub-*tariqas*.

Al-'Azmiya is another large *tariqa*. It was established in 1893 and registered in 1934 by Sheikh Muhammad Madi Abu l-'Azayim. He was then a sharia professor at the Islamic University of Khartoum. He wrote several books about Koranic interpretation, understanding of sharia, and Sufism. Today the *tariqa* is presided by its fourth sheikh, 'Alaa al-Din Abu l-'Azayim. Abu l-'Azayim was active in the conflict over the Sufi Council presidency in 2008. The *tariqa* claims to have around one million disciples and teaches a moderate approach to Sufism, in order to combat the perceived threat of the Salafi trend. Their main goal is the rebirth of an Islamic civilization and the reconstitution of the Islamic caliphate. Its following is mostly concentrated in Cairo; however, it has branches in many governorates. In the last three years, the *tariqa* has faced controversy due to its alleged ties to Iran. It has frequently been accused of calling Egyptians to the Shiite faith. Al-'Azmiya was the first Egyptian *tariqa* to celebrate the birth of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, who was a prominent Shiite imam. The discourse of this *tariqa* is highly critical of Egyptian foreign policy, especially regarding the 'steel wall' on the eastern border. Regardless, this *tariqa* is not in conflict with the state.

Activities

Generally, Sufis employ their own language and terms in order to describe their spirituality and practices. This language is taught within the *tariqa*, according to their specific spiritual understanding. One of these concepts is *ma'rifa*, or knowledge of God, which can only be obtained by deep physical and spiritual retreat. *Ma'rifa* is a central concept in Sufism, and holds a large influence over all other Sufi concepts and values. Any sheikh who has *ma'rifa* is highly esteemed by his disciples, and is considered to have a direct connection with God. Because of this reasoning, Sufi sheikhs yield a large amount of power and obedience from their followers.

Another major concept of Sufism is *zuhd* (asceticism). This value has the potential to motivate people to completely retire from politics, power, economic activities and public affairs. However, asceticism

does not mean full poverty for Sufis. Most Sufi sheikhs are wealthy, but regularly announce that their wealth is at the service of God and the saints. *Zuhd* may also lead to disobedience towards power and authority as an act to counter corruption, repression and injustice.

Wilaya (sainthood) is another central concept of Sufism. Sufi saints are considered to have received their knowledge directly from God. This concept is linked to other Sufi concepts such as *karama* (the supernatural deeds of saints). Many Sufi disciples believe that saints are capable of reviving the dead, cure illness, bend the rules of time and place, and other miraculous deeds. This concept strengthens the subordination of Sufi disciples to their sheikhs, and deepens their beliefs. Therefore, many Sufi activities focus on celebrating the birth of saints, visiting saint's tombs, and receiving blessings from saints. Sufis relieve themselves of their earthly struggles by relating these struggles to the souls of saints.[7] Another Sufi concept is *mahabba* (love of God and all creatures of God). Sufism thus encourages a deep feeling of tolerance and acceptance toward others, regardless of their differences.

Sufism presents an alternative way to worship God, with guidance from Sufi sheikhs. Sufi *tariqas* perform collective spiritual activities such as *dhikr*, and devotion to Sufi saints. Through spiritual and physical performance, these activities aim towards purifying the hearts of Sufi disciples, and enhancing their relationship with God. In these activities, the Sufi sheikh takes lead, and his disciples follow by repeating his *dhikr* and prayer. Each *tariqa* has a hierarchical network among its members, determined by each member's degree of knowledge and connectivity with God. This urges an absolute devotion of a disciple to his sheikh. Sufi *tariqas* are not just involved in spiritual matters, but are also active in different social, charitable and political activities.

Sufis often engage in charitable activities for the poor. For instance, they own hospitals, medical centers, schools, and provide for the essential needs of the poor. Most of this activity is run according to a charitable, yet non-developmental concept. The beneficiaries of these services are generally among the poorest disciples of each *tariqa*. According to the Sufi concept, one should trust fully in fate, and never challenge or change it. Hence, their charitable activities offer relief, but maintain an economic status quo. Sufi charitable activity is limited to the provision of aid, and does not work to empower marginalized people. The culture of complaining to the souls of saints about one's earthly transgressions acts as a supernatural relief for their sufferings. It keeps them in anticipation of miracles, rather than in pursuit of practical solutions.

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[7] Ammar Ali Hassan, *Al-Tanshe'a Alseyyassia lel-Turuq Elsufiyya fi Masr* [in Arabic - The Political Socialization of the Sufi Orders in Egypt] (Cairo, 2009).

Charity funds are the main source of finance for Sufi *tariqas*, and the Ministry of Endowments generally manages them. The Ministry of Endowments offers ninety percent of the charity proceeds to al-Azhar, the Ministry of Endowments, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Local Development. The remaining ten percent is given to the Sufi Council, which currently has around ten million pounds. In 1976, al-Hamidiya al-Shadhilya Tariqa worked to widen its charitable services to a more solid financial system. The presiding sheikh, Sheikh Salama al-Radi, decided that each member should donate eight percent of their annual income to their *tariqa* for three years. The *tariqa* collected around five million Egyptian pounds and built The Islamic Center, a complex containing a Sufi mosque, library and event hall in Mohandessin, Cairo. The center is also home to an affordable medical clinic, an Islamic school, a language school, and Koran center, and a charitable organization that provides essential needs to poor families.[8]

Al-Khalawatiya in Luxor has served its disciples for over a century in the village of al-Qarna. Today it has several air-conditioned buildings, including a mosque, a Koran center, and a center in which women are taught how to knit. It also includes a charitable organization that provides the poor with various essential needs, a free medical clinic, and a free restaurant. The center is also equipped to host foreign researchers, as it has a large library and hostel. The presiding sheikh, Sheikh al-Tayyib, has a favorable reputation in the community, so the center is also a gathering place for community conflict resolution. Disputing parties gather in the center and present their complaints to the sheikh. Several disputes have been resolved in the center under the supervision of Sheikh al-Tayyib.

Al-'Azmiya Tariqa is run out of Cairo, and is host to various charitable activities. It manages knitting center for young women, medical center for poor families, Koran centers, and aid funds for those seeking to perform their pilgrimage. It also organizes various religious and cultural events to celebrate saints' births or discuss relevant issues. The *tariqa* fosters discussions and debates among the community. For instance, cultural conferences were organized to discuss Obama's Cairo speech, globalization, and the steel fence on the eastern border of Egypt. Members of the cultural elite and various diplomats are invited to these events so that they may help facilitate the discussion.[9]

On a political level, Sufi *tariqas* are aligned with the state, as the state enjoys full control over them. The members of the Sufi Council formally elect the Head of the Sufi Council, but the decision is not official without appointment from the president. Furthermore, five of the Sufi Council members are state officials. Sufi positions on various issues are completely aligned with the state's positions in order to provide religious legitimacy for the state. Recently, some *tariqas* have aimed at achieving

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[8] تقرير الحالة الدينية، مرجع سابق، ص ص 284-286.

[9] حديث مع السيد عبد الحليم العزمي الحسيني المسئول عن مجلة الإسلام وطن الناطقة باسم الطريقة، في 30-6-2010.

independence from the state. This became particularly apparent during the Swine Flu outbreak of 2009. The state banned the performance of a Sufi celebration, claiming that a gathering of twelve to fifteen million people would be a health risk. Some Sufi sheikhs approved of the decision, others protested against it. After much unrest, they inevitably cancelled the celebration. However, the conflict indicates dissent between the two entities.[10]

Some Sufi *tariqas* face accusations regarding the spread of Shiite doctrine among Sufi disciples. The sheikh of al-Hashimiya al-Shadhilya in al-Buhaira governorate was detained for weeks due to these allegations. Sufi sheikhs denied the validity of these accusations, condemned the sheikh's detention, and presented a petition to protest it to the Minister of Interior.[11]

Regardless of these few tensions, Sufi *tariqas* remain fully aligned with the state, and most Sufi sheikhs are members of the NDP. However, this does not mean that they lack ambition to gain wider political leverage. For instance, Sheikh Muhammad al-Shahawi of the Shahawiya *tariqa* founded the Global Sufi Council in London to unite all Sufi Sheikhs of the world. The Global Sufi Council has also a branch in Cairo. It calls for moderate Islam in order to combat any radical movements, and a separation between religion and internal political affairs of the state. Moreover, Magda 'Id, al-Shahawi's wife, founded a Sufi association to unite women against the trend of Wahhabism in Egyptian society. Some Sufi sheikhs even demanded the appointment of Sufi women to parliament for the 2010 women's quota.[12]

Discourse

Sufi *tariqas* do not have specific discourses regarding contemporary issues such as citizenship, human rights, gender, poverty alleviation and social justice. Generally, however, Sufi discourse is conservative and aligned with the discourse of al-Azhar.

Citizenship

Sufi *tariqas* are generally considered to be the most tolerant Islamic group, and are especially tolerant of Egyptian Christians. The values of tolerance and coexistence are essential to Sufi belief.

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[10] http://islamyoon.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1248078590662&pagename=Islamyoun/IYALayout (no longer accessible).
[11] Idem.
[12] Idem.

Human Rights

Sufi scholarship differentiates between two sets of human rights; those fully approved by Islam and those dictated by a Western agenda. Sufi *tariqas* are generally aligned with the state against human rights activism by civil society groups. They emphasize the destabilizing effects of human rights reports and blame them for pushing a Western agenda that contradicts Islamic sharia regarding issues of homosexuality, abortion and sexual freedom. As such, Sufis rejected the amendment ratified by the Egyptian parliament in 2008 regarding family laws and the rights of children. Although it granted more rights to children, the Sufi community found that the law contradicted sharia because it prohibited early marriages for girls, prohibited female circumcision, and legalized the status of single mothers. According to Sufis, this amendment would negatively affect societal structures and condone relationships outside of marriage.[13]

Women

Regarding the rights of women, Sufis firmly reject contemporary propositions for reconsidering female inheritance laws, and believe that they must stay consistent with inheritance laws as outlined by the Koran. They believe that women do not provide as much for the family as a male, and thus should receive half of what her brother receives in inheritance.[14] Sufis also refuted human rights activists' demands for abolishing marital dowries, arguing that a dowry should be rationalized, not abandoned.

There exists a conflict among Sufis regarding women's political rights. In 2007, the Sufi Council magazine published an opinion piece that argued to prohibit women from running in elections, but endorsed their right to vote. The position was based on an al-Azhar fatwa from 1952 that argued that political candidacy creates distress for women, and thus is undesirable. However, three years later Dr. Nadra Mahmud argued in the same magazine that women should participate in all realms of politics, as they did through the prophet's era and in the establishment of the historical Islamic state. Moreover, Dr. Mahmud highlighted women's ability to perform jobs perfectly in various societal realms. Dr. Mahmud also argued that women's experience in the workplace can even enhance their role as mothers as it will help them in the nurturing and education of their children. Therefore, the piece concluded, no position should be closed to women unless it conflicts with their modesty.[15]

Sufis believe that mimicking the West regarding women's right to work has harmed Muslim societies. Sufis have supported the necessity of women working in a few instances. They argue that it is a necessity when a woman must help her husband in his work, or when she must work to be

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[13] د. عمار على حسن، التنشئة السياسية للطرق الصوفية في مصر، القاهرة: 2009، دار العين، ص 347.

[14] http://www.islamwattan.com/view_articles-546-546-view-87.html (no longer accessible).

[15] مجلة التصوف الإسلامي، العدد 377، إبريل 2010، ص ص 46-48.

economically independent. Women's work is also considered to be essential when they can serve other women in roles such as a women's doctor or teacher.[16] According to a poll conducted among Sufis from al-Hamidiya al-Shadhilya, 85.5% of Sufis consider women and men unequal in education and work, 33% of them consider men and women unequal in religious and sharia purpose, 14.3% suggested they are unequal for their different social responsibilities, while 11.1% viewed they are unequal due to biological purposes. Of those who believe that men and women are equal in work and education (14.5% of the sample), 4.8% of them suggested they are equal because the constitution proclaims their full equality, 20% of them viewed women as half of the society, 9.5% of them stated that women deserve equality due to their advanced education, and 6.3% stated that sharia law guarantees this equality.[17]

Social Justice

Regarding issues of social justice, Sufis do not support work that adjusts social or economic inequalities. According to a poll among al-Hamidiya al-Shadhilya Sufis, 68.2% stated that the rich have not exploited the poor in order to accumulate wealth, and argued that belief in fate should refute this kind of exploitation theory and 20.7% accepted that the rich have indeed exploited poor people.[18] Sufis do support the revival of *waqf* (endowments) in order to help the state combat the deterioration of economic conditions due to privatization and globalization. This *waqf* revenue could help finance schools, mosques, and hospitals, care for poor families, and would adjust social imbalance.[19]

Communication Strategies

Sufism is a widely popular form of Islam. It targets both the elite and the masses, but has a particular appeal to the masses as it presents an attractively simplified version of the religion. Although Sufism was first exclusively practiced by the elites and intellectuals, the establishment of Sufi *tariqas* brought it to the masses and transformed it from an individual spiritual activity into a popular collective celebration. The culture of seeking the blessings of saints has popularized the religion more than religious scientific explication, as adopted by other Islamic groups.[20] It was particularly attractive to the most marginalized members of society because the practice of seeking the blessings of saints provided for a spiritual catharsis for earthly problems.

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[16] د. عمار على حسن، مرجع سابق، ص 348.
[17] المرجع السابق، ص ص 300-301.
[18] المرجع السابق، ص ص 294.
[19] مجلة التصوف الإسلامي، العدد 374، يناير 2010، ص 45.
[20] Nehemia Levtzion, 'The dynamics of Sufi Brotherhoods', in: Miriam Hoexter, S.N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion, *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* (New York, 2002) 116.

For public interaction, Sufis depend mostly on preaching in mosques, at the tombs of saints, and in face to face interaction with the public. People become disciples of a *tariqa* after making a pledge to their sheikh. This takes place in an official ceremony, which differs according to the practices of individual *tariqas*. The disciple is asked to follow his sheikh in complete obedience, and to keep his sheikh updated about his spiritual status. Therefore, Sufism mostly depends on personal interaction between the sheikh and the disciple, and amongst disciples who must act as brothers to one another.

The Sufis are well known for their use of music in praising the Prophet Muhammad. They consider music an integral part of their activities. Al-'Azmiya, for instance, established their own group of singers who perform poetry as composed by the founding sheikh of their *tariqa*. They released their first album in 2001, and continue to perform on all al-'Azmiya occasions. They have performed several concerts throughout the country. The band owns its own studio for recording songs, and several professional musicians use its facilities.

Al-Hamidiya al-Shadhilya also has its own group of affiliated singers who perform concerts organized by the *tariqa*. The *tariqa* has an internal law regulating the recruitment of singers and performance selections. The singers are chosen carefully and they are required to have training in music. Al-Hamidiya al-Shadhilya is in the process of establishing their own religious singing academy. Women will not be accepted into this academy.[21]

There are two Sufi satellite channels on the Nilesat. One of them airs religious songs as performed by various Egyptian, Syrian, Palestinian and Moroccan bands, while the other is for preaching only. These channels do not represent a specific *tariqa*, but the whole Sufi trend as they are broadcast from Syria. The Sufi Council in Egypt intends to launch its own Sufi channel to represent Egyptian Sufism. Al-'Azmiya also intends to launch its own channel, directed towards combating Salafi Wahhabi channels. Al-'Azmiya leaders believe that the existing channels are not sufficient, and intend on enhancing their presence with their own shows, highlighting Sufi preachers such as the Grand Imam Ahmad al-Tayyib, the Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa, Sheikh Muhammad ʿAshur and Sheikh Shawki al-Zefzaf.[22]

Sufi *tariqas* operate their own websites to spread their message through online essays, videos and audio files. Al-'Azmiya, for instance, has an active Sufi website on which they publish articles from their monthly electronic magazine 'al-Sa'ada al-Abadiya'. The magazine covers spiritual issues such as the purification of hearts, as well as public and political issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict. The website has an additional portal, entitled Islam Watan TV, on which they post video clips and

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[21] المرجع السابق، ص ص 27-29.

[22] حديث مع السيد عبد الحليم العزمي الحسيني، مرجع سابق.

documentaries about Sufism and Islam. The *tariqa* also publishes 'al-Islam Watan', a monthly printed magazine with in depth coverage of their leaders activities and opinions.

Al-Rifa'iya Tariqa also has a website, but it was suspended. As for al-Hamidiya al-Shadhilya, a website and various Facebook groups are used to notify the *tariqa*'s disciples about upcoming events. Al-Khalawatiya also has a website with a forum in which al-Khalawatiya disciples inside and outside Egypt may exchange ideas and recruit followers.

SALAFI MOVEMENTS

Background and Relations with the Government

In contemporary usage, Salafism is synonymous with Wahhabism, the theological trend of Islam, which emerged in the Arabian Peninsula under the intellectual influence of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab. His followers were jointly called Salafiya and Wahhabiya.[23]

In the nineteenth century, Salafi thought gained relevance due to the popularity of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab in the Arabian Peninsula. The Wahhabi movement's main aim was to counter *bid'a* (innovation), and the Sufi cult of saints. It called for *tawhid* (oneness of God) and adherence to the ways of the Salaf – the early forefathers of Islam.

The Salafi trend was first articulated in Egypt in 1926, with the establishment of Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya association by Sheikh Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi. The association adopted an agenda that focused on promoting the Islamic sharia and on countering *bid'a* (innovation) and the cult of Sufi saints.[24] However, Salafism in Egypt does not necessitate membership in an organization or hierarchical movement, but is rooted in individual sheikhs and their communities. Salafis believe that they are the genuine followers of Islam because they emulate the pious forefathers and apply themselves to a literal translation of the Koran and the *hadith*. They believe that their version of Islam is the most authentic of all the Islamic trends.

Until the 1970s, Salafism was a relatively marginal trend in Egypt, far outweighed by the reformist trend embodied in the Muslim Brotherhood and the Sufi trend embodied in al-Azhar and the Sufi movement. However, starting the 1970s, the Salafiya trend witnessed a considerable expansion.

The most popular Salafiya trend in Egypt today is known as 'Scientific Salafiya' or Salafiya 'Ilmiya. It interests itself in religious science without any political ambitions. One of the largest Salafi movements in Egypt is the Salafi Da'wa, which originated in Alexandria in the 1970s. The founders included Sheikhs Muhammad Ismail al-Muqaddim, Saʿid Ramadan, Muhammad ʿAbd al-Fattah Abu

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[23] على جمعة، البيان لما يشغل الأذهان، القاهرة: المقطم للنشر والتوزيع، ص ص 178-182.

[24] عبد المنعم منيب، الحركات السلفية في مصر: رؤية تحليلية، ص3.

Idris', Ahmad Farid, Ahmad Huttayba and Yasir al-Burhami. These intellectuals refused to join the Muslim Brotherhood and named themselves the Salafi School, because their main aim was to teach religious science purified from *bid'a*. The group later changed their name to Salafi Da'wa, in order to shift the organization from a group of elite intellectuals to a more inclusive group from a variety of class backgrounds. They expanded their work to include preaching, mosque lessons, conferences, lectures, and youth initiatives. Soon afterward it expanded its activities to include social relief, charitable care for orphans and widows, and healthcare.[25]

The most remarkable aspect of the Alexandrian Salafi preachers is their institutionalization. The Alexandria Salafis are the most organized of any Salafi group due to the dedication of its preachers since the 1970s. Because of this, the Egyptian government particularly targets the group in security campaigns. For example, in 2002 Salafi preachers were detained after September 11, but they were released a few months later. In 2009, some Salafi figures were banned from giving sermons in mosques. Most of their Internet activities were suspended.[26]

The Salafi preachers of Alexandria consider political participation irrelevant to Islamic action. They criticize the Muslim Brotherhood for engaging in political activity and elections, and claim that it is a waste of resources to participate in manipulated elections. They believe that democratic parliamentary participation and elections are inconsistent with Islam, and are merely a Western import.

Another important Salafi group is the Salafiya 'Ilmiya in Cairo. Its leader is Sheikh Usama ʿAbd al-Azim of the 'Ibad al-Rahman Mosque in Basatin, Cairo. He is also a professor of *fiqh* at al-Azhar University. Sheikh ʿAbd al-Azim has over 100,000 followers and students in various governorates, but his popularity centers mainly in Cairo. This Salafi branch does not engage in politics and invests all of its efforts and resources in preaching. Sheikh ʿAbd al-Azim was one of the leaders of the militant Islamic movement during the eighties, and he introduced Salafi student activity at al-Azhar University.

Sheikh ʿAbd al-Azim is highly influenced by the work of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, Abu l-Farag ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali and his lessons center around their books. He focuses his preaching on the idea of sincere worship. Although he is not engaged in politics, his political philosophy is derived from the Koranic verse: 'Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition' (013:011). He believes that change will not occur unless every Muslim changes himself by committing to the rules and teachings of Islam. He focuses on Islamic purification, departure from *bid'a*, departure from Sufi cult practice, and departure from Western influences. He

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[25] http://islamyoon.islamonline.net (no longer accessible).
[26] http://islamyoon.islamonline.net (no longer accessible).

does not completely refute political participation, and seems to be a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood.[27] He conducts his preaching through sermons, religious lessons in mosques, and audio files of his lessons online.

The most popular Salafi preachers are from the Salafi Da'wa in the Delta. They are not connected to the Salafis of Cairo or Alexandria, but preach in the Delta governorates in local mosques and Salafi schools. However, aside from mutual respect and common Salafi principles, there is no direct connection between the Salafis of the Delta and Alexandria. The key figures among the Delta preachers are sheikhs Abu Ishaq al-Huwayni, Muhammad Husayn Ya'qub, Muhammad Hassan and Mahmud al-Masri. Although they are stars in the religious media, those preachers have never departed from the traditional preaching style practiced in local mosques in the Delta. They are deeply influenced by Saudi Salafi sheikhs, as they were educated in Saudi religious schooling institutes during their youth.

The final group, the Salafiya Harakiya, or the militant Salafiya emerged in the seventies like the Salafiya 'Ilmiya. They believe that a ruler is illegitimate if he does not rule according to the Islamic sharia. This trend was popular among youth in Cairo during the eighties and nineties. Its main figures were Sayid Arabi, Muhammad ʿAbd al-Maqsud, Nash'at Ibrahim and Fawzi Sa'id. This trend was subject to a security campaign after 2001, because its leaders urged their followers to support the Palestinian resistance in Gaza. Some of the followers participated in military training camps with the intention of joining resistance forces in Gaza. Those followers were detained and tried before military tribunals, including Sheikhs Sayid Arabi and Muhammad ʿAbd al-Maqsud. After years of detention, both sheikhs were acquitted and released, but were banned from giving public statements or religious lessons or sermons. When Nash'at Ibrahim violated this ban and gave a short sermon in 2007, he was detained for a month and then released.[28]

Activities

The main aim of the Salafi trend is to counter *bid'a* (religious innovation) that was not present during the era of the Prophet. The focus is on sincere worship of God, oneness with God, and the rejection of Sufi cult practices. Generally, the Salafis are very critical of other Islamic groups. They believe that Sufis commit *shirk* (polytheism) by asking for help from saints. They believe that the Muslim Brotherhood and movements like it divide the Muslim nation and work against the unity of Islam. In

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[27] عبد المنعم منيب، مرجع سابق، ص 4.

[28] المرجع السابق، ص7.

order to counter *bid'a*, the Salafis refute any intellectual renewal and follow only a literal translation of sacred texts.

A second pillar of Salafi thought is the purification of Islamic thought, and is based on the work of Sheikh Muhammad Nasser al-Din al-Albany. According to al-Albany's Salafi plan, purification of thought is followed by education of the nation. In this two-step plan, purification means to purify Islam from all deviated beliefs, myths and invented *hadith*. Here, education means the way by which this purified religion is spread. These two steps are thought to have the ability to cure all society's problems and bring Muslims back to Islamic rule. Purification and education are thus the core interests of the Salafi trend. Public action and political participation are considered to be a waste of effort, and a pursuit of material power with no sufficient spiritual base.[29]

Salafis are fully interested in gaining and spreading Islamic theology and do so exclusively through Salafi schools. They believe that unifying religious knowledge is the best way to guarantee the unification of the Islamic nation. They seek to have the entire Muslim nation follow a Salafi understanding of Islam.[30] They refute all flexible interpretation of sacred texts based on contextual reasoning. Therefore, the main element of Salafi preaching is the interpretation of the ancient sacred books, without any additional or contextual modification.

Salafis insist upon the duty of men to grow beards and women to wear the *niqab*. They also believe that men's pants should not cover their ankles, as wearing long clothes is considered a sign of arrogance and pride. The Salafi also ban any public interaction among genders, and believe that men and women should be segregated in universities, hospitals, restaurants and other public places. As a way to counter temptation, the Salafis do not watch television unless it is a religious program. However, they fully utilize communication technologies in spreading their discourse on the Internet.

Discourse

Salafis believe in complete loyalty to Muslims, especially those who are followers of the Salaf, the early forefathers of Islam. They believe in the unification of the Muslim nation according to this logic. They reject non-Muslims, considering them non-believers and supporters of disbelief.[31] Salafis consider any non-Muslim as an enemy of Islam. This sharp classification of the world between

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[29] التصفية والتربية، موقع الإمام محمد ناصر الدين الألباني، http://www.alalbany.net/misc006.php
[30] منهج الدعوة السلفية الشامل للدعاة والعوام والباحثين، من مطبوعات المدرسة السلفية، ط2، 2008
http://islamyoon.islamonline.net (no longer accessible).
[31] محمود عبد الحميد، "السلفيون والولاء والبراء"، 10-2-2008،
http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=2175

Muslims and non-Muslims and believers and non-believers fosters an inclination towards conspiracy thought, according to which all 'crusader Christians', 'Zionist Jews' and atheists of the world are cooperating to attack Islam. Accordingly, in order to defend Islam, conflict is an inevitable result.[32] Although the use of violence is not on the Salafi's domestic agenda, they are characterized by a high degree of verbal violence.

Human Rights

Salafis are generally suspicious of imported Western concepts and severely criticize those who promote Western thinking in Muslim societies. There is no mention of human rights or social justice in Salafi discourse, also not of the Koranic equivalent of these notions, such as for instance *takrim al-insan* or 'honoring human beings', used by some Islamists as a synonym for human rights.

Salafis consider absolute freedom as a source of disorder and barbarism, which in turn ruins all ethical virtues and religious principles. They support freedom of expression as long as it is not used for corruption. In this respect, freedom of expression may not be granted to those who call for ideals incompatible with Islam.[33]

Women

Regarding women's rights, Salafi discourse often warns about the negativity of Western influences. They believe that when the West first began interacting with the Muslim civilization, they found that its source of strength lay in its family structure and in the dedication of women to their home. As such, the West actively sought to destabilize the institution of the family in the Muslim world. It promoted fake campaigns about women's liberation to destroy the family structure. These campaigns misled Muslim women, and women began mixing with men in universities and work places. The Salafis believe that this is the cause of unemployment amongst men and of the disintegration of Muslim families. Salafis call for a strict resistance to these campaigns to protect the whole society.[34] They reject women's access to high education as long as there are no universities exclusively for women. For certain specializations they allow women to pursue careers, but this is primarily restricted to women's medicine and women's teaching. Women are allowed to work in other careers only if they need to cover their expenses, but if they have a chance to receive any financial or charitable aid they should stay at home.[35]

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[32] علي جمعة، مرجع سابق، ص 187.

[33] محمود عبد الحميد، "حدود الحرية"، 8-1-2008،
http://www.salafvoice.com/v2/article.php?a=461

[34] المرأة المسلمة وإصلاح ما أفسده دعاة التحرير، 9-7-2006،
http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=170

[35] حكم خروج المرأة من بيتها،
http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=3177

Regarding female circumcision, Salafis oppose the new Egyptian law that criminalizes this practice, as they consider it a religious duty for both males and females. They distinguish between different kinds of circumcision, and they prohibit the deep circumcision that could harm the genitals of a woman. However, they stay committed to light circumcision – although some Salafi sheikhs claim that it is obligatory and some say it is optional.

Citizenship

In one instance, on a Salafi website a question was posed about citizenship. The answer rejected the idea of equal rights between Muslims and non-Muslims because this concept contradicts the Koran. The 'disbelievers' are not allowed access to high posts of the state or even join the army. They are not allowed to join the police, the judiciary corps or any higher bureaucratic position than a Muslim. Moreover, they believe that freedom of faith is just a cover up for evangelization campaigns. According to Salafis, non-Muslims only have the right to remain non-Muslims, and cannot be forced to join Islam.[36]

Poverty

Poverty alleviation is not important to Salafis. They believe that economic deterioration in Egypt is due to disobedience to Allah. They reject the banking system and warn of the devastating repercussions it will have, as Allah will definitely punish those who deal with *riba* (usury) and deprive their wealth from *baraka* (blessing). They believe that the poor are most harmed in this system, and call for the implementation of a fair economic system based on agriculture, industry and commerce. Muslims are called to commit to Koranic principles in this regard, and to avoid Allah's punishment to the *riba* system. Interestingly, the Salafis consider Islamic banking a part of the *riba* banking system, and believe that Islamic Banks manipulate sharia to justify their unlawful work.[37] Salafis also call Muslims to disengage from the economies of the West. The general Salafi discourse encourages Muslims to direct their wealth to charitable organizations.

Communication Strategies

The Salafis depend mostly on Friday sermons and daily or weekly lessons in mosques to spread their message. They run their own mosques through which they recruit new followers and educate them about the Salafi understanding of Islam. In Alexandria, for instance, the Salafi Da'wa runs several mosques in which each preacher has specified hours to address his students. Al-Fath, Abu Hanifa, al-

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[36] حرية العقيدة وحقوق المواطنة والاحتفال بأعياد المشركين شبهات وردود، http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=3548

[37] ياسر البرهامي، النظام الاقتصادي والربا، موقع صوت السلف.

Imam Muslim, Ibn Kathir, al-Taqwa, al-Khulafa' al-Rashidin and Nur al-Islam are all mosques in which Salafi sheikhs preach. In Cairo, Sheikh Usama ʿAbd al-Azim has a weekly lesson in his mosque, along with regular Friday sermons and weekly Koran interpretation lessons and fatwa gatherings.

The Delta preachers have their own weekly lessons in local mosques in the Delta. For instance, Sheikh al-Huwayni has a weekly lesson in the Ibn Taymiya Mosque of Kafr al-Sheikh, and Sheikh Hassan has weekly lessons in al-Tawhid Mosque of Mansoura. Salafi lessons are generally full of references from the Koran and *sunna*, and the sayings of the Salaf and reliable ulama. Salafi preachers prefer to quote the sacred texts rather than explicate their content. Additional, they frequently use classical Arabic rather than the Egyptian dialect, especially in mosque lessons. Salafi preachers who appear on satellite TV channels frequently use the Egyptian dialect to allow ordinary audiences access to their messages. For instance, the Salafi preacher Mahmud al-Masri is frequently named the 'Amr Khaled of Salafis', as he uses simple examples and emotional illustration in his preaching.

Sometimes women listen to the same lessons as men in their own section of the mosque, and sometimes they have their own lessons from female preachers. These separate lessons are usually held weekly and divided into three parts so that women are not absent from their home for a long amount of time.[38]

Salafis depend mostly on personal networking to reach their followers. They constantly tell their followers to recruit new people. They often print small books full of Koranic verses and prophetic *hadith* to attract followers. Frequent titles for these booklets are *Why the Beard is a Duty*, *The Conditions of the Islamic Costumes for Women*, *On Prohibiting Music* and *The Dangers of Mixing Genders*. Salafi followers distribute these booklets among people on different occasions in mosques and on the streets. As some Salafi followers are public transportation drivers, they commonly put Salafi preaching tapes in their stereos.

In order to promote Salafi education of a 'purified' Islam, Salafis run religious schooling institutes to teach Salafi theology. These institutes are located throughout the country, but are especially common in the Delta. In Alexandria, after the suspension of the activities of the al-Furqan Institute in the mid-nineties, Salafi sheikhs gave their classes in mosques. These institutes commonly allow women to study material from their homes, and take the exams at the end of the year so that they can fulfill their household duties.

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[38] http://islamyoon.islamonline.net (no longer accessible).

Salafis frequently use the Internet to disseminate their discourse. Salafi cyber-activity is an expanding realm within the trend. They launch and run various forums for discussion. They often exchange information about their favorite sheikh, and provide their contact information. Sheikh Yasir al-Burhami supervises the popular Salafi websites *Salaf Voice*, *Ana Salafy* and *Salaf Way*, which are representative of various Salafi sheikhs and include lessons from all of them. These websites host audio and video lessons, and articles from the major Salafi sheikhs of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. Some Salafi preachers, such as Sheikhs al-Huwayni, Hassan and Ya'qub, have their own personal websites that stream their lessons. Other Salafi websites, such as *al-Minhaj* – supervised by Sheikh Hani Helmi – host virtual theology courses that offer online exams and certifications.

Some Salafi preachers have satellite television shows, but others are reluctant to appear on television. The Salafis of the Delta, for instance, are active on Alnas channel. After a dispute with the channel's owner over the orientation of the channel, the key preaching stars al-Huwayni, Hassan and Ya'qub left the channel and launched their own channel. Salafi activity through media is frequently criticized for altering the content of Salafi discourse itself. Unlike Salafi preaching in mosques, the Salafi discourse through media is directed towards the individual rather than the collective whole. This, it is argued, inhibits the creation of pious relationships among Muslim brothers in mosques, as they can access the same lessons from their personal homes. Moreover, the ascetic of Salafi discourse is deemed inconsistent with advertisements and material consumption which are promoted on TV channels. Furthermore, Salafi discourse cannot approach political issues on satellite channels because these channels are generally controlled by the state. Salafi preachers were criticized for petitioning to the Egyptian government to re-launch some of their broadcasting channels that were suspended from Nilesat.

NEW PREACHERS

Background and Relations with the Government

Over the last decade, a group of preachers, dubbed 'New Preachers', have emerged in the Egyptian public sphere. The rise of these New Preachers can be attributed to an emerging public space that has opened due to recent advances in communication technologies and new media outlets. This space has created new tools and channels for preachers to easily disseminate their message. Preachers of many styles and techniques now exist, allowing the audience to select their preference. A debate has arisen regarding the characterization, influence and role of these New Preachers.

Most New Preachers are characterized by their use of new media outlets, such as blogs, websites, satellite channels, CDs and videos. They commonly try to reconcile Islam and modernity, thus drawing a large audience – especially upper and middle class young men and women, who are particularly attracted to this message. Most of the New Preachers have been educated outside of the official religious institutions and commonly have secular professions. Many are involved in social or developmental work. All new preachers hold licenses to preach from al-Azhar. Though these preachers are called 'new' by most, some argue that preachers with this role have existed through Islamic history, and are not unique to the modern Islamic movement.

New Preachers first emerged in Egypt in the late 1990s, simultaneous to the time when many of the radical Islamic groups renounced the use of violence as a means of political action. This sparked a number of political, social and economic transformations in Egypt. Globalization and the advent of new media communications played into the phenomenon as well. The use of new media by these preachers set them apart from other Islamic actors. Traditionally, preachers conducted lessons in mosques. Today, however, they may offer lessons in online forums or through email, and on chat rooms, blogs, satellite channels, CDs and videos. New Preachers tend to have close links with businessmen who provide them with financial support. These preachers often hail the rich as 'blessed' people in their discourse, causing some suspicions about their financial motives.

Two preachers, Amr Khaled and Khaled al-Guindy, have been particularly influential during the last decade. They filled the space left open by veteran Islamic preachers such as Muhammad al-Ghazali, Sheikh ʿAbd al-Hamid Kishk and Sheikh Muhammad Mutwalli al-Shaʿrawi.[39] Amr Khaled appealed to the upper and upper middle-class youth of Egypt. Similarly, Khaled al-Guindy, an Azharite scholar with a sense of humor, appealed to this group. Both preachers attracted large audiences, but also attracted large-scale criticisms. Amr Khaled was often accused of being untrained and unlicensed by his adversaries. Khaled al-Guindy received criticism as well, especially regarding issues in his personal life.

In the course of a few years, both Amr Khaled and Khaled al-Guindy became mainstream. More young preachers who followed in their path built upon their techniques. This new group of preachers shared many similar characteristics. They generally do not give fatwas, do not preach violence, have a moderate approach to Islam, and do not make overtly political comments.

Most New Preachers are young, successful, middle- or upper-middle-class men who preach using American-style marketing methods. Most of them have received their educations outside of the official religious institutions, but all hold licenses to preach from al-Azhar. They also generally hold alternative professions to preaching.[40] Amr Khaled, for instance, graduated from the Faculty of Commerce. He worked as an accountant, and then pursued a diploma from the Islamic Studies Institute. He received his PhD on 'Islam and Coexistence' from Wales University, United Kingdom.

Similarly, Mustafa Hosni was a Commerce student who became a TV preacher. He simultaneously works at an international private school, teaching character development and religious identity among Egyptian youth. Moez Masoud had a similar path. He graduated with a degree in Economics from the American University in Cairo, and was a popular singer who worked as an advertising producer.[41] New Preachers often make their discourse sound vernacular. They depend on soft skills to deliver their messages; commonly using expressive body language, gestures and tones.

The New Preachers often work to reconcile spirituality with modern life. In doing so they attract new audiences from a range of backgrounds. The people who find them most appealing are generally well-educated, successful, middle and upper-class young men and women. The activities of the New Preachers are not limited solely to preaching. They often engage in developmental and social work. They consider community service a calling of Islam.

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[39] Al-Sayed Zaied, 'Da'wa for Dollars: A New Wave of Muslim Televangelists', in: *Arab Insight* 2 (1, 2008) 22.
[40] Wael Lutfi, *Al-do'aat al-judad... tahlil ijtima'i* [in Arabic: *The New Preachers... A Social Analysis*] (Cairo, 2005).
[41] For more details, visit the official website of Amr Khaled (http://amrkhaled.net/newsite/), Mostafa Hosny (http://mustafahosny.com/) and Moez Masoud (http://moezmasoud.com/).

The preachers are generally independent from existing Islamic groups, even if they have similar intellectual leanings. There are dozens of lesser-known preachers who are mimicking the styles of the mainstream New Preachers. These preachers each have their respective following.[42]

Activities

New Preachers often focus on social and developmental work. They also call for the conversion of faith into actions. Their activities are not limited to preaching, but extend to leading developmental initiatives and social service activities, as well as engaging in not for-profit activities. On the developmental level, Amr Khaled promotes 'faith-based development' and calls for societal collaboration in the Arab and Islamic world. He founded the Right Start Foundation, committed to building bridges between civilizations and nurturing coexistence between various cultures, faiths, and minorities. Additionally, he founded the global project Life Makers, aimed at engaging young men and women in developmental projects. Khaled was listed among the most influential people in the Arab world by *Foreign Policy*, and counted by *Time* magazine as one of the hundred 'Most Influential People in the World' in 2007.[43]

Amr Khaled believes that community development should be linked to interfaith dialogue, tolerance and moderation. He considers the fractionalization of communities as something that jeopardizes the future of Arab youth. Through Life Makers he has worked towards producing an Arab renaissance that will unite communities through religion and enterprise.[44]

Mustafa Hosni engages in similar work. He runs various campaigns and charitable events. He launched a campaign to aid the Children's Cancer Hospital 57357. In addition, he has launched campaigns aimed at rehabilitating drug addicts, called for voluntary blood donations and fighting smoking.[45]

Some of the New Preachers are more entrepreneurial than others. Khaled al-Guindy founded a service called Islamic Hotline that enables people to call a number to receive advice from al-Guindy and other sheikhs trained at al-Azhar. This service, however, costs a small fee. One minute costs the caller 1.50 Egyptian Pounds ($0.25), with the average call lasting about five minutes. He also founded

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[42] عبد المنعم منيب، خريطة الحركات الإسلامية في مصر، 2009

[43] Amr Abdel Atty, 'Israel and "Tele-Islamists": Rejection or Coexistence?', *Arab Insight* 2 (7, 1936) 8984.

[44] The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Ed Marques and Usra Ghazi, *The 500 Most Influential Muslims* (2009). See www.rissc.jo/docs/1N-WithCovers(lowres).pdf.

[45] لؤى على، مصطفى حسنى يطلق حملة لإنقاذ "معهد الأورام"، جريدة اليوم السابع، 30 أبريل 2010 - http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=221262&SecID=97&IssueID=79

a company named al-Guindy for Publishing and Import/Export.[46] Khaled al-Guindy has clear monetary aims. He commonly confesses his bias towards wealth, and highlights his rich companions as models. Similarly, Amr Khaled owns a highly profitable company for the production of cassettes called 'Sindbad Company'.[47]

In mid-2009, Khaled al-Guindy launched an Azharite-oriented TV channel. The channel, called Azhari, aims to counter 'confrontational and aggressive' interpretations of Islam. Its newest venture is the expansion of Azhari TV to include a channel with programs in English, French, Urdu and Pashto.[48]

Discourse

New Preachers try to convey a message that reconciles modernity and Islam. They aim to spread proactive social action throughout society, particularly among youth. Amr Khaled, for example, stresses ambition, hard work and productivity in his lessons. He urges Muslim youth to pursue positive actions by joining solidarity groups on social networking sites, promoting the Palestinian cause, or organizing blood drives.[49] Mustafa Hosni tries to keep himself close to the youth of Egypt as well, often appearing as a speaker in seminars at al-Sawi Cultural Wheel and interacting with youth.

New Preachers appeal to Arab youth because they does not ask them to revoke their alternative interests such as music, film, or sports, as long as these interests do not conflict with Muslim values.[50] Furthermore, New Preachers often offer youth lessons on ways of dealing with others with respect and acceptance. In addition, they highlight societal problems and offer ways in which youth can work to directly benefit society.

In his TV Program *al-Tariq al-Sah* (The Enlightened Path), Moez Masoud established himself as a New Preacher. He toured London, Cairo, Jeddah, Medina and Istanbul, interviewing Muslims and non-Muslims on a variety of topics including spirituality, romance, homosexuality, drugs and veiling.

New Preachers often give issues regarding women a high priority in their discourses. They tell stories of the Prophet Muhammad's wives, and of other Muslim women. They work to raise the status of

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[46] Al-Sayed Zaied, 'Da'wa for Dollars: A New Wave of Muslim Televangelists', in: *Arab Insight* 2 (1, 2008) 22.
[47] Wael Lutfi, *Al-do'aat al-judad... tahlil ijtima'i* [in Arabic: *The New Preachers... A Social Analysis*] (Cairo, 2005).
[48] Ziad Khalil Abu Zayyad, 'A Lone Voice of Moderate Islam Now Speaks Several Languages', *Middle East Post* (June 7th, 2010). See http://www.middleastpost.com/1926/lone-voice-moderate-islam-speaks-languages/.
[49] Amr Abdel Atty, 'Israel and "Tele-Islamists": Rejection or Coexistence?', *Arab Insight* 2 (7, 1936) 8984.
[50] Nabil Echchaibi, 'From Audiotapes to Videoblogs: the Delocalization of Authority in Islam', *the Media Anthropology Network* (EASA), e-seminar (April 28 – May 12, 2009). See http://www.media-anthropology.net/echchaibi_audiotapes_videoblogs.pdf.

women, thus appealing to many women.[51] The New Preachers do not deny women the right to work. However, they do emphasize the traditional responsibilities of women as Muslims. Commonly, they emphasize the primary duty of women as mothers, and as nurturers and carrier of society's moral values. Amr Khaled integrates women in his programs, and speaks to them 'as equals' and not as 'second class citizens'. According to Amr Khaled, women are responsible for raising the male citizens of society, and they represent more than half of the population.

Amr Khaled's discourse argues that a woman can be successful in life, have good morals and also remain veiled. Khaled states that women should be permitted to go to beach resorts and enjoy their lives, but they should nevertheless be responsible enough to evaluate which forms of dress are reasonable and modest for a Muslim woman.[52] At the end of his book *Call for Coexistence*, Amr Khaled designated a chapter on Islamic Jurisprudence and Women. In this chapter, he directs a number of questions to Lina al-Himsi, a Syrian female preacher who is considered one of the most prominent female preachers on Iqraa satellite channel. Khaled's questions tackled issues that revealed the high status given to women in Islam, and showed how Islamic teachings called for coexistence, and respecting women as mothers, daughters, wives, and colleagues.[53]

New Preachers challenge the characterization of Islamists as poor, uncouth and fringe extremists. Unlike the traditional religious discourse that targets poorer audiences, promising them blessings in the next world if they follow a righteous path, the New Preachers direct their preaching toward the upper and middle classes. These people have money, are concerned with the luxuries of life, and seek to reconcile money and the callings of Islam. The New Preachers tell many stories of ways in which people have used their money in a manner that helped develop their communities. They preach that riches are a sign of God's love, and should be used to do good works, thus buying the giver a place in paradise. One of the major reasons for the success of the New Preachers is that their discourse legitimizes wealth and promotes ethical behavior among the prosperous classes. Such efforts to justify wealth and rationalize materialism marks a sharp contrast with the discourse of Sheikh al-Sha'rawi, Sheikh Kishk, and the Muslim Brothers, whose discourses primarily address the middle and lower classes.[54]

The preachers' cosmopolitan modernity appeals to many. They often have high-tech, tastefully decorated television studios, and a yacht in the Red Sea to show how an Islamic life can also be a comfortable life. Some argue that the New Preachers have succeeded in making religion hip rather

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[51] Wael Lutfi, *Al-do'aat al-judad... tahlil ijtima'i* [in Arabic: *The New Preachers... A Social Analysis*] (Cairo, 2005).
[52] Lindsay Wise, *'Words from the Heart': New Forms of Islamic Preaching in Egypt* (Oxford, 2003).
[53] Amr Khaled, *Da'wa lel-Ta'ayosh* [in Arabic: Call for Coexistence] (Cairo, 2008).
[54] Lindsay Wise, *'Words from the Heart': New Forms of Islamic Preaching in Egypt* (Oxford, 2003).

than something for the lower classes.[55] New Preachers stress the importance of coexistence between Muslims and Christians. This is an issue particularly important in the discourse of Amr Khaled and his companions, who call for coexistence. During the Nag Hammadi sectarian clashes of 2010, Khaled al-Guindy stressed the concept of citizenship, and criticized those who ignited the sectarian clashes.

Most importantly, New Preachers pay considerable attention to ethics and morals. Many of the lessons delivered by New Preachers tackle the morals and attitudes of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. They stress the Islamic teachings that call for forgiveness, honesty, generosity, bravery and acceptance.

Communication Strategies

Islamic practice has traditionally centered on the mosque. However, this model has changed in the past decade with the advent of New Preachers and the use of new media. For the first time there is an alternative to the mosque, and preachers are employing the Internet, TV and satellite channels, telephone calls and CDs to communicate. Even if preachers begin in mosques, it is hard for them to maintain a large following unless they are responsive to new technologies.

Today, preachers offer lessons in elite upper-class clubs and in five-star hotels. These non-traditional gatherings were instrumental in introducing the preachers to the media. In turn, these preachers became stars, with popular programs and legions of fans.[56] Amr Khaled, for example, uses a variety of media including Iqraa, Orbit and Rai satellite channels, his website, CDs, tapes and videos, and also gives talks in private homes and in social clubs. Islamic satellite channels and new media technologies act as the main arena for New Preachers. These tools have enabled preachers to extend their outreach and recruit followers.

Religious preachers have appeared on television since its introduction into Egypt in the 1960s. The advent of Islamic satellite preachers over the last decade truly emphasized the importance of television. New Preachers use glitzy studios, lighting, music montages, and computer-generated images, giving them their very own brand and style.[57] Television is a far-reaching medium. It is more accessible than the Internet, which requires some level of education and financial capacity to access. Khaled al-Guindy found stardom on the small screen through Orbit Satellite channels. Currently, he is

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[55] Yasmin Moll, 'Islamic Televangelism: Religion, Media and Visuality in Contemporary Egypt', in: *Arab Media & Society* (10, 2010). See http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20100407165913_Mollpdf.pdf.
[56] Al-Sayed Zaied, 'Da'wa for Dollars: A New Wave of Muslim Televangelists', in: *Arab Insight* 2 (1, 2008).
[57] Yasmin Moll, 'Islamic Televangelism: Religion, Media and Visuality in Contemporary Egypt', in: *Arab Media & Society* (10, 2010). See http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20100407165913_Mollpdf.pdf.

the chairman of Azhari TV channel, where he appears on a daily basis on a show titled *al-Majlis*. In this show he tackles various issues and hosts people from different backgrounds. He acts more like a broadcaster than as a preacher. He also acts as a weekly TV host on *Misr al-Naharda* ('Egypt Today') to give fatwas, answer people's questions and speak about religion as it relates to modern life.

New Preachers are model examples of 'Visual Preaching'.[58] With their clean-cut appearance, they show that religious worship and piety can fit with modern lifestyles. They serve as role models for Muslim youth. They are well dressed, speak elegantly, and use a simple and straightforward style. This puts them in sharp contrast to the traditional stiff, bearded, *galabiya*-wearing preachers. As a guest in one TV show, Mustafa Hosni said: 'People love those who look like them; Allah granted me knowledge about Islam. My audience's feeling that I am one of them, reminding of Allah, has a great effect on them.'[59]

Using satellite broadcasts, Internet chat rooms, social networking sites, and their own popular websites, New Preachers reach a far greater audience than traditional preachers could in a mosque. They become celebrities in their own right, hailed by their believing 'fans' in much the same way as secular celebrities are. They have social networking accounts and fan pages, and their fans organize events on Facebook.

Traditionally, Islamic audiences were primarily middle-aged and older men. Many wear beards or white skull-caps, and carry prayer beads. Today, the audience is mainly the youth. In the New Preachers' shows, it is common to find both men and women sitting together on audience bleachers. There is range of veiling styles, some plain and relatively conservative, others flowery and stylish and worn with makeup. Several women may wear no headscarf at all. The young men are all clean-shaven and well dressed. A few wear expensive-looking watches or chains. However, they give the appearance of a blended group.[60]

The audiences of the New Preachers, though attracted and enthusiastic, may lose interest unless new creative ideas and styles are employed. Television production quality used to be relatively poor and uncreative. Today, there has been a production boom in religious shows. For instance, Amr Khaled's highly produced program, with its abstract studio, inter-gender audience and emphasis on individual relationships, contrasts powerfully with al-Sha'rawi's paternalistic, homespun-traditionalism. In al-Sha'rawi's show, his qualities come through in its conservative staging that

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[58] 'Visual Preaching' is an idea introduced by Amr Khaled, referring to a behavior that can be adopted by a Muslim who, through his very bodily and sartorial appearance, can call others to a more faithful adherence to faith.

[59] سالم عبد الجليل، الإعلام الديني..ما له وما عليه، برنامج ولا حرج، قناة أزهري الفضائية.

[60] Lindsay Wise, *'Words from the Heart': New Forms of Islamic Preaching in Egypt* (Oxford, 2003).

recreates the experience of attending a lesson in the formal, gender-segregated environment of a mosque.[61]

Mustafa Hosni opened his show *'Ala Bab al-Ganna* (At the Gates of Paradise) in 2007 with a precise description of his program's objective. With a well-designed and decorated studio, he explained to a mix-gendered audience that by tuning into his show, they will help to 'transform Paradise from merely an invisible dream to a daily reality'. He brings to life the eschatological accounts of the after-life through a passionate narration of Koranic and Prophetic stories. He says:

> Imagine the gates of Paradise before you… [He draws his arms wide apart to show the immensity of this gate] The believers are walking one after the other on a tight-rope toward it… [He rocks from side to side on the couch as if precariously balancing] The hell-fire is below… [He furrows his brow in horror] The Prophet is waiting patiently besides the gates for all his *umma* to pass through… [He smiles, a calm expression setting on his face as he raises his right hand to his chest, a traditional gesture of peace].[62]

Hosni transports listeners to a spiritual 'elsewhere' through highly visual language.

In the same context, Moez Masoud has been recognized for his global influence through his appearances on television and on YouTube. At the introduction of his show *al-Tariq al-Sah* (The Enlightened Path), Moez Masoud used a song whose lyrics included a call to hate sin but never hate the sinful. A popular contemporary singer, Mahmud al-'Issayli, sings the song. The song became popular, and was soon downloadable as a cell phone ring-tone.

Storytelling is an important aspect of the Islamic discursive tradition. Today's storytelling has at its center a theme of repentance and religious discovery. Moez Masoud, for instance, stresses that he does not aim to persuade people through 'preaching', but simply through telling the story of his own and others' paths to persuasion.[63]

New Preachers actively work to build upon their technique. Amr Khaled's form of 'two-way communication' encourages the audience's active involvement and input. He speaks to his followers as a friend and equal, or as an older brother perhaps. Viewers are encouraged to engage in a straightforward dialogue with him, and are responsive to his speeches. He makes use of active online

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[61] Ibid.

[62] This whole description was quoted from: Yasmin Moll, 'Islamic Televangelism: Religion, Media and Visuality in Contemporary Egypt', in: *Arab Media & Society* (10, 2010). See http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20100407165913_Mollpdf.pdf.

[63] Yasmin Moll, 'Islamic Televangelism: Religion, Media and Visuality in Contemporary Egypt', in: *Arab Media & Society* (10, 2010). See http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20100407165913_Mollpdf.pdf.

communities, centering on his own website. He features regular online dialogues and MP3 recordings of his sermons.

Mustafa Hosni caught on to this trend, and developed his own approach to preaching. He says: 'TV aims at entertainment, and thus in order to let people learn through it, the preacher has to let them enjoy. He should have the tools that enable him to revive the religious discourse using modern mass media.'[64] Hosni has hosted many untraditional episodes on his show. In one episode, he hosted Mr. Egypt 2006 to retell his story of religious adherence with a balance of fame, style and entertainment. On another episode, he discussed *bid'a* ('religious innovation'). It was a controversial episode, as he tried to show that there are false generalizations about this concept. During the episode, Hosni sat on the floor surrounded by many books, and read from them to legitimize his position.

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[64] Yasmin Moll, 'Islamic Televangelism: Religion, Media and Visuality in Contemporary Egypt', in: *Arab Media & Society* (10, 2010). See http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20100407165913_Mollpdf.pdf.

ISLAMIC ASSOCIATIONS

Religious or faith based NGOs constitute more than a third of all NGOs in Egypt. Religious NGOs undertake social, religious and culture functions, but the law prohibits them from engaging in any political activity. Religious NGOs can generally be identified by their names, which commonly include religious words, such as 'Islam', 'sharia' or 'Sunna'. Their activities typically include the running of mosques, orphanages, clinics, schools and day care centers, and the teaching of the Koran. They can also be identified by their funding resources, which are typically generated through *zakat*, private donations, and alms.[65]

The first Islamic NGO in Egypt, The Islamic Charitable Association (al-Gam'iya al-Khayriya al-Islamiya) was established in 1878, followed by the creation of the Association for Good Ethics (Gam'iyat Makarim al-Akhlaq) shortly before the First World War. Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, played an important role in the development of Islamic NGOs in Egypt. Influenced by Christian missionary associations, he endeavored to found the Hossafiya Charitable Association, whose activities focused on enjoining virtue and forbidding sinful practices, such as gambling and alcohol consumption. The association also focused on resisting the proselytizing efforts of Christian missionaries. Subsequently, al-Banna founded the Ethical Association (al-Gam'iya al-Akhlaqiya al-Adabiya) and contributed to the activities of the Association for Forbidding Sin (Gam'iyat Mana'a al-Muharamat) whose activities aimed at enjoining good and forbidding evil. Al-Banna also helped found the Muslim Youth Association (Gam'iyat al-Shuban al-Muslimin) in 1927.[66]

In 1928, Hassan al-Banna established the Society of Muslim Brothers, which was registered as a non-governmental organization. During the 1930s and 1940s, the Brothers engaged in social and charitable activities. They built schools and hospitals, and in 1946 they established a charitable agency to help poor families, the homeless, the elderly and orphaned children. The society also set up a boys scout group, which boasted 40,000 members in 1948. The scout group organized various campaigns to provide support for flood victims, patients of malaria and cholera, and to assist people in rural areas. These socio-religious activities helped the Muslim Brotherhood build a large popular

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[65] الجمعيات الاهليه الاسلاميه, تقرير الحاله الدينيه في مصر, مركز الدراسات السياسيه والاستراتيجيه بالاهرام, 1995, ص 233-237

[66] د. عماد صيام,دراسه بعنوان" الاسلام السياسي والجمعيات الاهليه", مجلة احوال مصريه, مركز الاهرام للدراسات السياسيه والاستراتيجيه,العدد 12, 2001, ص 18-19

base, which drove the state to constrain the activities of the Brotherhood and other religious NGOs, through a series of laws in 1938, 1945, 1951, 1956 and 1964.[67]

During the 50s and 60s, the Nasser regime imposed multiple constraints on the civil society sector, including the activities of religious NGOs. The state, through the Ministry of Social Affairs, imposed strict controls on the activities of NGOs and attempted via a large number of state funded social programs and community development associations to assume primary responsibility for the provision of social and welfare services. However, during the 1970s, as Sadat began to rely on religion to legitimate his authority and to encourage the rise of Islamists as a counterweight to his leftist challengers, Islamic NGOs were given greater freedom and state support. Moreover, as the state began to move away from socialist economic policies towards market-oriented policies, it began to shift the burden of social service provision away from the state and towards the civil society sector. Religious NGOs assumed the bulk of that burden.

Starting in the 1970s, the number of Islamic NGOs began to expand rapidly and by the mid-nineties the number of Islamic NGOs had risen to approximately 35% of all NGOs.[68] Approximately a quarter of all Islamic NGOs are offshoots of the four largest Islamic NGOs, namely Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya, al-Ashira al- Muhammadiya, Da'wat al-Haqq, and al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya. During the 1990s, Islamic NGOs constituted 21% of all NGOs in Cairo, 23% in Giza, 31% in Alexandria and 51% in Minya. However, during the second half of the 1990s, and as a part of a broader campaign against the Islamic movement in Egypt, Islamic NGOs were subjected to new state controls, and their funding was subjected to greater scrutiny. Moreover, during the late 1980s and 1990s, the Ministry of Social Affairs intervened on several occasions to dissolve the boards of a number of Islamic NGOs or to freeze them altogether, due to their alleged linkages with political movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1990, the board of al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya was dissolved due to alleged ties between some members of its board members and the Muslim Brotherhood. Similarly, the Muslim Youth Association (Gam'iyat al-Shuban al-Muslimin) was frozen on various occasions due to alleged linkages with the Brotherhood. Furthermore, in the 1990s the Ministry of Religious Endowments brought the mosques owned by Islamic NGOs under the control and supervision of the ministry in order to prevent them from adopting any anti-regime discourse or aligning with opposition movements.[69]

In spite of these constraints, Islamic NGOs continue to play an important socio-religious and political role. The diminishing social and economic role of the state, which has resulted from the adoption of

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[67] المرجع السابق, ص20-21.
[68] حسنين كشك,دراسه بعنوان "الجمعيات الاسلاميه في الدراسات السابقه عرض نقدي" ,الجمعيات الاسلاميه في مصر, مركز البحوث العربيه, القاهره, 2006, ص 27- 30
[69] المرجع السابق, ص30-34.

economic reform and structural adjustment measures, has created a greater need for the social and welfare functions provided by the NGO sector. As a result, the state had to tolerate, and even to encourage, the social and welfare role of NGOs, including religious NGOs, while trying to ensure that they do not get involved in oppositional political activities. However, there is some evidence to indicate that the social and charitable activities of Islamic NGOS have an important political dimension. For example, the candidates of the Muslim Brotherhood tend to perform best in parliamentary elections in those districts that have a high concentration of Islamic NGOs. Moreover, many of the supporters of the Islamic movement in Egypt have financially supported the social and welfare functions of Islamic NGOs.

Finally, it is worth noting that women have played an important role in the activities of Islamic NGOs since their appearance in the 1920s. In 1933, the Muslim Sisters Association was created as an offshoot of the Muslim Youth Association, under the leadership of Labiba Ahmad, who worked as a journalist and as editor in chief of the Islamic Renaissance magazine. The aim of the Muslim Sisters Association was to promote Islamic values while calling for women's equality. It fought for the right of women to leave their homes with their hands and faces exposed. The Muslim Women's Association, created in 1937, published a magazine under the same name, undertook preaching activities in mosques, offered guidance for women, and conducted lectures. The group's founder was Zaynab al-Ghazali, one of the most prominent Islamist female preachers and activists. She was arrested on several occasions for her activities and the association was dissolved in 1960s as part of Nasser's campaign against the Islamic movement.

Women are also active in some of the larger Islamic NGOs, like al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya, which targets women as beneficiaries and which has established a committee for female preachers. Out of a total of 200 women's NGOs in Egypt, thirty-two are Islamic NGOs. The activities of women's Islamic NGOs typically focus on religious preaching, providing day care services, and helping brides and widows.[70]

In recent years, new types of faith based NGOs have emerged, which may be labeled as New Islamist or post-Islamist. Unlike the traditional Islamic NGOs, which focus primarily on the provision of religious and social services and which use these services as a vehicle to disseminate a religious message, post-Islamist NGOs adopt a civic developmental vision which focuses primarily on youth engagement and on social development. And while these NGOs may use religious language as a means to inspire youth to get involved in changing their societies, the activities and services of these NGOs are not conspicuously tied to a religious message or agenda. In the following, we briefly review

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[70] عزه خليل, دراسه بعنوان " النساء في العمل الاهلي الاسلامي", الجمعيات الاهليه الاسلاميه في مصر, مركز البحوث العربيه, 2006.

a number of traditional Islamic NGOs, such as al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya and Ansar al-Sunna, and a number of New Islamic or post-Islamist NGOs such as the Resala and Life Makers associations.

AL-GAM'IYA AL-SHAR'IYA

Background

Founded in 1912, al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya is one of the oldest and largest Islamic NGOs in Egypt, with 882 branches across the country. The founder of the association, Sheikh Mahmud Khattab al-Subki, followed the Maliki School of Islamic Jurisprudence. However, he opened up the association to various Islamic trends, and was keen to keep the association separate from politics. Initially, the association focused on building mosques, and has since its inception built nearly 6,000 mosques. Since then the activities of the association have expanded to include the provision of various social, religious and welfare services such as the training of preachers, the organization of preaching campaigns, religious schooling, and care for orphans, the handicapped and young girls.[71]

According to its website, al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya 'embraces a centrist or Wasati approach to the sharia, which emphasizes the moderate nature of Islam and the inherent practical nature of the sharia, based on a deep understanding of the text, and in accordance with the insights of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence chosen by the umma.'[72] The activities of al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya are not solely focused on issues of theology and jurisprudence, but also on religious preaching. Preaching activities, according to the association, are divided into two kinds: individual preaching and collective preaching activities. Both of these preaching methods aim at communicating the ideas of the group's founder regarding proper Islamic upbringing, education, reform, and the eradication of *bid'a* (innovation).[73] According to the association, preaching should focus on transforming the mosque from merely a place for prayer to a center for the provision of various social services, in order to serve the larger purposes of *da'wa* (preaching).

In addition to traditional preaching activities and the provision of social services, al-Gam'iya publishes the monthly magazine *al-Tibyan* and various other religious texts and pamphlets.[74] Preachers associated with al-Gam'iya frequently appear on Islamic TV Channels. Moreover, al-Gam'iya al-

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[71]. لجمعيات الاهليه الاسلاميه, تقرير الحاله الدينيه,مركز الاهرام للدراسات السياسيه والاستراتيجيه, 1995.
[72]. الجمعيات الاهليه الاسلاميه, تقرير الحاله الدينيه,مركز الاهرام للدراسات السياسيه والاستراتيجيه, 1995.
[73]. هيئة كبار العلماء, الجمعية الشرعية بين المنهج والتطبيق, الجمعية الشرعية الرئيسية,2010, ص 53-76.
[74]. المرجع السابق, ص125-128.

Shar'iya's website includes detailed information about the association, and its activities and publications. The website also includes audio-and video recordings by preachers of the association.[75]

According to its website, the objectives of al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya are as follows:

- Spreading correct teachings of Islam and saving Muslims from corrupt beliefs and heresies through guidance and preaching
- Opening offices for teaching the Koran, and schools for educating Muslim children
- Building mosques for holding prayers and for educating the public about the teachings of Islam
- Issuing an Islamic journal to respond to criticisms directed at Islam
- Printing and publishing educational material
- Helping the poor and vulnerable members of the association, especially those who cannot find work as a result of their religious commitment
- Building hospitals for treating Muslims and providing religious teachings to the sick
- Providing funds to assist with the burial of Muslims, and for building cemeteries, and
- Fostering solidarity among the members of the association and protecting them from the deceit of outsiders.[76]

Activities

The activities of al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya are quite expansive, ranging from traditional preaching activities to the provision of social services in the fields of education and healthcare and social welfare. The association also works to train preachers, publish religious literature, and organize relief campaigns. The following is a detailed list of their activities as listed on their website:

- The Da'wa Committee organizes preaching caravans that travel to different governorates to deliver lecture series and sermons.
- The 'Fatwa Bank' is a database that includes the fatwas of the preachers of the association.
- The association runs forty-six institutes for training preachers in thirteen governorates.
- The association publishes *al-Tibyan*, a monthly journal with articles on various religious and social issues and information about the activities of the association.[77]

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[75] See http://www.alshareyah.org.
[76] Ibid.
[77] For access to *al-Tibyan* Journal, go to http://www.alshareyah.org/index.php?action=tebian_current_issue.

- The association owns a publishing house, which publishes books that tackle various religious, social and political issues from an Islamic standpoint. Some of the recent publications include: 'The Rituals of the Pilgrimage and Their Secrets', 'Human Rights in the Islamic sharia', 'The Duties of Solidarity', 'Abu Ghraib Prison', 'Kurdistan and the Western Sahara', 'The State of the Ottoman Caliphate', 'Organ Transplants', 'Reflections on the Jurisprudence of Preaching', 'The Impact of Linguistic Training in Understanding Religious Texts', 'Lessons from the Battle of Uhud', and 'The History and the Jihad of the Preachers of the al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya'.[78]

- The association runs various social service projects, including projects designed to care for orphans and the handicapped, assist students in need of housing services, and building cemeteries.

- The association runs various educational services including the building of schools and day care centers, and the provision of literacy classes for those seeking to study the Koran.

- The association runs various medical projects including a medical center for dialysis and kidney patients, an x-ray center, incubators for premature babies, a laser eye treatment center, and a surgical center. The association also organizes medical caravans to provide medical care to rural areas in need.

- The association runs internal and external relief campaigns and aid convoys which aim to raise funds and provide aid for victims in natural disasters, both domestically and abroad.

- The association runs various developmental projects, including job creation for single mothers, projects to assist in raising livestock, and bread production and distribution projects.

- The association runs an online textual, video and audio library, which includes texts and recordings by some of the preachers of the association and other religious material.

Discourse

Human Rights

The association's discourse on human rights is based on an Islamic understanding of human rights. According to its literature, the association believes that the United Nations International Declaration

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[78] For more on the books published by al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya, go to http://www.alshareyah.org/index.php?action=book_search.

of Human Rights is unrepresentative of many minorities, especially those in the Islamic East. According to the association, the Koran states that all people are of one origin, which indicates that all are equal. Therefore, there is no reason to differentiate among people based on religion, color, wealth or strength. However, the association believes that while the individual should enjoy freedom and should not be subjected to the judgment of anyone but God, constraints must be placed upon those who deviate within society and take freedom as a pretext to spread destruction or corruption.

Women

With respect to women, the association's literature maintains that the Koran states that women and men are equal in front of the law in value and in rights and duties. However, they draw a distinction between the role of men and women within society. They believe that a woman's role in public life is limited because of her duty to her family, and because she suffers from menstruation and pregnancy. They also believe that it is more modest and polite for women to limit their role in public. A *hadith* stating that women cannot successfully rule a nation has led the association to the conclusion that a woman cannot serve as president.[79] They believe in women's right to learn and work, and require that women wear the *hijab* to indicate her decency, honor and purity. They believe that Western values about women are flawed, and believe that when a woman leaves the home to work her home loses security and peace.[80]

Communication Strategies

Al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya relies primarily on traditional communication strategies to connect with its members. Face to face communication through individual and group preaching activities or through the preaching caravans organized by the association are the primary vehicle for communicating with actual or potential members of the association. The provision of social, educational and medical services is another important way through which the association communicates its religious message to its members, and recruits new members.

The association also uses printed materials including its monthly journal *al-Tibyan* and various religious books and pamphlets to connect with a broader audience. The publications of the association highlight the views of its preachers and various Islamic writers on religious, social and political issues. The association's publications can be viewed online, and may be bought from the association's branch locations or religious bookstores.

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[79] د. محمد المختار محمد المهدي رئيس الجمعية الشرعية في مصر ،حقوق الانسان في شريعة الاسلام،الجمعية الشرعية الرئيسية، 2007، ص 13- 18

[80] د.جمال محمد الزكي، المراة وافتراءات كاذبة على الاسلام،مجلة التبيان، الجمعية الشرعية، العدد73، اغسطس 2010.

In addition to these conventional methods of communication, al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya is one of the few traditional Islamic NGOs using more advanced channels of communication. Various preachers associated with al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya appear on religious satellite TV channels. The group also has a sophisticated website, which includes information about its activities and publications, as well as an audio/visual library of work by the preachers of the association.[81]

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[81] See http://www.alshareyah.org/index.php?action=book_search.

GAM'IYAT ANSAR AL-SUNNA AL-MUHAMMADIYA

Background

In 1926, a group of Salafi preachers split off from al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya to found Gam'iyat Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya (The Association of the Followers of the Muhammadan Way) under the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi. The organizational and ideological split between these two associations continues to this day, and the state has often manipulated this fracture in order to weaken both groups. In 1969, the regime merged the two organizations together in an attempt to freeze the activities of Gam'iyat Ansar al-Sunna. However, in 1972 the association reconstituted itself as an independent association under the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad 'Abd al-Magid al-Shafi'i.

Gam'iyat Ansar al-Sunna defines itself as a reformist Salafi Sunni association, following the path and the doctrine of the people of the *sunna* in their quest for God through the call for *tawhid* (unity) and the rejection of innovations and heresies, and through reviving the message of Islam and the *sunna* and following the Salaf of the umma. The association runs approximately 1,500 mosques and has 235 branches throughout Egypt, with an average of hundred members for each branch. The branches of the association typically exist in poorer areas, with 75% of the branches located in rural villages.[82]

The association is frequently accused of acting as a base for radical Islamist activists in Egypt, and on several occasions the state has arrested preachers from the association for alleged linkages with militant political movements. During the 1990s, Sheikh 'Abd al-Aziz Sidqi of Damietta and Sheikh Fawzi Sa'id of Cairo were arrested for criticizing the policies of the regime.[83] Eighteen members of the association were arrested and accused for belonging to the militant group al-Jama'a al-Islamiya during that time as well.

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[82] جماعة انصار السنة, نشاتها , اهدافها, رجالها, المركز العام, مجلة التوحيد, دار ام القرى, القاهرة, ص ص 4-5.

[83] د. عماد صيام, الحركه الاسلاميه والجمعيات الاهليه في مصر, مرجع سابق, ص135-136.

Sheikh Dr. Abdallah Shakir al-Guindy currently leads Gam'iyat Ansar al-Sunna. The group relies on membership fees for its funding, as well as internal and external donations from Islamic organizations in Qatar and Kuwait.[84] According to its literature, Gam'iyat Ansar al-Sunna has the following objectives:

- Calling for pure *tawhid*, free from all impurities, loving God by obeying and fearing him and loving the Prophet through following him as a role model
- Tying religion and life closely together through belief, good deeds, and character
- Establishing a Muslim society, governed according to what God has revealed in all aspects of life.[85]

Activities

The activities of the association according to its website are as follows:

- Building mosques
- Teaching the Koran and issuing religious fatwas
- Delivering sermons, lectures and religious lessons
- Running institutes which train and prepare preachers according to the Salafi tradition
- Collecting *zakat* funds
- Caring for orphans and widows
- Providing medical services for the poor in the hospitals and clinics run by the association
- Issuing the monthly journal *al-Tawhid*
- Providing financial aid to the poor.[86]

Discourse

The association shares the views of Salafi movements outlined in the section on Salafis. In some of its literature it has expressed the view that Islam constitutes a comprehensive social and economic system distinct from those in the West. In his book, entitled *The Islamic Caliphate Among Contemporary Ruling Systems*, Dr. Gamal al-Marakby explained:

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[84] الشيخ احمد يوسف عبد المجيد ، الأمين العام لجمعيات أنصار السنة المحمدية فى حوار مع مركز الأهرام للدراسات السياسية و الاستراتيجية
[85] جماعة انصار السنة, نشاتها , اهدافها, رجالها, المركز العام, مجلة التوحيد, دار ام القرى, القاهرة, ص ص 94-123.
[86] الشيخ احمد يوسف عبد المجيد, الامين العام لجمعيات انصار السنة المحمدية في حوار مع مركز الاهرام للدراسات السياسية والاستراتيجية ، ص 137.

The Islamic political system is not a democratic system, as it differs extensively from democracy in its' basics and principles. Islam is also not a totalitarian system or a socialist system and it is not similar to sectarian dictatorships or czarist dictatorships; we may not endorse it under any of these regime types. The Islamic political system is a pure Islamic system that doesn't relate to theocracy or autocracy or democracy or socialism.

The concept of popular sovereignty, according to their views, does not allow a regime the right to make laws contrary to sharia. With regards to the rights of women, the president of the association Sheikh Ahmad Yusuf ʿAbd al-Magid once said: 'People have duties and rights, and equalizing women with men is incompatible with the Koran.'

Communication Strategies

The communication strategies of Ansar al-Sunna are very similar to those of al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya. Ansar al-Sunna relies primarily on religious and social services to communicate and connect with its members. Sermons, lectures and religious lessons are a primary method of communication. Social services in the form of medical and welfare services provided for orphans and the poor are also principal vehicles through which the organization communicates its message to members.

Ansar al-Sunna publishes a monthly journal entitled *al-Tawhid*. The journal addresses religious, social and political issues from a Salafi perspective. In addition, the association publishes a series of pamphlets and books on Salafi thought, aimed to counter the messages of other Islamic groups such as the Sufis.

POST-ISLAMIST ASSOCIATIONS

Over the last decade, new types of faith based NGOs began to appear which are fundamentally different from the traditional Islamic NGOs discussed above. These new NGOs use religion as a source of inspiration or motivation, but their discourse and their activities are not explicitly religious in nature. Moreover, unlike traditional Islamic NGOs, these newer NGOs do not operate out of mosques, and their activities do not include religious lessons and sermons. Rather, these NGOs operate out of modern offices and tend to have a professional staff and rely for their activities on a large number of youth volunteers. Furthermore, instead of using the language of charity used by traditional NGOs, these new NGOs use the language of development, capacity building and empowerment used by modern NGOs.

Influenced by the new religious preachers like Amr Khaled, these associations have broken from the traditional mold and have taken on popular human development initiatives, youth training sessions and awareness campaigns as their primary activities. The majority of these associations were begun as student initiatives in private and public universities. Those involved are generally students from ages twenty to thirty, and a large proportion of them are women. They are mostly representative of the upper and middle classes. These associations do not seek to impose the sharia or to establish an Islamic state; rather they adopt developmental objectives. They have no discourses on democratization or citizenship, but they do call upon youth to become involved in developmental work in order to support the most poor and marginalized members of society.[87] Modern Islamic youth associations use social networking to spread their messages and initiatives. They generally maintain presences on Facebook, private websites, and various television programs.

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[87] Sara Lei Sparre (Danish Institute for International Studies), *Muslim youth organizations in Egypt: actors of reform and development* (Copenhagen, January 2008).

RESALA ASSOCIATION

Background

Resala Association is one of the largest Islamic youth networks in Egypt. It has around 100,000 volunteer members and 4,500 employees in fifty-two branches throughout the country. It began in 1999 as a youth movement in the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University, under the supervision of Dr. Sherif ʿAbd al-Azim, an engineering professor. Dr. ʿAbd al-Azim founded the group in an attempt to encourage youth to contribute positively to the development of their society. He still acts as the director of the association.

The activities of the Resala Association include a variety of initiatives, from blood donation drives to visiting orphanages and hospitals. The first official branch of Resala was established after a member donated a piece of land to the association. The association does not claim any political or religious ties. Officials of the association described it as 'a charitable association without any political or religious ties, aimed at providing charity and acting as a link between volunteers and those in need.' However, there is an undeniable relationship between the association and some of the new preachers like Amr Khaled, Mustafa Hosni, Sherif Shehata, and Khaled al-Guindy. These figures hold religious symposiums with the association and publicly endorse the association on their television programs.[88]

The association is funded by volunteer donations. Cash donations are the main source of finance for the association's activities. The association also maintains relationships with various companies and corporations. These companies donate to the association, and in return Resala advertises them as corporate sponsors during their events.

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[88] مروة عبد المقصود مسئولة العلاقات العامة بالادارة المركزية لجمعيات رسالة, في حوار مع مركز الاهرام للدراسات السياسية والاستراتيجية.

Activities

According to its website, Resala hosts a variety of social and developmental activities, including the following:

- Care for orphaned youth
- Helping needy families
- Care of the deaf and for those with special needs
- Tutoring for students
- Illiteracy classes
- Blood donations
- Sale of used clothes
- Recycling
- Charity visits
- Resala training courses
- Medical services
- Food donations
- Publicity and marketing
- Construction of a charity hospital.[89]

Communication Strategies

The Resala Association has a specialized department for public relations and media. It maintains a presence on Facebook, various satellite channels, and it has its own website and blog. It also posts documentaries about the association's activities on YouTube. The association disseminates posters and newsletters in commercial centers and universities to advertise its activities. Many times volunteers and employees themselves are the largest mouthpiece for the association, garnering support among their own social spheres.[90] The association's website is hosted in both Arabic and English. It contains links to their discussion forum, Internet radio station, prospective-volunteer information, and directions for donations. The association also has a number of Facebook groups with over 100,000 members. Much of the information and discourse hosted by the association online has Islamic themes. It includes Koranic verses, sayings of the Prophet, and use of Islamic rhetoric.[91]

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[89] انجازات رسالة 2009, نشرة جمعية رسالة, يناير 2010.

[90] المرجع السابق.

[91] See http://www.resala.org.

LIFE MAKERS ASSOCIATIONS

Background

The Life Makers Associations are a group of thirteen independent associations that have the same name and the same mandate. The groups work inside and outside Egypt, and are comprised mostly of youth volunteers. These associations developed as an inspiration from the popular Islamic preacher Amr Khaled. Khaled hosted *Life Makers*, a television show in 2004, in which he preached that Islam is a religion of reform, work and development. He taught that religiosity without social work and social work without religiosity is not sufficient, but that the two must be linked. Together they will produce national development. He pushed for a comprehensive renaissance for the Islamic nation in which the youth play a principal role. His slogan for these programs was 'Together we create life'. In response to this message, young followers of the popular preacher endeavored to create a chain of NGOs that sought to translate his message into action.

All associations and projects act under the direction of Amr Khaled and under the umbrella of Islam. The Life Makers groups define themselves as 'a group of youth assembled by compassion and God's love, urged to act charitably in an attempt to satisfy God and revive their country'. The association works to contribute to the community through mobilized youth who are committed to modernity and the needs of their society in a legal and social framework.

Goals and Activities

According to their websites, the goals of the Life Makers Associations are as follows:

- Fostering a generation with an effective role in creating life.
- Transforming faith energy into a positive effective energy to develop society.
- Spreading hope and optimism among youth.

- Increasing their ability to resist vice through preoccupation with useful societal developmental work.[92]

The programs of Life Makers consist of three stages. Stage one is the preparatory stage, which aims at eliminating apathy through simple and easy projects in which all Muslim youth can participate, such as for example clothing drives.

Stage two is the intermediate phase, which aims to eliminate negative habits and addictions, such as smoking, alcohol consumption and drug use. In this phase also more challenging projects are promoted, like the 'Marathon Project' in which participants walked 42 kilometers in a week. Also included in this stage is an exercise of collecting the dreams of youth for the country over the next twenty years, including goals about unemployment, industry, agriculture, education, health, environment, women, social peace, people with special needs, culture and art, scientific research, technology and national unity.

Stage three aims at the development and implementation of projects expressed in the second stage. Several projects have already been launched that seek to translate such dreams or projects into actions. These include the following projects:

- The Translation House Project
- Fighting Nudity Campaign
- A project for collecting clothes and Ramadan donations
- A project for eradicating computer illiteracy
- The Life Maker's technology website
- A project for the greening of roofs and buildings
- Health forums
- Anti-smoking campaigns
- Small industry development initiatives
- A campaign for the education of school drop-outs

Discourse

The discourse of the Life Makers Associations is very much in line with the discourse of New Preachers such as Amr Khaled, outlined in the section on New Preachers above.

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[92] See http://lifemakers.amrkhaled.net.

Communication Strategies

Like Resala Association, the Life Makers Associations rely on new media, especially Facebook groups, and websites to communicate with actual and prospective volunteers. The associations are also tied to the larger network of websites and groups and TV programs associated with Amr Khaled, the mentor and sponsor of these associations.

PART THREE

POLITICAL ACTORS

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Background and Relations with the Government

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 in the governorate of Ismailiya by Hassan al-Banna, a young and devout schoolteacher who had previously played an important role in the establishment of a number of Islamic organizations, including the Muslim Youth Association in 1927. The Muslim Brotherhood was conceived as a response to colonialism and increasing westernization in Egypt and the Muslim world, and also as an attempt to strengthen and buttress Islam and the Muslim community through the restoration of the Islamic caliphate after is abolishment by Ataturk in 1924. The objectives of the movement upon its inception were liberating the Muslim world from foreign domination and instituting a free Islamic state in Egypt that upholds the principles of Islam.

Al-Banna conceived of Islam as a comprehensive worldview that regulates both worldly and spiritual affairs, as both a state and a religion. Accordingly he framed the Brotherhood as an all-encompassing movement that reflects the comprehensive nature of Islam. Al-Banna thus defined the movement as a Salafi call, a Sunni way, a Sufi truth, a political organization, an athletic group, a cultural and scientific league, an economic enterprise and finally as a social idea.[1]

By defining the Brotherhood in such broad and comprehensive terms, al-Banna ensured that the movement would appeal to a vast array of groups, including Salafis and Sufis, and those who were interested in religious preaching, social work or political activism. The activities of the Brotherhood reflected the wide-ranging nature of the movement. The Brotherhood engaged in religious preaching, social work and charity, political activism and, prior to the 1952 Revolution, in paramilitary activities. This formula proved to be both successful and enduring and within a decade of its establishment, the Brotherhood grew to become one of the largest socio-religious and political movements in Egypt.[2]

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[1] Sameh Naguib, *The Muslim Brotherhood: A Socialist Perspective* (Cairo, 2006).
[2] Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford, 1993).

By 1948, the Brotherhood had grown into a formidable political force with 2,000 branches all over Egypt and a membership of approximately two million members. The growing strength of the Brotherhood coupled with its increased militancy drove the Egyptian regime to dissolve the movement in 1948. This decision drove a member of the Brotherhood to assassinate Prime Minister al-Nuqrashi. A few months later, regime operatives in turn assassinated Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Brotherhood.

Upon coming to power in 1952, the Free Officers sought the support of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, after a brief alliance with the Brotherhood, Nasser accused the group of trying to assassinate him. In 1954 the Brotherhood was legally banned for the second time and its leaders jailed and forced into exile.

In the 1970s, and as part of his strategy to undermine Nasserites and leftists in the opposition, Sadat allowed for the reconstitution of the Muslim Brotherhood. Sadat released Brotherhood leaders and activists who had been imprisoned by Nasser and invited those who had fled the country to return. Sadat also allowed the Brotherhood to regroup and to resume its preaching, charity and publication activities. However, Sadat chose not to grant the movement formal legal recognition either as an association or a political party, effectively placing the movement in a state of legal limbo.

The persecution suffered by the Brotherhood during the 1950s and 1960s at the hands of the Nasser regime destroyed the organizational infrastructure of the movement and depleted its popular base. Brotherhood leaders spent the better part of the 1970s rebuilding the organization and replenishing its membership. In doing so, they were able to benefit from Saudi support and from the considerable financial resources accrued by Brotherhood leaders who had immigrated to the Gulf during the Nasser period. The Brotherhood was also able to capitalize on, and to perpetuate, the wave of religious conservatism that had swept across Egypt in the wake of the 1967 defeat, which was actively nurtured and encouraged by the Sadat regime as a counterweight to socialism.[3]

More importantly, the Brotherhood was able to benefit from the growing alienation of the urban educated middle class in order to rebuild its popular base. The significant expansion in higher education affected by Nasser and Sadat during the sixties and seventies – coupled with the inability of the state to fulfill the promise of full employment or to secure a decent standard of living to an ever increasing pool of college graduates – provided the Brotherhood with an important constituency.[4] The Brotherhood's strategy, which combined religious revivalism, political activism

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[3] Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years* (New York, 2000).
[4] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam* (New York, 2002); Janine Clark, *Islam, Charity and Activism* (Indiana, 2004).

and social service, proved particularly appealing to the urban educated middle classes who suffered from economic, political and cultural alienation. Moreover, the gradualist, nonviolent, bottom up approach to social change adopted by the Brotherhood suited the conservative temperament of this group.

Having publicly renounced violence, the Brotherhood resumed its conventional activities in the areas of *da'wa* (religious preaching), social services, and publishing. In addition to these activities, the Brotherhood began during the 1980s to chart new territories and to engage in more overtly political activities. The Brotherhood capitalized on its growing support among the educated urban middle class to contest elections in student unions, professional syndicates and in parliament. In the late seventies and eighties, Muslim Brotherhood activists won a majority of the seats in the student unions of a number of major universities including Cairo, Alexandria, Zaqaziq, Minya, Mansoura and al-Azhar universities.[5] University professors affiliated with the Brotherhood were also able to gain control over professors clubs in a number of universities including Asyut, Cairo, and Alexandria University. Moreover, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, Brotherhood candidates were able to gain control of the elected councils of important syndicates, including the doctors, engineers, pharmacists, dentists, and lawyers' syndicates.[6] Finally, Brotherhood candidates contested the 1984, 1987, 1995, 2000 and 2005 parliamentary elections, winning 8, 36, 0, 17, and 88 seats respectively.

Relations between the Brotherhood and the Sadat and Mubarak regimes have followed a cyclical pattern, consisting of periods of controlled tolerance followed by episodes of repression, followed once again by periods of controlled or relative tolerance. After an initial honeymoon period between the Sadat regime and the Brotherhood during the mid-seventies, relations quickly soured as the Brotherhood strongly opposed Sadat's overtures to Israel, his visit to Jerusalem, and the subsequent signing of the Camp David Accords and the Peace Treaty with Israel. Sadat responded to such opposition by cracking down on the Brotherhood. The confrontation between Sadat and the Brotherhood reached its climax on 5 September 1981, when hundreds of Brotherhood activists were imprisoned along with activists from other Islamic and secular movements.[7]

Upon coming to power in 1981, Mubarak sought to distinguish militant Islamists from moderate Islamists, and to use moderate Islamists as a counterweight to some of the more militant groups such as al-Jihad and al-Jama'a al-Islamiya. Thus during the 1980s and early 1990s, the Mubarak regime

[5] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam* (New York, 2002); Sameh Naguib, *The Muslim Brotherhood: A Socialist Perspective* (Cairo, 2006).
[6] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam* (New York, 2002); Hesham al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak* (London, 2005).
[7] Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years* (New York, 2000).

allowed the Brotherhood to operate with relative freedom on university campuses, in professional syndicates and other civil society organizations and in parliamentary elections. However, the successes realized by the Brotherhood in these arenas, coupled with the escalation of violence by some of the more militant Islamic groups and the ascendance of Islamists in other countries such as Algeria, drove the Mubarak regime to adopt a more hard-line approach vis-à-vis the Muslim Brotherhood. During the 1990s the Mubarak regime adopted a series of measures aimed at containing the ascendance of the Brotherhood, including the prosecution of leading members of the organization, the imposition of new legal and procedural controls on university campuses and civil society organizations, and the widespread use of electoral fraud.[8]

In the wake of September 11, and especially after the American invasion of Iraq and the subsequent pressures on Arab regimes to 'democratize', the Mubarak regime adopted a more liberal approach towards opposition groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood was able to capitalize on this political opening to make important electoral gains in the 2005 parliamentary elections, in which they won 20% of the seats – thereby becoming the largest opposition force in parliament. However, following the elections the Mubarak regime began to crack down on the Brotherhood and other forces in the opposition. In the years following the election, the regime undertook a series of measures to limit political contestation, including the arrest of some leading members of the Brotherhood and the widespread manipulation of elections, including labor union, student union, municipal and parliamentary elections. In 2007, the regime introduced constitutional amendments to prohibit any political activity and organization on religious grounds, to remove judicial supervision over the electoral process, and to incorporate emergency measures into the body of the constitution.

Organizational Structure

The Muslim Brotherhood is organized along hierarchical and centralized lines. At the top of the hierarchy of the organization lies the office of the General Guide, followed by the Guidance Bureau, the Shura Council of the Movement in Egypt, the Shura Councils of the Governorates and the Administrative Bureaus of the Governorates.

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[8] Hesham al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak* (London, 2005).

The General Guide

The General Guide is the supreme leader of the movement. He is elected by the Shura Council of the Movement for a six-year term, which can be renewed only once.[9] The General Guide is the leader of the movement, and its official representative. According to the movement's regulations, he is the president of the movement in Egypt and the head of the Guidance Bureau and the Shura Council. He has the right to attend and to chair the meetings of all the divisions of the movement and he is the authority on any issue pertaining to the regulations of the movement.

Since its inception, the Brotherhood has had eight different General Guides. They are:

> 1928-1949: Hassan al-Banna
>
> 1949-1973: Hassan al-Hudaybi
>
> 1973-1986: Umar al-Tilimsani
>
> 1986-1996: Muhammad Hamid Abu l-Nasr
>
> 1996-2002: Mustafa Mashur
>
> 2002-2004: Ma'mun al-Hudaybi
>
> 2004-2010: Muhammad Mahdi Akif
>
> 2010-present: Muhammad Badie

The Guidance Bureau

The Guidance Bureau is the highest administrative and executive authority of the movement. It is responsible for the activities of the movement, for setting its general policies and for supervising all its activities and its various divisions. The Guidance Bureau currently includes eighteen members, in addition to the General Guide. Members of the Bureau are chosen every four years.

The Shura Council

The Shura Council of the movement currently includes 115 members. It is responsible for electing the General Guide and the Guidance Bureau, and for supervising the movement.

The Shura Councils of the Governorates

Each governorate has a Shura Council whose numbers are decided by the Guidance Bureau and whose members are chosen by the active members in the governorate according to procedures adopted by the Guidance Bureau.

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[9] The regulations of the movement were amended in 2008 to restrict the tenure of the General Guide to six years, which is renewable only once. Prior to this amendment the General Guide was elected for life.

Administrative Bureaus of the Governorates

The Administrative Bureaus of the Governorates are the bodies responsible for activities at the level of the governorate in keeping with the general policies of the movement and the instructions of the Guidance Bureau.

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │  General Guide  │
                    └────────┬────────┘
                             │
                    ┌────────┴────────┐
                    │    Guidance     │
                    │     Bureau      │
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                    ┌────────┴────────┐
                    │  Shura Council  │
                    └────────┬────────┘
              ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
   ┌──────────────────┐         ┌──────────────────┐
   │  Shura Council of │         │  Shura Council of │
   │   Governorate A   │         │   Governorate B   │
   └─────────┬─────────┘         └─────────┬─────────┘
             │  ┌──────────────────┐       │  ┌──────────────────┐
             └──│  Administrative  │       └──│  Administrative  │
                │    Bureaus of    │          │    Bureaus of    │
                │  Governorate A   │          │  Governorate B   │
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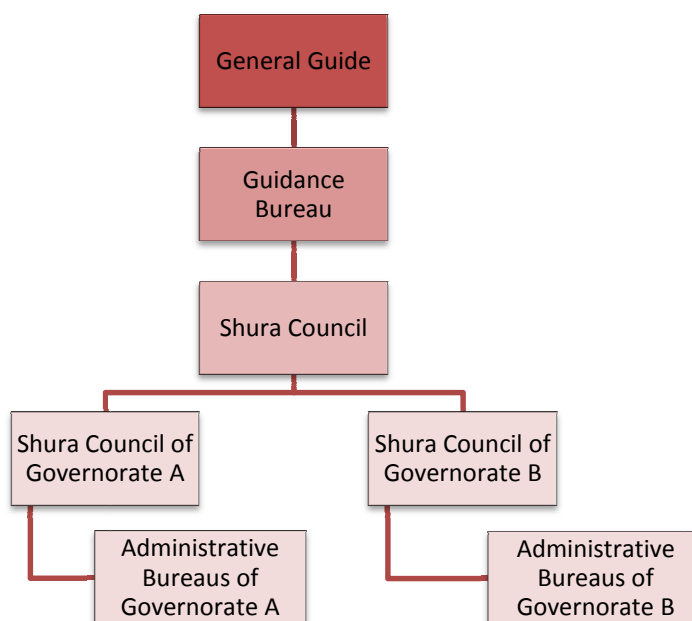
Activities

The Brotherhood, in keeping with the vision of its founder, engages in a broad range of activities in the religious, social and political fields. According to the vision of the movement preaching, publishing, providing charity and social services and contesting elections are all ways of promoting the call of Islam.

Activities in Mosques

Like other Islamic movements, the Muslim Brothers use mosques as a platform for spreading their message. Friday sermons, circles for learning the Koran and lessons in religion and jurisprudence, in addition to a weekly mosque meeting, are all used to propagate the message of the movement. The weekly mosque meeting is especially important, because it is used to respond to critics of the Brothers and any questions that are raised about their vision and tactics and their positions vis-à-vis specific issues. Typically, people are first acquainted with the Brotherhood through these activities and are later on asked to partake in other activities.

During the month of Ramadan, and especially in the poorer areas, the Brotherhood organizes daily *iftars* (meals for breaking the fast) in its mosques. The Brotherhood also organizes *iftars* every

Monday and Thursday of every week, where people are invited to eat and listen to the message of the Brotherhood. These *iftars* typically attract a large number of people.

Public Events

The Brotherhood typically organizes public events such as conferences, seminars, rallies and press conferences in response to important domestic, regional or international events. For example, in recent years the Brotherhood organized events to discuss parliamentary elections, to announce the election of its new General Guide, and to support Palestinians, Bosnians, and Chechens. In some cases, these conferences or events are co-organized with other political forces, such as the rally to oppose the invasion of Iraq in 2003 that was co-organized by the Brotherhood and various other political parties.

The Brotherhood typically uses these events as an opportunity to showcase its popularity. Thus, large numbers of Brotherhood supporters are mobilized to attend these events to underline their large support base, especially when compared to other political forces.

Islamic Days

New and prospective members of the Brotherhood are invited to go on excursions organized by the Brotherhood. These excursions target youth, and typically involve some leisurely activities such as sports competitions and cultural and scientific events that are used to introduce youth to the vision and views of the movement. Islamic days also include watching videos about some of the crises that afflict the Muslim umma, such as events in Bosnia, Chechnya or Kashmir. These videos are used to motivate youth to join the Brotherhood and to engage in collective action in order to help save their Muslim brethren.

Islamic Schools

Like other Islamic movements, the Brotherhood perceives education as one of the primary mechanisms for spreading their message and for Islamizing society from below. The Brotherhood has since its inception established a large number of Islamic schools, often in cooperation with other Islamic associations. Brotherhood run schools are private schools, and are gender segregated. They use the curriculum taught in public schools but with special emphasis on religious subjects, such as teaching the Koran and Islamic hymns.

The most famous Brotherhood sponsored schools in Egypt are the Islamic Generation Schools which are run by the Islamic Educational Association in Gharbia, the Islamic Da'wa schools run by the Islamic Da'wa Association in Beni Suef, the Haraa Schools in Asyut, al-Gazira Private School and the

Islamic Madina Munawwara Schools in Alexandria, al-Ridwan Schools in Cairo, Tiba Private Schools in Damanhur, The Islamic Education Schools in Maufiya and the Islamic Da'wa Schools in Sohag.

Activities in Universities

Upon its reconstitution in the mid-seventies, the Brotherhood began to actively recruit university students. The Brotherhood was given free access to the universities, and used this freedom to organize lectures and events and summer camps to acquaint university students with the ideas and vision of the Brotherhood. Students from the Islamic groups – formed on university campuses during the second half of the seventies – joined the ranks of the Brotherhood in large numbers. By the late seventies, these students had replaced the left as the dominant political force among university students, and student unions in all the major universities were successfully controlled by students from the Brotherhood. This trend continued into the 1990s when the Mubarak regime took measures to curb the presence of the Brotherhood in student unions and on university campuses. Brotherhood students were prevented from running for student union elections and elections were often manipulated in favor of the regime's candidates.[10]

In recent years, Brotherhood students have tried to circumvent restrictions imposed by the regime on student unions, by creating parallel student unions and by convening parallel student union elections. However, the regime has responded harshly to this attempt by arresting and suspending students associated with this initiative.[11]

Social Services

Charity and the provision of social services are some of the most important mechanisms that the Brotherhood uses to propagate its message (*da'wa*). Since its inception, charity and social service have been at the center of the activities of the Brotherhood. Brotherhood members undertake some of these activities on an individual level, including offering food to the poor at cost price or below market price, visiting sick members of the Brotherhood, providing support for students, and providing financial aid to poor families, especially on religious occasions.

Religious associations associated with the Brotherhood undertake some of the aforementioned activities and additional activities such as caring for orphans, providing medical clinics and medical services, teaching the Koran, providing day care centers etc. Some of the most famous associations associated with the Brotherhood are the Islamic Da'wa Association in Beni Suef, and some branches of al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya are also said to be closely associated with the Brotherhood ,such the Branch of al-Fatih Mosque in Maadi.

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[10] Hesham al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak* (London, 2005).

[11] محمد عادل سليمان، تطور الحركات الاجتماعية بالجامعات المصرية: الحركة الطلابية نموذجا، ورقة غير منشورة، القاهرة: 2010.

These associations focus on the provision of social services and on spreading the message of Islam. For example, the Islamic Da'wa Association uses its schools and educational institutes as a vehicle for spreading Islamic values and for propagating the views of the Brotherhood.

Professional Syndicates

During the 1980s, Brotherhood activists began to use professional syndicates as a platform for promoting the message of the Brotherhood. Brotherhood activists began to run in the elections of a number of syndicates and to use their presence on the elected boards of these syndicates both as a way to provide services to syndicate members but also as a way to propagate the agenda of the Brotherhood. By the early 1990s, Brotherhood activists constituted a majority of the members on the elected board of a number of important professional syndicates, including the doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, and engineer's syndicates. However, in 1993 the regime passed Law 100 to constrain the ability of Brotherhood activists to win in syndicate elections. Since then Brotherhood presence in professional syndicates has dwindled.[12]

Parliament

The final field of Brotherhood activities is in the Egyptian Parliament. Brotherhood activists began contesting parliamentary elections in 1984, when they ran on a joint list with al-Wafd Party, winning a total of 58 seats, eight of which went to the Brotherhood. Since then the Brotherhood has contested the 1987, 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010 elections. Contesting elections has provided the Brotherhood with an important mechanism for propagating its agenda. Election campaigning allows Brotherhood activists to spread the message of the movement at the district level. Moreover, the presence of Brotherhood members in parliament has allowed the Brotherhood to impact the legislative debate on political, social and economic issues. Brotherhood members of parliament are especially active in using the tools available to them to exercise an oversight role over the ruling party.[13]

Discourse

Since its reconstitution in the mid-seventies, the Brotherhood has moved towards greater moderation. The Brotherhood has publicly renounced the use of violence and has committed itself to participation through constitutional and legitimate channels, such as NGOs, syndicates and the parliament. The Brotherhood also recognized a multi-party pluralism and the political rights of women and minorities, including the right to vote and the right to run for office – with the exception

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[12] Hesham al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak* (London, 2005).

[13] هاشم ربيع، الإخوان والبرلمان: دراسة في الفكر والسلوك، كراسات استراتيجية، العدد 222، السنة 21، 2011.

of the highest executive offices. The Brotherhood also announced its commitment to the principles of democracy and human rights, but all within the limits and principals of the sharia.

Human Rights

In one of their earliest statements on the question of human rights published in 1996, the Brotherhood maintained that

> Islam – as we know – has been, and continues to be, the only intellectual and political model which has dignified man and humanity and which held this dignity above differences in tongues, ethnicities and races and which has from the first instant of its arrival averted bloodshed and sanctified privacy and property and honor and has rendered their protection a religious duty and an Islamic ritual to be upheld by Muslims, even when others are in breach.[14]

In their program for the 2005 election, the Brotherhood maintained that their conception of basic human rights consist of the following rights: the right to live a decent life free from poverty and unemployment, the right to medical care, the right to basic education, the right to housing, the right to social security, the rights of vulnerable groups such as women, street children, the rights of the handicapped.

According to the 2005 program, these rights must be provided by the state through public and private contributions. The state must also oversee the dissemination of the culture of human rights through school curricula and through Muslim and Christian religious figures, intellectuals and politicians and through works of art that respect ethical values and through sports events and cultural activities.[15]

In a draft political party program, published by the Brotherhood in 2007, the issue of human rights is addressed as follows:

> In the domain of human rights, there are many negative practices in Egypt. Foremost among these are illegal detentions and torture in prisons. Many human rights violations need to be understood in the context of the absence of political and legal rights and also the absence of economic and environmental rights. Freedom and justice and equality are gifts from God to man. They are thus essential rights for every citizen, without distinction based of beliefs, gender, or color while taking into consideration that the freedom of the individual must not infringe on the rights of other individuals or the rights of the community, which are agreed upon. The realization

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[14] The Muslim Brotherhood, *Declaration on Democracy*, Rewaq Arabi (January 1996).
[15] The Muslim Brotherhood, *Program to the 2005 Parliamentary Elections* (2005).

of justice and equality is the ultimate aim of democracy in the political system, which we call for.[16]

In another place the document states:

> Freedom, as a basic Islamic and human value, is a fundamental pillar of the contractual relationship between citizens on the one hand, and the governing authority on the other. It guarantees justice and leads to equality among individuals. It guarantees their freedom of belief, their property rights, their freedom of expression, movement and organization, the freedom to form parties and civil society organizations, and producing newspapers. (…) Guaranteeing freedom, and protecting individual rights and group rights, is the responsibility of the political system. (…) Freedom is not restricted to religious and political freedom, but it also includes freedom from all kinds of coercion and authoritarianism and any breach of human dignity.[17]

Finally, in their election program to the 2010 elections, the Brothers dedicate a special section to the question of freedom and human rights, in which they state that:

> The Brotherhood strives through legislation and oversight to protect the freedoms and basic human rights of all Egyptians, and to amend all laws which contradict or constrain these freedoms or which violate these rights. For freedom is God's gift to man, irrespective of his color, gender or religion. Freedom is an obligation and one of the greatest principals and goals of the sharia, which has granted man all forms of freedom, foremost among which is the freedom of belief. According to the Koran 'there is no compulsion in religion'. Based on this, the complete freedom of the Egyptian person is a fundamental principal and a basic right. The Members of Parliament of the Brotherhood strive to guarantee and realize the basic rights of all Egyptians, which are indispensable in any modern society, and especially the rights that are mentioned in universal treaties and declarations – and within the context of the principles of the sharia which the Egyptian constitution recognizes as the principle source of legislation – in addition to the provision of political and social freedoms, which are essential for the practice of these rights and for the progress of societies. These freedoms include the freedom of belief, of opinion and of expression in non-violent and legal ways, the freedom to own media outlets and the dissolution of the Ministry of Information, the freedom to form political parties by notification, the freedom to assemble and to protest peacefully, the freedom to travel and to move, the freedom to organize in syndicates and unions, the freedom to hold public meetings and to advertise them, the freedom to form unions in schools and universities, and the freedom to form NGOs.[18]

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[16] The Muslim Brotherhood, *Draft Political Party Program* (2007).
[17] The Muslim Brotherhood, *Draft Political Party Program* (2007).
[18] The Muslim Brotherhood, *Program to the 2010 Parliamentary Elections* (2010).

Citizenship

The Muslim Brotherhood discussed the question of citizenship rights in its draft political party program issued in 2007, in which it maintained that the proper Islamic approach to reforming the state rests on the principle of citizenship: Egypt is a country for all citizens which carry its nationality and that all these citizens enjoy equal rights and obligations, provided by the law and by the principle of equality and equal opportunity. In its program the Brotherhood states:

> We consider citizenship to be our basis for demanding democracy, not only to ensure the alternation of power but also in order to practice democracy beyond the principle of majority rule. Legal texts must ensure the equal treatment of all citizens without discrimination. The state and society must also ensure the existence of social conditions conducive to equity and which empower individuals to participate effectively in the decisions which affect their lives, especially in the political sphere.[19]

In their program to the 2010 parliamentary election, the Brotherhood devotes a section to the question of citizenship in which they state that:

- Egyptians, Muslims and Christians, are one society and they are an integral and complimentary part of the national fabric. They are equal in all rights and obligations, without discrimination, and in accordance to the values and principles of Islam.
- Citizenship rests on equality before the constitution and the law and full participation in rights and obligations – with the exception of family laws, which are applied to each in accordance to his religion.
- Egyptians, Muslims and Christians, are partners in the nation and the builders of its civilization, and are in solidarity in developing it and protecting it against any internal or external threat.
- Citizenship is a lofty human value, which must be practiced in a healthy environment and in accordance with the identity and the values of the Egyptian people and not any other people.
- We reject sectarian strife and we consider it as an anomaly to our society. We affirm the need to address its root causes and to reject any foreign pressures that seek to rupture the national fabric.

The question of the rights of religious minorities in Egypt is addressed in many of the documents of the Brotherhood. In their 1996 declaration on Democracy, the Brothers maintained that

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[19] The Muslim Brotherhood *Draft Political Party Program* (2007).

Our position towards our Christian brothers in Egypt and the Arab world is clear and old and well known. They are owed what we are owed and they owe what we owe, and they are our partners in this nation, and our brothers in the long national struggle. They enjoy all the rights of citizenship, whether material or intellectual, civil or political. Kindness towards them and cooperation with them towards the realization of the good is an Islamic duty which no Muslim can ignore. Whoever says otherwise is not one of us.[20]

In another place, they argue that because Copts are:

[P]artners in this nation. No one must think of isolating them or of doubting their strong bond to the nation and its people. That is why they must be represented adequately in parliamentary life and in all councils which tackle national issues. Some object to this by referring to the rule that 'no non-Muslim should have authority over a Muslim' and hence that non-Muslims must not be allowed membership in parliament. We respond that presuming this rule is absolute and has no exceptions, authority in parliament is not exercised by any single individual but by the whole body when it issues a decision. Thus the election of a non-Muslim would not contradict this rule.[21]

However, though the Brotherhood maintains that non-Muslims should enjoy equal rights and obligations, non-Muslims are exempted from holding the highest executive offices in an Islamic state, because these offices entail the performance of religious duties and functions. In their 2007 draft political party program, the Brotherhood stipulated that:

The state has important religious functions. It is responsible for protecting and guarding religion, and the Islamic state must protect the non-Muslim in his faith and religious practices and places of religious worship, etc. The state is tasked with guarding Islam and protecting its affairs and ensuring that nothing obstructs Islamic practices, such as worship, preaching, pilgrimage, etc. These religious functions are embodied in the Head of State or the Prime Minister, depending on the nature of the political system. That is why we view that the president or the prime minister have obligations which contradict the beliefs of non-Muslims, which precludes the non-Muslim from undertaking this task according to the Islamic sharia, which does not obligate a non-Muslim to perform functions against his faith. Moreover, the decision to go to war is a religious decision and must rest on the goals and the principals set by the Islamic sharia. This means that the Head of State, when he takes the decision to go to war, must meet the standards of the sharia, and this is a religious duty.[22]

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[20] The Muslim Brotherhood, *Declaration on Democracy* (January 1996).
[21] Ibid.
[22] Muslim Brotherhood Draft Political Party Program (2007).

Women

With regards to women, the Brotherhood maintains that women enjoy all rights and obligations accorded to men, except for the right to hold the highest executive position. In its 2004 reform initiative, the Brotherhood devoted a section on women, in which it maintained:

> Women constitute half of society and are responsible for the upbringing of generations of men and women. Hence, there is no doubt that women deserve to have heaven under their feet. Women are pure and dignified creatures which god had dignified, as he has dignified men. (And we have dignified the human being…) A woman is a rational and reasonable being whom the holy text has addressed as it has addressed man. Like man she bears full responsibility. She is equally liable before the law and has full financial autonomy. All her financial transactions are valid and require no prior approval from her husband, father or brother. The scope of a husband's trusteeship over his wife is limited to issues pertaining to the marital partnership only. It is based on affection, mercy and consultation. In return the husband assumes certain responsibilities. And from this dignified place we believe the following:

- Women have the right to participate in parliamentary elections.
- Women have the right to be represented in elected councils in a manner which ensures their honor, impartiality and dignity and without vulgarity.
- Women have the right to hold public office except for the Grand Imamate or its equivalents.
- The eradication of widespread female illiteracy, especially in the countryside.
- Including educational curricula which suit the nature of women, their role and their needs.
- Protecting women in all places: in transportation vehicles and in work places.[23]

Poverty

Finally, with regards to issues of economic development and poverty, the Brotherhood holds the following views. In its 2004 reform initiative, the movement addressed the issue of poverty as follows:

> The phenomenon of poverty has spread in our society. Poverty levels, according to available statistics, are above 50%. As such we must turn our attention to addressing this phenomenon through providing the basic means to a decent life to the population, especially the poorer classes and those on limited income. This entails providing suitable housing, which includes basic utilities such as electricity, clean water and sanitation and adequate space for a family, a balanced diet, suitable clothing, medical services and education.[24]

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[23] The Muslim Brotherhood, *The Initiative of the General Guide for the General Principals for Reform in Egypt* (March 2004).
[24] Ibid.

In its program to the 2010 elections the Brotherhood maintained that the principal goal of its program is the realization of social justice and the eradication of poverty. It also stated that *zakat* and religious endowments are some of the ways that Islam has set for the eradication of poverty and unemployment, for the realization of social and economic justice, for reinforcing social solidarity and discouraging the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. The Brotherhood maintained that in order to confront poverty in Egypt, it shall do the following:

- Present a draft law to amend the tax code to approve progressive taxation on incomes. Also, to raise the lower limit for tax exemption in order to ensure justice and equity especially for those on fixed incomes – this goes in particular for civil servants, whose number is around 5,6 million.
- Activating the role of *zakat* and religious endowments in order to create job opportunities for the poor and to provide them with material support, training and work tools so that they may break the cycle of poverty and enter the sphere of work and production.
- Redistributing income in a just manner, which ensures that each person receives the minimum which guarantees a decent standard of living. Towards that end we shall work towards the ratification of a law that sets a minimum wage, and also a maximum wage. This will restructure the current wage system, so that the basic salary constitutes the bulk of the final salary and which ties bonuses and incentives to performance.
- Presenting a draft law to amend the social security law, in order to expand the umbrella of social security so that it may include all Egyptians – especially the recipients of social security pensions.
- The provision of basic medical, nutritional, educational, housing, and transportation services in order to raise the standard of living of individuals.
- Supporting small enterprises and facilitating access to credit.[25]

Finally with regards to its economic philosophy, the Brotherhood stated in its 2007 draft political party program that:

[I]n light of the economic worldview of Islam and in order to address economic problems and to realize sustainable and even development, the program adopts a social and economic strategy which rests on the human being for the human being, as well as on collective self reliance. This strategy consists of a bundle of development, monetary, financial and commercial policies, and rests on the mechanisms of the market combined with state guidance (dirigisme), and on production efficiency combined with social justice.[26]

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[25] The Muslim Brotherhood, *Program to the 2010 Parliamentary Elections* (2010).
[26] The Muslim Brotherhood, *Draft Political Party Program* (2007).

Communication Strategies

In keeping with the comprehensive vision of the movement and the broad range of activities which it undertakes, the Brotherhood uses a vast array of communication strategies to communicate with actual and potential members. These strategies include face to face communication which takes place in mosques, schools, universities and syndicates. They also include the use of print media, audio-visual media, and in recent years also new media to connect with broader audiences in Egypt and abroad.

Print Media

Though the Brotherhood does not publish a regular journal or newspaper, the Brotherhood is associated with a number of Islamic publishing houses. They publish the literature of the movement, including the sermons and the letters of its founder Hassan al-Banna and various writings by Brotherhood leaders and figures which express their views on religious, social and political issues. Moreover, Brotherhood leaders often publish articles in Egyptian and Arab newspapers, such as *al-Dostor*, *al-Masry al-Youm* and *al-Sharq al-Awsat* to express their views on current affairs.

Audio Visual Media

State control of the audio-visual media for the last several decades has limited the ability of the Brotherhood to use these channels to communicate with broader audiences. During the 1980s and 1990s, the Brotherhood relied on audio cassettes to disseminate its views. However, with the emergence of satellite and private television channels such as al-Jazeera and Iqraa, Brotherhood activists and preachers began, for the first time in decades, to have access to platforms of mass communication which enabled them to reach a much broader base.

New Media

Due to the above mentioned constraints, which for a long time limited the access of the Brotherhood to the mainstream media, the Brotherhood has been among the first Egyptian political movements to use the Internet to propagate and disseminate its message. In addition to its official Arabic website, called *Ikhwanonline*, the Brotherhood also has an English website, called *Ikhwanweb*.[27] Moreover, the different Brotherhood branches in the governorates have their own websites.[28] The Brotherhood also has a news portal and Brotherhood parliamentarians have their own websites.[29]

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[27] See www.ikhwanonline.net and www.ikhwanweb.com.
[28] See for example the website of the Muslim Brotherhood in Alexandria: www.amlalommah.net.
[29] See for the news portal www.egyptwindow.net. The websites of Brotherhood parliamentarians can be found on www.nowabikhwan.com.

The Brotherhood also has begun to duplicate successful online social networking sites, such as Facebook (*Ikhwanbook*), YouTube (*Ikhwantube*) and Wikipedia (*Ikhwan Wiki*).[30]

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[30] See www.ikhwanbook.com, www.ikhwantube.org and www.ikhwanwiki.com. An overview of all the websites associated with the movement can be found here:
www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.aspx?ArtID=20320&SecID=117#.

AL-WASAT PARTY

Background

Al-Wasat Party (the Centre Party) is an Egyptian political party with a moderate Islamist or post-Islamist platform, similar to that of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey. The party is associated with Wasat (seventies generation activists), who had joined the Brotherhood upon its reconstitution during the 1970s and who were credited for overseeing the ascendance of the movement in student unions, professional syndicates and in parliament during the 1980s and 1990s. Led by Abul Ela Madi, some members of this generation split from the Brotherhood in 1996 to establish al-Wasat Party, after the Brotherhood refused to adopt their proposal about forming a political party. However, from 1996 to 2011, the group was repeatedly denied the right to form a political party by the state controlled Political Parties Committee. It was not until after the fall of the Mubarak regime in 2011 that the political parties' court finally approved the establishment of al-Wasat Party.

Discourse

Equality, Citizenship, and Women

Al-Wasat Party has distinguished itself from the Brotherhood by taking clear and unequivocal positions on the thorny issues of citizenship and equality. The founders of al-Wasat describe their party as a civic party that takes its inspiration from the principles of Islam.[31] Al-Wasat founders perceive the sharia not as a set of fixed and immutable principles, but rather as a set of general values and principles that must be re-interpreted and adapted to different historical contexts:

> The objective of the founders is to make the sharia a living entity that actively interacts with all aspects of life. We thus opt for those interpretations of the sharia that do not paralyze society

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[31] Islamists increasingly prefer to use the term 'civic' as a substitute for the term 'secular', because secularism has been associated in their discourse with atheism. The term civic allows them to embrace the notion of a non-religious state while avoiding the negative connotations associated with the term secularism.

and stunt its development, but rather those that push it forward. The founders believe that their views are inspired by the underlying purposes and intentions of the sharia and recognize that the teachings of the sharia are based on human interpretations that are subject to mistakes, criticisms and revisions and must thus be revised from place to place and time to time.[32]

In addition to adopting a loose and dynamic understanding of the sharia, the Wasat Party has unequivocally recognized the principles of equal citizenship and equality among men and women and among Muslims and non-Muslims. The program of the party explicitly states that the principle of citizenship is the foundation for organizing relations between individuals in a state and that there should be no discrimination on the basis of religion, gender, color, race in all rights and duties – including the right to hold the highest executive office. In another part of its program, al-Wasat affirms complete equality between men and women in terms of political and legal entitlements and maintains that merit and not gender is the only criteria for occupying the highest public offices.[33]

Thus, unlike the Brotherhood which continues to be ambiguous and elusive on the question of the equal rights of women and minorities, al-Wasat has resolved this question once and for all and in thus doing has moved its discourse beyond the interminable debates that continue to surround the Brotherhood. Moreover, unlike the Brotherhood which continues to be a society comprised exclusively of devout and observing Muslims and which demands of its members a high level of religious commitment, al-Wasat party is a political association open to secular Muslims and to non-Muslims. The founders of al-Wasat include a number of Egyptian Copts and secular men and women. Describing the difference between his party and the Muslim Brotherhood, Abul Ela Madi stated: 'Whereas the Brotherhood stands outside Egyptian society and seeks to transform it into its image, our party is representative of Egyptian society in all its internal pluralism and diversity. We regard ourselves as part of society and not as standing outside of it'.[34]

Communication Strategies

Up until its official establishment in 2011, al-Wasat Party's communication strategies have been confined to their online website.[35] Occasionally, party leader Abul Ela Madi holds seminars and conferences for party members, and writes press releases to update the public about the party's proceedings.

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[32] Al-Wasat Party Program, http://www.alwasatparty.com/dpages.aspx?id=7.
[33] Al-Wasat Party Program, http://www.alwasatparty.com/dpages.aspx?id=7.
[34] Documentary on al-Wasat Party, see www.alwasatparty.com.
[35] See www.alwasatparty.com.

AL-'AMAL PARTY

Background and Relations with the Government

Al-'Amal Party (the Labor Party) was established in October 1978 as an extension of the Masr al-Fattah Movement. The Masr al-Fattah Movement (Young Egypt Movement) was founded under the leadership of Ahmad Husayn in 1933. It was transformed into the Islamic National Party in 1939, and later became the Socialist Party in 1949. It was dissolved in 1953. The movement was reestablished under the leadership of Ibrahim Shukri as The Labor Party in 1978 within the framework of partisan, multilateral politics.

The party adopted an Islamic orientation in 1986 and in 1987 and formed an alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood for the 1987 elections. Al-'Amal Party emphasized this transformation at the Fifth Islamic Conference in 1989. It adopted the slogan 'Comprehensive reform from an Islamic perspective'. Intellectual Adil Husayn was then appointed Secretary General of the party. At its Sixth Islamic Conference in 1993, the party re-emphasized its Islamic identity. It demanded the institution of the Islamic sharia in the country, alienating many of its members who held stronger socialist ideals.

The party adopted a nationalist Islamist agenda. It emphasized the Arab identity of its members, saw Islam as the principal source of its positions and orientations and argued that there was no contradiction between Arabism and Islam. The party rejected any dependency upon the American-Israeli alliance and called for freeing Arab and Islamic countries from all forms of hegemony and occupation, particularly Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan. The party maintained that Arab unity can be achieved through fostering Islamic unity and that *shura* as a way of ruling will ensure freedom and social justice.

The party fought a series of battles against the Egyptian government, which it often accused of being a pawn to the United States and Israel. The party's last battle with the regime was an attack on the Minister of Culture, Faruq Husni, for his approval of a book by the controversial Syrian novelist Haydar Haydar. The content of the novel was found to be offensive to Islam. In the newspaper *al-*

Shaab, Dr. Muhammad ʿAbbas published an article calling on people to stage demonstrations against the book. The students who protested were met with a massive backlash of violence from the government. The party was accused of inciting violence and was frozen in February of 2000. Its headquarters were closed and *al-Shaab* was officially banned.

Discourse

According to the party's platform, the following procedures would protect and maintain a culture of human rights in Egypt:

- Ending the Emergency Law and the immediate release of all prisoners
- Abolishing laws that limit general and individual liberties and which are contradictory to the constitution and human rights
- Cancelling all linkages between state agencies and the ruling party in order to guarantee that the state acts on behalf of its citizens
- Ending the use of torture
- Abolishing temporary detention
- Allowing freedom of the press
- Allowing equal access to all political parties and forces in the media
- Amending broadcast and media laws in order to foster an independent media

The party platform discusses plans for poverty alleviation, unemployment and economic development, emphasizing the importance of state planning in order to guarantee these goals. It also warns that foreign interference in the Egyptian economy has a negative effect on economic productivity. The party called for an end to corruption in all forms in order to create a climate in which economic development may take place.[36]

Communication Strategies

Because the Labor Party has been frozen by the state, its communication methods are limited. Its newspaper *al-Shaab* is still banned after the 2000 decree. The party now supports an online website on which it presents its views and engages in popular debate. Party members participate in a number of conferences and seminars. They also engage in constant efforts to lift the freeze on the party and *al-Shaab* through demonstration and protests.

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[36] Al-Amal Political Party Platform, http://www.el3amal.net/news/news.php?i=33763.

AL-JAMA'A AL-ISLAMIYA

Background and Relations with the Government

Al-Jama'a al-Islamiya (the Islamic Group), was founded in Upper Egypt during the 1970s. Its popularity arose at a time when President Sadat encouraged the development of religious movements in order to derail the momentum of the period's leftist movements. The development of al-Jama'a al-Islamiya is also attributed to the weakened role of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was destabilized at the time by an era of Nasserite policy of persecution. The Islamic Group fractured in 1981 following the 'Jihad Organization Case', in which many members were investigated and imprisoned for the assassination of President Sadat. This case continued until 1983, after which many members were released. Once released, members returned to preaching their message throughout the country.

The Islamic Group's popularity spread rapidly among educated youth in Upper Egypt. The group also maintained strongholds in Greater Cairo, particularly in Imbaba and Ain Shams, and held presences throughout Lower and Upper Egypt. It tried to target all people and classes in its preaching, but mostly emphasized its focus on youth and the poorer classes. In order to gain attention from the poorer classes, it provided various social services for its followers.

The Islamic Group's activities aimed at establishing an Islamic state in Egypt, believing that this would lead to the establishment of the Islamic caliphate. They hosted several military camps outside the country, including Afghanistan and Chechnya. Many members, such as Rifa'a Taha, Mustafa Hamza, and Muhammad Shawki al-Islambuli sought refuge outside the country or moved abroad to lead group members in places such as Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Sudan.

The Islamic Group maintained a stronghold in the country until the assassination of the group's leader 'Alaa Muhyi al-Din. The Islamic Group accused the Egyptian government of coordinating al-Din's assassination, and responded by threatening to assassinate Dr. Rif'at al-Mahgub, the People's Assembly's President of the time. A series of attacks and counterattacks ensued, ending with the Luxor Massacre of 1997. The Egyptian government retaliated with an enhanced assault upon the

group's members and imprisoned the majority of them. Inside Egyptian prisons, leaders of the Islamic Group engaged in dialogue, and from 2002 to 2005 authorities began to release members of the group from prison. Over 12,000 leaders and members of the group had been imprisoned, all of whom were eventually freed.

Discourse

The Islamic Group's discourse evolved through a series of intellectual revisions. The discourse of the past emphasized the use of violence and force to establish an Islamic state. The group believed that through the establishment of an Islamic state they could reestablish the Islamic caliphate. Its discourse does not recognize the constitution or the legitimacy of the government. After the group's intellectual revisions in 2002, however, their policy and discourse changed. They abandoned the use of violence in all manifestations, and they adopted policies that were mindful of the law and the constitution.[37]

The Islamic Group now views Egypt as a nation in which citizens of various backgrounds may coexist with peace and tolerance. They now preach that the rights of all citizens must be upheld, regardless of their religion. They endorse political participation in all capacities. They have expressed their willingness to participate in political elections using all available legal and constitutional tools. Members participate in presidential and parliamentary voting, and have attempted to create their own political party. The Islamic Group emphasizes the protection of human rights as both an essential dimension of Islam and a legal obligation that must be upheld regardless of religion or nationality.

However, like the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Group believes that the highest positions in the state apparatus, including the office of president, prime minister and chief of the armed forces and the judiciary, must be restricted to Muslim men only. The Islamic Group calls for social solidarity as a means to combat the ills of poverty. It encourages members of the business world and the upper classes to establish projects that would help aid in employing others or in establishing charitable organizations. It believes that the people of Egypt can act in this capacity and reach the most poor and marginalized classes in ways that the state is unable to.

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[37] ضياء رشوان-الجماعة الاسلامية ونهاية العنف.لماذا الآن؟-صحيفة الاهرام5يوليو2002

Communication Strategies

Currently, al-Jama'a al-Islamiya has little influence as a religious or political group. They have generally lost any significant position or status in the public sphere. The Islamic Group runs a website on which it presents its views, data, and commentary.[38] Additionally, leaders of the group occasionally publish books or articles in independent newspapers or magazines.

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[38] For more information, see the Islamic Group's website: http://www.egyig.com/.

AL-JIHAD GROUPS

Background and Relations with the Government

Jihad organizations were numerous and varied. They did not have common leadership or a common organization, but all used more or less the same concepts. Members of independent Jihad groups only expressed loyalty to their specific Emirs or leaders, and did not form a cohesive network. Examples of these Jihad organizations include the Shubra Group, the Beni Suef Group and the Sharqiya Group, which were active in the seventies and eighties.

Generally, these organizations sprouted in Lower or Northern Egypt, and held very little presence in Upper Egypt. This changed after the conflict between the Egyptian government and al-Jama'a al-Islamiya – caused by the assassination of 'Alaa Muhyi al-Din – set a vicious sequence of violence into motion. The groups failed in their missions within Egypt, but they succeeded in bombing the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan in 1996. As a result, Egyptian security forces launched extensive campaigns to arrest al-Jihad group members. The work of Jihad groups within Egypt was directed towards people of all classes, with a particular emphasis on youth and army officers. Through preaching, al-Jihad groups spread their message that a *coup d'état* was necessary to achieve their goals. Jihad groups maintained some paramilitary camps within Egypt. A number of their leaders fled from Egypt and maintained their networks from satellite countries, including Afghanistan, Iran and Sudan.

Discourse

The discourse of the Jihad groups is the same as the discourse of al-Jama'a al-Islamiya. After the arrest of Jihad leaders in 1997, al-Jama'a al-Islamiya announced their 'Cessation of Violence' initiative. A number of the Jihad leaders supported this movement, and declared similar initiatives. For example, Nabil al-Maghribi, Nabil Nasim, and Ahmad Yusuf, three prominent Jihad leaders and influential intellectuals, publically reflected upon their previous intellectual faults and renounced the use of violence.

Problematically, Jihad groups were not unified and thus their intellectual revisions and views regarding the use of violence varied. Some groups did not support the renouncement of the use of violence. Additionally, some Jihad leaders abroad did not support these revisions. As such, cleavages between Jihad groups deepened on both the individual and leadership levels. Presently, the Jihad leaders and individuals who did not renounce violence are detained in Egypt. Generally the movement's revisions did not touch upon issues regarding citizenship, human rights, poverty alleviation or political participation.

Those who have been released from prison do not currently preach or act politically. There are no media or communicative initiatives maintained by the groups. They do not maintain any websites or engage with the press. The groups have essentially vanished.

PART FOUR

INTELLECTUAL ACTORS

WASATIYA INTELLECTUALS

Background

The Wasatiya intellectual trend originated during the Arab renaissance, at the time when an ideological conflict between Islamic values and Western values first began to take shape. At the time, two Arab intellectuals, Muhammad Abduh and Gamal al-Din al-Afghani, were working to find ideological reconciliation between societal values imported from the West and the values of the Muslim world. Although Islamic groups frequently attacked their work, Wasatiya intellectuals perceived the movement as a major step in reviving Islam and reconnecting it with the realities of contemporary life. The Wasatiya intellectual trend has its theoretical origins in the work of nineteenth-century reformist intellectuals and in the social activism of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood.[1]

Some consider the Islamic scholar Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali the founder of the Wasatiya trend. He founded the basis of Wasatiya thought, and mobilized it to attract a popular following. In Wasatiya thought, Islam is both a religious belief and an intellectual reservoir that can be drawn on for cultural, political, social and economic insight.[2] Wasatiya thought maintains a centrist view of Islam, set between radicalism and secularism.

Many Egyptian intellectuals gathered around al-Ghazali to help in the development of Wasatiya thought. Included were the Islamic scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the lawyers Muhammad Selim al-Awa and Ahmad Kamal Abul Magd, the journalist Fahmi Howaydi and the judge Tariq al-Bishri. At this point the group did not do much to attract new colleagues, researchers, contributors, activists or students. Many young people at the time, however, were seeking a moderate alternative to the violent groups of the period. The group of intellectuals collectively wrote a manifesto called *The New Islamist School*, including explications of current issues relating to culture, society and politics. They circulated this document among their students and colleagues for approval, publishing it in 1991, and

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[1] Raymond William Baker, *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists* (Cambridge MA., 2003) 13.
[2] Ibid.

again in 1992.[3] The group does not adhere to any sort of organizational hierarchy, but instead work individually with the same cooperative approach and value set.

Activities

Wasatiya thought seeks to promote Islamic ideals within the context of contemporary global realities. Accordingly, Islamic discourse must be updated in order to stay current with social realities. This renewal does not affect the established tenants of Islam, such as prayer rituals or the essences of belief. What is renewed, however, are the presentation of these foundations, including renewed *ijtihad* (interpretation of sacred texts). According to Wasatiya thought, the human mind plays a large role in *fiqh* (understanding or interpretation of Islamic discourse).[4] Regarding the renewal of *hadith* interpretation, the Islamic scholar Qaradawi said: 'Allah will raise up a scholar every century to this nation to renew its religion.' As such, the renewal of Islamic discourse within the context of contemporary circumstances is a necessity.

A *maqasidi* (purpose-oriented) approach to Islam starkly differs from the more conservative Salafi movement. *Maqasidi* Islam allows for freedom in the interpretation of Islamic texts. They distinguish two types of verses in the Islamic sacred texts: *qat'iyat al-thubut*, or those with absolute meaning that are not open to interpretation, and *zayinat al-thubut*, or those with relative meaning, open for interpretation in specific situations.

The Wasatiya trend views sacred texts in light of their larger purposes and messages, rather than focusing on narrower literal meanings. As a result, Wasatiya thought shares in a number of widely accepted human values. It focuses on Islamic values such as justice, equality, peace, freedom and human dignity. Its intellectuals emphasize the right to *ijtihad*. It calls not only for the implementation of sharia, but also for finding new ways in which people's needs and interests can be met by sharia.

Although Wasatiya intellectuals appreciate the Islamic revival that has evolved since the 1970s, they believe that this revival must be rationalized and moderated further to increase its benefits. Qaradawi mapped ten criteria for the enhancement of Islamic discourse in this historical moment. He called for a movement of the following trends in Islamic rhetoric:

- From appearance to substance
- From verbal debate to concrete action

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[3] Ibid, 10.

[4] يوسف القرضاوي، خطابنا الإسلامي في عصر العولمة، القاهرة: دار الشروق، ط3، 2009، ص 27.

- From sentimental demagogy to rationality and pragmatism
- From religious details to fundamentals
- From traditional preaching styles to an easier and more inviting preaching
- From rigidity and imitation to renewal and *ijtihad*
- From partiality to tolerance
- From extravagance and indecent attitudes to centrist and moderate line
- From violence to mercy
- From disputes to solidarity

This process urges the human mind to create new solutions and alternatives, and to enrich the *fiqh* (jurisprudence) according to these criteria. In Wasatiya intellectualism, the mind is respected and entrusted to understand divine discourse. It allows a bigger space for the *ijtihad* of sharia than it does for direct divine orders. Thus it invites the human mind to work, explore, search and criticize, rather than just receive and imitate. According to this trend, the human mind should seek logical proofs, not merely receive and imitate without examination. It urges people to seek these proofs through logical deduction and Koranic evidence.[5]

The Wasatiya trend views Islam as a civilization, calling for constructive social action alongside the preservation of Islamic values. It seeks cultural cooperation among humans who have common interests in the preservation of justice, freedom, peace and respect for human rights. It does not view non-Muslims as enemies, but rather as potential partners for exchange and cooperation.

The main activity of Wasatiya intellectuals is the production of books, lectures, and seminars. They work to reconcile Islam with modernity, and make use of new media outlets to facilitate their discourse. They appear on TV, and publish articles in periodicals and newspapers. They focus on youth initiatives, seeking to engage and inspire youth with new activities and new domains. Wasatiya intellectualism has inspired many trends, such as the al-Wasat Party, The Masr for Culture and Dialogue Association, and the popular *IslamOnline* website.

Discourse

In his work, the journalist and intellectual Fahmi Howaydi explains that the future of Islam cannot be disengaged from the future of Muslims. Wasatiya thought therefore aims to fully engage the realities of the modern world, and presents one of the most flexible Islamic discourses.

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[5] يوسف القرضاوي، خطابنا الإسلامي في عصر العولمة، مرجع سابق، ص ص 72-73.

Human Rights

For Muhammad 'Imara, Islam came to the world in order to liberate and emancipate human beings from various constraints. Therefore, freedom is considered not just a human right, but also a Muslim duty that must be pursued in order to preserve human dignity and freedom of decision. Freedom in this context, however, is not boundless and absolute as it is restricted in the few cases in which it conflicts with sharia. 'Imara argues that in every society, freedom is regulated in a way that respects societal limits and boundaries. In the Islamic perspective, sharia plays this regulatory role.[6] In this respect, the protection of human life and the promotion of the capabilities of the community are human duties. Public participation within the community is also considered a divine duty, as part of the 'promotion of virtue and prevention of vice'. Accordingly, human rights are fully celebrated and protected by Islamic fundamentals, but regulative limits are set on freedoms in order to respect sharia law.

Women

The Wasatiya trend aims at generating a new *fiqh* that clarifies thinking about women in public and in private, with grounding in the Koran and *sunna*. They do not believe that Western women should be the models for Muslim women's movements, but they look toward the progress made by women in the West for inspiration. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that it is a flaw of Arab and Islamic societies to ignore half of their population by keeping women in the home.[7] Accordingly, this trend encourages women to educate themselves, and considers education a religious duty for all Muslim men and women. Regarding women's dress, Wasatiya intellectuals do not believe that the *niqab* is an obligation for women, stating that it is a cultural tradition from the Arabian Peninsula rather than an Islamic tradition. It does, however, state that the *hijab* (headscarf) is a religious duty .[8]

Wasatiya intellectuals reject Islamic interpretations that restrict women. It believes that the *hadith* that states 'those who are governed by a woman are doomed to misery', the Prophet Muhammad was talking specifically of the governing of the Queen of Persia, and was speaking of the declining situation witnessed in Persia at that time. Some Islamic scholars, such as those in the Salafi movement, use this *hadith* outside of its specific context, and use it to insist that women may not govern. The Koran also speaks of the Queen of Sheba, and hails her because her wisdom drove her nation to faith. If one generalizes about women in power according to the *hadith* about the Queen of Persia, they will find contradictory teaching in the Koranic story of the Queen of Sheba.[9] Muhammad

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[6] محمد عمارة، هل الإسلام هو الحل؟ لماذا وكيف؟، القاهرة: 1998، دار الشروق، ط2، ص 133.

[7] Raymond William Baker, *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists* (Cambridge MA., 2003) 94-96.

[8] Raymond William Baker, *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists* (Cambridge MA., 2003) 98.

[9] Raymond William Baker, *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists* (Cambridge MA., 2003) 97.

'Imara opposed this position, however, insisting that women may not generally govern, but are invited to participate in minor positions.

Wasatiya thought holds men and women equal in their duties, rights and a*hliya* (eligibility). It promotes the idea that men and women are created in the same spirit, but were differentiated biologically to ensure their complimentary roles in the community. They are generally equal in duties and rights, but men have an additional role in *quwama* (trusteeship over the family). The man, therefore, oversees decision making in the family. Women, however, are allowed to discuss and implement these decisions. This corresponds to the man's larger duties of familial protection and finance.[10] This dynamic does not restrict women's rights on a public level. For instance, women appeared through history in state building activities, and were present to fulfill *bay'a* (allegiance) to the Prophet Muhammad in delivering medical aid during wars.

Wasatiya scholars insist that the legal testimony of a woman is equivalent to that of a male in all cases except for particular economic situations as specified by the Koran.[11] The role of women in judicial posts is under a wide debate among Islamic intellectuals, with some prohibiting it entirely. Qaradawi stated that some women may be more talented or experienced than men, and so it would not be appropriate to prevent them from holding judiciary posts. The women who access these posts, however, must have ended their maternity phase so that their complete attention to their judicial duties is ensured.[12]

Regarding female circumcision, Qaradawi says that it is a social practice that is not prohibited by Islam. He set several conditions to ensure that it does not cause harm when performed, and to ensure that it does not become a religious duty. He says that the practice should be prohibited if it can be proven that it causes physical harm to a woman. Interestingly, Qaradawi said that medical scholars rather than religious ones must make this decision.[13]

Citizenship

Qaradawi considers the protection of non-Muslims in the state a religious duty of Muslims. This includes a protection of their wealth, dignity and property, and their right to social welfare and

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[10] محمد عمارة، هل الإسلام هو الحل؟ لماذا وكيف؟، مرجع سابق، ص ص 136-142.

[11] محمد عمارة، هل الإسلام هو الحل؟ لماذا وكيف؟، مرجع سابق، ص 153.

[12] يوسف القرضاوي، "المرأة وتولي منصب القضاء"، نص برنامج الشريعة والحياة، http://www.Qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=70&version=1&template_id=105&parent_id=16.

[13] وسف القرضاوي، الحكم الشرعي في ختان الإناث، http://www.Qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=4953&version=1&template_id=260&parent_id=1.

freedom of faith.[14] There exists a large debate concerning the right of non-Muslims to hold high positions in the state. Qaradawi believes that non-Muslims have the right to access any positions, with the exception of those pertaining to religion. The position of the president is considered to be a religious position. Leadership positions in the army are also considered to be religious roles, because they entail the religious duty of *jihad*. Leadership positions in the judiciary are considered to be religious roles as well, because they entail the ruling of Islamic sharia law. Some Wasatiya intellectuals, however, believe that non-Muslims should access all positions in the state. For example, scholar al-Bishri believes that maintaining democracy in the modern state is only possible if Muslims and non-Muslims enjoy complete equality. He believes that this equality will promote unity within the state, thus protecting it from external threats. He promotes a system of checks and balances among the institutions of the state, with the full application of equality among its citizenship. ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Massiri, an al-Wasat Party founder, constructed his political manifesto for the party in reflection of this theory. The manifesto calls for equality in citizenship and state participation, regardless of religious, sexual or racial identity.[15]

Poverty

Wasatiya thought is centrist in its economic perspective. It believes in the preservation of ownership rights and in social justice. The economic ideal for Wasatiya intellectuals is a system in which free economic initiatives are respected, and social solidarity is maintained. As such, the alleviation of poverty is one of the major goals of the trend. It maintains that economic assistance to the poor does not only preserve their lives, but their faith as well. ʿImara calls for the countering of *riba* (usury) and the collection of *zakat*, as well as the imposition of progressive taxes to ensure an equitable standard of living among people. He also calls for an integrative economy between Muslim states, ensuring interdependence and efficiency.[16] ʿImara highlights the importance of *waqf* (Islamic endowments) in the liberation of wealth from state and individual authority. *Waqf* may be used to maximize the power of the umma, and to empower the lower classes, without burdening the state with additional costs.[17]

Communication Strategies

Wasatiya intellectuals publish books individually, maintaining intellectual unity in their messages. Qaradawi, for instance, wrote a series of books entitled *Rationalizing the Islamic Revival*, aimed at

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[14] طارق البشري، المسلمون والأقباط في إطار الجماعة الوطنية، القاهرة: 2004، دار الشروق، ط4، ص ص. 833-839.

[15] برنامج حزب الوسط، ص 3.

[16] محمد عمارة، هل الإسلام هو الحل؟ لماذا وكيف؟، مرجع سابق، ص ص 108-109.

[17] محمد عمارة، هل الإسلام هو الحل؟ لماذا وكيف؟، مرجع سابق، ص ص 111-119.

finding a reconciliation between Islam and contemporary realities. The books offer criticisms and solutions for the Islamic movement. Howaydi has also published a series of books to religiously and logically reconcile Islam and democracy. ʿImara wrote a similar series, outlining the similarities and differences in Islamic and Western discourses on human rights. Additionally, Wasatiya intellectuals regularly write in newspapers and periodicals, addressing both the elite and the general public. They also present lectures and seminars throughout civil society, universities and syndicates.

Wasatiya intellectuals have also begun to use the new media. They appear as guests on television programs and talk shows. Qaradawi has a weekly show on al-Jazeera's satellite channel, called *al-Sharia wal-Hayat* (*Sharia and Life*), in which he discusses contemporary Islamic issues. Through this show, Qaradawi reaches a large audience from all Islamic countries. Viewers may pose questions for him, send in their comments, and even debate with the sheikh. Additionally, almost all of the Wasatiya intellectuals run their own websites, on which they post their books, articles and audio-visual content.

Muhammad Selim al-Awa established the Masr for Culture and Dialogue Association as an association built to promote Wasatiya discourse, providing access to its lectures, seminars, and activities. The Masr for Culture and Dialogue Association has branches in Cairo, Damietta and Alexandria, each holding their own cultural and religious activities. The Cairo branch organizes biweekly lectures presented by various Wasatiya intellectuals. Audio or visual versions of these lectures are generally uploaded afterward to the Masr for Culture and Dialogue Association website.[18]

The Alexandria branch hosted several lectures for singers, musicians, poets, novelists and journalists to present their role within Wasatiya vision, as it considers art and culture to be of great value to the umma's renaissance. The Damietta branch has organized a summer club for youth, aiming to enhance their artistic and cultural capabilities. Wasatiya thought maintains that increased education will lead to a development of centrist values. The Damietta branch also organizes lectures on current affairs, social, cultural and political life, human development and management skills.

The *IslamOnline* website was launched eleven years ago, as an initiative to foster an online network for the Muslim community to enhance their ethical commitments to freedom, democracy, human rights and justice. The website was built to represent the entire Muslim community around the globe, and hosts both English and Arabic versions. The website encourages political mobilization for Muslims, and is aligned with democratic values. It presents information on the work of various

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[18] See www.misrculture.com.

Islamic activists. The website has covered the confessional disputes that have arisen in the area, and fostered a discourse on citizenship including both Christian and Muslim intellectuals.

The website has filled a void for many Muslims, giving them a space to engage in discourses that were formerly unavailable, including a vivid discourse on women's empowerment. The website frequently cooperates with official institutions such as the Bibliotheca of Alexandria and the Ministry of Family and Population to gain expert opinions on various issues.

In 2010 there was a dispute between the Qatari owner of the website and its Egyptian staff, causing the website to be shut down for several months. It was then re-launched by a new staff. Some believe that this dispute was due to the website's Wasatiya content, as it conflicts with the dominant Salafi movement in Qatar. Others believe that the dispute was merely due to Qatari-Egyptian tensions. The website re-launched under Qatari control, and the website remains a forum for Wasatiya intellectualism.[19] Meanwhile, the former Egyptian staff has launched its own website called www.onislam.net, and there they continue their Wasatiya discourse with joint finance from Saudi and Egyptian owners.

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[19] حديث مع الأستاذة فاطمة حافظ المسئولة السابقة لملف المرأة في الموقع، الأحد 8-8-2010

CRITICAL INTELLECTUALS

Background and Relations with the Government

Critical Islamic intellectuals comprise writers who work to reinterpret sacred texts in light of the realities of contemporary life. The primary concern of 'Critical Intellectuals' has been to demonstrate that Islam is not a holistic immutable religion and that the notion of an Islamic state is not original to Islam, by referring to Islamic texts and history. Their work thus conflicts with many of the long-established thoughts of Islamic scholars. The most prominent of these Critical Intellectual figures include Gamal al-Banna, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Sayid al-Qimni and Muhammad Sa'id al-'Ashmawi.

Critical Intellectuals argued that Islamic discourse must cease to imitate early Islamic scholars, and instead focus on generating an updated version of Islamic discourse, concurrent with the needs of contemporary reality. Their thinking challenged the existing Islamic revival movement which upheld the notion of an Islamic state and sought to demonstrate that it is fully compatible with the values of democracy, citizenship and human rights.[20]

Critical Intellectuals generally interpret sacred texts according to their own personal insights and reasoning rather than through the use of traditional methods of interpretation. Therefore, their opinions are controversial, and often conflict with existing Islamic scholarship. Muhammad 'Imara is a scholar who worked to refute the writings of the Critical Intellectuals.[21] Many al-Azhar scholars worked to refute their work as well, including Sheikh 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Nimr, the Minister of Endowments during the 1970s.[22] While al-Nimr worked to debunk the thinking of the Critical Intellectuals, he was under attack himself for opposing the implementation of Islamic sharia in the Egyptian legal system. Sheikh Muhammad Mutwalli al-Sha'rawi published a book to criticize al-'Ashmawi's writings on the Prophet's companions and the early days of the Islamic caliphate.[23]

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[20] See http://www.islamiccall.org/Islamic_Revival.htm.

[21] محمد عمارة، سقوط الغلو العلماني.

[22] محمد عمارة، سقوط الغلو العلماني، ص 5.

[23] See http://www.eltwhed.com/vb/showthread.php?t=1436.

Activities

The value of this intellectual trend lies in its ability to approach Islamic texts and values from a strictly logical perspective, without historical or traditional preconceptions. It neglects the work of earlier Muslim scholars, and works to purify the core of the religion. Al-'Ashmawi, for instance, believed that most Muslim scholars wanted Islam to play a large role in politics because they themselves had political ambitions. He believed that political affairs were not essential to Islam, and that this was only claimed as such by those who sought to control people under the guise of Islam.[24] In al-'Ashmawi's writings, he starkly delineated between religion and politics and refuted the legitimacy of the historical Islamic state, citing its mistakes in the interpretation of Islamic values. Al-'Ashmawi set few boundaries for the interpretation of sacred texts. Therefore, he viewed only worshipping practices as constants, and left the rest of the Islamic tradition open to interpretation.[25]

The main activity of Critical Intellectuals is the production of counter-discourses that challenge the conventional wisdom of Islamic scholars. Generated mainly by jurists and writers, these discourses are generally disseminated through articles, newspapers such as *al-Ahram*, *al-Akhbar* and *Rosa al-Yusuf*, printed books, and conferences. Additionally, some Critical Intellectuals have taught in Western universities. Abu Zayd has taught at Leiden University and al-'Ashmawi has taught at the American University in Cairo, Berkley College, Rhode Island University, Harvard University, University of Utah, and Princeton University. He never taught in any official Islamic university because most of its scholarship believed that he had adopted a 'distorted' vision of Islam that had been corrupted by Western culture.[26]

Discourse

Al-Banna believes that divine legislation is derived from divine discourse, prophetical messages, and philosophical contemplation. According to his thought, the role of law is to implement this divine legislation in accordance with the realities and conditions of society. Accordingly, this divine legislation is easily mistranslated into laws that contradict sharia teachings. Due to this reasoning, al-Banna refused the restrictions set by traditional Muslim scholars. He called on contemporary Muslims scholars to completely liberate their interpretation of sacred texts from the preconceptions of old scholars. Focusing mainly on the Koran, al-Banna found a wide-range of scholarship to justify

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[24] محمد سعيد عشماوي، "الإسلام السياسي أو الايدولوجيا الإسلامية"، في الحجاب وحُجية الحديث، مؤسسة رزواليوسف، الكتاب الذهبي،2002، ص 42

[25] See http://www.eltwhed.com/vb/showthread.php?t=1436.

[26] محمد عمارة، سقوط الغلو العلماني، ص 10.

support for human rights, citizenship and democracy. Al-Banna rejected the legitimacy of other resources for sharia, believing that the *sunna*, for example, was subject to historical distortion.

Freedom of Expression

Al-Banna believes that the Prophet Muhammad spoke on the importance of the freedom of speech when he asked Quraysh to let him preach without restriction.[27] According to this Koranic passage, freedom of expression, thought, and belief are fully protected in Islam. Al-Banna believes that all humans have both freedom of belief and freedom of disbelief in religion. He contested long standing views on apostasy, and considered them to be incompatible with the purposes of sharia.[28] He cited the following verse from the Koran to support his point of view: 'And if your Lord had pleased, surely all those who are in the earth would have believed, all of them; will you then force men till they become believers?' (010:099).[29] He believed that freedom of thought could not be restricted under religious conditions, and that there is no 'halal' or 'haram' idea, but instead merely correct and incorrect ideas. Al-Banna rejects any restrictions on freedom of expression, and believes that restrictions of this nature would paralyze creativity and innovation. He believes that freedom of expression works as the main source for reform in society, and that with freedom of expression one can generate positive reform in the legal system, educational system and society's value systems, if applied properly.[30]

Al-'Ashmawi believes that people have the right to disbelief in Islam, as supported by the Koranic verse: 'So let him who please believe, and let him who please disbelieve' (018:029). Additionally, he does not believe in punishment for those who chose disbelief, leaving it to the arbitration of Allah on the Day of Judgment, as stated in Koran: 'Surely Allah will decide between them on the day of Resurrection' (022-017).[31]

Women

Al-Banna argues that Islam itself does not restrict women, and that infractions on the rights of women are caused by distorted societal traditions and illusions. He believes that Muslim scholars have distorted sacred texts to support their restrictions on women. He reaffirms women's right to movement and believes that the *hijab* and *niqab* are cultural impositions used to restrict women.

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[27] جمال البنا، "الحرية تبني سقفها"، 18-11-2006، http://www.metransparent.com/old/texts/gamal_banna/gamal_el_banna_freedom_creates_own_limits.htm.
[28] جمال البنا، مطلبنا الأول هو الحرية، ص ص 2-3.
[29] See http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/Koran/010.qmt.html.
[30] جمال البنا، مطلبنا الأول هو الحرية، ص 5.
[31] محمد سعيد العشماوي، حقيقة الحجاب وحجية الحديث، مرجع سابق، ص ص 40.

Al-'Ashmawi shares al-Banna's opinions on the *hijab* and *niqab*. Al-'Ashmawi goes as far as to question the legitimacy of the *sunna* in his criticisms. He wrote that the *sunna* was open to over 300 years of historical distortion following the death of the Prophet Muhammad, and believes that those orders that restrict the freedom of women were born into the Islamic discourse as 'invented *hadith*'.[32] Al-'Ashmawi calls for the social and mental liberation of women in society, in order to allow them to fulfill their political and civic role. He believes that half of the energies of the society are paralyzed as a result of the subjugation of women, and that women who are deprived of their basic rights cannot succeed in raising a mature generation.[33]

Citizenship

Al-Banna believes that Islam allows for full citizenship rights to all who share life in the same country. The Prophet Muhammad declared that Muslims and Jews are one nation, as long as they live together in the same city. Al-Banna noted that Muslim scholars have not followed this prophetical teaching, and urged scholars to be more tolerant. In order to fully implement citizenship rights, all citizens must be equal in front of the law. Failure in this regard not only constitutes a contradiction with the Egyptian constitution, but also with the teachings of the prophet.[34]

Al-Banna believes that freedom of religion should be granted to every citizen. He stated that the problems in Egypt could only be reconciled by reinforcing freedom of religion.[35] He calls for religious unity between Muslim and Christians, based on a unified agenda of shared values such as justice, tolerance, and ethics. For al-Banna, this kind of 'faith coexistence' is the true path to national unity, and would protect society from radicalism on either side. If implemented, this coexistence would not compromise any religious practice, and would foster an environment of shared human values.[36] Al-Banna calls upon leaders from both religions to reconsider their discourse and employ practices of coexistence rather than radicalism.

Poverty

Al-Banna does not present a detailed view on how to eliminate poverty in his writings. He does, however, point to several innovations that could help foster an economically equitable society. He calls for the activation of civil society, trade unions, industry, Sufi *tariqas* and political parties to support the poor. He explains that civil society has a particularly crucial role to play in economic reform and in improving the lives of prisoners. He also insists that endowment and charity associations must enhance their efforts to establish schools, hospitals, and mosques. In order for civil

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[32] محمد سعيد العشماوي، "ليس الحجاب فريضة شرعية"، في حقيقة الحجاب وحجية الحديث، مرجع سابق، ص 24.

[33] http://www.mohamoon.com/montada/Default.aspx?action=Display&ID=98953&Type=3.

[34] جمال البنا، "إخواني الأقباط"، http://www.metransparent.com/old/texts/gamal_al_banna_heart_talk_4.htm.

[35] جمال البنا، "إخواني الأقباط"، http://www.metransparent.com/old/texts/gamal_al_banna_heart_talk_4.htm.

[36] جمال البنا، "إخواني الأقباط"، http://www.metransparent.com/old/texts/gamal_al_banna_heart_talk_4.htm.

society to play this strategic role, however, they must be able to exercise full freedom of expression, and have full access to relevant information.[37] Al-Banna writes that society needs to enjoy full freedom in order to work towards self-improvement. Therefore, he refuses all types of restrictions set on society, and believes that it is essential to maintain societal diversity in order to prevent restrictive monopolies. He believes that by establishing two syndicates for each profession, society could enhance the work of trade unions and avoid a monopoly.[38] He believes that state intervention in the proceedings of these associations causes harm to the system. He drew upon the example of investment companies in the 1980s to support this view. When the state intervened in the proceedings of these companies, the funds were wasted and even stolen under the pretext of state protection.

Communication Strategies

Critical Intellectuals disseminate their message primarily through publications and seminars. Al-'Ashmawi has published most of his work through newspaper articles. He then compiled these newspaper articles and published them in several books. Al-Banna has published several books and continues to publish newspaper articles. The books of both intellectuals have been confiscated and were prevented from being published for many years. Al-Banna's book *The Failure of the Islamic State in the Modern Age* was called a threat by the Islamic Research Center affiliated with al-Azhar.[39] The controversial chapter discussed the necessity for Muslim emigrants in Europe to adapt to their new societies. Al-Banna also supported the controversial 'temporary marriage', which is widely rejected by the Sunni Islamic tradition. According to al-Banna, temporary marriage is a solution for youth who are tempted by adultery.

Al-'Ashmawi's book *The Islamic Caliphate* was prohibited from reprinting after a dispute between the printing house and the cassation court. He believes that this conflict is merely a plot to prevent his work from being disseminated. Most of his controversial pieces were printed in newspapers, where they have been applauded and criticized by liberals and Islamists respectively.

Given the difficulties in circulating their discourses in printed books, Critical Intellectuals have employed the Internet as an opportunity to republish their thoughts. The controversy surrounding these writings is particularly intense on the Internet, where Islamists often attack their thoughts in

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[37] جمال البنا، مطلبنا الأول هو الحرية، ص 20.

[38] جمال البنا، مطلبنا الأول هو الحرية، ص 7.

[39] مجمع البحوث الاسلامية.

forums and question their positions and loyalty to Islam. Therefore, the presence of this discourse online is generally negative and widely dominated by adversaries rather than followers.

Gamal al-Banna's presence on TV shows is highly controversial. He often appears as a guest on various satellite TV shows, especially when they discuss Islam and modernity. Given the interactive nature of the satellite talk shows, al-Banna has been confronted by the issue of fatwas. For instance, al-Banna stated that smoking during Ramadan is not a break in one's fast, as it is neither food nor drink. Moreover, he states that relationship between non-married couples is an easily forgiven offence, as long as the relationship does not reach a sexual level.[40] Al-Banna's directives on these issues faced wide attack, especially from Suad Salih and Abu Ishaq al-Huwayni.[41]

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[40] http://www.masrawy.com/news/arts/stars/2008/march/8/gamalelbana.aspx.
[41] http://www.watan.com.

PART FIVE

NEW MEDIA

NEW MEDIA

In this report the term 'new media' refers to Internet and satellite television, to the exclusion of other forms of mass media such as radio, print, and terrestrial television. This limit is justified not only for reasons of scope, but because satellite television and Internet, whilst not replacing older mass media, have introduced new conventions and practices of their own to the wider field of communication.

Arab terrestrial television, for instance, has had to adapt and change both its formats of presentation and the variety of its content in the face of competition from satellite channels. It has adopted a number of features pioneered by satellite TV in order to rise to the challenge, and as a result has come to strongly resemble satellite TV at times. Even when content remains subject to control and censorship, state-controlled channels can no longer afford to broadcast the same interminable direct addresses and monotonous news journals – instead, talk-shows and exciting entertainment, a measure of provocation and news mimicking al-Jazeera's 'both sides of the story' style of reporting are now a minimum requirement on terrestrial TV. While these changes may seem superficial, they entail shifts in the construction of authority, and in the monopoly of knowledge. While 'real' monopolies of information hardly ever exist, perceived monopolies of authority – for instance, limiting oneself to state evening news because it is the 'voice of the nation' – are instrumental in limiting access to information, or in limiting the desire to access alternative information, or even the acceptation of alternative information when presented with it. Channels which are not only many and competing on a level, but also, and importantly, uniformly present the format of debate (even when orchestrated) as the principal way to deliver information and opinion on matters of public interest, do not help support conceptions of personified and centralized authority and the attendant absolute and exclusive value attributed to authoritative speech in those cases.

Similarly, in Egypt, the Internet and notably the blogs that introduced citizen journalism have made inroads into the journalistic culture of the printed press – both of state and opposition – which have been impossible to ignore by traditional mass media. The instantaneity of reporting, the short fragments of rich, intense, snatched audiovisual material from multiple sources and witnesses – generally captured on phones and either twittered or posted on a public personal webpage – and the spontaneity both of the information sharing and of the interaction with readership, has tinkered with the framework of journalistic practice: on the one hand, state news' frequent censure-induced lags in reporting and partial coverage of events stand out more starkly; on the other hand, opposition

newspapers find the opportunity to bounce off new spaces of relative freedom and point readers towards like-minded sources and content without directly printing the most provocative and controversial material themselves, thereby foregoing closure and banishment while keeping criticism alive.

The plasticity of Internet and satellite television has provoked a number of changes in the structure and quality of public discourse, affecting communication not only as a complex environment of avenues and circuits, but in the modulation of its content. Charles Hirschkind points out with regard to the typically short video clips circulated on the Internet that a 'phenomenological feature of the media's architecture' is that it does not support 'the thread of an unfolding discourse, but the sudden surprise of an affect, (…) shifts too quick for the unfolding of an argument, but enough to allow for the triggering of a fleeting sensation, (…) a burst of excitement, terror, fear, silliness, sadness, sentimentality, and so on'. In the particular case of Hirschkind's subject matter, the videos in circulation are one to ten minutes excerpts of hour-long Islamic sermons, and generally consist of the more poignant and emotionally intense segments of the performance. Spawned by the Internet and as a direct result of this medium's plasticity, a new genre of information sharing and a new format has appeared, one apparently determined by short and powerful emotional stimuli, and heavy editing by content-producing users.[1]

As regards satellite TV, Ehab Galal's comparative study of two shows by the famous Islamic preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi – one broadcast on terrestrial TV (*Hadi 'l-Islam* on national Qatari TV) and the other on satellite TV (*Sharia and Life* on al-Jazeera) – shows how the shift from terrestrial to satellite TV affects the contents of what was initially a very similar program, where the sheikh responds to sent-in or called-in questions from the audience on matters of Islamic jurisprudence as applied to daily life and current events. According to Galal, 'there is a significant change from public service TV to a more agenda setting TV'. He writes that where 'at *Hadi 'l-Islam* Qaradawi may as an introduction present a current case, followed by answers to questions from people sent in by letter, the questions may differ in topic and scope, which makes the program jump from one subject to another', instead 'in *Sharia and Life* the individual episode is centered around one topic, which is introduced by the host, and later analyzed and expanded by Qaradawi. Thereafter people can call in and ask questions in relation to the specific topic of the program.'[2] The powerful framing of discourse exerted by the conventions of satellite TV programming is also further supported by the detailed paraphernalia of

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[1] Charles Hirschkind, 'Experiments In Devotion Online: The YouTube Khutba', paper given at the 2010 CMRC Conference "Islam and the Media: Who Speaks for Islam?" at Colorado University, Boulder. Transcribed from the video file available at http://cmrc.colorado.edu/index.php/program.
[2] E. Galal, 'Qaradawi and the New Islamic TV', in: J. Skovgaard-Peterson and B. Graef (eds.), *Global Mufti* (London, 2009).

set design, spatial configuration, opening credits, and so forth. To the information-monopolies of state terrestrial TV, the genres of satellite TV substitute monopolies of meaning.

Another effect of new media can be discerned concerning the formation or formulation of Islamic discourse – whichever persuasion or school of thought may be represented. Anderson notes that the first stage precursors' early online discussions

> did not show much training in religious hermeneutics. Used to the methods of the physical sciences, contributors of these discussions had a habit of sanctioning interpretation by quick recourse to texts treated analytically as sources to be reasoned about objectively (…) They place online an Islam of textual objects and intellectual techniques rooted more in professional milieus into which they have been tracked from early schooling than in the hermeneutics that is the forte of 'ulama training'.

Dale Eickelman and his collaborators have written at length about the re-intellectualization that took place with the advent of mass media and the 'journalistic style' pioneered by such lay Islamic thinkers and preachers as Muhammad Rashid Rida and Mustafa Mahmud in twentieth century Egypt, where arguments seek to convince on their own and one can rationally debate religious injunctions based on revelation according to common sense.

Internet extends this much earlier development, but also adds a dimension of its own: much of Internet activity is neither textual nor discursive, and cyber- time and space frames often do not support the unfolding of a long argument. It is useful, therefore, to also look at the development of new online practices, and to see the developments in Islamic discourses and practices as a larger phenomenon of vernacularization of Islam, an effect of its presence in the new media, rather than solely as a re-intellectualization of discourse. At the same time, attention must be paid to a concurrent phenomenon of sacralization, which occurs when new religious experiences emerge from audiences' responses to Islamic messages online or on-air. Yasmin Moll has pointed out that the 'virtuous viewing' of religious TV programs, specifically those of the more charismatic new preachers, constituted a form of televised devotional experience to which the phrase 'pious entertainment' does not do justice.[3] Charles Hirschkind further developed the notion of 'online devotional experiences' when looking at YouTube users' pious responses to posted videos of *khutbas*, and at the

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[3] Yasmin Moll, 'Islamic Televangelism: Religion, Media and Visuality in Contemporary Egypt', in: *Arab Media & Society* (10, 2010). See http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20100407165913_Mollpdf.pdf.

kind of highly emotional and spiritually elated environment created by both the posted contents and the ritualized expressions they elicited.[4]

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[4] Charles Hirschkind, 'Experiments In Devotion Online: The YouTube Khutba', paper given at the 2010 CMRC Conference "Islam and the Media: Who Speaks for Islam?" at Colorado University, Boulder. Transcribed from the video file available at http://cmrc.colorado.edu/index.php/program.

SATELLITE TELEVISION

The history of Islam on satellite television follows developments in the medium itself, notably developments driven by commercial interests. As Naomi Sakr notes:

> The financial viability of religious programming (…) on Arab television has to be judged in light of the region's particular characteristics and not on the basis of precedents set elsewhere. (…) The preservation and promotion of what some media-owners like to call 'Arab-Islamic culture' is a major preoccupation for many of the region's producers and consumers alike.[5]

The place of Islam on Arab TV has always been secured, in a region where both religion and mass media are keen government interests. Religious programming on Arab TV has always been a standard feature, and it is the development of specialized channels creating specialized platforms for religious discourse, away from mainstream media, which is the more novel phenomenon.

This can partly be explained as a natural tendency of the medium to fragment into niche channels for specialized content, a development that was heralded by the rise of such specialized channels as MTV and BBC World, both specialized in one type of programming and airing round-the-clock. However, the fragmentation and specialization of TV channels, which accelerated with the advent of satellite TV, follows the wider commercial logic of segmentation of target-audiences along such criteria as age, gender, occupation, race and worldview. Religious broadcasting does not entirely fit this commercial description, since the ventures are never conceived as purely commercial enterprises, and often need generous funding to break even. They must equally be seen as acts of devotion on the part of wealthy patrons, who thereby contribute to the spreading of Islam.

This in turn feeds into the particular financial culture of Gulf actors, whose ways of disposing of immense, rent-based incomes circumscribe the secular morals of redistribution of wealth in welfare economies and ascribe instead to Islamic notions of *zakat* and *da'wa*, understood here as forms of public benefaction aiming to legitimize economical behavior embedded in highly conservative sociopolitical models. Hence it is important to remember that

> most satellite channels are also businesses, which means that other forms of governance and technology are important too: the role of rich individuals, and to a lesser extent advertising revenue, in funding; the lack of universally agreed mechanisms for measuring audiences and

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[5] N. Sakr, *Arab Television Today* (London, 2007).

> channeling funding; the relation to states' media regulation policies; the views and sensibilities of elite groups; and the logics of audience research and categorization,

while recognizing that within a political approach to mediatization, which focuses on the underlying relations of power, 'the relationship between "the media", "the state" and "the market" are conflicting and overlapping, since formations of power are not uniform, but rather each consists of competing groups.'[6]

Religious Broadcasting on Mainstream Satellite Channels

As noted in the proceedings of a recent conference in Cambridge, 'religion [has] been a central feature of television programming in the Arab world since the mid-1950's, with terrestrial state-operated channels carrying religious programs such as talk-shows, religious sermons, and Koran recitations.'[7] This is particularly true in Egypt, where famous contemporary ulama such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi have appeared on Egyptian channels since the 1970's, and where in the 1980's Mustafa Mahmud pioneered the figure of the independent lay preacher in his wildly popular shows on Egyptian television. Lila Abu-Lughod's article on national interests in the representation of Islam on popular TV programming in Egypt also highlights the degree to which the mediatization of Islam is matter of government interest.[8]

Religious programming on state-owned channels in Egypt largely reflects accepted 'Egyptian Islam', a notion construed and promoted by the political elites of Egypt with the help of established and consensual religious actors, chief among which al-Azhar and the Grand Mufti. The essence of 'Egyptian Islam' can be described as moderate and tolerant in outlook while traditional and orthodox in practice, also the standard definition of Wasatiya. The difference between state-sponsored Wasatiya and global Wasatiya resides in the political ends to which this conception of Islam is put. Having repeatedly experienced the unsettling political power of Islam during the twentieth century, authorities in Egypt have been anxious to assert a non-violent and politically quietist normative version of Islam on a national scale, the better to marginalize those groups and movements for whom religious ideals serve to question the status quo. Post-9/11, the state-led enterprise of nationalization and normalization of Islam in Egypt acquired greater relevance, this time in a regional and global context:

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[6] Proceedings from the conference 'Religious Broadcasting in the Middle East' (CAMP-CIS), held in Cambridge on January 30th-31st 2010. It was published in April 2010, see
http://www.cis.cam.ac.uk/Cambridge%20Media%20Report.pdf.
[7] Ibid.
[8] L. Abu-Lughod, 'Finding a Place for Islam: Egyptian Television Serials and the National Interest', in: *Public Culture* 5 (1993).

> After the terrorist attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001, satellite television programs, including those with visible religious orientations, [have] been brought under the spotlight in an effort to ensure their conformity with a moderate and centrist vision of Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance. State-affiliated mainstream satellite channels in the Middle East [have] come to embrace a more centrist and accommodating religious discourse that side-step[s] politics and intercultural and interfaith tensions, and instead promote[s] spiritual religiosity, a dialogue of civilizations and global coexistence.

Mainstream satellite television in Egypt now counts scores of private channels, the most popular of which are al-Mehwar and Dream TV channels. They offer religious shows as part of their standard programming, and can also invite members of the clergy, independent preachers and independent intellectuals the opportunity to express themselves on non-explicitly religious talk-shows and in interviews, in their capacity as members of civil society.

Among the most popular mainstream satellite channels in Egypt, the two Dream TV channels provide a good example of the sort of contents aired on private satellite television. Their owner, business tycoon Ahmad Baghat, launched the first of these channels in 2001, shortly after the Egyptian government opened the Egypt Media and Production City (EMPC) facilities to private broadcasting in 2000. Partly owned by the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), the state's control organ over mass media, these channels offer a variety of programs that toe the difficult line between profit-seeking and self-censorship. Unable to overtly question a regime whose various bodies – in this case the ERTU, also the main shareholder of the EMPC and the Nilesat fleet – control its means of production, Dream TV nonetheless seeks to provide alternative information, entertainment and opinions, if not for ideological reasons than at the very least to ensure its competitiveness. Dream TV has repeatedly received warnings and several of its talk-show hosts and journalists, notably Ibrahim 'Isa, the well-known editor of independent newspaper *al-Dostor*, have been fired and sentenced to jail for publicly naming corrupt officials and attacking the head of state on his misuse of public funds.[9]

As for religious programming, the Dream TV channels similarly strive to provide unconventional content, while remaining within the bounds of permissible Islamic discourse. Alternative religious content is not new to Dream TV, where Amr Khaled's *Words from the Heart* was showcased at a time when the talk-show format espoused by the bubbly preacher was still largely unclassifiable and faced with rejection from most other networks.[10] Two recent programs illustrate the point. In *al-Din wal-Dunia* (*Religion and Life*), airing since the spring 2010, independent intellectual Gamal al-Banna exposes his highly personal and unconventional views in a series of weekly thematic episodes. Gamal

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[9] N. Sakr, *Arab Television Today* (London, 2007).

[10] See http://articles.latimes.com/2008/apr/06/world/fg-eastwest6.

al-Banna is presented as an 'Islamic intellectual' in this show and discusses everything from recent publications on Islam to the history of particular activist groups in Egypt. The nonconformist al-Banna can be considered the ideal candidate for Dream TV, as both his last name and his maverick, freewheeling career set him apart as the alternative Islamic voice par excellence, while his largely progressive, if not secular views, his encyclopedic historical knowledge, and his highly critical view of the contemporary Muslim Brotherhood mark him as politically 'safe'.

Al-Tariq al-Sah (The Enlightened Path) is where 'new preacher' and native English speaker Moez Masoud appears in a program that explicitly caters to the youth. His first program in Arabic after two previous shows in English directed at Muslims living in the West, *al-Tariq al-Sah* is modeled partially on the shows of his competitors Amr Khaled and Mustafa Hosni, but does not consist in an uninterrupted lecture by the young preacher and adopts instead the format of a discussion between television host and preacher. Launched during Ramadan 2007, *al-Tariq al-Sah* is built around the role of religion in the lives of teenagers and young adults. Its popularity and relative longevity are mostly due to Masoud's unshrinking approach to all areas of modern life, including the controversial issues of sex, drugs and terrorism. His bilingualism, his personal knowledge of Western lifestyles and contemporary thought, as well as his cosmopolitan outlook differentiate him from other new preachers in Egypt whose focus and appeal is more Egyptian-centric, like Mustafa Hosni, or whose discourse is more rosy and subject-matter less shocking, like Amr Khaled.

In neither shows do the religious figures stand alone or monopolize speech. They are invariably the interviewees of a host, who represents both the channel and, by extension, the particular section of society to which the program caters. This arrangement ensures that discussion and exchange between equals are seen as the normal, accepted approach to religious matters, a departure from the traditional master-to-student relation underpinning religious education. Neither Moez Masoud nor Gamal al-Banna claim the aura of near-saintly authority surrounding the traditional figure of the sheikh, and both men are, in fact, dressed in urban suits and shirts. The studio sets are equally mundane, with only a subtle reference to Islamic art in the geometric patterning of the backgrounds. The differences in style between the more respectable and aged intellectual and historian and the cool young preacher are most evident in their uses of Arabic, where Gamal al-Banna and his host express themselves in pure *fusha* with a very rare interjection in Egyptian vernacular, and Moez Masoud freely uses *'amiya* to address his younger constituents, reserving classical Arabic for an occasional quote from scripture.

An interesting attempt by the sponsors of 'Egyptian Islam' to establish themselves in the field of private satellite channels is the creation of Azhari TV, the brainchild of a somewhat renowned Azhari

scholar, Khaled al-Guindy. Faced with the growing popularity of channels offering alternative content, and with the immense followings certain laymen have garnered as freelance media-preachers, al-Guindy felt the time was ripe for al-Azhar to descend into the arena of civil society and its competitive media. The story of the channel's foundation is exemplary of how state and private interests merge in both the Egyptian media industry, and in the promotion of Islam.

Azhari TV was launched on August 22, 2009 – the first day of the month of Ramadan that year – as a 24-hour religious education and entertainment channel. Though Azhari TV is a latecomer in religious satellite broadcasting – it was founded over a decade after the first Islamic satellite channel – its launch was timed with keen political flair: the official announcement came just days before US President Obama's visit to Cairo and the pronouncement of his now-famous address to the Muslim world. This is echoed in al-Guindy's words, who said: 'in the Age of Obama we realized it was time to look at new ways to deliver our message'. This message is 'to clarify to the world that Islam doesn't encourage violence, Islam respects the other, lives in peace and allows others to live in peace. Islam allows pluralism of views'.[11] Indeed, 'the objective of launching Azhari is to teach about the real Islam, which is void of terrorism' and to counter the 'distortion of Islam into a violent, intolerant force'.[12]

Libyan entrepreneur Hassan Tatanaki – head of Challenger LTD, a major regional contractor for oil and gas drilling and work-over services – invested a starting $2.7 million in the channel, whose operating costs he originally estimated at a yearly $2.5 million. According to al-Guindy, Tatanaki became involved in the project when the sheikh officiated at his daughter's wedding: 'The father of the bride and I forgot completely about that wedding and started to talk about a new wedding, about how to introduce this new channel to the rest of the world'.[13] Private investment is matched by government funding, and a total of $18 million was eventually funneled into the channel during its first year, while its operational costs have been re-evaluated at 'between $8 and $10 million a year'.[14] The channel's founding history thus reflects a typical pattern of personal involvement of a pious Arab philanthropist belonging to the government-favored section of the corporate world; heavy, ideologically motivated investment compensating low competitiveness and commercial

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[11] Alastair Sharp, 'Interview - Egypt's al-Azhar to launch Islamic TV channel', *Reuters* (May 31, 2009). See for the interview with Khaled al-Guindy http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-39998720090531.

[12] 'Egypt Launches "Moderate" Satellite TV for Ramadan', *All Headline News* (August 23, 2009). http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/7016183325?Egypt%20Launches (no longer accessible).

[13] Alastair Sharp, 'Al-Azhar plans satellite television channel about Islam', *Reuters* (June 1, 2009). See http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2009/06/01/al-Azhar-plans-satellite-television-channel-about-islam/.

[14] David Kenner, 'Cairo's Harvard takes to the Airwaves', *Foreign Policy* (June 17, 2010). See http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/16/cairos_harvard_takes_to_the_airwaves.

failure; respect for strict red lines in broadcast discourse, either through self-censorship or through more or less subtly imposed government restrictions.

This last point, in the case of Azhari TV, was made very clear when al-Guindy stated a few months before the launch that 'the channel would engage in topical issues such as globalization, cloning and genetics and organ donation, but would not challenge government decisions or be used for other political reasons'.[15] In an interview

> on whether Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood is one of the extremist organizations Azhari TV was designed to oppose, for example, Tatanaki said that it was 'sensitive to reply', but criticized the organization for extending its religious agenda into the political realm. He also had little to say about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, beyond the religiously-charged issue of Jerusalem. Other issues affecting Palestinian politics, he said, are 'of no interest to us'.[16]

The channel's website states that it 'upholds the following information and communication policy: it does not engage in state politics; it does not attack individuals, organizations or institutions and does not designate them by name'.[17]

Government involvement in the channel has been characterized as ambivalent in the first weeks of the channel's existence, as Coptic discontent over what was perceived as a biased, pro-Islamic policy led government officials to declare that they 'did not want any religious channels to be launched from Egyptian soil'.[18] However, the prior existence of at least three Egyptian-produced and Egyptian-aired Islamic satellite channels (al-Rahma in 2007, Alnas and al-Hekmah in 2006) and two similar Christian satellite channels (al-Hayat in 2003 and Aghapy TV in 2005) before this sudden declaration, and the manifest absence of concrete consequences to this statement, rather indicate a stern warning issued by the state to Egypt's turbulent religious actors, whose localized sectarian strife periodically disrupts the domestic scene, not to take the launch of Azhari TV as yet another opportunity for the sort of strident social agitation that periodically results in casualties. Indeed, sectarian incidents have been on the rise in Egypt over the last decade, with the media simultaneously becoming an increasingly loud sound box and a stake in sectarian competition itself, whereas in a typically ambiguous fashion, government policy has been neither to stoke the flames

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[15] Alastair Sharp, 'Interview - Egypt's al-Azhar to launch Islamic TV channel', *Reuters* (May 31, 2009). See for the interview with Khaled al-Guindy http://in.reuters.com/article/idININdia-39998720090531.

[16] David Kenner, 'Cairo's Harvard takes to the Airwaves', *Foreign Policy* (June 17, 2010). See http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/16/cairos_harvard_takes_to_the_airwaves.

[17] http://www.azharitv.net/aboutus.aspx.

تتبع القناة السياسة الإعلامية والمنهجية الدعوية التالية : عدم الخوض في سياسات الدول؛ عدم مهاجمة الأفراد والهيئات والمؤسسات وتعيينها بالاسم...

[18] 'Egypt Launches "Moderate" Satellite TV for Ramadan', *All Headline News* (August 23, 2009). http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/7016183325?Egypt%20Launches (no longer accessible).

nor to quench it straightforwardly, but rather to use sectarian strife as a lever on civil society whenever it saw fit.

Khaled al-Guindy is very clear in explaining the chief motive for Azhari TV. The channel targets 'youngsters, particularly those from poor homes', for whom Azhari TV wants to 'provide an authority on the satellite channels to which people can turn to'. He wants to counterbalance these young Muslim audiences' exposure to

> the hundreds of satellite channels that have sprung up over the past 10-15 years [and that] have given rise to a worrying trend of pseudo-religious authorities whose messages are not supervised or regulated (…) Azhari could be a good way to confront confusing and sometimes hateful messages aired on satellite channels.

Thus, according to the website's FAQ, all presenters on Azhari TV are sheikhs who have graduated in Islamic Sciences from al-Azhar University, and who spread 'al-Azhar's agenda of knowledge and moderation, which is determined, outlined and issued by al-Azhar itself'.[19] For al-Guindy, the teachings imparted on Azhari TV focus on 'dealing with religion for life, before it is for the afterlife', in contrast with the marked eschatological leanings of Salafi movements.[20]

Unfortunately for al-Guindy, shortly after the channel's launch the newly elected Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyib, disowned the initiative as a strictly personal undertaking whose claims to represent the venerable institution were unfounded. The reaction seems to stem from an idea that al-Azhar's standing as the only legitimate seat of Sunni Islam in the country does not allow it to descend into the madding crowd of opportunist laymen preachers, and that to enter competition on a level with these players tarnishes the institution. Furthermore, both the hierarchical structure and the collegial culture of al-Azhar do not allow for the sort of personal clout Khaled al-Guindy envisaged with Azhari TV, where he appeared as the main and most famous on-air personality. This short-lived attempt shows how new media do not establish a new, level playing field so much as enter an already crowded and complex ecology of competing actors whose interest may or may not lie in adopting new ways of doing things, or new places in which to do them. Whereas al-Azhar enjoys more concrete influence in Egyptian society than any other religious actor or movement, with the possible exception of the Muslim Brotherhood, other, less established actors, whose social base and repute are yet to be founded, may find that new media at the very least give them the opportunity to cast a wide if superficial net across a large section of Egyptian society. However, this

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[19] http://www.azharitv.net/faq.aspx.
وتصدر بها القناة تحمل أجندة الأزهر العلمية الوسطية التي عرف بها وتميز بها
[20] Alastair Sharp, 'Interview - Egypt's al-Azhar to launch Islamic TV channel', *Reuters* (May 31, 2009). See for the interview with Khaled al-Guindy http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-39998720090531.

does not allow them to vest themselves as deeply into the fabric of Egyptian society as, say, the Sufi *tariqas*, who are another conspicuously absent religious actor in the new media.

Specialized Islamic channels

It is in the development of specialized Islamic satellite channels that new Islamic actors have found the opportunity to establish themselves and create sizeable followings. Religion on these channels is no longer presented as part of a wider array of civil society matters, as on mainstream television. The existence of exclusively religious channels, much like specialized sports or music channels, implies a conception of religion as something to be catered to a group of aficionado consumers, rather than as a topic or a voice among many in general public debate. Very often the formats of presentation on specialized channels reflect this shift, where the religious figure is no longer accompanied and questioned by a host but in sole command of the entire show, lecturing his audience from a desk or a couch on the studio set. Naomi Sakr quotes a representative of al-Majd, one of the many Saudi-owned specialized Islamic channels, speaking of the 'market for Islamic programming', a tell-tale description, since none of these channels has, to date, been able to live up to its commercial goals.[21] While most of these channels are visibly profit-oriented, their financial viability depends on the support of their superlatively rich and pious founders, individuals such as Prince al-Walid ibn Talal or Sheikh Muhammad bin Rashid.

The absence of sound television ratings in the Middle East makes it virtually impossible to measure the channels' relative popularity in numbers. Since a nationwide audience-survey on Egyptian religious TV preferences falls outside the scope of this report, an attempt has been made to determine which of the main specialized Islamic satellite channels boasts a substantial audience in Egypt by looking at the popularity of these channels' websites in Egypt. The assumption is that a channel's website can provide an indication of the channel's popularity, because new and loyal viewers might use it to check up on program schedules and missed episodes.

The first indication to be derived from this table is the relative size of the Egyptian 'market for Islamic programming'. Eight out of eleven times, users from Egypt rank among these websites' most assiduous visitors is either first or second. Users from Egypt also make up a third or more of the websites' overall traffic in six out of eleven cases, and more than half in four out of twelve cases. While real numbers remain inaccessible, and while this paints an approximate picture at best, people from Egypt seem to be among the most numerous and most frequent users of the websites of specialized Islamic channels, far outstripping any single other Arab nation. While this may be directly

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[21] N. Sakr, *Arab Television Today* (London, 2007).

linked to Egypt's demographic weight, Internet penetration is not particularly high in Egypt compared to the rest of the region, and beside sheer numbers this may also reflect an appetite for specialized Islamic broadcasting in Egypt.

Channel Website	Users from Egypt Rank[22]	Popularity in Egypt[23]	% Traffic from Egypt[24]
al-Rahma	N°1	N° 1119	54.3%
4Shabab	N°2	N° 4284	10.6%
al-Resala	N°12	N° 5389	8.0%
Alnas	N°2	N° 6307	35.4%
Iqraa	N°6	N° 7101	15.0%
al-Hekmah	N°1	N° 9923	40.3%
al-Huda	N°1	N° 31,819	14.2%
al-Hafez	N°1	N° 32,746	67.8%
al-Omma	N°1	N° 52,336	82.1%
al-Fajr	N°2	N° 54,893	38.1%
al-Majd	N°3	N° 68,866	5.3%

Graph 1. This list comprises all specialized Islamic channels broadcast from Nilesat, which a) have a website and b) for which enough relevant data can be retrieved from Alexa.

The top five websites in this table have popularity rankings that place them below mainstream but in a high enough bracket, suggesting that while they cannot claim to rival the most popular private channels of mainstream satellite television, they do cater to a substantial segment of the Egyptian public. Ownership of most of these channels is not Egyptian – most are funded by Saudi or other Gulf-region entrepreneurs and philanthropists. Among them one finds the two most well-known and most commercially oriented Islamic satellite channels, Iqraa and al-Resala, the channel of Egyptian celebrity Salafi Sheikh Muhammad Hassan al-Rahma, the Salafi channel Alnas, and the 'Islamic MTV-channel' 4Shabab. Interestingly, much of the content on the top five channels is produced in Egypt, with al-Rahma and 4Shabab being entirely Egyptian initiatives, but for their funding. The remainder are Salafi channels owned and mostly produced in the Gulf region, whose popularity rankings in Egypt suggest they cater to niche markets.

Al-Resala (The Message), Iqraa (Read!), and to a lesser extent Alnas (The People) will air shows by both Salafi sheikhs and preachers such as Amr Khaled and Mustafa Hosni, and provide a measure of diversity in their programming by allowing women and young laymen to present shows on youth and feminine issues. The commercial orientation of these channels became apparent in an incident in

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[22] Indicates the rank of users from Egypt among all website users.
[23] Indicates the website's rank in relation to all websites visited from Egypt.
[24] Indicates how much of the website's total traffic is Egyptian.

2006, when the management of Alnas 'refused to ban the popular but non-Salafi Amr Khaled and the Sufi Ahmad Abdu Awad from the airwaves, [the famous Salafi preachers] al-Huwayni, Hassan and Ya'qub quit in protest'.[25] At any time of the year but most visibly during Ramadan, these channels offer a potpourri of Islam's most mediatic celebrities, with such little regard for ideology that in the summer 2010, Iqraa could host Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Mustafa Hosni and various Saudi scholars as part of its seasonal Ramadan programming. The culture fostered by this approach to Islamic discourse is one of accrued competitiveness, where mediatic celebrity becomes the measure of an actor's authoritativeness. In contrast to the collegial practice and spirit of al-Azhar – or for that matter of all ulama – the focus here shifts to the individual figure at the expense of the message.

Al-Rahma (Mercy) is a staunchly Salafi channel founded in the wake of the 2006 Alnas incident by the most prominent of the three sheikhs who then quit the commercial channel. Aiming to subordinate profit-seeking to ideological consistency, the channel is 'owned by clerics, [who] have control over programming and therefore doctrine, not market concerns, determine its contents. In comparison to Alnas, this station lists only Salafis as contributors, there are no commercials and it only broadcasts twelve hours per day.'[26] It is perhaps the most successful instance of the harnessing of a new medium to the actor's exclusive interest, with little or no incidence of the medium itself on the message or the practices of the actor. Whereas commercial satellite television has imposed its own definition of 'importance' on celebrity preachers such as Amr Khaled, and has at times blurred the distinction between entertainment and devotional practice in religious shows, here the transfer from mosque to airwaves has not affected the Salafi sheikhs in the least. Muhammad Hassan, the main on-air personality, does not fumble over his extensive pious introductory formulas, delivers his lengthy sermons from behind a desk directly into the camera, quotes profusely without ever forgetting to mention his source as proof (*dalil)*, wears the distinctive white robes and head-cover of the pure and faithful, and continues to sport an enviable beard at least two fists' length with a shaven moustache.

4Shabab (For the Young) is, at the very opposite end of the spectrum, the hybrid product of a meeting between pop-culture and Islam. Conceived as an 'islamically correct' alternative to MTV and its regional equivalents in the Arab world, the station broadcasts music video clips, series, talent shows and shows dealing with youth issues aiming to be as cool, sleek and entertaining as they are 'clean'. Ahmad Abu Hayba perfected his trade at al-Resala and oversaw Amr Khaled's debut, but took the cross-fertilizing of devotion and fun one step further when he created a full-fledged Islamic entertainment channel, as opposed to an entertaining religious channel.

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[25] N. Field and A. Rahman, 'Salafi Satellite TV in Egypt', *Arab Media & Society* 8 (2009).
[26] Ibid.

INTERNET

The history of Islam on the Internet follows a three-phased development, according to Jon Anderson, reflecting both technological developments in the medium and sociological developments in the user communities who took to Internet, and further defined themselves through it.

> At the time that the Internet itself was being formed in the 1980s, students who went from Muslim countries to leading Western universities and research institutes that were developing it soon followed the example of their colleagues by bringing avocational interests into what began as an engineers' work tool. In pious acts of witness, they scanned and placed online texts of the Holy Koran and *hadith* of the Prophet. These students and a penumbra of émigré and other diaspora Muslims who joined them online engaged in often fierce discussions of how to apply Muslim rules and interpretations to conditions of modern life.[27]

Interestingly, the two main elements rendering Internet both so significant and so challenging to Islam are already present from the beginning: open access to source materials, outwit the mediation of authority, and the opening up of space for discussion and debate about the proper application of a rich body of texts and practices to contemporary circumstances, again, away from the mediation of traditional authority. From there on, Islamic activity on Internet can be understood as a perpetually extended or re-defined field of experimentation, production of meaning, opinion-forming, and expression of identity – a field which actors, if they are aware of the stakes, will do their utmost to invest.

Soon, Internet

> attracted the attention of more conventional spokespersons of official Islams and of oppositional or militant voices as the Internet became more public with the advent of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s. Citing needs to present interpretations and views of Islam that they define as 'correct', Muslim governments and oppositional movements or parties began establishing publication-like websites that purvey more institutional views of religious establishments and oppositions to them. Some classic *da'wa* organizations brought their conventional apologetics on-line in a context of free-for-all *ijtihad*.

As Anderson remarks, the point of this second wave of Internet activity was very much to 'plant' content in a wide circuit of information sharing, rather than actively guide debate or generate new

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[27] J.W. Anderson and Y. Gonzalez-Quijano, 'Technological Mediation and the Emergence of Transnational Muslims Publics', in: D.F. Eickelman and A. Salvatore (eds.), *Public Islam and the Common Good* (Leiden, 2006).

Islamic practices online: 'Generally, these second-round Web sites were static, often directly transposed from other media, and preserved their formats and the diction of formal, official pronouncements.'

Finally,

> [T]his second phase is giving way to a more modulated one (…) more dynamically attuned to developing an audience or public online. (…) These sites use the latest Web techniques of instant polling, searchable databases, on-the-fly formatting of results, and email queries to engage a base of users and build sites that respond to their interests an grow with them. This may include databases of fatwas and also of advice of a more social and psychological sort, material for religious instruction of children as well as formal sermons, news with a Muslim interest and other kind of religious commentary on current issues. (…) Whatever their ideology, their styles are modern, engaging, and oriented to pious middle-class professionals who seek an Islam that is orthodox and accessible and that addresses how to lead a Muslim life in a modern society.

This short, summarized sketch of the development of Islam on Internet serves to highlight an important feature: Internet remains a user-dominated environment. Overall, actors have taken to Internet in an effort to control, guide or influence a space which was opened by and remains in the hands of private individuals or informal groupings of them. The most successful online actors, in this respect, are the ones who establish interactive platforms and who provide spaces and functions for users who could otherwise create their own discussion forums, or their own pages of advice and opinion. In creating space for these activities on their own domain, in supporting user activity, the more successful Islamic websites can guide and influence without fully controlling online Islamic activity. One last and very recent development – which is left out in this account because it postdates it – is the spread of Islam in the new and tremendously popular Web 2.0 environments of social networking sites, audiovisual content-sharing sites, and blogs. Here again, actors recede in the background and the making of online Islamic discourse and practices returns in the hands of millions of anonymous users. Some of these anonymous users take upon themselves certain roles or functions dictated by the medium, and will set up, for instance, YouTube accounts or Facebook pages where their often intense activity will be to aggregate, relay and disseminate information on a larger than normal scale, ultimately functioning as small publishing houses or information hubs keeping vaster circuits of information-sharing alive and flowing.

Islamic Websites in Egypt

The Internet being a strongly transnational communication space, there are virtually no 'purely Egyptian' websites. There is an inherent difficulty in determining what is and what is not relevant to Islam in Egypt when one takes to the Internet. One approach is to look at what originates from Egypt. For example, which domains are registered in Egypt? Is the content of such and such website produced in Egypt? However, this would lead to the exclusion of many important religious figures in Egypt, whose online activities are hosted abroad because of censorship or for financial reasons. Moreover, content on *bona fide* Egyptian websites may very well be produced in several locations at once. Another approach is to determine those Islamic websites that enjoy the greatest popularity in Egypt, wherever they are located. Then again, beyond sheer numbers of users, it is impossible to assess the impact of, say, a popular Saudi website, on Islam as it is understood and practiced in Egypt.

The real, qualitative impact hiding behind user rates is intractable. The Internet being a versatile tool in virtually everyone's hands, most if not all activity can be found online, from serious recruiting to casual chat. At the same time, it is an unlimited market-place replete with both niche boutiques and superstores, where consumers may spend any amount of time, in total concentration or with flitting attention. Again, user rates are useless indicators here, and an in-depth analysis of the traffic and activity for each site is needed to characterize a site's relative value. The impossible task is to single out individual Egyptian users in such a case-study. A corollary question is whether the website is popular because there is a preexisting demand, in Egypt, for the kind of messages it conveys, or whether the website's sole existence online endows it with a form of influence through the intricate paths of random browsing and/or deliberate attempts by the webmaster (or loyal users) to link up with other popular pages.

The search-engine politics visible behind the domain names of Islamic websites reveal a complex environment of wildly discrepant user and producer agendas. The major generic appellations of large Islamic portals dedicated to the promotion of a particular school of thought – for example Islamway.com, Islamonline.com, Islamiccall.com, Salafway.com, to name just a few – clearly point to a desire to position oneself as the main information provider in a certain field, and the concomitant attempt to 'rake in' as large an audience as possible among (novice) users who are effectuating broad, rather unspecialized searches, often looking for introductory material. Counter-examples are such domains as the stringently Salafi forsanelhaq.com, whose names are obscure references designed to protect the sites from both state agency monitoring and bothersome neophytes. Prominent Jihadi websites, such as *Minbar al-Tawhid*, can have up to six mirror sites, while more

underground forums in the same vein have to move locations regularly. Other websites still are the online mouthpieces of well-known individuals, whose domain names include these figure's names (Qaradawi.com, amrkhaled.com, etc.), and whose incoming traffic thus depends on these personalities being frequently 'googled', but where moderated discussion forums provide ample space for users from all walks of life to take over the debate.

The following table gives a list of the forty most popular Islamic websites in Egypt, classified according to user ratings retrieved from alexa.com.[28] While it does not purport to give a detailed assessment of the virtual Islamic landscape of Egypt, it goes some way to map out the positions of key-players in the field, and to indicate general tendencies.

	Domain name	Website popularity in Egypt	% of users from Egypt
1	www.islamway.com	127	25.6%
2	www.ikhwanonline.com	151	50.9%
3	www.forsanelhaq.com	226	40.5%
4	www.amrkhaled.net	246	32.7%
5	www.ahlalhdeeth.com	605	15.0%
6	www.anasalafy.com	637	67.1%
7	www.ikhwan.net	761	33.9%
8	www.alheweny.org	1049	45.4%
9	www.mustafahosny.com	1121	42.9%
10	www.islamonline.net	1135	18.3%
11	www.onislam.net	1210	24.1%
12	www.salafvoice.com	1223	63.5%
13	www.islamtoday.net	1319	10.7%
14	www.dar-alifta.org	1721	70.7%
15	www.egyig.com	1775	46.7%
16	www.alsalafway.com	1782	40.1%
17	www.Muhammadhassan.org	2150	42.2%
18	shababelikhwan.net	3342	74.5%
19	www.Qaradawi.net	4906	19.4%
20	moezmasoud.com	5232	59.2%
21	www.el-awa.com	5548	59.6%
22	www.ikhwanweb.com	6595	17.4%
23	www.tawhed.ws	6997	10.2%

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[28] All data was retrieved from www.alexa.com in the summer and fall of 2010.

24	www.soufia-h.net	11,617	8.8%
25	www.islamic-sufism.com	18,018	17.7%
26	www.islamwattan.com	23,718	61.4%
27	www.awkaf.org	24,579	84.9%
28	www.ikhwanbook.com	31,133	12.2%
29	www.elmessiri.com	37,367	11.2%
30	www.islamflag.net	37,970	16.2%
31	www.burhaniya.org	38,027	12.0%
32	ikhwanophobia.com	46,379	25.1%
33	www.islamiccall.org	63,741	26.1%
34	www.dr-emara.com	N/A	N/A
35	www.rubat.com	N/A	N/A
36	www.sufiegypt.org	N/A	N/A
37	www.abokhalil.com	N/A	N/A
38	www.alhamedeia.net	N/A	N/A
39	k7alwatia.ahlamontada.net	N/A	N/A
40	rifaiyyah.com	N/A	N/A

Graph 2   **Overview of the forty most popular Islamic websites in Egypt, classified according to user ratings**

In this simple ranking of the most popular Islamic websites in Egypt, the most noticeable feature is that not a single Islamic website figures in the 'top hundred' of most popular websites in Egypt – the top of the list starts at n°127, far behind major news websites, online gaming sites, blog portals, music and film websites, content-sharing websites and a score of pornographic websites. In fact, the only religious website included in the top hundred most popular websites in Egypt is a Christian community and news website addressing Egypt's Coptic population. Nonetheless, the 'Islamic top seven' in Egypt sports reasonably popular websites. For the purpose of comparison, in the Netherlands the same bracket (n°127 to n°761) contains such commonly used or known websites as publiekeomroep.nl, belastingsdienst.nl, klm.com, radio538.com, vd.com (Vroom & Dreesman), uva.nl (University of Amsterdam). For the US we see websites such as timemagazine.com, tripadvisor.com, allrecipes.com, rottentomatoes.com, aa.com (American Airlines) and ophrah.com, placing them squarely in mainstream culture.

Dominating mainstream online Islamic discourse and activity in Egypt, then, are the official Muslim Brotherhood site, a Muslim Brotherhood forum, star preacher Amr Khaled's personal website, and four Salafi portals or forums. Egyptians make up 40% or more of the site's users in three cases, on the official Muslim Brotherhood site and on the Salafi websites anasalafy.com and forsanelhaq.com,

where one can expect to find content that is specifically relevant to Egyptian audiences. They make up a third to a quarter of the audience of the remainder, which are, in the case of islamway.com and ikhwan.net, broad-based and ambitious websites or forums geared to transnational audiences, and in the case of Amr Khaled the mouthpiece of an international celebrity. Only 15% of ahlalhdeeth.com users are from Egypt, where content is likely to be primarily geared towards other audiences.

Further down the list, a larger bracket of less popular websites includes the overwhelming majority of established religious actors in Egypt. Websites where users from Egypt constitute 40% or more of the audience are plenty. They include the websites of famous Egyptian preachers such as Sheikh al-Huwayni and Sheikh Muhammad Hassan, young preachers such as Mustafa Hosni and Moez Masoud, and the independent Islamic intellectual Dr. al-Awa, the website of al-Jama'a al-Islamiya and two large Salafi websites. Two websites where users from Egypt constitute the overwhelming majority are that of the Dar al-Ifta' and the Muslim Brotherhood youth; thus though unremarkable in the general terms of mainstream popularity (they are n°1721 and n°3342), these websites must be understood to play an important role within dedicated Muslim audiences or groups in Egypt. Websites in this category where Egyptians constitute less than a quarter of the general audience are transnationally-oriented portals, such as islamtoday.com, islamonline.com and its new version onislam.com, the website of international celebrity and long-term exile sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the English version of the official Muslim Brotherhood site and lastly the militant website *Minbar al-Tawhid*, where only 10% of the general audience is Egyptian.

Finally, the remainder of the list is composed of websites whose lack of popularity, at the very bottom, results in a complete absence of available data, and others, just above the mark, whose status suggests that the niche-interest of a small, dedicated audience is what keeps them on the map. It is noteworthy that all Sufi websites belong to either of these two groups, suggesting that the various *tariqas*' otherwise substantial popularity in Egypt is in no way related to media-environments and confirming the notion that their solid sociological bases are not located within the Internet-literate demographic in Egypt. Furthermore, two of the more prominent independent Islamic thinkers of Egypt, Dr. Muhammad ʿImara and the late Dr. ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Massiri, are also found in these bottom categories, suggesting their weight in Egyptian public debate depends or depended upon different channels, which in turn poses the question of the relevance of Internet to political debate in Egypt. Both men have published extensively and are vocal interviewees, occasionally championing controversial positions on matters of foreign and domestic politics. Yet Internet does not seem to be the place where these intellectual arguments unfold, much as it does not constitute a playing field for the popular Islamic discourses and practices of traditional Sufism. The medium does

not, it appears, reflect the entire spectrum of Islamic thought or activity in Egypt, despite the profusion of websites.

The upper half of the list is dominated by the personal websites of famous preachers (6 out of 23), be they young and progressive or bearded and Salafi, large, generic portals dedicated to spreading either the Wasatiya or the Salafiya schools of thought (9 out of 23), and the online mouthpieces of existing, political or governmental organizations (the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Jama'a al-Islamiya, the Dar al-Ifta' and *Minbar al-Tawhid*, 4 out of 23). These are the types of Islamic actors who are successfully present and active online. All of these actors have brought with them certain characteristics of their offline activity into cyberspace. Whether it is the construction of large, cult-like personal followings for star preachers or the pamphleteering and counter-propaganda of political activists, or even the collegial tendency of Islamic scholars leading to the foundation of madrasas, multidisciplinary abodes of learning where a single *madhab* prevails. As for the Dar al-Ifta', its online activity is the straightforward extension of its day-to-day business. Interestingly, these actors are also the most urgently concerned with questions of authority, either in a personal, an academic, or an institutional capacity. Freelancing, independent Islamic thinkers and Sufis bound by a wholly autonomous system of ties – of initiation, of traditional identity and of master-and-student relations – do not take to Internet with equal vigor.

One characteristic shared by most sites in the upper half of the list is the presence of a forum for discussion between users, where the incidence of the actors themselves on the ongoing debates is a degree of moderation against personal attacks and threatening behavior between participants, the suggestion of a topic and the occasional but rare provision of information and opinions. In fact, some of the most popular Islamic websites are just that, online forums, and where the data can be retrieved, one finds that even on such high-profile personal websites as that of Amr Khaled, the most visited page is the discussion forum. In their monitoring activities, most actors toe the thin line between the desire to shape and guide general discourse about Islam, and the need to host an as-large-as-possible constituency of users who would otherwise flock towards more hospitable chat-rooms. Hence the greater variety of voices that are tolerated on any website's forum than in the remainder of the official pages, and the relative freedom users experience in appropriating these near-civic areas.

Discussion will typically range from purely Islamic matters of ritual, scripture and religious history to various questions of public and private life, often, but not always including intimacy. Here the difference between the Wasatiya and Salafiya schools of thought is stark, where the first tries as much as possible to cover every area of non-religious life, making ample use of laymen's advice in the

domains of psychology, education, personal hygiene and marital affairs and the second strives to sacralize and ritualize those areas of non-religious life that may be openly discussed while squarely rejecting topics that may not – the dominant logic, which is generally absent from Wasatiya, being one of purity (of heart, of intent, of the self and of the soul) versus impurity, to be avoided at all cost. Here the opposing tendencies of vernacularization and of sacralization of Islamic discourse and practice on the Internet are perhaps best felt, and it must be noted that in this case they are linked to discrete groups of actors and users, not to the medium in itself.

One recent development whose success can be traced back to the marked popularity of online discussion forums among Islamic websites is the phenomenal shift towards user-dominated online activity brought about by the third generation, so-called Web 2.0 software introduced halfway through the 2000's. From a landscape of established actors extending their activity online, the Internet rapidly changed into a vast pool of individual users, with whom interaction was at once facilitated and rendered less exclusive or controllable. Facebook is, after all, the single most popular website in Egypt, towering above any news, music or gaming website, with YouTube hot on the heels at n°3. If there is an incontestable hub of online activity in Egypt, then it is made-up of these wholly secular platforms where the possibilities for both celebrity TV preachers and activist groups are nonetheless tantalizing. Another product of Web 2.0, smaller in scope but nonetheless highly significant, has been the rise of young independent bloggers, such as the avid users of such forums as shababalikhwan.net where 75% of the audience is from Egypt, who mobilized the technology to further distinguish themselves as a new generation of Muslim Brothers and Sisters with an increasingly distinct voice.

Islam 2.0

Facebook

The use of one of the globally most popular social network sites, Facebook, by a growing section of the Egyptian urban and educated youth warrants close scrutiny. Though Egyptian use of Facebook is not dominantly related to Islam, this site provides an increasingly significant platform in Egyptian society for individual expression and social rally around common themes and interests. These may overwhelmingly consist of pastimes, entertainment and celebrity adulation, but also happen to include aspects of social, political and religious debates as part of the diverse set of personal and common interests binding young Egyptian Facebook users. Similarly, while the habit of posting short messages on the walls of friends and acquaintances adopts the light, bantering language of informal chat between familiar parties, opinions on a range of public affairs – figures or matters of public interest – can be found there too. Moreover, as has been noted before, the more intertwined Islamic discourse and new media practices become, the harder it becomes to distinguish between movie-stars and celebrity preachers, fan-clubs and religious followings, convictions and lifestyles, full endorsement and casual interest. Facebook emerges as one of the principal instruments of this shift, or 'third stage vernacularization', and constitutes a unique observation ground for this development.

Why Facebook?

In 2010, Facebook can be considered a small, model virtual public sphere in its own right. As a social network site (SNS), Facebook provides users with three main functions: setting up a personal profile; building a network of connections and socializing with them through chat, messages, picture-sharing, etc.; access to the entire network of individual profiles (generally in a minimal version) through either searching the site or browsing other members connections. But the website's basic function – to provide a glorified sort of telephone book where each user possessing a profile page can provide basic information about him or herself, and participate in a wider, open-access network of private individuals – has given way to a much more intricate social environment, with more complex dynamics.

On the one hand, as the number of users increased and spread beyond the university networks where the technology initiated and began to spread, the modalities of networking developed. As the number of users grew and their reasons for joining an ever-expanding network diversified, sub-networks began to include not only universities, but all manners of private businesses, public

institutions and associations – the default set-up on Facebook is that members of the same network can automatically view each others' profiles, while the rest may not. Concurrently, functions appeared permitting to select one's contacts, and to differentiate between types of contacts by choosing the amount of private information to be displayed to different selections of one's connections. The ongoing, and sometimes virulent debates over Facebook's intricate and morphing 'privacy settings' testify to a complexified social environment where a distinction between the public and the private not only emerged as a vital convention, but was shaped as a set of optional, modulated and differentiating functions, revealing a subtle understanding of all the nuance and scaling of the public versus private paradigm in such an environment.

On the other hand, while the ever-expanding network tended to outline and restrict privacy more starkly through differentiation options, the truly public aspect of Facebook emerged more clearly through another set of new functions. Typically social network sites are described as

> primarily organized around people, not interests […and…] structured as personal (or 'egocentric')
> networks, with the individual at the center of their own community [which] more accurately
> mirrors unmediated social structures, where 'the world is composed of networks, not groups'.[29]

Though this remains at the core of Facebook, functions were developed to increase the amount of user-generated content appearing on profiles, as well as the options for indicating and discussing personal tastes and activities. As the information made available on individual profiles increased – including pastimes, professional and vocational activities, tastes in arts and entertainment, pictures of the individual, etc. – preferences and common interests emerged more massively. As the possibility appeared to import content onto Facebook, in the form of hyperlinks to any given page on the wider Internet, functions were created to establish groupings around these themes and to build discussions around increasingly diversified and richer, often imported content. The types of pages to be found on Facebook are no longer limited to profile pages, but include fan-pages, event-pages, cause-pages, business pages, association pages, to name a few.

The central feature, however, is the 'Newsfeed'. Though it was initially regarded as highly invasive by many Facebook users, it came to replace the personal profile page as the main user interface and shifted the entire focus of the site. This newsfeed, which chiefly displays users' 'statuses' – short statements, typed and renewed at will by individual users – where most of the content-posting and expression of opinion as well as adherence to non-profile pages is recorded, was perhaps the most significant change in the website's configuration over the last few years, crowning the development

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[29] D.M. Boyd and N.B. Ellison, 'Social Networking Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13 (1, 2007). See http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html.

of Facebook into a distinctly public platform, supported by more private networks where access to further information concerning the individuals is more strictly regulated.

When logging on to Facebook, before accessing their own private profile or messages, and before establishing any one-to-one connection with other individuals, users gaze upon the permanently updated 'feed' of their full network's activity, an aptly displayed summary of short statements, containing highlighted titles with hyperlinks to corresponding pages and miniatures of posted photos, videos (which can be streamed in situ), and text which can equally be accessed by a click. This incessant flow of information can be edited and qualified by each user at the hand of three functions: a 'Share' option, which further disseminates a page, a statement, a picture or some such to the users' own network, a 'Comment' option, through which they can provide feedback, and a 'Like' option, with which users can signify their endorsement of a statement or position, or satisfaction with a state of affairs – interestingly, despite widespread user-demand, Facebook never provided a 'Dislike' option for the malcontents. All these actions will in turn be 'fed' into their wider networks' newsfeeds, further upping the level of information circulation, and the opportunities for linking up individuals on the basis of fragmented common interests beyond personal acquaintance. This sense of fragmentation is important, since common interests on Facebook tend to be narrowly circumscribed – they do not imply full or extended worldviews, and encompass nothing more than their immediate object – and since the functions permitting adherence or agreement are invariably non-exclusive – absolutely nothing stands in the way of a Facebook member of, say, the World Vegetarian League naming a famous steak-house as his or her favorite restaurant.

This ambivalent quality of Facebook – and Internet activity overall – where the structure of the network combines dense interconnectivity with great openness and fluidity, is reflected both in complaints about the insubstantiality of 'click activism' and in the success-stories of Barack Obama's presidential campaign or the rebellious Twitter-storm that blew over the latest Iranian elections. In both cases, these new Internet applications are widely regarded as directly responsible for (failing to) allowing and supporting momentous mobilizations, while little attention is paid to the rather more concrete ways in which interested parties exploit the general effervescence that is fostered and amplified by these media. Ironically, as a result of this ambivalence, intelligence agencies all over the world have begun to take very seriously a medium which greatly dissatisfies real-life activists worldwide.

Facebook in Egypt

As with the Internet at large, the role of Facebook in Egyptian society is difficult to render with precision. Figures published in a recent commercially-oriented report indicate that as of July 2010, Egypt counted 3,797,200 Facebook users.[30] Seven months earlier, in January 2010, the count was at 2,220,665 users, indicating a tremendous current growing rate, nearing the 70%.[31] In the MENA region (defined according to World Bank terms, thereby excluding Syria, Iran, Israel and Sudan), Egypt ranks first among its neighbors with 23% of regional Facebook usership. At the global level, Egypt ranks 23rd on the global Facebook country list. However, in order to measure the significance of this development, some context must be introduced. Little over 21% of the Egyptian population uses the Internet; of that segment, Facebook users represent nearly 23%; the penetration of Facebook in Egyptian society thus represents no more than 4.83%. In order to appraise the significance of a 4.83 percentage of social penetration, and the likely impact of Facebook on the Egyptian public sphere, figures for Egypt are contrasted with figures for the United States, United Kingdom, France and Turkey in the first table below, and with figures for the leading five MENA Facebook-using countries in the second table below.[32]

In those countries were the Internet and such applications as Facebook were developed and initially spread, in three out of four cases, Internet users represent well over half the population and a little more or a little less than half the Internet users also use Facebook; consequently, penetration rates span a 30% to 40% bracket. Typically, these are the societies were Facebook may appear to play a significant role in the formation and mobilization of public opinion. Egypt bears little to no comparison. Regionally, though Egypt provides the largest number of Facebook users, the impact of Facebook on this large and densely populated country is comparatively low. The general picture emerging from a comparison with the four other leading MENA countries is somewhat sketchy, but a few general statements can be made. With the exception of the United Arab Emirates, Internet users represent 35% of the population on average, about half the proportion for France, the UK and the US; Facebook usership is either situated at an average 45% of Internet users, not far from European and American rates, or at an average 22%; penetration of Facebook in the overall society oscillates between 8% and 15%, with an exceptional peak for the UAE, again far below rates shown in the first table. In the MENA region the use of Internet and the comparative importance of Facebook are much

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[30] E-Marketing Egypt, *Report: Facebook in Egypt: E-Marketing Insights* (August 2010). See http://www.emarketing-egypt.com/Facebook-in-Egypt-E-Marketing-insights/2/0/10.

[31] Checking on these figures in early September 2010, it appeared the number had risen to 4,121,460 users; in the 'Facebook in Egypt' section, for the purpose of comparison, figures from the report will be used unless otherwise indicated. In the following section, called 'Islamic Actors on Facebook', revised figures from September 2010 will be used instead.

[32] Tables 1 and 2 have been compiled on the basis of material published in the E-Marketing Facebook Report.

lesser than in Europe and the US, and Egypt, on the whole, is far less permeated by the technology and its applications than its neighbors.

Graph 3. Facebook in Egypt: global context	Internet users: % of total population	Facebook users: % of Internet users	Facebook penetration rate of society
Egypt	21.16%	22.83%	4.83%
US	77.50%	53.75%	41.65%
UK	82.91%	52.53%	43.55%
France	61.18%	43.36%	29.57%
Turkey	36.40%	86.80%	31.59%

Graph 4. Facebook in Egypt: Regional Context	Internet users: % of total population	Facebook users: % of Internet users	Facebook penetration rate of society
Egypt	21.16%	22.83%	4.83%
Saudi Arabia	38.10%	25.40%	9.68%
Morocco	32.35%	18.70%	6.05%
UAE	82.15%	44.72%	36.73%
Tunisia	33.55%	45.91%	15.40%

One consideration must balance this account, and tip again the balance in favor of granting some importance to the use of Facebook in Egypt: out of the five MENA countries observed in the table above, restrictions on public life and freedom of expression in the form of political and social censorship are perhaps the weakest in Egypt; the qualitative effect of the spread of Facebook use may then be much more significant in Egypt than elsewhere, and must be measured according to different criteria. Furthermore, the social and intellectual history of Egypt has been shaped and dominated for centuries by a few-to-many model, which often overlapped with a cosmopolitan-to-autochthonous configuration.

Though this is a very broad and sweeping generalization, and one which can undoubtedly be presented with many counter-examples, the chronic and deep disconnection of intellectual elites from their 'social base' is a leitmotif in 20th century Egyptian history. If the Islamist movements, which greatly shaped this and the last century's developments, seemed at first to actively counter this tendency, the 'embourgeoisement' of the Muslim Brotherhood, the commercialization of chic Salafism, the Westernization of Wasatiya, and the grueling radicalization of some figures and elements of the Egyptian Islamic spectrum continue to provide examples of this tendency to 'slip'

that characterizes the majority of these and of other, secular, movements. Incidentally, the Egyptian regime has long perceived and exploited this weakness, and established itself as a paragon of Egyptian identity by playing chiefly on the power of tradition, as embodied on the one hand by folkloric understandings of religion, promoted through the agency of traditional Sufi orders, and on the other hand by the enduring, real and symbolic authority of al-Azhar.

Nonetheless, for all their disconnectedness, the various secular and religious movement headed by the intellectual elites of Egypt create a powerful, if fragmented, concert of voices, which the decision-making centre has never afforded to neglect. With respect to Facebook use in Egypt, this superficial background sketch suggests first of all that no mass movement of Egypt's 86 million strong population is at stake, and second of all, that, paradoxically, developments tracked in Facebook use could nonetheless be significant enough to bring about change in the circumscribed segment of Egyptian society where reflection, criticism and discussion takes place.

An example of what the use of Facebook brought about in Egyptian society is the general strike that took place on April 6, 2008. According to David Faris, 'April 6th was the day when organizing tool [Facebook] met political reality to create elements that were strong enough to form storm clouds on the regime's horizon'.[33] In this case, Israa 'Abd al-Fattah, an 'obscure woman from outside of Cairo, (…) not the type of person you would have expected to be behind massive social protest in the past, but (…) precisely the sort of person who has been most empowered by recent technological innovations in information communication technologies', started a Facebook group in support of a workers' strike against declining wages in a textile factory of the Delta.[34]

At the time, various elements had combined to generate widespread social disgruntlement and a serious loss of regime legitimacy, chief among which were rampant inflation, steady increases in the prices of basic commodities, government clampdown on opposition figures in the runner-up to local elections, and, importantly, the regime's official stance on the Gaza strip. Within a matter of weeks, the Facebook group, which called upon Egyptians to stay at home on the day of the strike, gained substantial membership.

On April 6, 2008, 'high rates of absenteeism [were] reported (…) with countless reports of deserted streets and abandoned shops.'[35] Israa 'Abd al-Fattah was imprisoned for over two weeks and both her person and her undertaking were widely mediatized. Meanwhile, 'no less a heavyweight than *al-*

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[33] D. Faris, 'Revolution Without Revolutionaries? Network Theory, Facebook, and the Egyptian Blogosphere', *Arab Media Society*.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

Dostor and *al-Ahram* columnist Fahmi Howaydi declared the Facebook organizers "hope for the future of Egypt"', and the regime embarked on a delegitimization campaign of Facebook .[36]

Though enthusiasm for new media as a tool for political empowerment of the disenfranchised and politically voiceless young Egyptian middle-class has somewhat ebbed in the past two years, the recent and tragic death of a young man from Alexandria at the hands of the Egyptian police has sparked a series of protests and rallies against state-sponsored violence once again organized – and galvanized – by the use of Facebook. Similarly, Muhammad al-Baradei's return to Egypt and incipient political campaign in view of the presidency have been supported by many Facebook groups.

In fact, Facebook activity continues to preoccupy government authorities, which have recently set up a specific monitoring facility of Egyptian Facebook use. The blog *Global Voices: Advocacy: Defending Free Speech Online* published a post to this extent on August 29, 2010, citing Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Jarida*. On July 1, 2010, as part of its Internet Control Department, the Egyptian Ministry of Interior set up a monitoring organ where teams comprising fifteen individuals – two police officers, ten secretaries of police and three engineers – work three eight hours shifts, monitoring Facebook activity around the clock. The focus of their watch is said to be 'content like groups, pages and chat and to publish reports countering online criticism of current Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak or his son Gamal'.[37]

Islamic Actors on Facebook

Recognizing the importance of this medium in Egyptian society, certain Islamic actors have a widespread presence on Facebook, and others are doing their best to break through on it. While Egyptian Facebook use is by no means dominated by religious concerns, Islam nonetheless has a significant place among the identity markers employed by Egyptian Facebook users, and in the content that is exchanged and published by Egyptians on the website's many pages. To give but a very general idea of this 'significant place', a very popular public figure page by the name of *Ashraf al-Khalq Muhammad sala Allah 'alayhi wa-sallam*, counting 324,521 fans Facebook-wide, is 'liked' by 76,780 Egyptians – in the Muslim world as it is represented on Facebook, Egypt accounts for 24% of Muslims who demonstrate their belief in the Prophet on the most popular Facebook page dedicated to him. A broader search for Egyptian preferences, combining the five generic Islamic pages 'Salat al-Istikhara', 'al-Salat', 'Qul huwa Allah wahad', 'Ana Muslimu' and 'Surat al-Kahf' will yield 304,360

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Ramy Raoof, 'Egypt: Security Department to Monitor Facebook and Support the Government', *Global Voices Advocacy* (August 29, 2010). See http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2010/08/29/egypt-security-department-to-monito-facebook-and-support-the-government/.

Egyptian 'likes'. Out of a total Facebook population of 4,025,280, this amounts to 5% of Egyptian Facebook users.

A noteworthy phenomenon is the permanence of certain past Egyptian figures of Islam on their dedicated Facebook pages, such as that of the Salafi Sheikh Muhammad Mutwalli al-Sha'rawi, who died in 1998 – 19,147 members on the most popular group, many more thousands on less popular fan-pages – or Hassan al-Banna, who died in 1949 – 49,946 fans on the foremost page, thousands of others on many less popular pages. These pages were set up by fans and admirers, and were designed to perpetuate the memory and the teachings of iconic figures, allowing a complete re-appropriation of their persona and their discourse by thousands of private users, far outwit the reach and beyond the control of official actors – for instance, of an organization's official discourse on the life and teachings of its founder, or of a rigorist doctrine's intransigence on who may or may not consider themselves supporters of a venerable sheikh. To a possibly even greater extent than adherence to the pages of currently active Islamic actors, membership to these 'iconic' pages participates of the users' identity-construction: it allows a feeling of belonging to a sometimes vaguely defined but nonetheless powerful and far-reaching tradition, by endowing users with a tangible part in the conservation and conveyance of a spiritual and intellectual heritage. For the purpose of this section, we will limit ourselves to the use of Facebook by living Islamic actors in present-day Egyptian society.

The Dar al-Ifta' has one official page on Facebook. The page is in Arabic, is listed as a 'Group' and has 3626 members. Its chief purpose is to present the electronic fatwa services provided by the main Dar al-Ifta' website. The 'Wall' is regularly updated with new material from both the administrators and group members. On the 'Wall', questions from members range from 'Is it absolutely necessary for me to put my money in one of the Islamic banks, because I often heard that depositing it at normal banks and at the post office is haram?' to 'How can I send a question or a request electronically to the Dar al-Ifta'?'. Moreover, 108 links to other Facebook pages or Internet content appear, for example to general *da'wa* pages such as 'The Holy Koran and Its Sciences' (1093 members) or an Egyptian page named after an Islamic prayer formula (3071 members), which gives a full list of *da'wa* websites, Islamic TV channels, and where the administrator, Heba al-Sayid, has posted 81 videos and over thirty links.[38]

Sufi *tariqas* employ Facebook in a somewhat unconventional way. Though five groups related to some of the main schools or movements can be found on Facebook, three of them are entirely closed to non-members, with a public profile showing only a name and perhaps a picture, but no

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[38] يا حى يا قيوم برحمتك استغيث اصلح لى شانى كله و لا تكلنى الى نفسى طرفه عين

further information. Clearly, the intent is not to disseminate content or create wide connections over the Internet to guide users in their searches, nor to publicize a figure or a school of thought. Rather, Facebook here seems to be used for organization purposes only, between small groups of initiates, reflecting the secrecy of some Sufi circles off the Internet. The groups tend to be medium to small, counting a few hundreds, and the two open group-pages show modest amounts of content and links.

While Facebook counts a large number of Salafi pages, or pages for Salafi *da'wa*, most of them are not particularly 'Egyptian' in character, but rather tend to address transnational audiences in English. One exception is the unmistakably Egyptian 'El-Da'wa el-Salafiya bil-Iskandariyya', a group counting 539 members, showing very high levels of activity, and a high connectivity. Here, devotional content dissemination is an important activity, and the page works as a hub of connectivity to many other Salafi Facebook- and web-pages, successfully laying down virtual tracks to guide users in their search for Salafi content. The fan-bases of the main Egyptian Salafi preachers compete with those of iconic figures such as Hassan al-Banna and Sheikh Mutwalli. Muhammad Hassan's following on the most popular of his numerous Facebook fan-pages falls short of that of the Prophet himself, but with 203,662 fans he is clearly situated in the same 'super-category'. Most of his lesser-known colleagues have fan-pages as well, but none rivals him in popularity.

Competition in this domain comes from the celebrity 'new preachers' Amr Khaled, Mustafa Hosni and Moez Masoud, whose followings on Facebook are a testimony to the power of intense mediatization. These pages are brim with interaction from hundreds of thousands users, who flock to these personal profiles as if to the feet of an idol. The vast majority of comments consist of praise, while the pages are replete with photos and videos posted both by users and by the page's administrators, adding up to little cyber-monuments of personality cult. It is interesting to note here the development of a peculiar devotional practice proper to Facebook, which is the posting of a pious Islamic picture (of the Kabaa, of a natural landscape underscored by a quote from the Koran, of a praying figure) accompanied by a short *du'a* (invocation) in praise of God, of Islam or of the preacher, or all at the same time. This practice is strongly reminiscent of the depositing of votives at a shrine, and the pious formulas that invariably dedicate the pictures place them squarely in the category of devotional practice. Hundreds of such deposits line the Facebook walls of Egypt's most popular preachers, in what seems to be an extension of sacred space – and of religious practice – into cyberspace.

Two Islamic actors who are remarkably poorly represented on Facebook are the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Azhar.

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YouTube

Unfortunately, no statistical data is made available for YouTube, and it is therefore impossible to assess its popularity in greater detail than simply to say that, being the third most popular website in Egypt, most of the Facebook demographic is also using the famous audiovisual content sharing site. While YouTube is of lesser interest than Facebook in that it provides less room for discussion and swift exchanges and spreads only a particular type of content – videos of maximum fifteen, formerly ten minutes-long – it has two crucial functions: firstly, that of closing the communication loop, so to speak, by allowing to bring TV content to the Internet, where it will be further discussed, dissected and assimilated; and secondly that of empowering users in the many-to-many model of communication with the tools of broadcasting, something formerly in the hands of the very few. Combined with user-friendly video editing software and cameras so accessible they are even found on phones, the power of YouTube, with regard to public debate, resides in that it allows everyone to broadcast what they feel people should have seen on TV but have not, be that because they missed the program, because of a lack of commercial value, or because state-censorship prevents the event from being covered or the message from being conveyed.

The interaction on YouTube is relatively limited, although comment pages below posted videos typically receive litanies of short comments, generally no more than simple expressions of approval and appreciation or rejection and dislike. Occasionally a debate is sparked off, but the anonymity of YouTube profiles is not as conducive to actual discussion as on Facebook, and debates on YouTube hardly ever amount to more than angry exchanges of invectives. Another option is to post a video in answer to a video, creating chains of cross-referenced audiovisual content. Individual users can browse videos at will, but must create an account in order to post videos themselves. These accounts are called channels, and the most prolific users effectively transform their personal account into full-fledged specialized channels, to which other users may subscribe, and on which the account holder's own subscriptions may be seen, inviting visitors to further peruse. The most common approach to YouTube, however, remains the casual browsing of individual video pages, and the most popular videos are not always those posted by large account holders. Links to these outstandingly popular videos are often embedded on other pages and circulated via other sites, generally social networking sites, which is where they achieve their superlative popularity – at the very top end, one finds over 174 million views of a low-quality comic dancing video and over 332 million views of a minute-long candid homemade video of a baby biting a toddler's finger.

On YouTube, Islam is amply represented, but verifying to which extent is impossible, since no tools allow the immense – and undisclosed – number of videos to be searched efficiently. It is similarly

impossible to determine the proportion of Egyptians among the website's immense – and once again undisclosed – user base. A simple search for 'Islam' produces about 1.23 million results, while the same word in the Arabic language produces 100,000 results. 'Muslim' yields 579,000 results in English and 51,500 results in Arabic. For the sake of comparison, 'FIFA World Cup' yields 149,000 results, 'Obama' 642,000 results, the words 'friends', 'funny' and 'how to' respectively 1 million, 2.47 million and 2.83 million results, and 'Facebook' a staggering 3.4 million results. With 1.2 million results, 'Islam' is thus by no means under-represented on YouTube, but the dominant language remains English, as is the case with Facebook. Cleary, many Islamic videos on YouTube do not contain the word 'Islam' or 'Muslim' in their title or description, and the simple key-word search must serve as a general indicator of overall proportions – the real numbers, of course, change by the minute.

One function of the site is a ranking of the most popular channels by country, which allows only a partial view of Egyptian user habits. This is done in terms of 'most viewed all time' and of 'most subscribed to all time' – because of the particular structure of YouTube, these categories do not necessarily overlap. As noted before, the site can be used without creating a personal account, videos can be watched without subscribing to the account on which they are posted, and all in all random browsing is by far the most common activity on YouTube. Subscription to a particular channel rather denotes comparatively an unusual, specialist interest.

Channel	Number of uploads	Number of views of uploaded videos	Number of subscribers	Rank (most viewed all time by Egyptians)
'ikhwanboy'	10	29,812,264	1251	8
Amr Khaled	830	12,958,406	13,855	31
'muslimflower'	13	12,605,792	562	33
'rassoulallaah'	456	7,088,802	13,664	89
'hamdye'	234	6,088,362	734	95

Graph 5   **'Islamic' YouTube channels among the 'top 100' most viewed YouTube channels by Egyptians**

Graph 5 shows those pages among the hundred most viewed channels by Egyptian YouTube users that may qualify as 'Islamic', insofar as the account holders either clearly engage in *da'wa* activities through their account or insofar as Islam holds an important place in the way the account holders choose to publicly present themselves, often by being mentioned in their pseudonyms. According to this definition, five percent of the most watched content by Egyptian YouTube users can be deemed 'Islamic'. Though this is a diminutive figure – YouTube is the third most popular website in Egypt and its users thus represent a substantial section of the totality of Egyptian Internet users – it can be taken as a general indicator, at minima, of the amount of Islamic content viewed in mainstream contexts by the general Egyptian public.

The picture emerging from this table is interesting and highly representative of more general trends arising from the encounter of Islam and third generation web technology in the context of Egyptian society. First and foremost, only one established religious actor figures: the heavily mediatized celebrity preacher Amr Khaled, who only recently acceded to the status of established player at all and continues to be known in Egypt as a 'new preacher', an unconventional figure, lacking classical training and the attributes of traditional authority. The five remaining account holders are anonymous, private Egyptian citizens, whose videos have nonetheless attracted audiences in the millions.

Top of the list is a well-known blogger from the Muslim Brotherhood youth, whose superlative popularity is due to ten videos alone. This must alert one to the fact that in this case YouTube very probably served merely as the passive host for videos that were meant to circulate in much wider and well-established activist and mainstream networks. The combined use of several online platforms for the dissemination of various types of information is a hallmark of the new generation of Islamic activism that has taken to the Internet to evade both censorship and persecution by the state and the pressure exerted by the historical organizations that dominate Islamic activism in Egypt. The contents of Ikhwanboy's videos are effectively much more political and framed by national priorities than religious and transnational, and were it not for a subtle mention on his profile of Wasatiya Islam, one could easily mistake him for a 'generic' Egyptian activist. This ideological and technological rapprochement between young Islamic activists and their secular counterparts in such movements as Kifaya is in fact another such general trends illustrated the sample of graph 5.[39]

Below, one finds Muslimflower, an interesting poster-child for another recent development in Egyptian Islam: the rise of increasingly distinct female Muslim voices alongside the parallel rise of an Islamic youth, exemplified above by Ikhwanboy. Muslimflower, an Egyptian university student in her twenties, exemplifies a new demographic of educated and vocal young Muslim women for whom Internet constitutes an unfettered socio-communicative space, in the words of Jon Anderson. While the term feminism may not always apply to a largely un-politicized phenomenon of growing awareness, identity – feminine Islamic identity – is without doubt the central concern of Muslimflower, and a powerful drive in taking to online expression. A short excerpt from the lengthy 'about me' section of her profile reads as follows:

> this my hijaab, I will never remove hijaab is my pride, it makes my soul improve it is Allah's law (…) people didn't approve for what I had to say...covering my self will hide my charm away; confused was my mind in what I shouldn't do…I have been so sad, my feeling never went

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[39] See http://www.youtube.com/user/ikhwanboy.

through; my heart got that peace, the peace that showed me light the light of my hijaab which made my spirit bright; without my hijaab, I feel insecure deep within my soul, I feel peace and pure, oh my dearest sisters, hijaab is the cure wisdom lies beneath it…[40]

The fourth one, 'Rassoulallaah', is the YouTube extension of an immensely popular Facebook page dedicated to the Prophet Muhammad, counting over 3.7 million fans worldwide. The page is administered by a group of ten individuals who, according to the information section, are higher educated male and female professionals from several different countries, who do not belong to any political organization or specific religious movement, and profess to refer themselves exclusively to the Koran and the *sunna* of the Prophet. Both the YouTube account and the Facebook page host self-produced Salafi-oriented content – such as support for the view that all music is strictly forbidden in Islam – and videos of well-known Salafi sheikhs. An associated website in English furthers this transnational group's *da'wa* efforts in the direction of non-Arabic-speaking and non-Muslim audiences.[41]

Hamdye's YouTube channel is another such video hub, dedicated to diffusing the Salafi school of thought through the posting of short video segments of its most prominent sheikhs. Where the website of al-Rahma TV, for instance, hosts the full episode, the YouTube account postings work as a form of quick introductions or trailers but mostly as RSS feeds: they are the next step in a processing chain that takes the *khutba* or the *dars* from the live context of the mosque to the pre-recorded TV performance and finally to the fast-moving online socio-communicative spaces, where information must conform to a bite-sized format. Even when the length of videos is limited at fifteen minutes on YouTube, most of the segments do not exceed a duration of two to four minutes.[42]

Both Ikhwanboy and Muslimflower owe their immense popularity to a single video, respectively a tribute to an imprisoned fellow Muslim Brotherhood blogger and a cute children's song about fruit that somehow caught the attention of millions of Arab speakers. Neither video is distinctly Islamic. The 'viral' phenomenon is key here, and this differentiates them from the other YouTube accounts in graph 5, who 'weigh' much more in terms of the corpus of material they post and hence of the messages they convey. Amr Khaled, RassoulAllaah and Hamdye's posted videos are in the several hundred. Ikhwanboy and Muslimflower's popularity is more a function of their representative or iconic value for a generation of like-minded individuals keen to identify themselves through consumption of and passing adherence to instant expressions of an elusive zeitgeist. Amr Khaled,

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[40] See http://www.youtube.com/user/muslimflower.
[41] See http://www.youtube.com/user/RassoulAllaah,
https://www.facebook.com/Rassoul.Allaah#!/Rassoul.Allaah?sk=info and http://rassoul-allaah.com.
[42] See http://www.youtube.com/user/hamdye.

Rassoulalaah and Hamdye, on the contrary, have garnered what popularity they have through the intensive use of new media to spread existing messages, and have done so with a clear agenda, of undertaking *da'wa* and of building a solid basis of followers. It is not surprising, therefore, to find two of the three 'heavy-weights' in the next table, where YouTube accounts are ranked according to numbers of subscribers, and to find that the poster-children for the new Egyptian generation of young Muslims are left out.

A simple observation provides the key to graph 6: there are a great many more Islamic YouTube channels with high numbers of subscribers than there are Islamic YouTube channels among the most widely popular channels. That is, while five percent of mainstream online content viewed by the general Egyptian public can be said to bear some relation to Islam, seventeen percent of the more regular use of YouTube by Egyptians is related to Islam. Different uses, and different users, are found behind this discrepancy.

Channel	Number of uploads	Number of views of uploaded videos	Number of subscribers	Rank (most viewed all time by Egyptians)
Amr Khaled	830	12,958,406	13,855	12
RassoulAllaah	456	7,088,802	13,664	17
El Mokhales TV	131	2,052,425	6,882	25
Alnas TV	1,787	1,500,971	6,638	26
Mustafa Hosni	591	4,267,908	5,587	34
AntiShubohat	60	129,103	5,520	36
'nnnnnooooooloveyou'	2,576	5,090,746	5,228	39
El Zoghbe TV	221	N/A	5,028	42
Bridges Foundation	153	1,196,175	4,194	52
Only4Islam channel	741	1,033,649	4,239	53
Abu Ishaq al-Huwayni	183	337,028	4,131	54
Al Rahma TV channel	519	439,615	3,753	62
Only4Islam second channel	373	1,011,341	3,496	65
'afahmyh'	53	1,704,578	2,992	76
Muhammad Hassan TV	488	N/A	2,800	78
TheBoyOfIslam	1,262	N/A	2,812	84
HashemStudios	139	163,374	2,195	100

Graph 6.   'Islamic' YouTube channels among the top 100 YouTube channels with the largest number of Egyptian subscribers

Aside from the ubiquitous Amr Khaled and his younger competitor Mustafa Hosni, the overwhelming majority (twelve out of seventeen) of YouTube accounts present in graph 6 are Salafi channels – either directly related to sheikhs and to existing satellite TV channels, or secondary distribution hubs such as RassoulAllaah. 'Elmokhales TV', 'El Zoghbe TV', 'Abu Ishaq al-Huwayni' and 'Muhammad Hassan TV' are directly related to individual sheikhs; 'Alnas TV' and 'Al Rahma TV' are related to the relatively well-known Salafi satellite TV channels; 'AntiShubohat', 'nnnnnoooooloveyou' (the account username for a group of sheikhs calling themselves the Forum of the Umma's Ulama) and 'TheBoyOfIslam' are individual or group initiatives posting both self-produced content and segments of videos from famous Salafi sheikhs; the two 'Only4Islam' channels hide a third one, called 'Only4Fatwa', all administered by one AboMaryam.

The homogeneity of content across these channels is striking, and cross-referencing by linking up to each other is a common practice. Similarly, when external websites are recommended on certain channels, they can invariably be found on several others in this group too. Thus, 'AntiShubohat' channel subscribes to 'Only4Islam' channel, 'El Zoghbe TV' and 'El Mokhales TV', where one finds that 'El Mokhales TV' is also a subscriber to 'Only4Islam' and 'Only4Islam' subscribes to 'El Zoghbe TV', where it shows subscription to 'AntiShubohat', and all of them use material from or directly refer to forsanelhaq.com. Most of these YouTube accounts indicate further Facebook and sometimes Twitter accounts, as well as domain names on other content sharing sites and blogger platforms. 'Only4Islam' and its derivatives are an interesting attempt at establishing a mini-network of Salafi video channels modeled on the idea of the better-funded Saudi bouquets of satellite channels, but transferred onto an effectively cost-free medium. Many videos on the two 'Only4Islam' channels are over an hour or half an hour long, successfully circumventing YouTube restrictions, and are full episodes of shows from Alnas TV or other such major Salafi channels, while the segments on 'Only4Fatwa' are shorter than usual, providing a vast collection of bite-sized wisdom for immediate consumption.

Thus while the overall popularity rates of this collection of YouTube channels places them well below the mainstream, it is not to say that what happens under the radar of the general public is insignificant. The sheer volume of posted material, the high degree of interconnectivity and the simultaneous spread across most types of third generation online environments suggests a homogenous and highly active community of users, whose size is not inconsequential despite not being dominant. This is a near-perfect mirror image of the place of Salafiya in Egyptian society at large, where it is rejected from the mainstream but nonetheless constitutes a strong current just below the surface of normative public life.

Blogs

Blogging developed in Egypt during the mid-2000's, and quickly became something of a social phenomenon. Bolstered by their supporting role in the large-scale social protest movement Kifaya from 2004 onwards, bloggers steadily imposed themselves as a new breed of 'citizen journalists' in Egypt, working against government censorship and self-censorship of both state-owned and private Egyptian media.[43] As a result, some of the most daring and controversial critical voices in Egypt became those of bloggers, and government crackdown on them, through repeated intimidation, arrests, beatings and imprisonments, further helped shaping a new, self-conscious type of Egyptian activist.[44]

The only Islamic actor to have taken to blogging with any noticeable success is a new category that actually saw the light of the day thanks to blogs, and which represents a true case of media-spawned fragmentation of authority. They are the young Muslim Brotherhood bloggers, whose use of the technology quickly granted them the independence to take openly critical stances against their mother organization, an unprecedented event in the history of the oldest Islamist group. Initially conceived as an experiment, the adoption of blogging by a small number of Brotherhood youth stemmed from their desire to 'keep up' with their secular and leftwing colleagues active in such movements as Kifaya. The immediate catalyst was also a series of government crackdowns on the Muslim Brotherhood that sent over sixty members and senior leaders to jail during 2006-2007. Blogging was then readily available as a tool to be used by young Brotherhood members with a new and urgent cause: to attract and fix media attention on the arrests and trials of so many key-members of the organization.[45]

This period saw the beginning of the now famous blog *Ana Ikhwan*, followed by the bitter-sweet and often acerbic blog *yallameshmohem*.[46] They were soon followed by the following:

http://ensaa.blogspot.com

http://www.khirat-elshater.com

http://freehassanmalek.blogspot.com

http://banatelerian.blogspot.com

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[43] Rania al-Malky, 'Blogging for Reform: the Case of Egypt', *Arab Media & Society* 1 (Spring 2007). See http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=12. See also Courtney Radsch, 'Core to Commonplace: The Evolution of Egypt's Blogosphere', *Arab Media & Society* 6 (September 2008), available at http://www.arabmediasociety.com/topics/index.php?t_article=228.

[44] 'Egypt arrests another blog critic', *BBC News* (November 20, 2006). See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6164798.stm.

[45] Khalil al-Anani, 'Brotherhood Bloggers: A New Generation Voices Dissent', *Arab Insight* 5 (2008).

[46] See ana-ikhwan.blogspot.com and yallameshmohem.blogspot.com.

The latter sites are mostly run by the children of imprisoned leadership figures. The presence among those early bloggers of a significant number of young and vocal Muslim Sisters constituted another first for the male-dominated and patriarchal organization. While these young women stayed well within accepted roles – maintaining blogs for the release of their fathers where much of the content centered around the sympathetic themes of family and dear ones – and while the archetype of the abandoned daughters' cries of distress at the loss of their protector and provider rather evokes the publicly mourning women of Antiquity more than it calls to mind the uncompromisingly emancipatory discourse of postmodern feminism, the sudden and loud advance upon a public stage of a formerly invisible and inaudible demographic, and its spontaneous embrace of novel methods reaching far beyond the grasp of its appointed guardians was enough to cause a substantial stir.

But as blogging spread like wildfire among a generation of increasingly self-aware youths, whose very adoption of Web 2.0 technology became a deliberate gesture of identification, the initial purpose to which it was harnessed gradually faded – notably with the release of the majority of the concerned individuals within a relatively short period of time. Furthermore, the reflective quality of a medium which has often been described as a public-private diary crept up, and the formidable potential of the critical spotlight was turned inwards for lack of an immediate external battle. Having been offered a more important role in the life of the organization than their rank-and-file membership would have classically afforded them, young members began to turn their confident critical eye to the internal structures of power that excluded them from the decision-making process of an *alma mater* which they defended precisely against the arbitrary rule of an autocratic regime, and from whom they expected better and more in return for their loyal services. To a top-down and secretive organization, guided above everything by the single principle of survival, and in which, like in much of Egypt's organized civil society, a solid sedimental layer of relatively short-sighted, mediocre and privilege-seeking middle-management had flourished, the Brotherhood youths who had no pre-1980's living memories opposed notions of transparency, meritocracy and critical feedback, at the same time as they spontaneously showed much greater ease in their dealings with Egyptian civil society at large, unconsciously dropping the dominant 'us versus them' logic of their elders.

They were not unconscious, however, when it came to the realization of their impact upon the organization. Second wave blogs entitled *Waves in a Sea of Change* and *I Am With Them* point to a strong sense of identification on the part of these individuals with a self-promoting generational group whose avowed agenda is, in one word, change. Observers have pointed out that not all Brotherhood bloggers conceived of this change in similar ways, and that self-promotion can be equally ambiguous: certain bloggers hoped to further their careers within the organization, while others seemed to be edging closer to defection every day. Change at times seemed to mean

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progressive internal reform and at others radical overhaul.[47] It seems counter-intuitive, however, to expect a critical movement to adhere en masse to a single vision, nor is the tension between reform and revolution a novel feature in theories of change. Least of all, the inherent difficulty in negotiating private and group interests, which is the standard experience of every socialized individual, cannot be taken as a weakness per se. In the process of articulating their criticism and of building themselves as a conscious force, young Brotherhood bloggers have touched upon every major aspect of the organization, rethinking the fundaments of its political and intellectual discourse, thoroughly scrutinizing the controversial 2007 draft platform, and deconstructing the Brotherhood's electoral practices and overall strategy. Wherever these twenty-somethings will be found in ten to twenty years time, the attitudes developed during this period will not be lost to political life in Egypt.

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[47] Khalil al-Anani, 'Brotherhood Bloggers: A New Generation Voices Dissent', *Arab Insight* 5 (2008).

CONCLUSION

The mapping survey above challenges the view that the Islamic sector in Egypt constitutes a homogeneous, cohesive and self-reinforcing sector, and that Islamic actors share a unified vision and seek to implement some agreed upon conception of Islam and of the Muslim state and society. Rather, this survey shows that the Islamic sector in Egypt is highly diversified and fragmented and that the various actors within this sector have competing understandings of the role of Islam and of the nature of the Islamic state.

The internal diversity and fragmentation of the Islamic sector in Egypt has come to the forefront in the wake of the 25th of January revolution. While several commentators have observed the rising polarization among Islamists and secularists in Egypt since the revolution, an equally important phenomena has been the rising polarization between the different Islamic actors, especially between Salafi actors on the one hand and the Muslim Brotherhood and official and Sufi actors on the other.

Since the revolution, Salafi movements, like all the other Islamic movements, have felt emancipated from the constraints imposed on them by the Mubarak regime and they have used their new found freedom to assert their position within the Islamic sector and within the broader Egyptian polity, maintaining that they constitute the largest Islamic current in Egypt. Salafi actors are now challenging the hegemonic position of the Muslim Brotherhood in the political field by forming a number of new political parties which will contest the upcoming parliamentary elections. They are also fielding a candidate for the forthcoming presidential elections. Salafis are also actively challenging the hegemony of the Sufi trend over official Islam. They have begun to make claims to these institutions by calling for the resignation of figures such Sheikh Ali Gomaa, who is known for his Sufi orientation. In reaction, Sufis actors have held a series of conferences, in which they have called for the unification of their ranks against threats from the Salafi movement. They also have called upon their followers to form popular committees to protect the shrines from attacks by Salafi zealots. Some Sufi actors have also formed their own political parties, such as al-Tahrir Party and the Voice of Freedom, while others have joined some of the new secular parties, such as the Free Egyptians Party, in order to compete against Islamic parties, such as the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party and the various Salafi Parties, which have emerged since the revolution.

This leads us to the second major development within the Islamic sector since the revolution, namely the rapid politicization of previously apolitical Islamic actors. While the creation of the Brotherhood's

Freedom and Justice Party and the rise of the Brotherhood as a prominent political actor in the wake of the revolution were widely expected given the long standing involvement of the Brotherhood in the political process, the rise of the political profile of other Islamic actors came as a surprise to many observers. In the wake of the revolutions, Salafi groups held a series of conventions across the country, in which they declared that given the recent political changes in the country they intended to fully participate in the political process. A number of Salafi groups have since then formed a number of new political parties including al-Nour, al-Asala and al-Fadila and are planning to contest all upcoming electoral contests.

Similarly, a number of Sufi movements which were previously aligned with the ruling party have since the revolution endeavored to form a number of political parties, including the Tahrir Party and the Voice of Freedom Party. Some leading figures within the Sufi movement have opted to join some of the new secular parties such as the Free Egyptians Party. Sufi groups have aligned themselves with those forces that have called for the establishment of a civic and democratic state based on the principles of citizenship and they have opposed attempts to create an Islamic state in Egypt.

As for al-Azhar, after the revolution it started playing a new political role by positioning itself as a mediator between the various political groups. Dr. al-Tayyib launched two main initiatives: the first called for a dialogue between all Islamic groups – the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi groups, Sufi groups and al-Jama'a al-Islamiya – in order to endorse moderate understanding of Islam in Egypt. For the first time, al-Azhar received the supreme leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and leaders of the Salafi groups, and it organized a national conference to discuss the future of Egypt with representatives from these groups. This initiative placed al-Azhar as an umbrella for dialogue among all these groups.

The second initiative was the 'al-Azhar Declaration', which constituted a consensus document between the principle Islamist and secular groups over the desired political system in Egypt after the revolution. The declaration states that 'Egypt is a modern national democratic state, the legislative authority resides in the people, in accordance with the correct understanding of Islam'. It states that Islam does not call for a theocratic religious state.[1] This document represented a way out of the impasse caused by the call for the establishment of an Islamic state in the wake of the revolution. This initiative was supported by the Brotherhood but rejected by the Salafi groups.

Finally, in the wake of the revolution a number of the new preachers such as Moez Masoud and Amr Khaled became politically active. Moez Masoud is one of the founding members of the newly established Adl or Justice Party, while Amr Khaled has publicly flirted with the idea of running for the

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[1] نص وثيقة الأزهر حول مستقبل مصر، 21 يونيو, 2011 http://www.25yanayer.net/?p=11030.

upcoming presidential elections. Khaled broke ranks with the Brotherhood and other Islamic actors during the March 19th referendum by actively campaigning with the secular groups which rejected the proposed amendments which were supported by most Islamic actors, including the Brotherhood and the Salafi movements.

A final development that has characterized the Islamic sector in Egypt since the revolution has been intense competition and fragmentation, not only between Islamic actors belonging to different currents such as Sufi and Salafis, but also increased fragmentation among actors belonging to the same current. In the wake of the revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood witnessed a number of splits unseen in the movement since al-Wasat group left the movement in 1996. Shortly after the revolution, there emerged a debate within the movement about the future of the Brotherhood, with some calling for the establishment of a political party representing the movement, while others called on the movement to remain a socio-religious movements whose members are free to form or to join different political parties. However, the first opinion prevailed and the Brotherhood endeavored to create the Freedom and Justice party as the sole political representative of the movement. It called on all of its members to join the party and threatened to expel any member who joined another political party.

In the wake of the creation of the Freedom and Justice party there emerged a second debate over the nature of the relationship between the movement and the party: some were calling for the complete independence of the party from the movement, while others preferred that the party be controlled by the movement. Ultimately the second opinion prevailed and the leadership of the Brotherhood proceeded to select the founding members and the secretariat of the party.

These differences of opinion over the role of the movement after the revolution and over the relationship between the party and the movement led to multiple splits within the movement. Brotherhood youth who were active during the revolution rejected the constraints imposed by the movement on its members and on its newly founded political party. As a result, they opted to create another party, the Egyptian Current Party. In response, the guidance bureau expelled these young activists from the Muslim Brotherhood.

Similarly, a leading moderate figure in the movement Abdel Moneim Abu l-Futuh announced his intention to run for president, which led to his expulsion from the movement. Other important figures in the Brotherhood such as Muhammad Habib and Ibrahim al-Za'farani also opted to form the party al-Nahda, after being marginalized by the movement. Al-Wasat Party, which had split from the movement during the 1990s, was finally able to constitute itself in the wake of the revolution. Thus, in the wake of the revolution there emerged a number of political parties which highlight the

different factions and splits within the Brotherhood. They include the Brotherhood's official party the Freedom and Justice party, the youth led Egyptian Current Party, al-Nahda Party and finally al-Wasat Party.

The Sufi and Salafi movements have also created multiple parties, which deepen fragmentation and competition within each of these sectors. Sufis have created at least two new parties, namely al-Tahrir and the Voice of Freedom. In addition, many leading figures within the Sufi movement have joined some of the newly founded secular parties. The Salafi movements have also formed multiple parties, which include the parties al-Nour, al-Asala and al-Fadila parties.

The 25th of January revolution heralds in a new era in Egyptian politics where Islamic actors are likely to play a more important role. It is expected that the internal diversification of the Islamic sector will express itself in the emerging political landscape, where we are seeing a number of new parties associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, Sufi and Salafi camps. However, the ascendance of these new political parties may not necessarily strengthen the Islamist sector in Egypt, since – as we tried to illustrate above – each of these groups offers a varying interpretation of the role of Islam in politics and society. How each of these groups decides to align itself in the coming period will have an important effect on the course of the Egyptian transition. Increased competition between different clusters of actors will create opportunities for alliance building between Islamists and secularists, which in turn would enhance the prospects for the emergence of a civic and democratic state in Egypt. However, a rapprochement between the various Islamic actors could tip the balance in favor the Islamist agenda and lead to further Islamization of the state in Egypt.

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Index

Appendix 1.   Contact Information for Islamic Actors in Egypt

Official Actors			
Name of Organization	**Contact Person(s)**	**Website**	**Contact Information**
Al-Azhar University	n/a	www.azhar.edu.eg Website of al-Azhar University Students: www.azharway.com	info@azhar.edu.eg
Al-Azhar institution مشيخة الأزهر	Ahmad Tawfiq, Public Relations Director	n/a	**Address:** Mashyakhat al-Azhar, Darassa , al-Hussein **Tel: 25902518 / 25908829**
Al-Azhar educational website	n/a	www.alazhar.gov.eg	n/a
Fatwa Committee al-Azhar institution	n/a	n/a	**Address:** Al-Azhar Mosque, Al-Azhar Square, Cairo **Tel: 25902518 / 25908829**
Magma' al-Bohoos al-Islamia – al-Azhar University Branch	n/a	n/a	**Address:** **Tayaran Street, Nasr City** **Tel:** 22637798 / 22637483 / 22637763 / 22637467
Magma' al-Bohoos al-Islamia – al-Opera Branch	n/a	n/a	**Address:** **Al-Khalideen Park,** **al-Darasa, Cairo** **Tel: 25895935**
The Committee for Religious, Social and Awqaf Affairs	General Secretary Dr. Samih Mutwalli	n/a	**Address:** People Assembly Building Qasr al-Ainy Street, Cairo مجلس الشعب المصري ـشارع القصر العيني **Tel: 27945000 / 27943000** Ext: 3407

Official Actors			
Name of Organization	**Contact Person(s)**	**Website**	**Contact Information**
Dar al-Ifta'	n/a	www.dar-alifta.org www.dar-alifta.com www.dar-alifta.net	**Address:** Al-Khalideen Park, al-Darasa, Cairo PO Box: 11675 القاهرة – الدراسة- حديقة الخالدين – ص .ب 11675 **Tel:** 25970400-107 / 25970400 **Fax:** 25926143 Fatwa General Director: **Tel:** 23937843
Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs المجلس الاعلى للشئون الاسلامية	n/a	www.islamic-council.org	**Email:** askme@islamic-council.org askme@islamic-council.com
Ministry of Awqaf وزارة الاوقاف	Dr. Salem 'Abd al-Jaleel, Adviser to Minister of Endowment for Da'wa Affairs	www.awkaf.org	**Address:** Sabri Abu Alam Street Bab al-Louq, Cairo باب اللوق - - شارع صبرى ابو علم القاهرة **Tel**: 3929403 / 3933011 / 3926022-3926163 **Fax:** 3900362 **Email:** mawkaf@idsc1.gov.eg **Tel of Dr. Salem** : 23961130 **Mobile number of Dr. Salem**: 0101277855

Social Actors			
Name of Organization	**Contact Person(s)**	**Website**	**Contact Information**
al-Gam'iya al-Shar'iya **الجمعية الشرعية الرئيسية لتعاون العاملين بالكتاب والسنة**	n/a	www.alshareyah.org	**Address:** Umar al-Mokhtar street, al-Rahma al-Mohdah Mosque, al-Amereya **شارع عمر المختار ـ مسجد الرحمة المهداة الأميرية ـ بجوار مجمع المصالح الحكومية** **Tel: 0222846429 / 0222846430 / 0222846431** Fax: 0222846447 **Email: Info@alshareyah.org**
Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya	n/a	www.elsonna.com	**Address**: Qula-Abdeen, Cairo قوله ـ عابدين ـ محافظة القاهرة **Email:** info@elsonna.com
Resala Association	n/a	www.resala.org	**Hot line:** 19450 **Email:** raselna@resala.org contact_us@resala.org
Life Makers Associations	n/a	www.lifemakers.org.eg	**Address:** Building1, Street No 6 al-Maadi, Cairo 1 شارع 6 المعادى (بجوار محطة مترو ثكنات المعادى, بجوار مستشفى المبرة) **Tel:** 3782250 **Email:** Lifemakers@ lifemakers.org.eg

Social Actors			
Name of Organization	**Contact Person(s)**	**Website**	**Contact Information**
Al-Shadhilya Derkawiya Tariqa الطريقة الشاذلية الدرقاوية	n/a	www.shazly.com	n/a
Azmiya Tariqa الطريقة العزمية	n/a	www.islamwattan.com	**Address:** Zoqaq al-Sahikh 4, Hamza, branched from Bor Said street, al-Fawala, Sayeda Zainab زقاق الشيخ حمزه المتفرع من 4 الفواله ش بورسعيد السيده زينب **Tel: 23936573**
Supreme Council of Sufi Tariqas دار المشيخه العامه لمشايخ الطرق الصوفيه	n/a	n/a	**Address**: Um al-Gholam street, al-Hussain Square, al-Jamaliya الاوبرا داول ش ام الغلام بميدان سيدنا الحسين الجماليه **Tel: 25905393**
Jazuliya Husayniya Shadhilya Tariqa الطريقه الجازوليه الحسينيه الشاذليه	n/a	n/a	**Address**: Sultan Ahmad Hassan street, branched from Salah Salem, Mansheyet Nasser منشية ناصر قايتباى ش السلطان احمد من ش صلاح سالم مقر المشيخه العام **Tel: 29212720**
Ahl Allah Mosque - Muhammadiya Shadhilya Tariqa مسجد اهل الله تابع الطريقه المحمديه الشاذليه	n/a	n/a	**Address:** Mansheyet Nasser – next to the Islamic Magma' منشية ناصر الشقر بجوار المجمع الاسلامى **Tel: 29215511**

Social Actors			
Name of Organization	**Contact Person(s)**	**Website**	**Contact Information**
Khaliliya Tariqa الطريقة الخليلية	n/a	www.sufiegypt.org www.abokhalil.com	**Address:** Sheikh Abu Khalil mosque, 27 al-Wasat street, al-Nahal, Zaqaziq, al-Sharqia Governorate PO box: 368 مؤسسة مسجد الشيخ أبوخليل الخيرية الأهلية المقيدة بمديرية الشئون الاجتماعية بمحافظة الشرقية تحت رقم 1996/993/1 شرقية مقر المؤسسة : 27 شارع الوسط – قسم النحال – الزقازيق – جمهورية مصر العربية ص . ب 368 الزقازيق **Tel:** 0552292876
Al-Qadria Tariqa الطريقة القادرية العلية في مصر	n/a	www.elkadria.com	n/a
Muhammadiya Rifa'iya Tariqa الطريقة المحمدية الرفاعية	n/a	www.rifaiyyah.com	n/a
Qadiriya Budshishiya Tariqa الطريقة القادرية البودشيشية	n/a	www.boudchichia.net	n/a
Khatmiya Marghaniya Tariqa الطريقة الميرغنية الختمية	n/a	www.alkhatmiya.com	n/a
Ja'fariya Ahmadiya Muhammadiya Tariqa الطريقة الجعفرية الأحمدية المحمدية	n/a	www.algaafary.com	n/a

Social Actors			
Name of Organization	**Contact Person(s)**	**Website**	**Contact Information**
'Alawiya Madaniya Tariqa <u>الطريقة المدنية العلاوية</u>	n/a	www.madaniyya.com	n/a
Burhaniya Desoukiya Shadhilya Tariqa <u>الطريقة البرهانية الدسوقية الشاذلية</u>	n/a	www.burhaniya.org	n/a
Dar al-Eman – Khulwatiya Tariqa <u>دار الإيمان - الطريقة الخلوتية الجامعة الرحمانية</u>	n/a	www.daraleman.org	n/a
Al-Hamidiya al-Shadhilya Tariqa الحامدية الشاذلية	n/a	www.alhamedeia.net	**Address:** Al-Hegaz Street 4 – branched from Arab League street, Mohandessin, Giza 4ش الحجاز من ش جامعة الدول العربية - المهندسين – الجيزة **Email:** info@alhamedeia.net
Salafi Group in Alexandria الدعوة السلفية بالاسكندرية	n/a	www.anasalafy.com www.salafvoice.com www.alsalafway.com	n/a

Political Actors			
Name of Organization	**Contact Person(s)**	**Website**	**Contact Information**
Socialist Labor Party حزب العمل الاشتراكى	n/a	n/a	**Address:** Bor Said Street 313, al-Fawal 313ش بورسعيد الفواله **Tel:** 23904073 / 23909237
Muslim Brotherhood	n/a	www.ikhwanonline.com	المركز الاعلامى للاخوان المسلمين **Tel:** 0107224333 / 0104664111 **Fax:** 022400019 / 0226347500 **Email:** Nowabikhwan2010@ gmail. com
New Wasat Party حزب الوسط الجديد	n/a	www.alwasatparty.com	n/a
Islamic Labor Party حزب العمل الاسلامى	n/a	www.el-3amal.com	They can be contacted via their website

Preachers			
Name of Organization	**Contact Person(s)**	**Website**	**Contact Information**
Sheikh Muhammad Husayn Ya'qub	n/a	www.yaqob.com	n/a
Sheikh Muhammad Hassan	n/a	www.mohamedhassan. org	n/a
Sheikh Mahmud al-Masri	n/a	www.abouammar.com	**Email:** info@abouammar.com
Sheikh Hani Helmi	n/a	www.manhag.net	n/a

Independent Intellectuals			
Name of Organization	**Contact Person(s)**	**Website**	**Contact Information**
Tariq al-Bishri	n/a	tark-bishry.com	n/a
Muhammad Selim al-Awa	n/a	www.el-awa.com	n/a
Yusuf al-Qaradawi	n/a	www.qaradawi.net	**Email:** feedback@qaradawi.net
ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Massiri	n/a	www.elmessiri.com	**Email:** info@elmessiri.com
Muhammad ʿImara	n/a	www.dr-emara.com	n/a
Gamal al-Banna	n/a	www.islamiccall.org	Dar al-Fikr al-Islamy دار الفكر الإسلامي **Tel:** 0104970519

Others			
Name of Organization	**Contact Person(s)**	**Website**	**Contact Information**
Al-Azhar Scholars Front Gabhat Ulama al-Azhar	n/a	www.jabhaonline.org	n/a