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THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN EGYPT'S QUEST FOR DEMOCRACY:

CASES OF AL-AZHAR AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

PhD THESIS

AHMED M. AMIN

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THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN EGYPT'S QUEST FOR DEMOCRACY:

CASES OF AL-AZHAR AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Approval of the Institute of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN EGYPT'S QUEST FOR DEMOCRACY:

CASES OF AL-AZHAR AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

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The political role which Al-Azhar and the Egyptian Orthodox Church played in the political transformations since 2011 is important. During the uprisings in 2011, both religious institutions backed Mubarak's regime against the protests. From the very beginning, Pope Shenouda III declared his support to Mubarak. In the same context, Shaykh al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb announced his support to the regime. He stated that protests are prohibited religiously since they will lead to chaos and political instability. In spite of these attitudes against the uprisings, both institutions altered their attitudes toward the uprisings after Mubarak's ousting. On the other hand, both institutions supported the political transformations on 30th of June 2013. During the military coup declaration by General Abdul-Fattah al-Sisi, Shaykh al-Azhar and the Pope attended the press conference and supported the roadmap after deposing Mursi from the presidency. These behaviors of the religious institutions opened the gates again to examine and address democracy and secularism, and their relations with Islam. Most importantly, the rise of Islamists, especially Muslim Brotherhood, after the Arab Spring in Egypt devoted the endeavors to introduce new understanding of the relations between Islam, democracy and secularism which this study tried to achieve. Interestingly, secularism and democracy did not part from their Western origin since they have been tied with colonialism in the last couple of centuries. The study depended on different research methods: content analysis, critical discourse analysis, and conducting personal interviews. The study worked to reach a clear understanding about the relations between Islam, democracy, and secularism. The mian finding of the study proved that the increasing political roles of the religious institutions in Egypt led to the failure of democracy.

Keywords: Al-Azhar, Egyptian Orthodox Church, Islam, Democracy, Secularism, Arrogant Secularism, Rational Secularism, Arab Spring

ÖZET

MISIR'IN DEMOKRASİ ARAYIŞINDA DİNİ KURUMLARIN ROLÜ:

EL-EZHER VE ORTODOKS KİLİSESİ VAKALARI

AMIN, Ahmed M.

Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü
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Mısır'da 25 Ocak 2011'de patlak veren siyasi isyanlar, Mısır siyaset sahnesinde farklı politik aktörleri incelemek için yeni potansiyeller doğurdu. El-Ezher ve Mısır Ortodoks Kilisesi'nin oynadığı roller, siyasi alanda dini kurumların rolünü incelenmesi konusunda pek çok araştırmacının ve uzmanın dikkatini çekti. 2011'deki ayaklanmalar sırasında, her iki din kurumu da protestolara karşısında Mübarek rejimini destekledi. İsyanların başlamasıyla birlikte Papa Shenouda III Mübarek'i desteklediğini açıkladı. Aynı şekilde el-Ezher şeyhi Ahmed Al-Tayyeb de rejimi desteklediğini ilan etti. Protestoların kaos ve siyasi istikrarsızlığa yol açması nedeniyle dinen yasaklandığını belirtti. Her iki kurum ayaklanmalara karşı bu tavırlarına rağmen, Mübarek'in devrilmesinden sonra tutumlarını değiştirdi. Öte yandan, her iki kurum da 30 Haziran 2013'teki siyasi dönüşümleri destekledi. General Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi'nin askeri darbe ilanından sonra, Şeyh El Ezher ve Papa yapılan basın toplantısına katıldılar ve Mursi'nin görevden alınmasından sonra izlenecek yol haritasını desteklediler. Dini kurumların bu davranışları, demokrasi ve laikliği ve bunların İslam ile ilişkilerini incelemek için yeni kapılar açtı. En önemlisi, Mısır'daki Arap Baharı'nın ardından İslamcıların, özellikle Müslüman Kardeşler'in yükselişi, İslam, demokrasi ve laiklik arasındaki ilişkiler ile ilgili yeni anlayışların ortaya konulmasına adanmıştır, bu çalışmanın amaçladığı husus da budur. İlginç bir şekilde, son birkaç yüzyılda sömürgecilikle ilişkilendirildiği için laiklik ve demokrasi Batılı kökenlerinden ayrılmamıştır. Bu çalışma içerik analizi, eleştirel söylem analizi ve mülakatlar olmak üzere farklı araştırma metotlarına dayanmaktadır. Çalışma, İslam, demokrasi ve laiklik arasındaki ilişkiler hakkında net bir anlayışa ulaşmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın temel bulgusu, demokratikleşme sürecindeki dini kurumların artan siyasi rollerinin demokrasinin başarısızlığına yol açacağını kanıtladığıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: El-Ezher, Mısır Ortodoks Kilisesi, İslam, Demokrasi, Sekülarizm, Kibirli Sekülarizm, Rasyonel Sekülarizm, Arap Baharı

{ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا }

{And Ever Greatis the Grace of Allah unto you}

113 : Al-Nisa - النساء

{ وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا }

{And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little}

85 : Al-Isra -الإسراء

{ يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ }

{Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe, and those who have been granted knowledge}

11 : Al-Mujadalah – المجادلة

To my wife, I do and I will do forever...

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Al-Azhar and the Egyptian Orthodox Churh are considered to be the most ancient religious institutions not only in Egypt but in the Arab and Muslim World. Therefore their political roles cannot be neglected or overlooked, especially since 2011.

Attending the former Egyptian first directly-elected president Mohammad Mursi's ouster declaration by his minister of defense; Abdulfatah el-Sisi, the Grand Sheykh of Al-Azhar Ahmad El-Tayyeb and the Pope of the Egyptian Orthodox Church Tawadros II; both backed the military intervention religiously.

Going back to the first moments in the Egyptian uprisings in Tahrir Square on 25th January 2011, leaders of both religious institutions continuously declared their support for Mubarak during those critical incidents. "*I call the protestors in Tahrir Square to withdraw and take a step back. President Mubarak promised that he will conduct some improvements and launch some repairs in the government. Please take a step back; otherwise, it will be a chaos in our country*", Sheykh Al-Azhar said.

Parallel to what Shaykh Al-Azhar said, the previous Pope Shenouda III announced his support for Mubarak, especially after Mubarak delivered his emotional speech in order to absorb the increasing frenzy and anger among the protestors. "*We thank Mr. President for his prompt interfering by assigning Omar Suleiman as his vice president, and Ahmad Shafik as the prime minister. I telephoned Mr. President to thank him and to greet him. I told him that I support him, we support him, and all the Egyptian people support him. May our Lord grant him the strength to secure and save Egypt to sustain order and power*", Pope Shenouda said.

Religious institutions in Egypt have passed through continuous changes during the last two centuries when *Mohamed Ali* started his project to modernize Egypt. Although being assigned by the Ottoman Sultanate in order to fully demolish *Mamluks* and their long legacy in power in Egypt, he appropriated the province and implemented his vision to establish an alleged strong, modern, and influential state in Egypt. That vision had multiple dimensions, and the

role of religious institutions in public and social life was redefined and reshaped aiming to go along with his project.

The path to implementing those new modifications in religious institutions wasn't soft or easily accepted by leaders of both institutions. Secularism and secularity of the state was an important tool to subject these institutions and turn them to be tools in the hands of the new authority in Cairo. Ironically, the disputes between the religious institutions and the rulership never stopped or ceased due to the profound influence of the religious institutions in the Egyptian society. Numerous religious and lay movements were established and backed by the society to accept this new form or to refuse it, and the consequences varied according to the different contexts and religious backgrounds of each movement.

Two pivotal historical incidents had reshaped the political role of both religious institutions; 1919 and 1952 revolutions. In the 1919 revolution, religious leaders from both institutions led the movements against the British occupation in Egypt. 1919 revolution established the political role of both and made them tools to foster the resistance and revolt against the British. On the contrary, since the 1952 revolution, this political role was modified and reshaped to foster the revolution, and to provide the religious legitimacy of the new regime which was forming and developing at that time. The consequences of these new modifications and changes shaped the political behavior and the political position of both religious institutions until today.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The Arab Spring sparked in Tunisia by the end of 2010; which swept rapidly to Egypt and other countries in the Arab World, deeply influencing not only the regimes but the societies and its mobility simultaneously. The Islamic movements in most of the Arab countries which witnessed the revolutions played a crucial and key role in leading the changes to democratize the countries and resist the states' authoritarianism. Promptly, these democratization attempts mostly failed by counter-revolutions within short times and led to adversely catastrophic consequences.

Away from discussing these details, religion and its role in public life and in directing the transformations in the political sphere reached its peak by the success of the Muslim

Brotherhood in Egypt to take over the presidency. In the first post-revolutionary parliament elections, Muslim Brothers achieved more than 45% of the seats, which was historically unprecedented.

Since the beginning of the uprisings, as I previously mentioned, both Al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church played an important role in the political transformations, even till today. Both institutions stood against Mubarak's ouster while backing the military coup against Mursi. Obviously, both of them stood against the political changes and the democratization of the political regime. Not only doing so, but they legitimized the coup and supported General Abdul Fattah el-Sisi to be elected as the post-coup president.

This study tries to address and tackle the different multifaceted dimensions of this topic, in order to clarify the role of the religious institutions in the Egyptian political life. Many questions could be asked and provided, and this study attempts to find answers:

a) How does each religious institution envisage the relationship between religion and politics?
b) How did each institution develop its role in the political sphere according to the historical developments since 1952 and during Mubarak's era in particular?
c) What are the institutional and structural modifications which changed the political roles of both of them according to the historical developments?
d) Although each religious institution perceives politics differently, both play political roles and have intellectual attitudes before politics and secularism in particular. What are the attitudes of both institutions toward democracy and secularism?
e) Why did both institutions back Mubarak while participating in Mursi's ouster only two years later?
f) Why did both institutions support the military coup and continue their support the regime till now although the consequences on both Muslim and Christian societies in Egypt were not that desired ones?

Tackling the role of the religious institutions in political changes and in politics generally is a multifaceted problem. Roles of religious institutions have been identified and determined by different factors.

The first and the most important factor is how each institution envisages the relation between religion and politics. Both institutions represent different religions, Islam and Christianity,

which possess different attitudes towards politics and political roles. The dominant narrations in Islamic perspective claim that there is no separation between religion and politics. These narrations constitute the basic ideological principles for all Islamic movements, which mean briefly the denial of the secularity of the political realm based on religious convictions. On the contrary, the Church is responsible for the spirituality and religiosity of the Christian community, and it has not any political role to play. Consequently, secularism is much easily accepted by followers of the Church.

The second important factor addresses the reality on the ground level. Both institutions have obvious political roles which were determined by the authority through the mutual interactions between all these different actors. In other words, although both institutions deny any political role, they are playing important political roles especially since 2011.

The third factor is associated with the last incidents since 2011 till now. The democratization of the political regime in Egypt has secularism in its very essence to secularize the political sphere. This simply threatens the long lasted political roles that religious institutions adopted through decades or maybe centuries.

The study also tries to introduce a comparative understanding of both institutions in many levels, institutional, structural, religious, and political as well. Worth to be mentioned, the studies addressing both institutions comparatively are rare and may be non-existent, which gives this study the highest importance and necessity to the present moment.

The main argument of the study tries to testify and address is the following:

1- There is an inverse relationship between the political role of religious institutions and democracy. Whenever the political role of the religious institutions retreats, democratization succeeds and the converses.
2- In order to democratize the political regime, there must be secularization of the political realm which threatens the historical roles of many political actors, mainly Al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church.

1.3. Significance of the Study

What remarks this study is that it is an important addition to the literature covering the religious institutions in a comparative analysis. While working on religious institutions for two years or more, the lack of comparative studies on Al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church is obvious. Worth to be mentioned, studying the political role of religious institutions in Egypt became necessary and highly important since the uprisings in 2011 until now. Hence, there is enormous literature available to the study; religious institutions literature, history of both institutions, literature covering the political regime in Egypt before and after the Arab Spring, and also the literature that covers the religious and political role for both institutions severally, and democracy.

1.3.1. The Literature Review of Al-Azhar

The studies that address the role of Al-Azhar in the political sphere are few and sometimes rare. Some of them focus on the historical role of Al-Azhar and the role of Al-Azhar scholars socially and scholarly. Al-Azhar was founded in 969 CE during the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz and commenced teaching activities in 975. Historically, the ʿulamaʾ were in charge of interpreting and imparting the holy texts and were recognized as guardians of faith both by believers and by those in power. Their authority was neither abstract nor textual; rather, it was deeply entrenched in communal life. The study of the Quran, the hadith (sayings attributed to the Prophet), and especially the presence of the Islamic law (sharia) in every aspect of life served as constant reminders of the implicit authority of religious knowledge and its earthly representatives (Hatina, 2010).

Other studies tried to shed the light on the role of Al-Azhar scholars, and their scientific role. The imparting of knowledge was essential to guarantee the existence of the faith. But for its keepers, the ʿulamaʾ, it was also a source of livelihood and prestige and served as a vehicle for distinguishing their sectoral status from that of other groups in society. This process of the socialization of knowledge, which involved the coalescence of formal patterns of training and authorizing scholars, arbiters, and judges, perpetuated the public status of the ʿulamaʾ. Religious knowledge constituted a kind of cultural capital that became a source of authority and a means to guide believers on the right path. Yet it was also an effective way to include or exclude individuals or groups from the exclusive pool of the learned. Knowledge and religious authority endowed the ʿulamaʾ with effective control over entry into the academic

and legal establishment and allowed the most senior clerics to create a kind of religious aristocracy of old established families in places such as Cairo, Damascus, and Istanbul.

The ongoing influence of these families had three main foundations: nepotism and guaranteed privileges for their descendants, patronage ties with those who sought support, and marriage ties with each other or with other families belonging to the elite. This impressive accomplishment of the ʿulamaʾ contrasted with the egalitarian basis of Islam, which lacked a clerical or priestly establishment as in the Catholic Church. The religious authority of the ʿulamaʾ was not based solely on formal training in religious colleges (madrasas) and the ability to expound the shariʿa. An added source of their authority was charisma acquired through pious and ethical conduct but mainly through the capacity to bestow a state of spiritual blessing (*baraka*) and perform miracles (*karamat*). The most pronounced manifestations of such charismatic authority were sainthood and the ritual worship of saints, identified primarily with the Sufi movement, which gained a broad social base from the twelfth century onward. Al-Azhar ultimately gained the upper hand in its struggle against Islamic modernism and liberal nationalism, but the debate over the status of religion and its official spokesmen in the Egyptian state continued and intensified at the start of the twentieth century (Hatina, 2009).

Several studies tried to tackle the role of al-Azhar in the social and political spheres in the last couple of centuries. Al-Azhar's role during Muhammad Ali's reign was studied and tackled since it was an important tool in the modernization process which was launched on his hands. There were internal struggles and conflicts in Al-Azhar and it reached its peak in the last decades of the 19th century and early twentieth century (Ali, 1986).

There was an academic struggle between forces of modernity and tradition in which we know exactly who is on what side and which side is good. The conceptual boundaries that their debates constructed did not exist before, nor did the nation that their arguments described. Further, the religion that their educational and legal reforms articulated was distinctly more personal and less communitarian than that of their predecessors. Thus, these debates constitute a critical juncture in the evolution of modern Sunni Islam. Today al-Azhar University is the most influential voice of Sunni Islam establishment. During the ages of Muslim power, al-Azhar was known for the breadth of its scholars' specializations, offering training in all four schools of Sunni law as well as various theoretical sciences. Its endowments provided stipends for scholars as well as free education, lodgings, and daily

bread rations for thousands of students. Its fame was in part due to its historical stature as the second oldest continually existing university in the world (Keshk, 1990).

However, during the nineteenth century, al-Azhar madrasa was by most accounts an administrative mess. Reformers described its crumbling edifices, the squalor of the most impoverished students residing in its courtyards and loggias, the declining relevance of the subject matter its scholars taught, and rioting by students who distrusted government attempts to intervene. Even during this low period, al-Azhar attracted students from all over the Muslim world and returned those students to their countries as teachers, preachers, prayer leaders, and jurisconsults. Beginning in the 1830s, because of al-Azhar's local and global importance, some religious scholars and government officials began to call for its reform, for the government to impose methods of administrative order learned from Europe, and for the scholars to teach modern sciences that would aid the cause of progress and allow Muslims to combat European subjugation. Ottoman and European imperial control of Egypt imbued these efforts with political danger (Gesink, 2010).

Al-Azhar, traditionally Egypt's most respected and influential center for Muslim study, adopted an increasingly bold platform opposing Egyptian government policy throughout the mid-1990s. Al-Azhar stood against government policy on a variety of sensitive issues, including population control, the practice of clitoridectomy, and censorship rights. Moreover, al-Azhar directly challenged the government in high forums such as the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo, September 1994.

This open opposition was remarkable in light of the tremendous capacity that the Egyptian government has shown in the past to manipulate and control al-Azhar. Over the past century, and particularly since the 1952 Free Officers' coup, the Egyptian government virtually incorporated Al-Azhar as an arm of the state through purges and control over al-Azhar finances, and by gaining the power to appoint Al-Azhar's key leadership (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

Other studies shed the light on the role of the previous political regimes since 1952 on al-Azhar and its social and political roles. Presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak all benefited from this dominance over Al-Azhar by securing fatwas legitimizing their policies. Given this overwhelming leverage, what can explain Al-Azhar's increased opposition to the government throughout the mid-1990s? Al-Azhar was willing to defend the government from radical Islamist critics, which also threatened al-Azhar's position

in the Egyptian society, but it took advantage of this situation to press for Islamic policies of a more moderate cast (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

The government was forced to accept this bargain as it became increasingly dependent on Al-Azhar for religious legitimization. Moreover, the government found that manipulating al-Azhar and silencing its opposition to the state policy undermined al-Azhar's influence within the Egyptian society and therefore its ability to discredit opponents of the government. Finally, Al-Azhar won major concessions from the government by forming loose alliances with state officials sympathetic to al-Azhar's interests (Moustafa, 2000).

One of the key figures of Al-Azhar during the last century was Abd al-Halleem Mahmoud. Mesho Albo and Yoram Meital tried to shed light on this important and influential figure in their study. Their article calls into question the widely-held notion that the Islamic establishment in contemporary Egypt is subservient to the ruling class (Albo & Meital, 2014). They eschew the simplistic binary approach to interactions between the political and religious leadership, and claim that under the stewardship of Shaykh 'Abd al-Halleem Mahmud, al-Azhar maintained an autonomous agenda that diverged from the regime's views on a fair share of public and political issues. By dint of a careful analysis of several major disagreements between Shaykh Mahmoud and the ruling elite, the author sheds new light on the complex dynamics that limited the regime's ability to compel the religious establishment to toe the 'party line'. Although al-Azhar indeed strengthened the regime and legitimized its overall policy, the institution also challenged the latter on crucial topics, such as the Personal Status Law, the sale of alcohol, and the integration of Islamic values into the education system's curricula (Albo & Meital, 2014).

Another important angle was studied by Malika Zeghal (Zeghal, 1999) who tried to shed light on the linkage between the structural change the ruling elites imposed on al-Azhar, the Egyptian religious institution, and the transformation of the political behavior of the people who belong to this institution, the ulema. Even (Yadlin, 2006) worked on examining Al-Azhar's attitude towards Israel two perspectives.

The first is the content of the messages transmitted through its discourse on Jews, which is informed by a historical conception of the canonical scriptures. The second is the relative weight that these messages carry in the Egyptian public sphere and in the government's decision-making process. In this context al-Azhar can be seen as being engaged in a tug of war with the Egyptian government, in which it is both controlled and controlling. Its power in relation to the government derives from its widely accepted role as a gate-keeper of both true Islam and traditional, non-Western, morality in society (Albo & Meital, 2014).

Other studies addressed the relationship between al-Azhar and Muslim Brotherhood, especially after the Arab Spring in 2011. Since Muslim Brothers became the largest opposition entity, their relationship with Al-Azhar was somehow addressed and tackled, which also had some reflections after Mubarak's fall. The millennial discourse provided a medium through which Egyptians worked out their nationalist aspirations in a religious key and envisioned their religious values and identity in nationalist form. The volatile, irrational character of millennial movements made Egypt's postcolonial transition to modern politics fraught and uncertain. And the authoritarian trend among Egypt's ruling secular nationalists exacerbated the situation. In the end, Egypt's seminal Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, proved capable of reorienting itself, downplaying its millennial claims, and espousing a rational politics. Its evolution speaks to the capacity of millennial movements to transform themselves and the societies of which they are a part (Kenney, 2012).

Shortly after Mubarak's ouster, Al-Azhar has advocated views that align with the Islamic constitutionalism in the FJP's platform. Shaykh al-Azhar issued a statement in June 2011 that expressed support for a democratic state based on a constitution approved by the citizenry. It called for the separation of powers, protection of civil and political rights, equality for women and Copts, and a freely elected Parliament with unrestricted authority to draft and adopt laws.

These changes in Islamic constitutionalism constitute one of the most important developments in constitutional thinking since the January 25th uprising. In essence, the boundary between liberal thought and IC has largely disappeared. In official documents and statements, liberal thinkers and moderate Islamic thinkers have converged around a conception of constitutionalism that supports democratic transition and consolidation. Significant political tensions have emerged between liberals and the Muslim Brotherhood. However, these shared views of constitutional order that arose in the wake of Mubarak's departure might provide a basis for common ground (Rutherford, 2013).

On the other hand, how Muslim Brothers considered Al-Azhar's role was addressed in Rachel Scott studies. One of his articles analyzes Muslim Brotherhood statements about the public role which the organization sees for the *ʿulamāʾ* of al-Azhar and their function in the legislative process. It also analyzes the statements of Azharite and other *ʿulamāʾ* and Islamic intellectuals concerning the construction and defense of their religious authority (Scott, 2012).

1.3.2. The Literature Review of the Egyptian Orthodox Church

There is huge literature covering the Orthodox Church in Egypt, its political role, and its attitudes regarding the political changes since 2011. The Church got the most attention for many reasons, and being the oldest Church in the Middle East and its role in securing the Coptic as a religious minority community in Egypt; are the most important ones.

The political participation of Christians in the Arab world highlights the difficulties in reconciling the principles of equality and full rights based on citizenship with maintaining the public role of the religion of the majority of the population - Islam. Christian strategies have focused upon both Arab and state nationalism as well as pursuing individual ambitions. The political context of these efforts is also significant. Firstly, Christians are not immune to the political environment in the region which has been characterized by a tradition of authoritarianism and limited political opportunities. Secondly, the Islamic environment provides the framework for discussing the political role of non-Muslims in Muslim-majority states. Christian political participation has also been shaped by the strategies pursued by the ruling regimes. These are namely being treated as same/indistinct, the notion of 'loyal' citizens and the institutionalization of differences through quotas. Yet irrespective of what strategy is employed, religious identity continues to be the crucial factor in determining the type of political participation accessed by Christians in the region, thus challenging the notion of national unity. (McCallum, 2010)

There are other studies trying to shed light on the uniqueness of the Copts in Egypt and consider them the authentic Egyptians in comparison to Egyptian Muslims. The essay by (Vliet, 2004) briefly reviews the Coptic identity constructions that can be subsumed as 'Pharaonism', and tries to assess them with reference to both ancient sources and modern developments. Broadly speaking, Pharaonism is a way of claiming a deeply rooted national identity that transcends the religious opposition between Egypt's Muslim majority and its indigenous Christian minority, the Copts. As a political ideology, it was most successful in the period of the nationwide Egyptian struggle for independence in the early twentieth century, but its impact in particular among Coptic intellectuals is still great. In this essay, it is argued that Pharaonism is shaped in a remarkable degree by western Orientalism and that its main historical tenets, such as the Copts' indebtedness to pre-Christian, Pharaonic culture or their anti-Greek nationalism, can no longer be maintained.

Other research put most emphasis on the discrimination against Copts, claiming that Egyptian Orthodox Christian community - the Copts - has been the target of violence and discrimination since the 1970s and especially following the revolution that overthrew Hosni

Mubarak. The Egyptian state has done little to remedy the situation and has at times enabled the conflict between Muslims and Christians. Achieving religious freedom and equality depends on building state institutions that can guarantee all citizens' constitutional rights (Brownlee, 2013).

Muhammad Afifi (1999) tries to investigate the nature of the relationship between the Egyptian State and the Coptic Church in the nineteenth century. Egyptian historical studies have not been greatly concerned with relations between the Church and the state. The tradition of nationalist historical writing in modern Egypt has made it difficult to discuss this subject, for in doing so one may be perceived as challenging the idea of national unity. Moreover, in accordance with the consistent doctrine of the Coptic Church that "there is no politics in religion," Egyptian historians have not touched upon the socio-political history of the Coptic Church as an institution. Instead, their interest has focused upon the role of Coptic politicians. This neglect has contributed to a lack of understanding of the position of the Coptic Church in Egyptian politics, such that Egyptian historians and intellectuals had no context in which to understand the conflict between President Sadat and Pope Shenouda III, which resulted in the President withdrawing legal recognition of the Pope and exiling him to a monastery.

There are also numerous studies focusing on the relationship between the Church in Egypt and the Coptic community in Diaspora, especially in the US. (Haddad & Donavan, 2013) in their study analyze the relationship between the Coptic community in the United States and Egyptian Copts regarding the status of Coptic citizenship in the Egyptian state. The conception of citizenship for the Coptic Christian minority has been debated since the formation of the modern nation-state and has acquired greater relevance after the revolution that brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power. One primary narrative of citizenship is promoted by the Egyptian Church. It recognizes that, while Copts may not feel like equal citizens, they are devoted to their homeland. They try to promote greater equality through civil discourse, opposing foreign intervention and seeking to foster positive relations with Egypt's Muslims. While many Diaspora Copts echo the message of the Egyptian Church, a minority of activist Copts have challenged that narrative. Inculcated with ideas of Islamophobia and neoconservatism, they tend to dismiss hopes of national unity and focus rather on incidents of persecution. These diaspora activist groups continue to challenge the Coptic Church. Their policies have influenced American foreign policy and have broader implications for Muslim–Christian relations in Egypt.

1.3.3. The Literature Review of Arab Spring and Democracy

Finally, the literature that covers Arab Spring, democratization, and the role of Muslim Brotherhood in the incidents were well addresses and tackled. The uprisings in 2011 in Egypt had profound political consequences. Mubarak's ousting was only an important signal for that political changes; however, what happened fluctuated the whole political regime in Egypt. There is huge literature worked on examining the role of the state in political changes, and the relation between religion and politics in Egypt before and after the uprisings, and of course democratization in Egypt and in the Middle East generally.

For example, the role of militarizing the state in the Third World have been touched in a comparative manner between the east and the west. The reasons for the militarization of the Third World states, including the middle east, of course, are different and dependent on domestic and regional conflicts, dissimilar to the western First World states (Windet & Barnett, 1993).

From another angle, Lisa Anderson studied the failure of most of the states of the Middle East to develop modern bureaucratic institutions resulted from the legacy of the Ottoman Empire's collapse, European colonial policies, and global support of rentier regimes, which envisage the modern history of the region. Both the regimes and the regional state system were challenged far more by groups espousing alternative ways of organizing political, social, and economic life, including the transnational Islamist movements and ethnic communities, than by political parties disputing policy positions (2006). She also claims that the Middle Eastern state also presents a number of specific characteristics whose influences in shaping modern politics merit comparative examination. The historical significance of corporate, lineage and tribal groups in exercising political authority alongside - and sometimes within centralized bureaucratic administrations presents a starting point for state formation markedly different from that in Europe - was also covered and examined.

The most huge literature produced was focusing mainly on the state-religion relationship, and the ideological conflicts between Islamism, which became the main political phenomenon in the 1970s and later on. Interestingly, the Islamic revolution in Iran powered this literature and connected it with the Arab countries and Egypt in particular, where the Muslim Brotherhood was the largest political actor. The contestation between secularism and Islamism in Egypt is very profound and old since the last century. However, the long existence and sustenance of the Muslim Brotherhood and their capabilities to adapt to the authoritarian regimes in Egypt

allowed them to be an important political actor in the new millennium. They are an important player in the democratization of Islam in Egypt (Kenney, 2012).

In general, Islamic groups in Egypt have been considered to have a considerable impact on the democratization of the country, as they are moderate and played role in emerging the civil society during the reign of Mubarak (Stark & Iannaccone, 1994). Even the economic sector of the Islamic groups was covered, and how the state reacted regarding the ascending Islamic finance since the 1970s to control this sector and prevent its leakage to counter-state rivals was explored (Galloux, 1999).

Another important field of studying the Middle East, and Egypt of course, is the colonial and imperial legacy which considered to play a crucial role in hindering democracy and democratic transition. The history of Egypt in the late 19th century and early 20th century refers to enormous historical momentous. Egypt was torn between three main players, the Imperial Project of Muhamad Ali Pasha and his dynasty, which failed by the British occupation. Then the European British imperial influence in Egypt, and its bankruptcy. Then the Egyptian national movement which the Ottoman Empire tried to use to regain its influence on Egypt (Reinkowski, 2014).

Paradoxically, Nazih Ayubi downplays the importance of colonial legacy in State formation in the Middle East and evaluates the nature of the societies in these formations (1993). Even Leenders shares this argument, saying that the Middle East had its own share of intrastate conflicts that generally grew into regional constellations, a look at the region's post-colonial history suggests that such trends are not as novel as has often been claimed. Middle Eastern states, mostly authoritarian in outlook, have over recent decades become stronger despite prevailing conditions of regionalized conflict; indeed (2010).

Moreover, some other important studies tried to shed light on the democratic prerequisites which the Arab countries, and Egypt, lack them. These studies even tried to refer to the role of oil in impeding democracy in the region like what many scholars had done (Tessler, 2016). However, some other scholars downplay these factors.

The exceptionalism of the Middle East and North Africa lies not so much in the absence of the prerequisites for democracy as in present conditions that foster robust authoritarianism and especially a robust and politically tenacious coercive apparatus. Some conditions responsible for the robustness of this authoritarianism are exceptional to the Middle East and North Africa; others are not (Bellin, 2004).

The literature on Arab democratization has been, since the beginning, preoccupied with the search for the factors conditioning a potential path towards democratization in the Arab world. In this context, the literature has branched into two main schools of thought. The first is the 'domestic factors' school, which emphasizes the domestic sources of democratization. These accounts, usually conducted by comparative politics scholars and political scientists interested in political development, look at the democratization process as a product of internal historical processes and socioeconomic change. Under this school, one could identify four scholarly approaches, namely (i) the 'political culture' approach, (ii) the 'structural' approach, (iii) the 'institutional approach', and (iv) the 'political agency' approach. The second school of thought is that focused on 'external factors', which stresses the effects of external actors and the structure of the international system and its institutions on democratization. Under this school, one could also identify four scholarly approaches to the study of Arab democratization, namely (i) the 'great powers' approach, (ii) the 'dependency' approach, (iii) the 'regional conflict' approach, and (iv) the 'advocacy' approach (Selim, 2015).

The identity of the state between Islamism and secularism in Egypt plays an important role in understanding the struggle over the state after 2011. So, the focus in state-religion relations is important to understanding this struggle. Egypt alone shows that there are many non-secularisms as well. It is difficult to draw a line between state and religion in Egypt, but observing that difficulty does little to define the many ways that the state expresses, supports, pursues, contains, and defines religion, or that religion informs, limits, guides, and infiltrates state authority. In post-revolutionary Egypt, the complexity of the relationship is growing (Brown, 2012).

Most Importantly was addressing role of Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab Spring which was well covered and analyzed by a huge literature. Important approach sought to analyze how the way the Muslim Brotherhood has presented itself to the Egyptian people – via its behavior and ideology – has changed under the rule of Mubarak. The study has set out with the following in mind (Ranko, 2015):

(a) that the Brotherhood's behavior and ideology are shaped in a dynamic process of mutual interaction with the state;

(b) that ideational aspects of this interaction should be incorporated into the analysis (so far material factors of state Islamist interactions prevail in the literature); and

(c) that an inductive approach should be adopted for the analysis of the Brotherhood's ideology (Ranko, 2015).

Also, the failure of the democratic transition and the interference of the military in the political context have been examined and analyzed. The battle over specific institutions in the Arab spring countries, rather than the entire former regime, allowed the safeguards of the state institutions to play a counter role. Interestingly, those safeguards who had been integrated into post-authoritarian regimes are anti-democratic and halted democratization. Even the failure of the Arab Spring countries, especially Egypt, was tackled and addressed with the new-Mamluk perspective, as the ruling circles in Egypt, the army officers and their families, failed to sustain in Authority by the beginning of revolution and demands for reform (Bulliet, 2011).

1.4. Research Methodology

Since this study is addressing a multifaceted academic problem, it depends on different research methods and research methodologies. The theoretical framework that this study is dependent on is the Theory-Guided Process Tracing (TGPT); an old research approach developed by Alexander George and Timothy Mcqueen who exploited it in political studies (Collier, 2011).

This study approach is examining the relationships between the inputs and the outputs which are reflected in the political behaviors of institutions (Falleti, 2016). In this study, the TGPT theory tackles and addresses the inputs that the religious institutions are exposed to and experienced throughout a specific period of time, examines the mechanisms of decision-making inside these religious institutions, and finally addresses the political behaviors of these religious institutions according to the social, political, and structural contexts in which these institutions are conducting their roles.

The study is tracing the different inputs that both religious institutions were exposed to since 2011. The Arab Spring was a new variable which changed the ordinary contexts that both religious institutions were accustomed to. The incidents in 2011 and the fall of the former president Mubarak represented a new input to both institutions. Moreover, the rise of Islamists and Muslim Brotherhood in particular was an important pressure on both institutions. Therefore, according to the previous mentioned theory, the study is also tracing the outputs. These outputs were clear in the reactions and the behaviors of both religious leaders, the Pope and the Grand Shaykh. Hence, the study is examining the pressures that both institutions are

exposed to; how the decisions were made inside both instituions; and finally the reactions and the behaviors of both institutions according to the ongoing incidents.

In order to conduct the research, the study relied on three main research methods:

1- ***Content analysis***: this research method is an old method to deal with texts and to analyze them (Neuman, 2014, p. 371). This was conducted by skimming and addressing the official magazines of both religious institutions; al-Azhar magazine and al-Kirazah al-Murkusiyyah, between a specific period of time: 2011 untill 2014. It is necessary to refer to the scarcity of these magazines in the libraries and it was very difficult to collect them. The official magazines of both religious institutions are issued periodically every month, and they are collected and submitted to the archive after one year from their publication. Hence, almost 24 magazines of Al-Azhar had been reached out and collected. Also about 30 official magazines of the Church had been collected. The official articles of both religious leaders; Shaykh al-Azhar and the Pope, in these magazines had been covered. In addition any article inside these magazines about Arab Spring, democracy, and secularism had been covered and analyzed in order to understand the official stands of both religious institutions towards Arab Spring, democracy, and secularism.

2- ***Critical Discourse analysis***: which aimed to skim and tackle the official declarations of these religious institutions' heads; Shaykh al-Azhar and the Popes of the Orthodox Church. This was conducted by collecting their speeches and announcements since the beginning of the uprisings in 2011 until the political transformations in June 2013 throughout newspapers and news websites. This process was performed by collecting the official announcements and declarations of both religious institutions, and mainly by the main religious leaders, from different newspapers and news websites between January 2011 and December 2014. The main newspaper was the official newspaper in Egypt: Al-Ahram. Besides al-Quds newspaper; al-Hayat newspaper; alyoum7 newspaper; al-monitor; Copts United; and Watani. Most of these newspapers had been skimmed through their websties and their online archives. In addition, many reports and articles had been collected from global research centers and think tanks like: Brookings, Middle East Institute, Council of Foreign Relations; USIP; The forum of Arab & International Relations; and al-Mustaqbal al-Araby periodicals.

3- ***Personal interviews***: This was conducted amongst very critical conditions and moments after the political transformations in 2013 until today. It was planned to

conduct 15 interviews from both institutions. However, almost 7 interviews were conducted from each.

Interestingly, it was extremely difficult to reach the interviewees and take their permission to conduct the interview on both sides, al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church. Most of the interviewees required to avoid mentioning their names or any personal or professional information, or even to record the interviews, which represented real challenges to document the interviews. However, I tried to conduct as much as I can to interview figures from both sides, besides interviewing experts in both institutions. I do believe that this field work could be a prolonged plan to conduct more research in the future.

1.5. Study Contributions

As formerly metnioned, this study is considered to be the first study to examine the Egyptian religious institutions comparatively. The majority of the previous studies tackled the religious and social roles of Al-Azhar and the Egyptian Orthodox Church. Several studies shed the lights on the historical developments and the important contributions of both institutions. Most importantly, there was huge literature which covered the minority problem of Christian Copts in Egypt, and the role of the Egyptian Orthodox Church to protect the Christian Copts before the continuous regimes since 1952.

Worth to be mentioned, this study is addressing the role of religious institutions in the Egyptian political sphere based on a combination of different research methods which considered to be an important addition. Besides, as far as known for the researcher and based on the former studies, no previous studies tackled the religious institutions according to the official magazines of both institutions. In addition, the personal interviews added a realistic understanding of how each religious institution perceived its political role in the same time which the official attitudes of both institutions denied any political role. Consequently, this study is an important and valuable addition to the literature which covers the Egyptian religious institutions.

1.6. Study Chapters

This study is an important addition to the studies and the literature which tackle the religious institutions comparatively. As was mentioned before, there were different studies that cover

Al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church; however no studies tackle both institutions in a comparative way.

Chapter one of this study is introducing the background of the study, the problem of statement and the literature review of the previous studies which cover both institutions. It also shows the literature which covers Arab Spring and democracy in Egypt and the role of Muslim Brothers in the incidents and later on. In addition, it explains the research methodology and the research methods used to conduct the research in the field. Worth to be mentioned that many questions had been pre-prepared to be asked in the interviews; however, some of these questions were ignored and skipped by the interviewees. Some of these questions were regarding the attitudes of both religious institutions from the regime after the political transformations in 2013, which many interviewees rejected to answer.

Chapter two of the study addresses democracy and secularism in the Western understanding and in the Arab Middle East contexts in a comparative way. Then the chapter tries to understand the relationships between Islam, democracy, and secularism. This topic is extremely important especially after the Arab Spring in 2011 in Egypt.

Chapter three of the study examines the Egyptian Orthodox Church historically especially since the establishment of the republic in Egypt in 1952. This is important to understand the behaviors of the Church amongst the political transformations since 2011. It also introduces a better understanding of the behaviors of the Church by the rise of Muslim Brotherhood and the reasons behind the cooperation between the Church and the military leaders to oust the former president Mursi.

Chapter four of the study is tackling Al-Azhar historically as well and how the social and political roles of al-Azhar had changed in the last couple centuries. Moreover, it studies the role of the continuous regimes to modify and shape the role of al-Azhar politically and socially since 1952 until the Arab Spring. Then the chapter sheds the light on the political role of al-Azhar since 2011 until the political transformations in June 2013.

Chapter five introduces a brief summary of the previous chapters, and compares between al-Azhar and the Egyptian Orthodox Church since 1952 until the Arab Spring. It states the main differences and similarities between both institutions to enhance understanding the role of both institutions in the political transformations in 2011 and 2013.

CHAPTER TWO: TIES DISENTANGLEMENT AND RELATIONS RE-CONFIGURE BETWEEN ISLAM, DEMOCRACY, AND SECULARISM

"*Western Secularism is refused. We cannot separate between Religion and Politics because Islam does not know such separation. Islam is a religion and politics."* This answer was introduced by Essam Abdulshafey, the leading researcher in the Egyptian Institute for Studies in Istanbul. The question was trying to figure out the Muslim Brotherhood stands before secularism and other Western concepts. It is well known that this research institute belongs to Muslim Brotherhood members, the major Islamic movement in Egypt and even in the Middle East.

Undoubtedly, the incidents which took place since 2011 envisaged the perceptions of many political concepts that were pervasive and excessively used positively or negatively in the so-called Arab Spring. Although the above-mentioned answer reveals a fundamental attitude before secularism, the heterogeneity regarding secularism, and even other western political concepts, is continuous. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the last century couldn't be considered the main reason for such dichotomy regarding the imported western terminology (Nowyhid, 2009), but it was dated back to the French Campaign on Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century, a phenomenon that hugely fledged to overwhelm the world history in the last two centuries known as *colonialism.*

Western colonialism created cleavages among the intellects regarding the model way to address its consequences. Two main tendencies were historically recorded: reform and awakening. Although both tendencies had the main aim to address the Muslim nation's retreat; they disagreed how to implement the inspired reform. The first claims that "*Muslims have sufficient legacy to resuscitate*", although the other averred that "*What suits the west will definitely suit us.*" (Nowyhid, 2009). This created more contradictions and increased the ambiguity of the Western concepts which were forcefully imposed on Muslim societies that experienced different political contexts thoroughly.

A good example is the attitude of *Secularists* in the Muslim world and in the Arab Societies particularly, which assures that there is nothing called "*implementing Islamic Sharia*", but implementing the Muslim Scholars' perception of the so-called Islamic Law (Qutb, 1994). They believe that Muslims inherited the state structures of old Empires, and filled these state

vacuums with Islamic terminology, which is a human production in its very essence (Beshara, 2013), concealed with the sacred cloaks that are granted for Islamic *Shari'ah*. Attitudes by secularists are continuously accused of apostasy and infidelity per se by Islamic intellects and ideologues, like Muhammad Qutb, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Sayyed Qutb and others (Qutb, 1994).

Yet, Western World, in general, doesn't separate between *democracy* and *secularism*; since Western intellects consider *secularism* as pre-requisite for *democracy*. The West is full of awe from Islamic Fundamentalism due to the long internal European historical incidents which still nest the European and Western mentality and psychology. The West persists that Islamic fundamentalism is encountered with far less opposition than the Christian or Jewish fundamentalisms due to the Islamic existential and monochromatic nature among Muslim societies. Islamism is pervasive and permeable among Muslims although it is oppressed and persecuted (Fourest &Venner, 2006). Consequently, the argument that: "unity under the same religion is a delusion, is prevailing", because it leads to social and political instability and bloodsheds (Different Authors, 1993).

The so-called Arab Spring allured the overwhelming historical tensions among the various attitudes before the western concepts, accompanied by the post-colonial era and the historical defeat of the major Islamist actors, and eventually the retreat of the revolutionary surges by military interventions backed by excessively religious discourse. This devoted the ambiguity of both concepts.

2. 1. Democracy

The uprisings sparked in Tunisia and spread to numerous countries in the Middle East were calling for changing the autocratic regimes, which endured for more than six decades. However, the prompt triumph that Islamist parties achieved after ousting the leading figures of the old regimes puts democracy and democratization in the front (Taleb, 2013). The uprisings seemed to be the continuum of the *third wave* of the global democratization. However, democracy was not anticipated to find its path in the Middle East, an argument that some intellects in Western World don't stop repeating and fortifying it due to the "*Middle East Exceptionalism*" per se.

At first glance, the excessive role that Islamists practiced in the revolutionary incidents and democratization procedures, which took place later on, puts them under internal and external pressures in order to examine their commitment to democratic principles. Besides the

revolutionary atmosphere that the Arab societies are experiencing, re-establishing authoritarian religious surrogates was not expected (Taleb, 2013). These expectations withered away by the Islamist's failure in Egypt which ended by the military intervention and led to re-establishing authoritarianism eventually.

What happened is pushing us to question the alleged incompatibility of Islam and democracy because of Islam's and Middle East's *exceptionalism*. It is important to denote the historical differences between both of them, besides the notion of secularism which is perceived as a pre-requisite for democracy.

Worth to be mentioned that the philosophy of democracy is multifaceted and varied according to different historical Greek philosophies, renaissance philosophies, and even post-modern philosophies (Shafeeq, 2014). Interestingly, according to Freedom House, no country in 1900 met today's standards of electoral democracy. By 2000, eighty-five countries had become liberal democracies and other thirty-five were electoral democracies (Higley & Burton, 2006). This proves that democracy passed through different transformations.

2. 1. 1. Historical Background of the Western Democracy

History of democracy is dated back to the social and economic developments in the 7^{th} and 8^{th} centuries BC. The growth of agricultural output in the lands surrounding the Mediterranean and the increase of sea trade led to the advent of an urban pattern of classical civilization between 800 and 500 BC. These developments were accompanied by the introduction of iron to replace bronze as the main working metal in Greece because iron was cheaper than bronze. These also led to the large-scale production of weapons and tools, which meant accumulation of wealth in the hands of limited social classes. In addition, the increased trade which mentioned before meant more interaction with other societies which might help to discover and implement more effective agricultural tools and irrigation techniques (Roper, 2013).

Roper stated that "democracy was introduced in the Athenian city-state with the reforms of Cleisthenes in 508 BC. It reached its height while Pericles was a leading political figure from around 461 to 429, before being suppressed briefly in the wake of the defeat of Athens by the oligarchic city-state Sparta in the Peloponnesian war in 404" (p. 14). It is unclear whether this attempt was considered to be the first democratic city-state in history since there were

different and numerous democratic practices and institutions emerged earlier in Sparta and among Phoenicians. It is even doubted by different scholars that democracy was a Greek intervention. Instead, some claim that democracy and democratic practices were originated in Western Asia in the contemporary lands of Syria, Iraq, and Iran. However, the Athenian democracy was perceived to be significant and influential in the world's history because of its suppression in 322 BC.

Western histories of democracy could be perceived to date back to the extraordinary politics of the Greek city-state, in which each city-state had its own distinctive history and institutions. There was a balance of power among three elements: a central executive, an oligarchic council, and a general assembly of citizens. The wealthy ties dominated the major trading city's councils, but all citizens had the right to voice in general assemblies. It is important in this context to refer to the reality that half of the Athens' population was slaves, who didn't enjoy any citizenship rights since they were not qualified as citizens; only free male adults enjoyed full citizenship. In addition, resident foreigners or wives and children were not also qualified to be citizens (Tilly, 2007).

Back to the concept, *democracy*, the Oxford Classical Dictionary denotes that the word firstly emerged in the turn of the 5th to 4th centuries BC after the revolts in Athens. In 506 BC and during the same time when Cleisthenes introduced the reforms which led to the establishment of democracy in Athens; Tarquinius Superbus, the last Etruscan king to rule over the city of Rome, was expelled and the republic was declared. The essence of democracy and democratic ideal was freedom (*eleutheria*), a meaning that concealed the political liberty and private liberty to live more or less as the individual desires. From the date of the suppression of democracy until the 18th century, the concept was never mentioned in any European political spheres "neither a doctrine of principles and institutional arrangements to be put in practice, nor as a theory that might help to explain the rise and fall of states." (Crick, 2002, p. 32). Worth to be mentioned that *democracy* was tackled and even criticized by many medieval Muslim scholars, like al-Farabi, who depended on Aristotle's and Plato's arguments. These arguments later used by Republicans in the 18th and 19th centuries political transformations (Crick, 2002).

The resurgence of democracy in the modern era took place as a consequence of the Renaissance and enlightenment era followed by the revolutions in Europe, mainly the French Revolution. Between the 10th and 13th centuries, the European societies lived under the feudal

system which grew strongly economically and demographically. Feudalism led to the emergence of aristocratic consumption, urbanization and the increase of expenditures on warfare, and the growing sophistication and size of royal administrations. However, it was insufficient to meet the growth of agriculture and productivity output. This was promptly followed by climatic crisis and even poor corps, besides the widespread bubonic plague over Europe causing a massive decline in population in 1358, 1362, and again between 1368-69 (Roper, 2013).

Returning to the political developments, Charles Tilly said that "Europe's revolutionary mobilizations sometimes broadcast visions of collective consent and radical egalitarianism; especially those tinged with pietist and primitive Christian traditions" (p. 31). In England, for example, although none of the Catholics and Anglicans tended to threaten themselves by endorsing democratic surges, distressed Protestants supported egalitarian programs. "Some called for rule by a parliament elected through manhood suffrage. Quakers even went beyond these limits by instituting equality of men and women within their congregation." (p. 31). In the Nordic countries, religious congregations were resuscitated with numerous associations that became the bases and nuclei of reform socially and politically. "Church-backed associations then became models for secular action simultaneously" (p. 31). These associations were models adopted in various European cases in 18th century Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, which endorsed and fortified democratic institutions in Northern Europe.

Two precious examples must be retrieved in the western history of democracy; France, and the United States of America. Firstly, France is considered to be an important model for democracy and secularism. It passed throughout numerous and continuous challenges and surges of democratization and de-democratization. French case is refuting the notion of gradual democratization; instead, it singles out how the social intervention could change the political game rules. The political fluctuations the society experienced prove that democracy is a consequence of struggle and shock for both democracy and its reversals. Democratization started with the French revolution in 1789, which shortly followed by its decline with the rise of Napoleon in 1799. Between 1815 and 1848, France returned to monarchies that swept away with another democratic revolution which also promptly declined and substituted with authoritarian regimes between 1851 and 1870. The third republic was instituted on the ruins of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte's legacy in the 1870s, a political transformation which endured till the Nazi occupation in the 1940s.

In this context, I refer to democracy by instituting a government that is profitable to the people (Benz & Papadopoulos, 2006). “Democracy means that extent to which the regime features broad, equal, protected, binding consultation of citizens with respect to state actions.” (Tilly, 2007, p. 34). The state capacity in this context refers to “the extent to which interventions of state agents in existing non-state resources, activities, and interpersonal connection alter existing distributions of those resources, activities and interpersonal connections as well as relations among those distributions.” (p. 34). France proves that democratization and de-democratization do not usually take place in a regime one time; instead, they pass through reverses. During the 19th century, Belgium, Hungary, Germany, Bohemia, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland all witnessed democratic revolutions which were rapidly defeated. “Allegiance in democracies is demanded and given by popular consent and must be based on utilitarian and secular grounds: the state must demonstrate practical benefits in the here and now and not in the hereafter. If authority is not truly a contract between the rulers and the ruled, yet commonly a contractarian language is spoken, as if rights depend upon duties.” (Crick, 2002, p. 94)

The second example is the American democratic transformation which endured for decades (1765 – 1783). It started with the resistance of royal taxes and commercial controls imposed by the British crown in endeavor by the kingdom to compensate the great financial losses during the Seven Years War (1756 – 1763). The American Revolution soon turned to democratic programs by adopting the well-known and famous motto: *no taxation without representation*. Not only are the movements working on coordinating the resistance surges which spread in the British colonies in North America, but also they demanded rights of representation from the King and Parliament. Opponents of arbitrary rule within the British crown; such as Thomas Paine and John Wilkes, began formulating doctrines of popular sovereignty (Tilly, 2007).

The American case proves that the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few people can threaten democratic processes, and the massive increase of poverty removes people from the normal polity and threatens the order. All ancient and modern authorities agree that an excessive middle class is essential (Crick, 2002). “The American Revolution and the Civil War that followed 70 years later constituted bourgeois revolutions because they created a democratic state form that facilitates the emergence of the United States as the World’s dominant capitalist power” (Roper, 2013, p. 151).

2. 1. 2. A Convoluted Nexus between the Middle East and Democracy

Middle East countries passed through different historical contexts amidst the same period the Western World developed democracy. The societies in the Middle East were subject to the European colonialism which was imposed from above by military occupation followed by autocratic regimes backed by the West after the alleged independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, the Western hegemony over the Middle East delineated the approaches that dealt with democracy. In addition, the role of religion throughout the history of the Middle East in shaping the societies and framing the political authorities is profound. Therefore, the compatibility of Islam and democracy is questioned not only among the Middle East intellects but also in the Western intellectual arena. In contrast, "the dominant mainstream view, based on the received wisdom of the Enlightenment, is that religion is a problem for democracy and the less we have of it the better. This is, however, a superficial and limited view of the development of democracy" (Esposito & Shahin, 2013, p. 71).

Three contemporary approaches could be recorded in the Middle East in the Arabic literature, which tries to address and tackle democracy in Middle Eastern contexts. A main approach that Shafeeq Munir is representing; and most of Islamists including the Muslim Brotherhood are adopting it, criticizes the imported western monochromatic perception of democracy. He claims that those who are evaluating or studying the historical liberation and unifying Arabic projects or exploring the reasons behind the defeats and retreats including the failure of unity and development projects claim that the main and only reason for all the mentioned is the lack of democracy. Democracy is the only cure and roadmap for healing from all these disasters. Numerous actors that don't have any clue to democracy in our societies exploit democracy to criticize Islamic movements and Islamic uprisings using the democratic justifications to accuse all Islamic movements of being backward and fundamental. However, these actors are in coalition with the extreme despotic authoritarian regimes justifying their behaviors by securing these regimes from Islamists' criticism. Dealing with the western democracy for some means human rights, multiculturalism, separation of powers, representation in parliamentary councils, etc. However, this is not the only approach to understanding democracy. Depending only on the philosophical texts doesn't represent the western real dynamics of the western societies in which the realities are definitely different (Shafeeq, 2014).

Munir criticizes the American Democracy model. He claims that American democracy is not fully implemented in reality. On one hand, blacks and minorities, or even the right to be elected are not available for the masses in the actual capabilities. On the other hand, introducing the western democracy must pay attention to its historic evolvement, and how these movements dealt with the native societies' genocide in the US or Israel for example, or excluding women from the political spheres for centuries or even excluding the lower classes from being represented (Shafeeq, 2014). The democratization process passed through long ups and downs based on the real influential actors who own the powerful tools which enabled them to negotiate and address the transformations among them.

Most Importantly, there is a historical duality image, internally and globally, when researchers try to understand how democracy could be achieved and implemented in our societies. The West, including the US, doesn't introduce democracy and its principles to the rest of the world during the imperial and colonial period. However, they supported dictatorship and authoritarian regimes, and there are endless examples everywhere in the world and even in our Middle Eastern countries. Historical realities of the western democracy contradict the actual realities of our modern and contemporary world. The world passed from the old traditional colonialism to more intensive and comprehensive levels of colonialism by the unipolar global power since the 1990s. Therefore, resisting the new forms of colonialism allured the new tool for oppressing and controlling the oppositions everywhere (Shafeeq, 2014, pp. 21-28).

The endeavors to understand the western democracy will lead us for sure to understand and explore the differences and varieties in the western democracy and its implementation in a country to another. The British democracy is different from the French, different from the Italian, German, Swedish, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese, etc. These different democracies didn't pass through the same path to develop; so did its constitutions and institutions; laws, constitutions, institutions are different. Addressing the concepts of human rights, the role of law, separation of powers, and even elections; these principles, their understanding and their implementation turn to our religion when it is exposed to jurisprudence, and our historical developments. Societies in the Middle East, then, are the only part that is responsible for explaining and implementing such principles. This turns these principles to be part of the Middle East's privacy. Opposing historical privacy then and the endeavors to confiscate it, is against our interest to be liberated from the western hegemony and developing our societies. Middle Eastern societies are then the only actor responsible for determining the principles;

otherwise, imposing any of them is against the principles of democracy itself and against respecting the will of these societies. Although it is important to avoid the understanding that some trends inside Marxism introduce democracy in a simple way in which all social strata in the Western societies are participating in gaining the benefits of colonizing the world and stealing other societies' wealth. This argument claims that the Western societies with all their classes participated in stealing the subject societies. Even they exploited the Christian religious institutions in order to be their religious tool outside their states' political borders (Shafeeq, 2014, p. 33).

Another approach, which Fahmy Howeedy is representing, believes that without Islam and democracy nothing could be changed in the Muslim societies. Combination of both is considered to be a *fiqhi accepted rule*: "*Ma'loom min al-Deen beldarorah*", a well-known religious necessity. Any claim that makes the call for implementing Islamic Law and neglecting the role of democracy which is equal to *Shura*, is considered to be against the main objectives of Islam (Howeedy, 1993). He criticizes those who reject democracy claiming that they reject it for being imported from the west which practiced all kinds of oppression and humiliation against Muslim societies. This is even clear in the western discourses toward the Muslim world until now. They do reject it not for its own principles but for its western reflection and hegemony (Howeedy, 1993, p. 97). This view could be endorsed by the role of Islamic movements during colonialism when these movements rejected democracy considering it as a western tool to the western European colonialism. This was obvious in the Algerian case when the Islamists rejected democracy and constitutionalism, and called for *Shura* and implementing *Shari'ah*. Howeedy then deduced the main principles of instituting the state in Islam (pp. 103-112):

i. The nation has the free will to determine its future and choose their leaders;
ii. The society's responsibility for developing itself and the state;
iii. Freedom of every individual in the Muslim society;
iv. The equality and egalitarianism of all individuals in the society and humanity since they go back to the same origin;
v. The other – non-Muslims – have the mere and very right to practice their religion and follow their own legality;
vi. Injustice is prohibited and its resistance is mandatory for every individual, society or nation;
vii. Role of law; and all individuals are equal and subject to the law whether being in leadership or an ordinary citizen.

In accordance to the principles he mentioned, he believes that the very essence of democracy is to give the people the free will to choose who rules them and which economic, social, political, or even cultural policies and doctrines to be adopted and followed. He considers democracy equal to *Shura*. Although democracy in the western world was a fruit of continuous struggle and dispute, Shura was a divine order through revelation which was easily implemented from the very beginning. Moreover, some Muslim scholars, e.g. Mahmoud Abbas al-'Aqqad, claim that democracy is early introduced and implemented globally since the beginning of Islam. However, Islam left the doors open for the details to be updated and invented for Muslims based on their needs and ongoing necessities (Howeedy, 1993, p. 140).

Howeedy believes that democracy cannot be fragmented or divided; however, it is a roadmap which must be adopted as it is. He even contradicts the Islamists' attitudes regarding their opponents and claims that those who reject Islam's existence and insist on secularism must enjoy their rights to exist. This is their original right according to Islam (Howeedy, 1993, pp. 264-268).

The third approach is being led by Abdul Jabbar, who believes that democracy is a human right and value like freedom, goodness, or even beauty. Democracy is gained and possessed by continuous struggle even in the western world, and the claim that the liberal western democracy is the end of history is overestimated and highly influenced by the consequences of the Cold War, which promptly followed by the American wars in the Gulf countries to achieve protection for the oil resources and the Israeli nuclear arsenal (Abdul-Jabbar & Eid, 1990).

The claim that "*the West is the West and the East is the East*" represents an isolation of the west and more marginalization of the global edges. It considers democracy as a Western Christian product and not an invention for humanity. What is really distinguishing and surprising is the acceptance of the East to be different and unique in accepting the Western perception regarding the eastern context which is an outcome of colonialism. One of the manifestations of the western perception of the Muslim world is divided between two iconic imageries: the Gulf model that is dependent on the West in almost everything; or the Afghani extreme conservative model that the West even created it itself. The very essence of the battle for the West is the civilizational clash that the West introduced, and all democratic or global values are considered to be only western. Europe then is the western model perception. It

represents the values of human rights, civilization, secularism, modernity, rationality, etc. which is known ontologically as Eurocentrism. And any attempt away from these western European values must pass through civil wars, genocide, and destruction (Abdul-Jabbar & Eid, 1990, pp. 24-25).

To sum up, there is a continuum of contentious relationships between Islam and democracy reckoned on the main principle that democracy conceals; *Secularism*. For Alexis De Tocqueville, "*Islam is anti-democracy since Islam is a religion which claims the inclusion of principles for politics and civil laws, an argument that will prevent Islam from prevailing in a democratic era*" (Hashemy, 2017, p. 231). Such an argument expresses the mere essence of the conflict between Islam and democracy according to the Western perception from the very beginning since democracy is a product of a continuous secularization process of the political arena, and social arena in different Western cases.

2. 2. Secularism

At first glance, religion and secularism seem to address different fields. However, this primordial perception sweeps away when the dust of the combats between both overwhelm the political and social discourses everywhere, in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, etc. On one hand, religions are addressing the mere human activities, politically and socially, by delineating the ethical and moral frameworks for them. Religions set the pathways for individual and social entities to achieve the happiness and the continued existence of both entities on earth and in the afterlife. This is the very essence of religions. On the other hand, secularism addresses the same affairs distinguishing the human activities socially and politically to be mundane and belong to this life. It sets surrogate frameworks for individual's and society's activities away from the hegemony of religions. It was a reflection of the monopoly that the clerics owned for centuries in the European contexts (Haarscher, 2005). However, Islam created a seamless whole different historical experience.

Attia Sakr, a well-known Azhari Scholar, released a religious verdict (*Fatwa*) stating that: "*the western secularism, or laic, that is to separate religion from all life terrains is rejected by Islam because Islam is a comprehensive religion that feeds all life dimensions. Islam's beliefs don't have any heresies or vague creeds. Islam does dignify human mentality. There*

was not any priesthood in Islam, Islam doesn't have sacred authority from God but achieving the main objectives of shari'ah for the interests of human beings". This attitude could be considered the official attitude before secularism being issued from the oldest and the most influential prestigious Islamic institution in the Muslim world. Although al-Azhar does not have any executive role to impose its visions on the political sphere, it introduced a so-called testament which is dependent on its religious role (Al-Morsy, 1999, pp. 187-189).

Roy Jackson in his book "Nietzsche and Islam" verifies that Nietzsche admitted that there is no way to address the separation of religion and politics in Islam. Islam's creeds don't differentiate between the religious and political issues, even Islam mandates the subordination of all political issues to its religious standards and frameworks. Nevertheless, there is practical separation of religion and politics in Islam; however, the ties between them are sustainable. Therefore, the apologetic initiatives by various Middle Eastern and Muslim scholars to accept communism, liberalism, or secularism, are alien to the ontological principles that Islam rooted in its first Medina model. Moreover, if we consider secularism to mean the deterioration of religion in social, political, and even educational fields, there are different examples in the west that prove the converse (Jackson, 2015).

The declaration of independence in 1682 by the Christian Cleric in France from the Papacy in Rome, which was influenced by the writings of Bousseut, opened the gate for long secularization processes to reach the second Article in the 1958 French constitutions. The article states that: "*France is a secular republic. It assures the equality of all citizens before law without any kind of discrimination due to religion, race, or origin. The state does respect all religious beliefs.*" For long centuries, Catholicism practiced its political authority in surveilling all individual and social activities, including the scientific and intellectual ones. Episcopacies imposed their policies by all means, and the bad reputation of the inquisitions prevailed the medieval centuries (Haarscher, 2005).

For more than 10 centuries, Europe lived under anomalous circumstances that could be summarized as: a) an extraordinary position of the Church in social, economic, and political arena; b) a sectarian and religious state type; c) an illiteracy and opposing conditions for science and any scholastic invention; d) monopoly over education and scientific fields by the episcopacies; e) the allegiance between the Church and political and economic elites which was known historically as feudalism; f) oppression of religious minorities which caused continuous political and social instability; g) and last but not least the distortion of

Christianity teachings, monopolizing and manipulating their interpretations by the Church (Qadooh, 1995). All that which was mentioned and even more caused the political and social cleavages between the Church and the European societies which led to secularism. On the other hand, the Muslim world and the Middle East were experiencing thoroughly different contexts and conditions.

2. 2. 1. Secularism Conceptually and Historically

Secularism as a political concept firstly appeared in the European Western Concept by the end of the Thirty Years war and the real implementation of Westphalia Treaty in 1648, intertwined with the appearance of nation-state conceptually. Therefore, the concept is perceived as the very essence of that political transformation. Conceptually, secularism didn't have the wide meaning; however, it referred to the devolution of the Church properties to a secular state ownership. John Holyoke coined the contemporary definition of the concept to be: "*the belief that the human being could be reformed and redeveloped dependent on the materialistic nature, away from the belief issue is not under its interestedness to accept or to reject it*" (Beshara, 2010). According to the British Encyclopedia, secularism is: "*the belief that ethics must be in favor of humans, neglecting any other perspectives reckoned on the divine resources*."

Thomas Ford Hoult in his dictionary of modern sociology distinguishes between three different concepts tied with secularism: *secular*, *secularization*, and *secular society*. The secular individual is the person, who does belong to the contemporary times only, this worldly life and visible environment (Al-Musairy & Al-Azmah, 2000). According to Ford's perspective, secular person is not anti-religion, but irrelevant to religion, which is different. The first understanding which is widespread regarding secularism, semantically the concept denoted the separation of the Church and the state. The concept was limited to economic and political arenas and was neglecting any social activities. Historically, the separation between the state affairs and the religious institutions was implemented and conducted in ancient civilizations. Fusing the state affairs and institutions with religious institutions is very primitive and simple, and in any civilization, there was a distinctive separation between political and religious institutions (Al-Musairy & Al-Azmah, 2000).

Calvinism as a doctrine adopted secularism to cope with the deteriorated conditions in Europe which were mentioned before. Secular movements worked to shrink the political authority of the Church for different reasons: a) to emancipate the human mind from the Church's religious custody; b) to achieve equality and egalitarianism among all individuals no matter their belief is; and c) to achieve dichotomy between the sacred role of religion to care about the afterlife, and the mundane worldly issues (pp. 72-75).

The civic constitution declaration on 12th of July 1790 shrank the Clerics' political role prior to the French Revolution, and before the advent of Napoleon Bonaparte. The declaration threatened the Church's former political enlarged sectarian authority. It assured the religious freedom for Non-Catholics in France, averring their equality with Catholic citizens before the law and secured their political rights. This was practically impossible before under the Church episcopacies. Such gains had not deteriorated after the decline of the first democratic attempt by Napoleon: instead, a treaty was ratified between Bonaparte and the Pope in the Vatican assuring the religious freedom for Non-Catholics and Jews.

In addition, and it was historically unprecedented, the Pope accepted to submit and devolve the Church properties to the secular state. From that moment, the nation-state subordinated the Church to its authority and as a consequence, it was responsible for the monthly payments for the priests and pastors (Haarscher, 2005). Besides the economic subjugation of the Church to the state, the state becomes responsible for shaping the education away from the Church's religious custody based on a secular worldly new vision. Secularism then turned to a historical movement to liberate the individuals from the theocratic religious social frameworks to a mundane civilized society away from any divine interventions of any religious institution and away from the metaphysical sphere. Secularism didn't stop in the French case to secularize the economic, political, and social terrains, but it secularized the cognition of the individuals to adopt the mundane and worldly views (Qadooh, 1995). We can realize the sentimental existence of secularism in modernism, nation-state, and democracy.

What has been just mentioned before is a display for secularism linguistically, conceptually, and historically in the western context. Tackling the concept in the Muslim and Middle East contexts is a path surrounded by ambiguity and confusion. Importantly, there is no agreement about the definition of secularism among those who use it in Muslim and Arab contexts. What adds to the ambiguity and confusion of the concept, and even increases the suspicion regarding it, is the western attitude from the Muslim world, and the behaviors of the

secularists or liberals in the Middle Eastern societies. Such suspicion forced some secularists and liberals to justify their attitudes and endorse their positions in a contradicting context, by quoting Quranic verses in endeavors to legitimize their western orientations (Fourest &Venner, 2006, p. 380).

The linguistic use of secularism in the Arabic context was distorted from its real rhetorical meaning to be defined semantically as *knowledge*; (*'ilm* – عِلْم). The other different procedural historical, political, economic, and social dimensions were neglected and skipped. In spite of this frivolousness, Britannica Encyclopedia enrolled secularism to be a form of atheism; a matter that devoted antagonism and alienation for this concept amidst Muslim contexts and for its disguised translation (Qadooh, 1995). This ambiguous stand of secularism fragmented its mere understanding and diversified its perceptions. Interestingly, the definition of secularism was tackled negatively or positively among scholars according to their stands on the western theoretical and philosophical intellectual progressive modernism. In other words, generally, secularism is positively perceived when scholars are moving closer to the western attitudes towards Muslims and the Middle East and vice versa. This diversity of tackling the concept devoted more segmentation towards realizing and addressing the very essence of secularism, a matter that led to plenty of definitions and understandings of secularism, which will be clarified when addressing the concept in the Arabic literature later on.

Some of these different definitions could be summarized as the following (Qadooh, 1995, pp. 16-19):

- Mohamed Mahdy Shams al-Deen: "*secularism means that the leadership in the state and its institutions conducted by figures who don't consider their policies and their leadership as part of religion or dependent on it*";
- Mohammad Hussein Fadhlullah: "*the idea of secularism is based on the western separation of religion; sacred and profane. It considers religion as a spiritual phase which doesn't have any influence on ethics and morality in the society. In his point of view, it couldn't be implemented and accepted in reality*";
- Muhammad Arkoon: "*secularism is an attitude that the spirit can reach the truth by continuous struggle*";
- Muhammad al-Bahy said that: "*secularism is stressing the separation between the state and religious institutions. It is the transformation of rulership from the religious hegemony to the civil conduct*";

- Dr Ahmad Faraj considers secularism as being: "*against religion and sacred divine resource*".

The state principles which the prophet instituted in Medina considered to be the main reference for the Islamic political intellect per se. Promptly after the prophet's demise, Muslims started to implement the principles the prophet instituted, which influenced the Muslim states until recently. Interestingly, Beshara claims that the Rashidun Caliphate was not a state in comparison with the state forms in old empires, but it was a continuum of the religious role of the leader. The state form was developed during the second Caliph, Omar ibn al-Khattab, and deteriorated again during the fourth Caliph Ali ibn Abi-Taleb's reign; who was assassinated. So did the concept of Rashidun caliphate (Beshara, 2013).

Moreover, according to Beshara (2013), negating the existence of religious institutions in Islam is inaccurate. Muslim history proves the development of religious institutions which started to be obvious in the Second Abbasid Caliphate and excessively increased during Ottoman and Safawy empires. According to him, this was an evidence that demolishes the argument of the absence of priesthood in Islam. The establishment of religious institutions in any society is a natural necessity per se. In contrast, the diversity of religious institutions in Muslim societies created continuous disputes and clashes between them and the political authority, an expected conflict similar to any other civilization (Beshara, 2013, p. 425). Therefore, we can talk about different forms of secularism that existed in Muslim societies similar to the contemporary modern secularism. However, the concept of "secular" was early used by the Church in the Western Christian context to distinguish between the religious affairs and the lively mundane ones. The values embedded in the political arena are changeable in accordance with the new interests and the sophistication of each civilization (Jackson, 2015, p. 59).

Officially there was a profound refusal for secularism in Muslim societies, a stand that was endorsed by the Islamic institutions, like al-Azhar. Even the religious verdicts, *Fatwa*, mentioned formerly prove such tendencies. Another supportive stance for the former sentence is the definition introduced by Mohammad al-Bahy, who was a distinguished Azhari scholar. He defines secularism as: "*the belief that church clerics should not interfere in the state policies and in public education in particular. Secularism then means the complete separation between the state authority and church authority. State is responsible for political, social,*

economic, and legislative terrains when the Church is responsible for the personal private individual affairs" (Al-Morsy, 1999).

Moreover, some Sufi scholars believe that Jews are behind secularism. They claim that Jews instituted secularism to control the European societies to spoil any divine religion and control the world. That's the reason that secularism and religion are always in contradiction. It led to the destruction of European societies and created destructive impressive wars in the world (Al-Morsy, 1999). Distinctively, this might be the origin of the bad reputation that traces secularism among Muslim communities. In addition, what al-Azhar scholars conducted in reaction to the book that was published by one Azhari scholar, Ali Abdulraziq, deepened the hostility for secularism. Ali Abdulraziq in his book "Usul al-Hukm fee al-Islam" claims that after the demise of the prophet there was no need for religious leadership and the society needed a different leadership which was fully implemented by Abu-Bakr and Omar. Therefore, the leadership of both of them was non-religious. The committee of al-Azhar scholars replied to his arguments by averring that such arguments were against the reality of the leadership of Abu-Bakr. Abu Bakr's leadership was a religious and political, the separation between both of them didn't exist. Even though those who elected him and verified their allegiance to him knew that he was conducting the role of the prophet in running the state and society (Al-Oulamaa, n.d.).

In another context, secular ideologies, particularly Arab Nationalism and Socialism, which prevailed between the 1950s and 1960s, asserted that the scientific and civilizational leap the West achieved was dependent on secularism and was marginalizing religion (Browers, 2009). This perception was early adopted by different Muslim countries, mainly modern Turkey, the old and the last Islamic Caliphate. The separation between religion and state, and modifying education policies to be secular were adopted to catch up with the alleged Western universal developments (Al-Morsy, 1999). This could be described as secularization, which is a process of gradual separation of the religious affairs from the worldly ones; simply the sacred from the mundane, and God from the earth. It is an operation to rationalize and humanize the social, political, and economic terrains from the religious divine custody (Beshara, 2013, p. 441).

The well-known Lebanese socialist thinker Yaqub al-Baytar argued that revolutionary ideology must serve as "*a new religion to compete with other religions for controlling over the spirit of the people. Thus, its very birth is tied to its final victory which must be achieved*

over the religions". Similar to many Arab socialists, al-Baytar understood that Islam is the antithesis of socialism, thus reconciliation between both of them is a form of self-defeat for socialism. Also, according to Albert Hourani; "*the tendency toward secularism was strong in the modern Arab Nationalist thoughts*." Secularism dominated the nationalist thinking in Mashriq greater than its extent in Maghrib. However, the impact of the June 1967 defeat contributed to the retreat of this secular tendency according to Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (Browers, 2009).

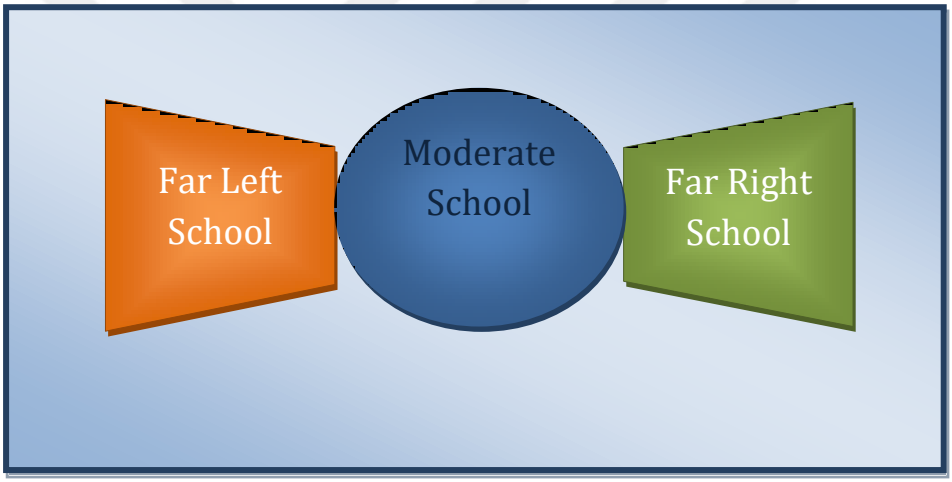
Despite al-Azhar's establishment attitude towards secularism, many Azhari scholars were influenced by the Western hegemony and the Western permeation in Muslim societies and in Egypt particularly. There were different initiatives by Azhari scholars advocating Western philosophies, and supporting secularism in particular, which was clear in the writings of Mahmoud Abu Rayya, Khaled Mohammad Khaled, Mansour Fahmy, and Nasr Hamid Abu Zeid. The later even claimed that the Arabic mind is restrained by the divine texts, and if any development must be sought then the separation between the sacred texts and the mind should be implemented. The Arabic Mind must be emancipated from the oppression that the divine texts are executing. Simultaneously, these West-based initiatives were deeply rejected and criticized by other Azhari scholars, mainly Muhammad al-Ghazali who was considered to be the main guardian and defender of Islam and its comprehensiveness until today, even after his death (Al-Morsy, 1999). In the forthcoming part, I will explain the different tendencies of secularism in Arabic literature in more detail.

2. 2. 2. Secularism in the Middle East Arab Perceptions

Stands on secularism in the Arabic intellectuality were numerous and different as mentioned before. Therefore, to facilitate mapping these differences and diversities I will categorize these stands according to their closeness from secularism. I dare to say that there are three main schools addressing secularism in the Arabic context: *the moderate school*, *the far right school*, and *the far left school*. The *moderate school* tries to address secularism by examining its mere essence and deduces its main principles, comparing them with the main principles deduced from Islam as a religion, and based on the Arabic and Muslim Middle Eastern contemporary contexts. The *far right school* rejects secularism claiming that it marginalizes Islam as a dominant comprehensive pathway to the societies in Middle East's Muslim

territories. The third school, the *far left school*, is opposing the *far right* attitudes towards secularism. It claims that the role of religion, whatever the religion is, must be neglected and thrown away to achieve development and modernism. The solidity of the orientations inside each school doesn't exist. Instead, the orientations are approaching the moderate school gradually as shown below in the chart reaching its tangential borders. Each school will be elaborated and fully explained. Figure 1 below shows the classification of these different schools according to the research of this study.

Figure 1: Classification of the Middle East Schools Regarding Secularism By the Researcher



i. Far Right School

Far Right School is endorsing the mere contradiction between Islam and secularism. It is expected that Islamism devotes this contradiction since it exploits such dichotomy to enlist their masses, reckoned on a precious history of anti-Western Colonialism. The first quote in this chapter assures such a claim. There are numerous figures and ideologues in this school, all of them are stressing the contradiction between the "Christian West" and "Muslim East". I will refer to three main theorists and ideologues; Yusuf al-Qaradawi; Abdul-Salam Yaseen; and Muhammad Emmarah.

Al-Qaradawi believes that Secularism; *al-ilmaniyya* or *al-'almaniyya*; is an imported concept that doesn't exist in the Arabic Middle Eastern traditions and heritage. He believes that there is an agreement on its definition that religion must be separated from state and social phenomena to be very limited to individual practices. Secularism might be a necessity in the European context due to the reasons that were mentioned before. However, secularism will not succeed in the Muslim societies since there is not any justification or pretext to implement it like Europe and the West. In addition, Islam doesn't accept any other leading ideology on its territories, since Islam is a religion and a legal system which was revelated by God to his messenger. Secularists even if they are not atheists, they deny the revelation which will eventually lead to their apostasy by allowing what is prohibited in Islam like wine, economic interests, adultery, etc. A secularist who denies implementing Islamic Shari'ah is explicitly announcing his infidelity (Al-Qaradawy, 1997).

Muslims believe that the revelation doesn't underestimate the mind's role in reaching rationality based on Islamic principles. They can agree on specific standards to be the leading principles: a) the divine standard is the revelation; b) human standard is mind; c) the social standard is interest; d) the political standard is the constitution; e) the national standard is authenticity; f) the international standard is human rights declarations and; g) the democratic standard is respecting the majority's will. According to his understanding of secularism, Islam does reject secularism. Secularism may accept the Islamic beliefs and ethics; however, it totally rejects Islamic legality, which is anti-Islam per se. In addition, secularism is against the people's will who call for implementing Shari'ah in all social classes. Muslims believe that Islam is politics and politics is Islam, and they never experience such alleged separation. Muslims who live under secularism are living continuous contradictions and dichotomies (Al-Qaradawi, 1997).

In another appraoch which Abdel-Salam Yaseen is its main ideologue, the history of the Roman empire then was based on paganism and injustice, which appreciate conquest and enslave human beings. It worships only materialism and powerful entities, and only weighs these standards. Contemporary Europe is the only heir for the Roman empire and they claim this daily (Yaseen, 1995).

In his perception, secularism had been planted and grown up in the Middle Eastern societies under the Western eyes' surveillance throughout their military existence in Muslim societies, and throughout their agents whom implanted to widespread the secular ideas and spoil

Muslim societies. This was conducted by changing the ideas in Islamic terminology in order to achieve Western superiority and hegemony. Historically, the *Christian Calls* remained isolated for three centuries until the Caesar adopted Christianity and allowed the existence of the Church after historical agreements turned Christianity to be a tool in the hands of the state.

Prior to that incident, Christianity was an isolated religion, and it was filled by old cultures' philosophical ideas in the Roman-Byzantine societies. They were accepted to create the authenticity of Christianity from one side and against the teachings of Christianity on the other side, turning Christianity as a hollow religion similar to paganism in ancient Roman societies. Therefore, the struggle against the church, later on, was not against the real Christianity but against the distorted form of it, since the authentic Christianity withered away by centuries (Yaseen, 1995).

Yaseen believes that Christians in the Arab and Muslim societies were the agents of the Western Colonialism. They played the role to edify Muslims and called for Western philosophies. They called for nationalism and liberalism supporting revolutions of the Arabs against the Ottoman Empire and they have disguised in serving the Arabic language. Therefore, Christians then were the first to call for secularism and nationalism when they considered the new Western ideologies to be the salvation pretexts to liberate from what they believed being subjugated to the retreating Muslim civilization. Secularists consider Islam as a pretext for the lag behind the Western civilization and its democratic innovation. Many attempts tried to prove that argument; however, what happened in Lebanon by fragmenting the societies based on sectarian and religious affiliation was a clear example for such Christian Western secular calls in the Middle East (Yaseen, 1995, pp. 111-112).

Another intellectual figure in this school is Muhammad Emmarah. In his perception, European societies were ruled by the theory of the two swords: spiritual religious sword; and worldly contemporary sword. The fluctuations were initiated when the Church exceeded their spiritual religious limits and overwhelmed the political sphere when the Popes controlled who to rule and whom to be assigned to be the kings. This was the main feature during the middle ages in Europe, which was not the case in Muslim societies (Emmarah, 2003).

Verily, secularism was an influential and fruitful tool for colonizing and separating Muslims from their religion, creed, and ethics in order to be subject to the Western hegemony, which meant the subordination of Muslims to the West. The very essence of secularism then is to master the human activities and all life angles away from any divine intervention. In other

words, secularism represents the separation and isolation of the divine rules from being connected to human life and considers the humans to be responsible for this life and all its dimensions. Therefore, Muslim scholars realized that the Western World and those who came with Napoleon in the campaign in Egypt were *atheists* and *secular materialists*," دهري" (Emmarah, 2003).

Secularism doesn't only refer to the retreat of religion in human societies' cultures, but it also introduces an approach to understand the universe. It uses three pillars as tools to implement and impose its hegemony in the world (Emmarah, 1999):

a) imposes secularization on history and forces its own perception;

b) imposes political messianism that believes in the return of the Christ, which is contradicting its essence of separating religion from understanding the universe;

c) and finally worships science as a secular tool for faith.

In reality, the defeat and the failure of the campaign on Egypt didn't finish the imperial and Western interventions in the East, but it was resumed and continued by different Egyptian figures who enlisted themselves to serve colonialism and offered the subjectivity of the Church to achieve the Western imperial aims in Africa (Emmarah, 2003, p. 47).

In the Muslim context, there were negative impacts and manifestation of secularism. One of the obvious manifestations was separating between Islam and Islamic Shari'ah from the Arabic language to secularize the legal systems away from Islam as the main reference for the legality. This entirely contradicted what God has revelated in His divine book; hence, any principle contradicts this perception and worldview is against Islam. Interestingly, the West understands the profound difference between Islamic Shari'ah and secularism. The Swiss orientalist Marsel Bowazar claims that: "*there is a clear difference between the essence of Islamic Shari'ah and European Western legality in their resources and in their outcomes. Islam is directing people to believe in the oneness of the legal resources that God has revelated to his prophet and to achieve people's closeness to God who orders specific ethical rules and moralities. However in the Western jurisprudence people can choose different legal standards and references based on the needs, desires, and the necessities in their epoch*." (Emmarah, 2003, p. 37)

In contrast, Islamic Shari'ah is organizing and paying attention to all human life aspects, politically, economically, socially, and ethically. With no doubt, there are different partial rules and legalities inherited from ancient nations and Islamic legality and jurisprudence. However, Islamic Shari'ah instituted divine principles of the Islamic legality and opened the doors for innovation to deduce the rules for the continuous and upcoming incidents. {ثم جعلناك على شريعة من الأمر فاتبعها ولا تتبعها أهواء الذين لا يعلمون}; {Then We set thee on a clear path in the matter of religion; so follow it, and follow not the evil inclinations of those who know not}. Therefore, secularism is anti-Islam in its very essence (Emmarah, 2001).

ii. Far Left School

Different theorists could be embodied in this school, but I will tackle the main arguments which George Tarabeeshy represents its main figure. George Tarabeeshy is a Syrian sociologist and political scientist. He criticizes not only Islamism, but he criticizes Islamic tradition and heritage. He considers secularism not to be a problematic issue for the religious minorities, but he claims that secularism is an Islamic-Islamic problematic issue due to the sectarian diversity in Muslim societies. A clear stance and reflection for such sectarian disputes could be recorded is the consequences of the American invasion of Iraq (Tarabeeshy, 2008).

He believes that Arabs will be excluded from creating any civilization even more than the rest of non-Arab Muslim societies, due to the organic linguistic nexus between Arabs and Islam. The Turkish and Malaysian models are expressive examples for this argument and supposition. In his opinion, Islam does reject Western secularism because it claims that the separation of the ties between religious hegemony and political and social affairs, is a struggle in developing mundane life as a substitute for the struggle for the afterlife. The alleged existence of any Arab secular state is beyond the truth and reality. There is not any single secular Arab state, and the first or the second article in most Arab countries constitutions proves their Islamic reference. Although George Tarabeeshy is criticizing stating Islam and Islamic Shariah to be the main resource for legislation, similar articles could be found in the Western secular European states like Norway (Tarabeeshy, 2008).

The second figure is Murad Wahbah who is one of the theorists of secularism and Western liberalism in the Middle East and in Egypt particularly. He believes that secularism had been

assassinated intellectually and practically by the hands of illiterate extreme Islamists. The Islamist main tool for assassinating secularism was the religious sentences which accuse secularism of apostasy and infidelity, similar to what Sayyed Qutb, Muhammad Qutb, and others wrote in their books (Wahbah, 2011).

He mentioned the story of Farah Anthony who published a book titled as: *Averroes and his Philosophy*. Promptly after publishing his book, he was accused of despising Islamic creeds on the walls of al-Manar magazine, the oldest Islamic magazine inherited by Muslim Brotherhood and Hasan al-Banna from Rasheed Ridha. Moreover, the well-known Egyptian secularist; Faraj Fouda, was assassinated by an illiterate Islamist after hearing a fatwa stating Fouda's apostasy (Wahbah, 2011).

The third one is Rasheed Khayoon, tried to ameliorate the contradiction between Islam and secularism, accusing Islamists of rejecting secularism although it was scientifically proved that it is authentic and the only way to develop. He asserts that it is necessary to distinguish and separate between secularism and atheism since the jurists of Political Islam imposed to distort and castrate secularism. In Islam, even atheists must enjoy the rights of living and their human rights must be secured similar to other human beings (Al-Khayyoon, 2011).

Finally, M. Kishanah, tries to shed light on the last incidents in Egypt between Islamists, secularists, and liberals since 2011 until the ousting of the former president Mursi. The main difference between secularists and Islamists was their universal and materialistic views. Secularists insisted on neglecting the history and depended only on the materialistic mundane perception of the universe that neglected any metaphysical spiritual dimensions. On the contrary, Islamists gave priorities only to the history and to the Islamic legacy avoiding the contexts of the produced jurisprudence and the universal views that were represented in the defunct eras. Islamists continuously criticize and launch their attacks on secularism and its ideologies: liberalism, Capitalism, Marxism, etc., whenever they commit any anti-democratic behavior, justifying these introduced critiques against them to be Westerners and initiated by the West's allies in the Middle East (Kishanah, n.d.).

On the contrary, secularists represented a blocking stone and dissuading obstacle to Islamists after becoming the leading power in Egypt. They called for protests and demonstrations against Islamists rapidly and continuously which prevented any official from practicing his duties. Moreover, private TV channels were their official spokesmen against Islamists when Islamists conducted the same through their religious channels. This deepened the cleavage

among both currents and led to the military intervention eventually. Secularists forge the reality of Islam and its historical progress to be similar to Christianity and its role in European history. They claim that secularism possesses the ultimate reality and rationality to achieve human development. They usually underestimating the progresses and scientific civilizational leaps that Islam achieved. Secularists inseparably averred that modernism and development are the products of secularism. Therefore, secularists continuously accuse Islam of being the main cause of ignorance, and they disregard religion and its principles. According to what has been mentioned, I can to say that Kishanah tries to be objective in his analysis, and he went closer to the *moderate school* (Kishanah, n.d.).

iii. Moderate School

Different Arab intellects attempted to understand the very essence of secularism and to compare it with Islam's principles. They tried to ameliorate the contradictions between both, to overcome the current deteriorated conditions in the Arab and the Middle Eastern societies.

According to Azmi Beshara (2010), separation between religion and state, and delineating their relationship, was founded and already existed before the advent of secularism as a concept in the contemporary modern world. Interestingly, many scholars, like Thomas Jefferson, discussed secularism in the turn of the 19th century without mentioning or referring to secularism as a concept. Secularization as a theory in social sciences and its existence as a concept doesn't have advantageous or disadvantageous attitudes. However, it was used to explain and to deepen the understanding of numerous phenomena in our contemporary modern world. Moreover, there are different levels for the sociology of secularism. These levels start with Max Weber: deterioration of religion. The Second level is addressing putting religion in the private sphere, and finally is distinguishing the social terrains in order to limit the religious sphere. Most of the introduced critiques tackled only the first level and neglected the other two levels. Even in the first level, Ernst Troeltsch developed the Weberian theory regarding secularism and stated that the concept referred to liberating religion from the state and neutralizing the state before religion. It meant practically liberating the religion from the state not the state from religion which is totally different (Beshara, 2013).

Tackling secularism in the West is different from tackling it in other Eastern and Muslim countries and societies. Rajeev Bhargava, for instance, claims that there were different secular political forms in India before colonialism under which numerous different religious and

cultural affiliations lived in peace and tolerance. It is important then to understand that secularization migration to other societies and countries must take in consideration the formation of national states and national identities through modernization and colonization processes. The concept was negatively perceived when the French mandate (Longueville) in the Westphalia negotiations in Monster, Germany, used the Latin term *secularisiren* to refer to the devolution of the Church properties and avenues to the state. This term was negatively perceived by the Church. In reality, the secularization process didn't lead to a neutral or free-value state. Instead, religion endorsed modernity, and it was perceived as a part of the national identity. However, desecularizing the state didn't mean desecularizing religion and the ethical values in the society (Beshara, 2010).

Interestingly, politicians in the United State avoid being titled as secularists, because they believe that it adversely affects their stands on religions. In comparison with the French constitutions, the American constitution doesn’t refer to secularism in any way. American constitution doesn't use the word GOD in all its articles. However, it mentions religion twice in the sixth article assuring that it is prohibited to use any religious test to appoint any person in an official state post.

According to Beshara, in the European contexts’ religion was a decisive factor in shaping many European identities. For example, there is no evidence that secularism existed in England; however, there were many initiatives to separate between the political and religious role of the kings who were religiously backed. Importantly, there was a religious fundamental call to separate between the state and the Church. Affirming the religious freedom for the rebellious separatist protestant sects was adopted after long periods of sectarian tensions. It seems that the Church played a more influential role due to the historical incidents that led to the collapse of the empires and states in Europe. This role was important due to the influential legality of the Church that was preceding the state’s existence and legality. Then, the attitudes against the Church was not against the religion; however, it was against the role that the Church played to support the monarchy. The anger was directed to the mundane role of the Church not its religious one (Beshara, 2013).

In addition, absolute monarchy was the main tool for secularization historically. Several kings tried to subordinate the Church to the state’s will and authority but they barely succeeded. The French king Henri IV fostered the Catholic Church position in the political sphere when he converted to Catholicism. He issued the declaration which could be considered as the first form of secularization. This incident and others led to the insolvency memo against him but the Church's Popes intervened in his favor, which fortified the role of national Church in the

French political sphere. Therefore, when the French revolution took place in 1789, it possessed the legacy and the experience to interact with the hegemony of the Church in the political and social realms. For instance, many secular youths were recruited thoroughly in Church positions and Priesthood, and they played a role in the revolutionary incidents. Moreover, the civic law regulating the clerics' affairs in 1790 didn't only separate the Church from the state but subordinated the Church to the state when these Churches were nationalized and separated from the Papacy in Rome according to the terms of Westphalia treaty (Beshara, 2013).

The subordination of the Church to the state started in France when the state obligated all the priests to introduce the oath of allegiance to the state. Also, the constitution stated that all French citizens could vote for Catholic priests whatever their religion was, which was unprecedented. The separation between the state and the Church took place early before legislating the religious affairs in the new constitution. Both parts agreed that salvation and happiness of the citizens don't belong to the state under any term. The state is responsible only for the citizens' salvation and happiness in the contemporary mundane life. Therefore, three consequences could be recorded from the secularization process which started in France (p. 137):

a) the clerics had been suspended to be a state class;

b) the Church law was no more obligatory;

c) and finally the state suspended its intervention is framing the Church laws.

Secularization as a process and historical context didn't achieve dichotomy between the sacred and profane. Instead, it confiscated the holiness off the church granting it to the state in order to build a new sacred value system without neglecting the role of religion. These new sacred values like sanctifying the political sphere and the state above the Church, and building the new national concepts by building the nation-state, were the main pillars in shaping the new imagery of the Church's role (p. 63). In addition, building the nation-state in Europe took place simultaneously with the excessive role of faith and religion, not vice versa. For example, the British Church continued to play a political and social role. The religious spirit was prevailing and was exploited as a leading force in education and in facing poverty.

From these points, it was an epidemic in Europe to address and attack the Church's authoritarianism. In the German case, similar incidents took place when Liberals, Nationalists, and Bismarck sought to isolate and omit the Papacy's hegemony over the world churches politically and socially. Liberals and Nationalists worked on establishing a secular state. However, Bismarck accused the Church to be the enemies of Rayans. Although secularism

even started to tear out the religious cloaks off the Church, it stressed ethics and its importance in the newly born societies (p. 165).

Worth to be mentioned, the engagement of the priests and pastors in the national resistance against authoritarianism added nationalistic dimension for the Church's role in the social and the political spheres. In some cases, the Church was engaged in democratic and liberal resistance movements and even supported the leftist movements in Spain, Poland, and South America, for example, in order to achieve their aims in their struggle with the political authority. It seems that the Church realized that adopting anti-social interests will lead to its total isolation similar to the French case, which will even deconstruct its social roles. In reality, the religious institutions reckoned on real and impressive social and political pillars, and also reckoned on popular cultures that endured for eras in many cases. Therefore, secularizing the political sphere must be gradual and steady to avoid the catastrophic consequences similar to the French case (p. 168).

In the Polish case, the Church figures refused to be passive towards the ongoing incidents and refused the separation between the state and religion as a concept. They believed that the Church's role is to condemn any form of injustice and violence against human beings. Therefore, they called for human dignity and human rights, especially the right to determine society's destiny. Even when the Church was isolated and rejected by the opposition, it adopted a pragmatic stand to be a mediator between the regime and the opposition. It tried to keep a political and social role even at the very minimum levels (pp. 172-173).

Beshara claims that secularization and secularism are attached components and outcomes for modernism. When the Church lost its political dimension, it no longer possessed the capability to force its beliefs and to chase its opponents religiously. And the declaration issued by the Vatican 1965 announcing its acceptance of religious freedom was perceived as a deep dichotomy with the past and adapting itself with the new contemporary political and social contexts (Beshara, 2013, p. 198). We can't talk about complete and comprehensive separation between divine and mundane, which is practically impossible. Residues from both would remain in the other conversely (p. 223).

The second extraordinary attitude belongs to Gamal al-Banna; the brother of the founder of Muslim Brotherhood Hasan al-Banna. Gamal al-Banna defends secularism and tries to criticize Islamism and the extreme model of secularism simultaneously. Regarding the relationship between Islam and liberty, he believes that since Islam is a religion then dealing with the sacred fundamentals reveals that Muslim intellects resent when discussing such liberty, and of course secularism; although tackling these sacred fundamentals is the main

essence of liberty and secularism. Refusing the wisdom that Islam is calling for by Islamists, who introduce themselves as the guardians of faith and religion, is against the very essence of the message of Islam itself. Islam is the religion of free thinking and never stands in contradiction with liberty, and the Quran stated and stressed this continuously. Although, extremism and deviance are unacceptable and had undesired epiphenomena, it leads to changing and modifying corrupted principles. Khawarij, for example, were extremists but they tackled a principle that was corrupted during their era: "*leaders and Imams must be from Qurayyesh*" (El-Banna, n.d.). This distinctive argument overlaps with Durkheim and Morton regarding the necessities of deviance in adjusting the society and developing it (Giddens, 2014).

In addition, Gamal al-Banna went beyond the pervasive historical perception and stereotypes, then he claims that the religious apostasy wars that the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, launched were mainly political when some tribes rebelled against the central government although they were performing prayers and paying the endowments. He believes that Islamists, similar to Orientalists, adopted the rules that jurists instituted and considered them to be Islam's rules although they were the deductions of the jurists only (El-Banna, n.d.).

Moreover, Gamal al-Banna averred that Islam rejected religious institutions when *Quran* criticized the behaviors of priests and pastors when they prohibit and legalize what they consider suitable according to Christianity while neglecting the principles of the religion. One main policy that Islam instituted was to negate religious institutions in order to liberate Muslims from being subject to any religious compulsion by making religious practices available at any time and place. Islam was very simple, for example, when it sets the rules regarding performing the prayers (El-Banna, n.d., p. 28).

However, Gamal al-Banna argues that the existence of religious institutions in Islam is similar to the existence of the Church in the West. Importantly, the main shortcoming of any religious institution was the concentration of the authority in the hands of the institution's figures and individuals who are running these institutions. By the changes, the principles of the religion changed and converted to be mundane. The religion was exposed to human deficiencies and deviances (El-Banna, n.d.).

Nonetheless, the simplicity of the principles of Islamic faith made it tenable to follow the same path that Christianity followed when the religious institutions were established (El-Banna, n.d., p. 29). He perceives that the main reason for the defeat of the Church as the

leading political actor was its hegemony over the social and political spheres and its inquisitions that had a long bad reputation of absurd incidents. Interestingly, inquisition history was a historical profound phenomenon very early in the practices of the Church to oppress the opponents dated back to the *First Council of Nicaea*. However, the nature of religious institutions is totally different in Islam and Christianity. For instance, the religious institutions in Islam never rule like what happened in Europe (El-Banna, n.d., p. 30).

Finally, Abdul Wahab al-Musairy considers secularism a dynamic concept, not a static one. Secularism existed in different eras with different forms. This diversity in forms doesn't mean contradiction or contrast; however, it means that the perception and the indicator of the concept changed according to the historical social and political contexts (Isam al-Qaisey 2012). Al- Musairy distinguishes between two different levels of secularism: ***partial secularism***, and ***comprehensive secularism*** (Al-Musairy & Al-Azmah, 2000).

Partial secularism could be defined as a partial and non-comprehensive view of this life which believes that religion must be separated from politics, economics, and maybe some other different angles in this life. However, this form of secularism neglects other fields in this life and acknowledges the existence of different resources of human ethics and overviews, including religious ones. On the other side, ***comprehensive secularism*** is the type that excludes and separates every dimension in this life away from religions and religious frameworks. The life and its materialistic essence are only the main arbiter and indicator of humans' life (Al-Musairy & Al-Azmah, 2000, pp. 120-121).

The Western and European secularism is in the second level, the ***comprehensive secularism***. It asserts the human centrism, and particularly white man centrism, before nature. Only human potency is that controls and exploits nature and all its materialistic and human components (Al-Musairy & Al-Azmah, 2000, p. 125). ***Comprehensive secularism*** then means excluding and separating all religious rules and ethical human values to be only materialistic and mundane and not having any divinity. It is only stressing the materialistic exploitation and utilizing its benefits. The human individual then doesn't have any spiritual or metaphysical existence; it's only the materialistic one that directs this life.

Comprehensive secularism is the theory, and imperialism is the practice but at two different levels: a) internal imperialism in Europe, which meant the good governance of all materialistic tools in favor of the material framework of the ruling elites; b) and international imperialism that launched colonialism and colonized the human societies, imposing the

materialistic views of the livelihood and exploiting it in favor of the centers; the Western societies (Al-Musairy & Al-Azmah, 2000, pp. 126-127).

At the theoretical level, secularism may not be an atheist or anti-religious philosophy; however, at the practical level, it excludes God and divine resources from exploiting the nature and framing the human ethics and beliefs, putting it in the center of the universe and pushing it away from the center simultaneously.

Historically, in the Eastern Muslim societies the anti-secular movements were a reflection of colonialism, hence secularism was perceived as a tool of deep and continuous colonization in the subject societies (Al-Musairy & Al-Azmah, 2000, p. 176). It belongs to the Middle Eastern societies' free will to choose what level of secularism suits them according to their necessities and the social and political phenomena that are unique to them being Muslim societies. We cannot take secularism as a mere concept and implement it; otherwise, the effects will be harmful and problematic (Al-Qaisey, 2012).

2.3. Re-configure the Relations between Islam, Democracy, and Secularism

Before approaching the clear ties between the three concepts; Islam, democracy, and secularism, it is necessary to refer to the numerous main arguments to settle down the alleged antagonism among them. First, the very essence of democracy is to restore the human dignity individually and socially and to return the right to the individuals and to the human societies to determine their path in this life in order to achieve justice, equality, and freedom for human beings. I do believe no one dares to contradict such a fact or argument.

Second, this fact was implemented historically throughout a long path overwhelmed with convolutions, sacrifices, and radical transformations in the mere understanding of religion and its role in this life after being fledged with mysteries and Church's despotism in Europe. Also, I do believe that no one can oppose this reality which created the European history for centuries known as the *dark ages*.

Third, and most importantly, no one can deny the reality that existence of religious institutions is a very concept and pillar for any developed and sophisticated civilization whether being Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, etc. History ratifies that religious institutions did exist in all civilizations and Islam was not an exception. The claim that Islam doesn't know

religious institutions and denies the priesthood practiced historically in other religions like Christianity, is a two-edged reality simultaneously. In other words, Islam denies the existence of religious institutions which existed in Europe, but in reality, there are different religious institutions that dare to claim to represent the very essence of Islam, like al-Azhar in Egypt, Zeytona in Tunisia, Shi'ite religious institutions which exist in Iran and among any Shi'ite community, or even the Salafi religious institutions in Gulf countries, mainly Saudi Arabia. These institutions don't stop issuing absurd religious sentences (*fatwa*) frequently. Therefore, this delusion must be clarified, and I will address this in the following.

Regarding Islam, from the very beginning and starting moment, Islam instituted three main political pillars that were the fundamental arguments accompanied its advent. In order to clarify these pillars, it is necessary to go back to the main resources that Islam was built upon; *Quran* and *Sunnah*. If anyone wants to understand the Quran, then the return to the Quran rather than the perceived understandings regarding it is a mere reality and necessity. Quran itself claims that it is God's words: {كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ}

(This is a Book which We have revealed to thee that thou mayest bring mankind out of every kind of darkness into light, by the command of their Lord, to the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy) *Ibrahim: 1*. Then in this context, it is preferable to refer to the Quran when tackling the very essence of these political pillars.

There are three pillars for instituting the political authority in any human society and particularly in Muslim society; *justice*, *equality*, and *freedom*. Regarding *justice*, there are numerous verses which support this essence, and few will be mentioned here:

a) {إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَى أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا}

(Verily! Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those, to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice. Verily, how excellent is the teaching which He (Allah) gives you! Truly, Allah is Ever All-Hearer, All-Seer) *al-Nisa 58*.

b) {يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَى بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَى أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَلْوُوا أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا}

(O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be he rich or poor, Allah is a Better Protector to both (than you). So follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you may avoid justice, and if you distort your witness or refuse to give it, verily, Allah is Ever Well-Acquainted with what you do) *al-Nisa 135*.

c) {يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَآنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَى أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ}

(O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah and be just witnesses and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do) *al-Maeda 8*.

d) {إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَى وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ}

(Verily, Allah enjoins Al-Adl (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allah Alone - Islamic Monotheism) and Al-Ihsan (i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allah, totally for Allah's sake and in accordance with the Sunnah (legal ways) of the Prophet SAW in a perfect manner), and giving (help) to kith and kin (i.e. all that Allah has ordered you to give them e.g., wealth, visiting, looking after them, or any other kind of help, etc.): and forbids Al-Fahsha (i.e all evil deeds, e.g. illegal sexual acts, disobedience of parents, polytheism, to tell lies, to give false witness, to kill a life without right, etc.), and Al-Munkar (i.e all that is prohibited by Islamic law: polytheism of every kind, disbelief and every kind of evil deeds, etc.), and Al-Baghy (i.e. all kinds of oppression), He admonishes you, that you may take heed) *al-Nahl 90*.

Few verses could also be mentioned for instituting *equality*, *egalitarianism* and *freedom* for the entire human societies:

a) {يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ}

(O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa (i.e. one of the Muttaqoon (pious). Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware) *al-Hujuraat 13*.

b) {لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ}

(There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in Taghoot and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower) *al-Baqara 256.*

c) {قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ * لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ * وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ * وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَا عَبَدْتُمْ * وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ * لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ}

(Say (O Muhammad (Peace be upon him) to these Mushrikoon and Kafiroon): "O Al-Kafiroon (disbelievers in Allah, in His Oneness, in His Angels, in His Books, in His Messengers, in the Day of Resurrection, and in Al-Qadar, etc.)! * I worship not that which you Worship * Nor will you worship that which I Worship * And I shall not worship that which you are worshipping * Nor will you worship that which I worship * To you be your religion, and to me my religion (Islamic Monotheism)) *al-Kafirun: 1-6.*

Implementation of these principles was conducted comprehensively by the prophet himself, and many evidences could be mentioned to endorse these principles, examples which are extremely numerous and endless. In addition, the prophet's successors who were known historically as the *Rashidun caliphs* implemented these principles. Nevertheless, the prophet combined between the religious and the political roles; Muslim scholars did understand and realized that this was one of the prophet's specialty granted by God to him only. Scholars even distinguished between his traditions and behavior being political, religious commands, and human innate characteristics; and they depended on the mere understanding of the companions who realized the differences between the prophet's divine religious role and his humanitarian nature being a leader, judge, and social reformer (Al-'othmany, 2015, pp. 13-30). These arguments refute numerous claims that were surrounding Islamic history and philosophies, like Islamic theocracy. Two crucial examples underpin this perception:

a) In his farewell pilgrimage peroration, the prophet stated and asserted the human equality when he declared: "*All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; white has no superiority over black, nor does a black have any superiority over white; [none have superiority over another] except by piety and good action*."
b) The canon that the second caliph announced: "*How could a man enslave his fellow man when both were born free*?"

Moreover, the Quran asserted refusal of the monopoly of few individuals over the wealth:

{مَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ فَلِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ ۚ وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ}

(What Allah gave as booty (Fai) to His Messenger (Muhammad SAW) from the people of the townships, - it is for Allah, His Messenger (Muhammad SAW), the kindred (of Messenger Muhammad SAW), the orphans, Al Masakin (the poor), and the wayfarer, in order that it may not become a fortune used by the rich among you. And whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad SAW) gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it), and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Severe in punishment) *al-Hashr 7*. This was even implemented by the second caliph when he rejected dividing and fragmenting the lands among the warlords who asked him to grant them these lands since they conquered these territories themselves, and he referred to the previous verse to cut the roads for feudalism in its cradle.

According to the comparison of the very essences of Islam as a political surge and democracy as a political tool to govern societies, then Islam instituted the same principles that democracy instituted. The claim that Islam and democracy are in contradiction is aspersion and even fabricated. This refutes Alexis De Tocqueville, “Islam is anti-democracy since Islam is a religion which claims the inclusion of principles for politics and civil laws, an argument that will prevent Islam from prevailing in a democratic era” (Hashemy, 2017, p. 231). It is possible then to justify Tocqueville’s stand on Islam and the alleged contradiction between Islam and democracy, that no other form of democracy will be accepted expect the Western democracy which would be only exclusive to the West. Supporting authoritarianism in the third world according to the Western classification, not only in the Middle East though, is explicit evidence for the Western authoritarianism over the subject societies and nations.

In addition, regarding the perceived contradiction between secularism and Islam, it is mandatory to refer to different flaws in such a claim. It is well-known and strongly perceived in the Islamic literature; based on the Quran, the prophet’s tradition, and even the implementations of the prophet’s successors, that the very essence of Islam is to emancipate individuals and societies from the autocratic states and entities. Islam seeks to grant the very rights for human beings, the mere naked right to believe in any religion, and follow any legality that they desired.

It is inaccurate to claim that Islam filled the legal vacuums with Islamic terminology to assert its existence. The reality is profoundly different since Islam was conducting radical transformations and modifications to the legalities that existed in the previous civilizations. In other words, the main principles mentioned before, justice, equality, and freedom, where the leading principles when Islam dealt with the existing legal systems during its advent. Islam

did inherited the legalities of the collapsed and diminished states like the Roman state, or Persian state, but it modified them to meet the principles that Islam instituted for all humanity. Moreover, the main difference in the nature of religious institutions in Muslim societies and European context was the commitment of the Islam's institutions to the main principles which are universal for all humanity. Whenever any religious institutions, being Islamic, Christian, Buddist, etc, rejects to admit the implementation of these principles in its social context, it turns to be a tool in the state's hand of authority, or even the state itself similar to the European Church. Then, resistance of this deviance, even if it is claimed to be religious, is a must and necessity. And when tackling the role of the Orthodox Church and Al-Azhar, as the main Egyptian religious institutions, it will be necessary to refer to their positions in the political regime as political entities assuring the legitimacy of the political authority.

Finally, I can then denote that the very essence of secularism took place from the very beginning of Islam's advent. It was a form of secularism that negated forcing any autocratic authority over human individuals or their minds to emancipate human beings from any authority and grant them their rights back in order to choose all their life details including their religion, even if they reject Islam as a creed and a belief system. Interestingly, Islam conducted this secularization process in the name of the religion itself to provide this operation with sufficient legality and to open the doors to add any human universal political values or principles to be part of it as a religion to achieve its main aims in any human society.

The alleged contradiction between Islam and secularism is a distortion of the realities and the very essence of both. In my opinion, it's important to separate between Islamism, which was a social and political phenomenon tied with the European colonialism and its consequences in Muslim societies, and Islam as a religion that underpins the main principle for the existence and continuity of human societies on this earth.

When any religious institution or any political authority pays the highest attention to religious cloaks and vestments and neglects the main principles for building any society and securing it from despotism and injustice turns this religious institution to be anti-Islam even if it pretends the opposite. Worth to be mentioned, even the religious verdicts (*fatwa)* are accepted and verified when they meet the main principles of Islam and Shari'ah objectives; otherwise, they will be refused and rejected if they contradict and show non-compliance to these principles in spite of their religious sacredness. Many scholars denoted this argument centuries ago, like Ibn al-Qayyim when he clearly said that:

"*The shari'ah is based and built upon wisdom and [achieving] public welfare, in both this life and the next. It is justice in its entirety, mercy in its entirety, welfare in its entirety, and wisdom in its entirety. Any issue that departs from justice to injustice, mercy to its opposite, public welfare to corruption, or wisdom to folly cannot be part of the shari'ah, even if it is claimed to be so due to some interpretation*" (Al-Salman, 2002).

Verily, the mere essence of democracy and secularism took place in the very beginning of Islam throughout democratization and secularization procedures if we can mark Islam's political experience according to the Western terminology. These procedures were conducted by liberating the human societies from despotic regimes which endured in some cases to a millennium, and emancipating the human mind from any mysterious religious superstitions and heresies imposed by religious institutions for centuries. Two procedures that could be easily defined in our modern times by *democracy* and *secularism.*

Based on all what was mentioned before, I can refer to two important new concepts; ***rational secularism*** and ***arrogant secularism***. ***Rational secularism*** is the form of secularism that distinguishes between the excessive existence of religious beliefs in the political spheres according to the main principles of democracy which overlap and congregate with Islam's main political principles. It does exploit the main principles, justice, equality, and freedom, and considers them as the leading principles for policy-making, decision-making, and legality. The second type of secularism is the ***arrogant secularism***, which is a form of secularism that forces a specific type of Western secularism and neglects the main principles, justice, equality, and freedom, that are mandatory for building any civilized and well-being society, whatever the social, historical, and religious affiliations of this society.

According to the previous definitions, the Western secularism was implemented internally as ***rational secularism***, and as ***arrogant secularism***, in the Middle East and in the Third World according to the Western terminology during the colonial era, and even the post-colonial era. What the Middle East's societies, including the Muslim societies for sure, are experiencing and witnessing is the ***arrogant secularism***. The implementation of this type of secularism in the name of democracy in some cases was underpinned and endorsed by the West-backed authoritarian regimes, which aim to persist and devote underdevelopment and fragmentation among the societies of this part of the world to ensure the Western European and American superiority and hegemony. This claim could easily be averred by the contemporary crisis and the destructive consequences of the so-called Arab Spring in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen, and previously US invasion to Iraq.

CHAPTER THREE: THE EGYPTIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AMONGST INCONSISTENT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS

The Egyptian Orthodox Church is one of the most important religious institutions in Egypt since it is one of the oldest churches in the world and in the Middle East. It has been a beacon for Christianity and its guard for centuries. The Orthodox Church has played many roles in the Egyptian political life, particularly in the fundamental historical moments that Egypt has gone through during the last century till today. For instance, Saad Zaghloul's revolution was a terrain for the Church's political engagement in cooperation with Al-Azhar scholars, demanding liberation from the British occupation. At the beginning of the Egyptian revolution in January 2011, the Egyptian Church was a major actor in the political incidents that Egypt witnessed.

The Egyptian Orthodox Church, similar to any other religious institutions in Egypt, has gone through a series of political transformations since the mid-twentieth century after the revolution in July 1952. In 1952's revolution, Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized all religious institutions, including the church. Hence, the status of the Egyptian Church continued as a dependent and as a subject to the Egyptian regime till the moment of writing these lines. One important incident that expressed how far the regime is subordinating the Church was during Sadat's reign when he deposed Pope Shenouda III in response to the Church's political sectarian tendencies in the 1970s. After the assassination of Sadat in 1981, Mubarak returned the Pope Shenouda to the Papacy, a decision that was a part of the new regime's behaviors in order to ameliorate the chronic tensions witnessed promptly prior to Sadat's assassination.

At the beginning of the political uprisings in January 2011, the official stands of the Church were extremely diverse and fluctuating; from rejecting the political changes in the Egyptian political sphere until supporting the coup in 2013. Pope Shenouda III expressed his support for Mubarak and the regime adopted political procedures which were aiming to absorb the ascending tensions in Egypt's streets.

By Mubarak's ousting and the rise of the Islamists to power, the Egyptian Church seemed uncomfortable with those changes which led to the continuum of pressures on the former president Mursi. The Church supported the military's political intervention in July 2013 which was led by the Minister of defense Abdul Fattah al-Sisi. With the success of ousting Mursi, the Church supported the coup leader in the following presidential elections.

Interestingly, Pope Twadros II and other church figures expressed their support for Abdel Fattah al-Sisi claiming that: "*Voting with yes brings the blessings.*" Despite the Church's official stands, there are different Christian Copts who rejected the Church's interference in the political sphere, and they seek to separate its political, and spiritual-religious role.

The Church has gone through many internal and external transformations, and structural changes, which have devoted its role to the Egyptian political life in an unprecedented way. Such transformations have been responses to the political and economic transformations in the successive Egyptian regimes since Nasser and even till Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. It is worth mentioning that these changes in the structure of the Church and its role in the Egyptian political sphere came in the context of the social and cultural transformations within the Egyptian contexts during the previous decades, and also the changes within the regime in accordance with global politics during the last three decades.

3.1. The Egyptian Orthodox Church before Founding the Republic

This part is addressing how the Orthodox Church shaped and formulated its political role amongst the political transformations in Egypt prior to the uprisings in 2011, the so-called Arab Spring. This role cannot be separated from the political, social, and economic transformations in the last century, especially the Church's relations with the successive Egyptian regimes. I can claim that the main and the most important factor in delineating the Church's role is its ***political theology*** that has been formed, elevated, and modified according to the social, economic, and political changes, especially in the last two centuries. Tackling the Church's political theology is crucial in order to understand the Church's role in the Egyptian sphere comprehensively.

Conceptually, ***political theology*** refers to two concepts: ***theology*** and ***politics***. This means that the religious belief is intertwined with the political ideology to eventually produce and attribute the political behaviors of the Church as one of the major religious institutions in the Egyptian context. Both concepts confirm that the Church's political tendencies have been formed in an environment full of social, political, and religious interrelated contexts which produced the political theology of the Church. This requires, of course, understanding the dynamics of these contexts and their backgrounds, and how they interacted separately and mutually between them. This makes separating such contexts from their environment, in

which this political theology had been elevated, impossible. These contexts are *the historical context, the religious context, the political context, and the social context*.

The dynamics of these contexts individually and mutually are deepening and clarifying the understanding of the Church's political behaviors, exploring the extent of the modifications in its political theology as being flexible and changeable. The main aim of the Church amongst these contexts was to adapt to the surrounding environment in order to achieve one main goal: *securing the status of the Church by securing the existence of the Christian Coptic community itself in Egypt*.

Religious context is not based on the Christian belief of the Church, as some people understand at first glance. However, it is based on the religious tendencies of the Egyptian Church since the Islamic conquest of Egypt in the seventh century (642: 640 AD). The Islamic conquest of Egypt and Egypt's liberation from Roman's domination to the nascent Muslim state represented the beginning of a new era for Copts. Interestingly, the term "Coptic -Copts" did not mean at that period the Christian religious minority in Egypt; instead, every Egyptian at that time was necessarily a Copt, not every Copt was necessarily a Muslim.

A radical change took place when Egypt moved from the Byzantine Romans' rule to the rule of Muslims under the leadership of al-Madinah al-Munawara, the religious capital after Mecca. And away from the historical narratives written in the Islamic history books, which were retrieved and repeated frequently especially after the Arab Spring and with the political rise of the Islamic movements, that Muslims liberated Copts from the Roman despotism; but it must be denoted that these historical moments represented a deep wound for Christian Copts. Many of them converted to Islam, and the Arab tribes began to overlap and merge in the Egyptian Coptic society. Consequently, the Coptic Christians became a religious minority under the rule of Muslims – what was historically known as *ahl al-Dhimmah*. This situation required the subjugation of Christian Copts under the protection of Muslims and paying *Jizyah* in return for that protection while respecting their beliefs, churches, and religious sanctuaries.

This has resulted in several religious reactions by the Church, in an attempt to re-institutionalize the Church to protect and root out the Christian strain and preserve what was remained from the Christian community in the Egyptian society in particular. Also, as part of the larger Muslim society that was massively expanding at that time. This necessitated the adoption of different historical, religious and contractual narratives that were contradicting the historical context of that period. The Church was formulated of cultural policies distinct from the Muslim environment, whether voluntarily by the feeling of discrimination in the new

Muslim society or by imposing such a situation on them. This was translated later by establishing the Church in order to prove the continuation of the Christian Copts as the main constituent of Egypt and as the largest Christian minority in the entire Middle East. However, it should be noted that *ahl al-Dhimmah* contract and the status of the *Dhimmi* in Egypt contributed to a large extent to provoking feelings of hostility to this situation, and to raising the Christian religious sensitivities, especially in modern times with the radical changes in the era of Muhammad Ali.

In addition, and before turning to tackling the changes in the religious context, it would be necessary to refer to another important context, which is the *ethnic context*. The ethnic context, as ethnologists defined it: "*a society that has language, culture, religion, customs, and traditions different from the other human society that is surrounding it, which does not necessarily create conflicts and imbalances the whole society*." In the last century, the Church has been mixing these two contexts in all its various political interactions internally and externally, as I will clarify soon.

The first point of the fusion of these two components is the Church's association with the Coptic Christian community, the arrival of the Holy Family to Egypt, and the establishment of the Coptic Church, almost half a century of this asylum (55:61 AD) by St. Mark in Alexandria. After the Islamic conquest and during the following centuries, Coptic Christians were religiously distinct from the surrounding environment of Muslims. Muhammad Ali's orientations contributed to the establishment of this ethnic trend in the last century. One of the most important outcomes of this period was the renaissance of the Coptic society. The tribute was overcome to Coptic Christians for the first time since the Islamic conquest in the era of Khedive Sa'eed in 1855, and to allow them to become a key actor in the modern Egyptian army which his father founded (Tadros, 2013, p. 34).

Although Christian Copts have different identities consolidated as Egyptian-Christian Middle Eastern, the archaeological discoveries of the Pharaonic antiquities on the eve of the 19th century during the British occupation increased the national feelings of the Church and the Christian Copts. These discoveries exaggerated the feeling of having the Pharaonic root and expanded the mindfulness of Coptic Christians as the owners of the nation, and that they were very original community since they adhered to Christianity and thus being the apparent heir to that connected Pharaonic heritage (Zeidan, 2007, p. 56). In the light of these new changes, the Church has deepened its religious assurance of its ethnic foundation and has imparted and developed this inclination from multiple points of view. The first was the Christian religious qualification as a remarkable religious character and as opposed to the Muslim environment

(Povery, 2013, p. 68). The second was the major distinction according to the Pharaonic connection. This meant that when Muslims viewed this Pharaonic legacy as an inherited religious heritage, the Church considers it to be evidence of its closeness (Zeidan, 2007).

Here comes the primary issue, the thought of considering all Muslims as an odd component in the Egyptian culture. Consequently, the Church considers Muslims the relatives of their own country's invaders (Delhaye, n.d., p. 77). This was the very essence that the Church has developed over the previous century, considering the Copts as the first proprietors of the nation, and has expanded the ethnic familiarity with marriage with the religious faith. This way, Christian Copts are not a religious minority, "***We are not a minority and we do not like to be called as Minority.***" In spite of the fact that this discussion came with regards to communication of political cooperation with the Egyptian administration, which will be displayed in the following lines (Sedra, 2007, p. 225).

The consequences of this pattern of character in the view of the religious setting can be summed up in considering the Islamic existence as a crisis and peculiar which must be opposed since Muslims have changed the character of the very Egyptian society through Quran and Islamic beliefs, as well as thought and culture. This was conducted by conversion of the biggest share of Egyptians to Islam through education instituted in Arabic, the Quran, and merging the Islamic religious creed as the main essence of the Egyptian culture (Sedra, 2007).

In addition, the agreements between Muhammad Ali and the Europeans at that time facilitated the advent of Christian missionaries in Egypt which created a threat to the main components of the Egyptian society. In spite of the fact that the main role of those missionaries was to preach for Catholicism among Muslims, many Copts converted to Catholicism, which has resulted in the Church's outrage and frenzy. That prompted the extraordinary responses by the Church when it rejected all alien components in the Egyptian society, even Muslims who were existent centuries ago before the arrival of the Europeans and Muhammad Ali (Tadros, 2013).

Consequently, the Orthodox Church re-established itself to counter the new threats and launched its missionary activities not only in Egypt, but in the entire world as a response to the European hegemony and the Western Colonialism, which aimed to religiously subordinate the subject societies under the superiority of the *white man* (Ukah, 2007, p. 5). This was exploited by the Church as an anti-occupation dogma, which situated it as a main actor and player in forming the national Egyptian identity and drew its impact in the Egyptian politics later on.

Interestingly, the alleged adoption of European secularism and building the state based on the European modernism – nation-state – did not enhance the social status of Copts and the Orthodox Church. Muhammad Ali followed the same Ottoman methodology in dealing with Christians in Egypt under the historical well-known *millet-system*. This represented a profound problematic issue in defining modernism and European nation-state that Muhammad Ali emulated, which fragmented the society and even was well-exploited by the British occupation later on based on the famous policy: *divide and rule* (Nicola, 2005, p. 12).

According to what was mentioned before, the intertwining of the religious context with the ethnic context was clearly envisaged and tackled, which facilitates addressing the other contexts in forming the Church's political theology. I will fuse both contexts; the historical and the political ones; since they are strongly related and connected in order to understand the transformations of the Church and its position in the political and social Egyptian contexts. And I will merge both contexts again with the religious context to explore the connectedness between all these contexts.

The Church was the main actor in forming the Christians' creed based on its spiritual religious role, which the Church was practicing for centuries (Ukah, 2007). For example, Pope Peter VII refused the offer that the Russian Orthodox Church introduced to expand its mandate over the Egyptian Orthodox Church in moments that were very critical and full of disputes between Russia and Europe from one side, and between the obsolete Ottoman Empire and Europe and Russia on the other side (Afifi, 1999, p. 286). The Pope then replied to Muhammad Ali who thanked him for adopting such a stand: "*Don't thank the man who did his duty toward his country*."

Worth to be mentioned is that in spite of the *millet-system* that the Ottoman Empire instituted for different ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities living on the Ottoman territories, the Coptic Orthodox Church and Egyptian Copts were not entirely subject to these laws due to the intellectual, cultural, and even regional importance of Egypt as the largest Ottoman province (Afifi, 1999, p. 275). In other words, the Orthodox Church had not been treated by Muhammad Ali and his successors according to the *millet system* thoroughly. The Church had been banned to conduct any political role dissimilar to al-Azhar as I will explain in the next chapter, and it had been marginalized politically. It was practicing its religious spiritual role per se. This was conducted simultaneously with opening the gate for Christian Copts to play that role instead (Afifi, 1999, p. 279). Interestingly, the Coptic figures were going along with the dominant Muslim Culture during Ottomans and even during Muhammad Ali's era and his

dynasty, until the level that Christian Copts were practicing polygamy and possessing slaves (Afifi, 1999, p. 290).

The 20th century was overwhelmed with a profound transformation at all levels, socially, politically, and historically. It started with the advent of liberal movements leading the resistance against the British occupation and followed by the resurgence of Islamic movements as the main arbiter of the political and cultural identity by the Muslim Brotherhood. This was followed by the revolution in 1952 which established the republic based on Pan-Arabism, and finally, the progress that Islamists achieved at the turn of the new millennium which impacted the uprisings later on in 2011. Interestingly, each of the mentioned doctrines answered differently for the Christian Coptic existence in the Egyptian society, from full discrimination into comprehensive inclusion according to the dogma of each doctrine. However, the dominant Western secular and liberal value system impacted the political and social nature of the Church and the Christian Copts since they achieved the very egalitarianism and equality between Christians and Muslims as citizens before the state, theoretically at least, which was unprecedented according to the Copt's perception (Zeidan, 2007).

Therefore, the period between (1882 – 1950) is considered to be the most precious era for the Church's engagement in the social and political Egyptian context due to its success to delve into the political arena as the main arbiter of the Christian community and the sole representative of them before the state. It achieved emancipation from the historical political subjugation to the Muslim community and the state and turned to be an equal social and political actor (Zeidan, 2007). What proved this radical transformation in the position of the Church was its participation in the 1919 revolution officially by its religious figures promptly after its triumph over its lay Christians who believed in separating the religious and political role of their Church for centuries. That moment particularly represented the profound change in monopolizing the Christian community's representation before the state; a change that was deepened with the resurgence of Islamism in the last century and never ended till the current moment (Zeidan, 2007). Such political and social alienation of Islamism, which was an epiphenomenon to the Western Colonialism, was rooted by founding the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920s despite the existence of other liberal and secular movement which was led by Saad Zaghlool (Purcell, 1998; Philipp, 1988). Interestingly, the secular and liberal movements were not fully emancipated from its Islamic background; however, it was exploited by the

monarchy and by the British occupation, later on, to suppress Islamists ideologically at least until today (Delhaye, n.d., p. 43).

The very essence of the Church's hostility then to Islamism and Islamists could be summarized in two points: first, the increasing social and political authenticity of Muslim Brotherhood after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the continuous calls by Islamism to re-institute the Islamic Caliphate. Second, the stands of Islamism in contradiction to the Church's political excessive role as well after its emancipation from being subject to the state to an active political actor monopolizing the representation of Christian Copts which was an outcome of the secular and modern orientations of Muhammad Ali and his dynasty. Simply, Islamists revert the subordination of the Church to the historical Islamic laws before non-Muslim; *ahl al-Dhimmah*, and implement it again on the Church and the Christian community which became impossible after the previous radical transformations. Such Islamists' orientations deepened the social and political alienation between Muslims and Christians on one part, and between the Church and Islamists on the other. This antagonism was continuously exploited and utilized by the successive regimes to control the social and political contexts under the same rule that the British occupation followed, *divide and rule* (Delhaye, n.d., p. 73). Consequently, the Church connected all these disputes to its religious belief that Islam is an alien and odd component in Egypt, which devoted fragmentation and divisions in the Egyptian society (Philipp, 1988, p. 383). This phase ended with the 1952 revolution, which imposed the Church's return to be a state subject after independence (Philipp, 1988, p. 385).

Finally, the *social context* was the main bowel to include all the previous reactions that shaped the Church's political theology. The inter-relationships between Christian Copts with Muslims passed through profound fluctuations. Worth to be mentioned is that the Middle Eastern societies were divided longitudinally based on their ethnic and religious affiliations, the ascending discrimination discourse deepened the cleavages between the Egyptian components, especially when Islamists devoted their superiority being the main social and political actor (Zeidan, 2007). The historical and political narratives that Islamists are adopting and feeding to their followers were based on the social and political marginalization of the Christian Copts since they are working on imposing a specific understanding that was dominant before the radical and profound transformations conducted by Muhammad Ali and his dynasty (Ibrahim, 1996, p. 234). Such Islamists' orientations were exploited by the Church and the regime as well to monopolize the political representation before the state and devote

the social isolation of the Christian Copts amidst such alienation and antagonism (McCallum, 2010, p. 2). Moreover, the resurgence of Salafis in the 1970s created chronic sectarian tensions which never ended till today (Leenders, 2010, p. 177).

3.2. The Egyptian Orthodox Church since 1952 until the Arab Spring

This part sheds light on the mutual reactions between the Orthodox Church and the successive regimes since the independence and the establishment of the republic in 1952 until the first spark of the recent political transformations in 2011. Interestingly, every regime since the declaration of the republic has its distinctive nature and characteristic to shape the social, political, and religious contexts according to its interests. Such differences express the absence of a vivid state orientation and the state exploitation by each regime to direct the policies in accordance with each regime's tendencies (Al-Beshry, 2011, p. 15). In spite of that ambiguity, the common character of all previous regimes in the second half of the 20th century was the hegemony of the military elites on the state structures, and the enforcement of their visions on the state up-down hierarchy to implement their political orientations (Skocpol, 1985, pp. 7-8). Amongst all such fluctuations in the state orientations, the Church experienced different contexts which impacted its behaviors according to the main features of each regime (Afifi, 1999).

3.2.1. Political Subjugation during Nasser Regime

Imposing the minority concept was not an outcome of 1952 revolution; however, it dated back to the Egyptian constitution in 1922 when *Setteni Shamy* introduced an article to define the concept of religious and ethnic minorities in order to preserve their rights constitutionally (Tadros, 2013, p. 35). However, the advent of Arab Nationalism contributed to the unrests that the Church expressed after the revolution which imposed its political isolation and subjugation to the state (Ibrahim, 1998, p. 234). First, there was an absence of any Christian Copt in the revolution leadership council, which was a negative sign for the Church. The second was the political orientation of Nasser's education policies to merge Islamic teachings in the study curricula and to impose the state surveillance over the Church's schools (Povery,

2013, p. 68). The third was the low representation of Copts in the government and even in the public sphere. This behavior forced the Church's monopoly for representing the Christian Copts and to be the social and political mediator for its community before the state (McCallum, 2010, p. 12).

During Nasser's regime, the Church adopted the political hibernation and devoted its religious existence. Such orientation by the Church came as a result of the political authoritarianism which confiscated the political rights and even the political and social impacts of any regime's rivals after the 1952 revolution. This impacted all political actors including the Church of course (Philipp, 1988, p. 385). Simply it meant suppressing all political actors except the regime's allies (A. Mahmoud & et al, 2013, p. 2). In spite of the tensions between Nasser's regime and the Church regarding imposing and merging the Islamic values and Islamic beliefs in the school curricula by the regime, the oppression of the Muslim Brotherhood as the main Islamist political entity represented a relief from the threats and suspicions of the Church after the long disputes and tensions during the 1930s and 1940s (A. Mahmoud & et al, 2013). Nevertheless, there were numerous constraints that the regime imposed on all political actors including the Church as I previously mentioned.

The first constraint was confiscating all trust properties of the Church, which included al-Azhar's trusts as I will discuss in the next chapter (Zeidan, 2007). Second, the land-reform policy that the regime adopted impacted the Christian Coptic elite since their possession of huge lands - a constraint that influenced the Copts socially and economically (Abdul-Fattah, n.d., p. 3). Interestingly, confiscated lands were redistributed by the regime to the Egyptian farmers, mainly Muslims, which deepened the cleavages between the Church and the regime (Brownlee, 2013, p. 6). However, this silent rejection was expressed by more isolation of the Christian Coptic community and the legality of the Church to be their sole political representative before the state (Zeidan, 2007).

In spite of the previously mentioned challenges, the Church achieved two important aims. Firstly, it devoted its religious existence and its monopoly to representing the Christian Copts before the state. This was obvious when Nasser agreed with Pope Cyril V to guarantee the state protection of the Church and the Copts in return for considering the Church the only political representative before the state (Tadros, 2013, p. 76). This transformation instituted by the regime after the revolution contributed to positioning the Church socially and politically in a distinctive position that was not noticed till Sadat's and Mubarak's regimes as

will be elaborated shortly. Particularly, such an outcome revived the tensions between the Church religious leaders and lay Copts who were opposing the political role of the Church (Tadros, 2013). Secondly, Nasser showed his commitment to building 50 Churches annually, which revealed the continuity of the millet-system as an Ottoman legacy in spite of building the nation-state. However, this was conducted while the Church itself accepted to be marginalized politically.

3.2.2. Political Conflicts with Sadat's Regime

By the demise of Nasser, Egypt delved into a new different context in which Islamists were the main actors to fill the political and social vacuum by the collapse of Nasser's Pan-Arabism project. This transformation necessitated the return of the Church to engage in its existential battle (Leenders, 2010, p. 12). The resurgence of Islamists and even changing the constitutions to appease their existence forced the Church's adoption of the social and political unjust position again to be the main element of its political theology (Delhaye, n.d., p. 73). And the sectarian incidents that were provoked during Sadat; the "*believer president*"; envisaged the social and political isolation of the Christian community. It also asserted the Church's role to be its sole representative before the "*Muslims' injustice, and the sectarian state*". This transformation shunted the Church's national stands to be closer to the Western US policies.

Interestingly, the monopoly of the Christian Coptic representation before the state deepened the social cleavages between Christians and Muslims, when the Church exploited such dichotomy religiously under the previously mentioned sectarian atmosphere (Guirguis, 2012, p. 521). In spite of the strong overlapping between Muslims and Christians in the daily life details, the connectedness among them is very dull and even absent. Moreover, the Opening Policy that Sadat devoted during his reign intensified the cleavages, not only between them but also between the whole social components (Delhaye, n.d., p. 71). On the other side, the majority of the Muslim community was suspicious about the Church and the Christian Copts being agents to the Western powers that threaten the existence of Islam and Muslims, an argument that hugely underlined by Islamists as previously explained. Such arguments necessitated continuous responses from the Church that they are the authentic Egyptians and

they are committed to securing the national interests socially and politically (Haddad & Denovan, 2013, p. 215).

By the arrival of Sadat to authority after Nasser's demise in 1970, the Church encountered different political and social contexts. Sadat started to ameliorate the consequence of the 1967 defeat by suppressing the main Nasser regime's elites who caused the defeat. Sadat adopted different political tendencies in order to defeat his political rivals, Nasserists and Socialists; and he filled the vacuum with Islamists by appeasing the relationships with the Muslim Brothers who had been suppressed during Nasser. These procedures initiated the anxieties of the Church religiously and politically simultaneously (Zeidan, 2007). Sadat not only liberated and released the Islamist leaders and members in prisons, but he also legalized the Islamic Shari'ah constitutionally. Moreover, he filled the media vacuum with Islamic slogans and propaganda to de-secularize his political socialist, secularist and Nasserist rivals. These steps outraged the Church and the Christian Coptic community, especially when the sectarian incidents increased during building and reforming the Church and its properties from time to another (Abdul-Fattah, n.d., p. 6). This started with al-Khanka incidents in November 1972 and ended by the sectarian incident in al-Zaweyyah al-Hamra in 1980. And between these two main incidents the atmosphere was religiously polarized especially when the Church started again its missionary activities in the Egyptian society as a response to the Islamists' preaching activities, which also outraged Muslims (Brown, 2000, p. 1059).

The tensions were continuous and heightened when the Church started to introduce specific sectarian requests during its Church Conference in 1977 when it required specific position for the Christian Copts as a response also to adding the second article in the constitution regarding Shari'ah (Mady, 2007, pp. 47-48). Interestingly, the Church was also outraged regarding the law introduced by the government for apostasy, a law that many Western states interfered to suspend it eventually (Brown, 2000, p. 1060). In general, the Church was accusing the regime of its endeavors to diminish the Christian Copts in Egypt, and in the meantime the regime was accusing the Church of behaving in a sectarian way and its endeavors to establish a Christian Coptic state in Egypt. These accusations caused more social cleavages when Islamists supported the regime in its orientations against the Church.

Moreover, the Church was in conflict with Sadat's regime after Camp David treaty, a procedure that the Church exploited to go further in its opposition to the regime. These tensions ended when Sadat announced in 1981 that "*the Pope Shenouda III turned to be a*

political leader instead of being a religious leader" (Mady, 2007, pp. 47-48). Consequently, Sadat detained the Pope and exiled him which outraged the religious feelings of the Christian Copts (A. Mahmoud & et al, 2013). Promptly after his return from the US to ratify the treaty, he launched a campaign to detain any political rival including Church leaders and Christians; 8 pastors, 24 priests, and 24 political activists. This period that was overwhelmed by those chronic tensions and sectarian incidents ended by Sadat's assassination in 1981 (Haddad & Denovan, 2013, p. 217).

3.2.3. Cooperation with the Regime during Mubarak's Reign

Mubarak's era was precious and full of social, political, and economic transformations due to his long reign for almost three decades. Therefore, the relations between the Church and regime were changed radically since the arrival of Mubarak to the presidency. The first step Mubarak conducted was appeasing the tensions with all political opposition leaders, including the Church. Hence, he released the Pope and re-assigned him in the Papacy almost after 4 years; 40 months from his detainment (Mady, 2007, p. 50).

Worth to be mentioned, most of the researchers agree that Mubarak's era witnessed the establishment of the *neo-millet system* ((Delhaye, n.d., p. 82). This was evident by two main features:

1- the absolute support for Mubarak by the Pope during his reign even amongst the political fluctuations in 2011(Brownlee, 2013, p. 11);
2- the witnessed independence that the Christian Copts enjoyed after the implicit agreement between Mubarak and the Pope to accept the state's hegemony over Christian Copts to the Church

Interestingly, the Church leaders instituted long and strong ties with Mubarak's regime hierarchy (Rowe, 2014, p. 237). This gave rise to the Church religious leaders who engaged more in the political sphere to overwhelm the activities of the Christian Copts before the state. This change adversely affected the inter-relationships between Muslims and Christian Copts and increased the feeling of discrimination by Copts which turned every single conflict to be a sectarian incident (Povery, 2013, p. 75).

Moreover, the security apparatus considered the Church religious leaders the only responsible figures for the Christian Coptic community which devoted the political authority in the hands of these religious leaders (Povery, 2013). Simultaneously, those leaders formulated a mere religious discourse in response to any political incident which deepened the sectarian tensions socially. These religious leaders adopted the same political discourse of the regime toward the Islamic movements and mainly the Muslim Brotherhood. When the regime exploited the Islamic movements as a pretext to overwhelm the Egyptian society, the Church leaders adopted the same orientation to dominate the Christian Coptic community. This revealed the comprehensive cooperation between the regime and the Church (Povery, 2013, p. 69). Therefore, whenever the tensions between the regime and Islamists increased and exaggerated, the tensions between the Church and the Christian Coptic existence in Egypt arose and thus deepening and nurturing the sectarian tensions (Purcell, 1998, p. 332). This led to the comprehensive cooperation and connectedness between the Church and the regime by instituting mutual interests which cannot be neglected or threatened unless the regime itself is threatened by the opposition (Guirguis, 2012, pp. 514-515). It was extremely obvious when the Church supported Jamal Mubarak to succeed his father Mubarak (Shehata, n.d., p. 6).

This strong and profound relationship never fluctuated except in very few cases. One of these cases was the absence of Christian Copts in the high state position, the military, or even the intelligence apparatus and presidency (Ibrahim, 1996, p. 23). Even the parliamentary elections were lacking any Christian Copts in 2000 elections, which forced the regime to adopt quota policy for Copts and women at that time (McCallum, 2010, p. 14).

Another case that provoked tensions between the regime and the Church was building and reforming the Church and their properties. The permissions were passed through very long and complicated bureaucratic procedures, which forced the Church to build and construct the new Church first and then seek the permissions which created more tensions and antagonism socially between Muslims and Christian Copts (Purcell, 1998, p. 445). Moreover, the decline that Mubarak's regime experienced in its last 6 or 7 years enabled the Church to oppose the regime's frameworks like accepting the state's surveillance and inspection of the Church properties similar to the mosques and Muslim religious properties (Shehata, n.d., p. 6). This took place when the regime worked on concealing any sectarian incident and banned the media from propagating such tensions publicly (Delhaye, n.d., p. 13). In spite of these previous conflicts, the Church was supporting the regime in any incident and that was obvious during the first moments of the uprisings.

3.2.4. Structural Transformations in the Church's Bureaucracy since the Republic until the Arab Spring

The bureaucratic and hierarchical transformation that the Church passed through since the 1952 revolution profoundly impacted the nature of the Church's role socially, politically, culturally, and even religiously in the Egyptian contexts. Due to the hegemony that the Church practiced over the religious and political behaviors of the Christian Copts, the Pope and the clerics had the most important influence in shaping and framing all Christian Copts' details (Guirguis, 2012, p. 4). Importantly, such transformations participated in shaping the position of the Church to be the only safe harbor for Christian Copts individually and politically.

One important stage that strengthened the Papacy role politically and religiously was the hierarchical fluctuations that the Church encountered after the 1952 revolution during the Papacy of Pope Joseph II (Yousab II). The Church's Papacy was threatened by a Christian Coptic separatist movement: the Coptic Nation Movement[1], similar to the Muslim Brotherhood but based on a Christian creed. This movement believed that the Pope was weak enough to be subject to the new emerging regime, Nasser's regime. Consequently, many members of that movement attacked the Papacy and demanded the Pope's retirement. This incident ended up in the interference of the well-known Christian Coptic figure Jendy Abdel-Malak by Nasser's support to mediate between the separatists and the Pope, which ended by the withdrawal of the separatist members later on. Interestingly, Gamal Abdel Nasser succeeded in defeating the Coptic movement and finished its existence forever after that incident (Weeken, n.d., pp. 70-74).

After the demise of the Pope, the Church didn't elect a new Pope for almost four years until the Pope Cyril VI assumed the Papacy in 1959. Pope Cyril VI was supported by Nasser himself after the agreement between them that the Pope will handle all the Christian Coptic affairs and the Church issues before the state, which enabled him to conduct numerous and continuous changes in the Church internally and externally. One of such transformations was his support for the widespread of the Sunday schools among all Christian Copts all over the

[1] Nation Coptic Movement was founded by some Christian Copts as a response for Muslim Brotherhood before the revolution in 1952. The movement was founded by one of the Church's priests and sought to control Egypt politically, however its behaviors were denied and condemned by the Church itself since the Church considered them as a profound threat to the Church and Christian Coptic community in Egypt. Nasser officially dissolved the movement on 23rd March 1954, and detained all its members which finished its existence for ever.

country (Tadros, 2013, p. 32), which participated in changing the Church religious elite to be more educated and academically appreciated dissimilar to the previous elite (Delhaye, n.d., p. 76). This new elite succeeded to change the Church's social and political position during the Papacy of Pope Shenouda III. Worth to be mentioned is that the majority of Church religious figures pastors and priests were PhD holders in theology and comparative religious studies in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

Pope Shenouda III was an impressive and influential actor in changing the Church structurally throughout his papacy which endured for almost 4 decades (1971 – 2012) (Tadros, 2013, p. 82). This long Papacy could be categorized into two main stages: the first stage between 1971 and 1981 until his detainment and exile. The second stage was from 1984 through up to the Arab Spring and his demise in 2012. The first stage instituted his legality and religious authenticity in the Church and among the Christian Copts. When he was elected, he started his visits to the Churches and bishops all over the country and took advantage of most of the Church capabilities to support the Christian Copts in all their religious and livelihood affairs, which achieved his closeness to all Copts (Guirguis, 2012, pp. 516-517). However, Sadat's reign pushed him to the confrontation with the regime in responses for many political and social challenges as I previously mentioned (Weeken, n.d., p. 85).

The second stage started when Mubarak returned him to the Papacy in 1984, and it seems that his exile and detainment reshaped his mentality which influenced his behaviors. Simply, he returned as a political and religious leader simultaneously as I will explain in the following lines. Most importantly, his return reshaped the Church's hierarchy, since he worked to revenge from all priests and pastors who participated in his isolation and detainment by Sadat. This took place when Sadat formed a Papacy committee to handle the Church's affairs consisted of 5 priests, which inspired Pope Shenouda III to revenge from any opposition inside the Church to his papacy and to subordinate the entire Christian Coptic community to his authority (Guirguis, 2012, pp. 518-519). These changes were conducted by the Pope in two important entities inside the Church by changing the laws organizing the limits and the capabilities of these entities: Majlis al-Millie – Congregational Council of the Coptic Orthodox Church – and the Holy Synod.

The Holy Synod is the highest Church authority second to the Pope, and it was the entity that conducted the Papacy role during the Pope's exile. Promptly after his return to the Papacy, he changed the laws organizing the activities of the Holy Synod aiming to subordinate it utterly

under the Pope's authority by shrinking its capabilities. The main changes conducted to implement the transformation were modifying the laws in order to achieve that purpose:

1- Article 15 regarding the Holy Synod: The Synod cannot hold any meeting whenever the Pope is alive;
2- Article 52: Only the Pope possesses the entire and absolute right to opt the bishops who run the Church.
3- Article 54: The Pope is the sole representative for the Church, and he has the absolute authority to run the Church and represent it before the state or other religious or political entity; (the new-millet system)
4- Article 70: The previous articles cannot be changed when the Pope is alive.

Consequently, the Church's authorities were amassed in the hands of the Pope, which turned the Holy Synod to be his strong tool in implementing his policies without any internal criticism. Interestingly, Pope Shenouda utilized that transformations to defeat all his rivals inside the Church, and the Holy Synod lost its capabilities even to choose any bishop in the Church. Therefore, no single priest can even travel abroad without the Pope's permission, and the internal tensions between the Pope and his oppositions were vivid most often from time to time (Guirguis, 2012).

For example, in 2005 the Pope suspended bishop Tekla in Qena governorate and exiled him in Wadi al-Natron monastery without any judgment or accountability for five years. Other examples could be mentioned like the disputes between the Pope and the priest Matta al-Meskeen, Bishop Samuel, and priest Georges (Ibrahim, 1996, p. 22). These priests and bishops were deposed by the Pope and replaced by other religious figures, which were loyal to the Papacy in a new tradition which was unprecedented (Guirguis, 2012, p. 521).

Al-Majlis al-Milli, the Congregational Council of the Coptic Orthodox Church, is an entity that doesn't go under the authority of the Pope in its very essence. This council is being selected by direct referendum by all Christian Coptic community as being an official political entity for them before the state. The council through its long experience introduced many initiatives and projects to reform the Church and its institutional practices and enhance the educational level inside the Church, etc.

However, this entity also was exposed to the Pope's interference when he owned the right to assign its members and lowering their selection to ordinary Christian Copts. Interestingly, the

Pope in 1995 prepared a secret list of names to be assigned in the council and succeeded in these endeavors (Abdul-Fattah, n.d., pp. 14-15). Simply, this council turned out to be a subject entity under the Pope's authority similar to the Egyptian parliament during Mubarak's reign.

Consequently, the sectarian religious and ethnic identity was devoted based on the previously mentioned political theology amongst massive and enormous Islamic challenges. The most critical outcome of such hierarchical transformation was turning the Church to be a semi-state entity inside the Egyptian state, which had a profound political and social reflection in the society. The field research even assured that different Christian businessmen, like Sawiris and Ghabour families, are financing the Church (Al-Beshry, 2011).

The Church has converted to be a real political actor in which all the Church's religious leaders became politicized and were conducting a political role because of being a part and parcel from Mubarak's regime. It has been separated and isolated from the real context of the rest of the Egyptian society, similar to the regime in its last period. This even was deepened by a decline in the regime itself and the excessive sectarian and religious polarization, which delineated the Church's role in the Egyptian political context during the uprisings in 2011 as will be examined later.

At the social level, the Church hierarchy became confident and strongly believed in their distinctiveness ethnically and religiously, being the authentic Egyptians and thus different from the rest of the Muslim majority (Sedra, 2007, p. 2). Most importantly, Christian Copts produced an equal religious movement to the Muslim Salafis, following the same extreme belief but based on a Christian belief. The most dangerous point is that these Christian Salafis consider the west and the US as their reference in dealing with their co-existent Muslims, which had profound negative impacts.

At the ordinary level, the Christian Copts consider the Church as the only savior and safeguard before the state, especially when the Church devoted that by providing social, economic, and political surrogates to the Christian Coptic individuals exclusively. The Church bishops all over the country provide and supply the Christian Coptic community with most of its necessities especially supporting the poor families. Moreover, the Church provides work opportunities, marriage support, and collect money from rich Christian Copts to support the poor, which isolated the Christian Coptic community from the rest of the majority of Egyptian Muslims who suffered from poverty and illiteracy under Mubarak's regime. However, the

state doesn't differentiate between them and Muslims in its oppression whenever they oppose the state's trends.

3.2.5. The Egyptian Orthodox Church and Copts in Diaspora before Arab Spring

The role that the Christian Coptic communities are playing in Diaspora is interesting, and it is a reflection for the transformations that the Orthodox Coptic Church is passing throughout the last decades. Interestingly, no one can generalize a standard evaluation for all Christian Copts in Diaspora. However, the role the Coptic entities are practicing in the west generally, and in the US particularly, is important in directing the US policies towards the Christian Coptic minority in Egypt. Simply, the role of the Coptic Diaspora is adversely affecting the tensions and sectarian incidents in Egypt, and it must be connected to the transformations that the Church and Christian community are experiencing.

The main argument here is referring to the exploitation of these Coptic entities in the West by the Orthodox Church as pressure groups to achieve more gains and victories over the Church's political rivals in the Egyptian society. Moreover, the historical religious and political narratives that these Coptic entities in Diaspora are adopting agree and overlap with the profound transformations in the Church's political theology which was covered before. However, such an argument faces different challenges and difficulties to prove the connectedness and subordination of these Coptic Diaspora entities in the West to the Church in Egypt, which might be proved by a serious and realistic field work there. Only a simple overview and primordial perception could be introduced here to address that role.

The role of the Coptic Diaspora in the West and in the US in particular was first recorded and witnessed during the 1990s. Two main variables could be used to witness such a role; first: the 1952 revolution and land reform policies which adversely affected many Christian Coptic families which migrated as consequence for that, as previously mentioned (Mady, 2007, p. 60). Second, and most importantly, the support that Nasser's regime introduced to the Pope Cyril V to re-institute the Church's role globally and connect it with the international Church council, in which Makkari al-Suriyani represented the Orthodox Coptic Church. During this period, the Pope sent his first delegate to North America which opened the gates for more Christian Coptic migration to the US and the establishment of many Christian Coptic

Churches there. Today, almost 145 Coptic Churches exist in the US only serving almost 700,000 Christian Copts (Haddad & Denovan, 2013).

Therefore, the Christian Coptic activities had been institutionalized in the US, and different associations had been founded mainly in three fields: human rights, Coptic studies, and social services. These institutions had been politicized by Pope Shenouda III and represented pressure groups on the Egyptian decision-makers (Tadros, 2013, p. 100). The tendencies of these Diaspora institutions overlapped with the main Church's tendencies in Egypt, especially in addressing the sectarian incidents, which agreed with the radical transformations conducted mainly when Mubarak re-assigned the Pope in the Papacy in 1984 (Mady, 2007, p. 60). The salience of the activities of these institutions was exaggerated after the Cold-War and the US military interventions in the Middle East in the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium (Leenders, 2010, p. 13).

An important Christian Coptic figure that institutionalized the activities of the Coptic Diaspora was Michael Mounir, who founded the Coptic Association in the US in the 1990s. He also founded information bank to record any sectarian incident that takes place in the Egyptian society which increased his reputation among the Christian Coptic community in the US and in Egypt simultaneously. Interestingly, he determined 19 aims as a framework for the activities of his associations. Some of these aims are: adding the teaching of the Coptic history to the school curricula, achieving a reasonable Christian Coptic representation in the Egyptian Parliament, Freedom of religious practices, etc. (Brinkerhoff, 2005, p. 198).

These Coptic Diaspora institutions had ties with the American political elites and members in the Congress and represented a pressure group to direct the American policies to practice and experience pressure on the Egyptian policy-makers regarding Christian Copts to ameliorate discrimination and achieve equality between Christian Copts and Muslims according to their perception (Brinkerhoff, 2005, p. 200). Such orientations were exploited by the American Foreign policy-makers to devote their hegemony and superiority over Egypt and Arab countries generally. Most importantly, these tendencies were exploited by Jewish and Zionist associations which formed a *mundane alley* according to a Western political researcher (Delhaye, n.d., p. 91).

Behaviors of these Coptic Diaspora institutions led to more sectarian tensions in the Egyptian Society and even created two different political discourses for the Church and Christian Coptic community. The Christian Coptic discourse focused on religious, social, and political

discrimination which the Copts are encountering under Mubarak's regime due to their minority status ethnically and religiously (Haddad & Denovan, 2013). On the contrary, the Church adopted an opposing stand before the Coptic Diaspora institutions publicly to support the regime. However, the discursive role of Coptic Diaspora institutions appears whenever any sectarian tension occurs whether by Muslims and Islamists or by the state. For example, the reports that Coptic Diaspora associations are issuing exaggerated the incidents in 2005 that witnessed excessive oppression by the police apparatus in different sectarian incidents in Egyptian southern villages (Nicola, 2005, p. 10).

The role of these Coptic Diaspora institutions in Egyptian politics cannot be ignored even with the lack of any evidence that proves the connectedness of these institutions and the Orthodox Coptic Church in Egypt. However, the transformation which the Church passed through, turned it to be a political actor and questioned the relationships between both of them. For example, Al-Kerazah magazine, the Church's official magazine stated that Pope Tawadros II assigned 16 priests in the Egyptian Orthodox Churches in the US and Canada promptly after the coup in 2013 (Tawadros, 2013, p. 4). In the same year, the Pope ratified the decisions regarding constructing a monastery and a Church in Canada. Moreover, the Coptic Churches in the US suppress any opposition to the Papacy's political tendencies to devote the Church's political role, since these oppositions are being marginalized by the Churches themselves (Tawadros, 2013, p. 4).

3.3. The Egyptian Orthodox Church and the Contentious Politics of Arab Spring

Society uprisings in 2011 represented a profound response to the closed political potentials by the regime throughout almost three decades. That scene ended in the falsification of the parliamentary elections in 2010 and the boycott that the political opposition staged against the political deviances of the regime. Amongst all the mentioned contexts, the Orthodox Church turned to be a political key actor throughout the socio-political transformations which were previously elaborated. This was obvious in the mutual interests between the Church and the regime in adopting a hostile stand on the Islamist movements, and mainly the Muslim Brotherhood, which was based on the existential threats that these Islamist movements presented to the Church and the Coptic component (Guirguis, 2012, p. 4). It must be denoted that the social and political successes which Islamists achieved were due to the lack of any

different national opposition on the ground whether being secular or liberal since the oppression that Sadat practiced against them in the 1970s. Therefore, Islamists monopolized the political opposition since Sadat's assassination in 1981 (Zeidan, 2007, p. 55).

The main axiom in such political context was the profound alliance between the Church and the regime in order to be protected from Islamists on one side. Hence, the Church adopted the State's discourse regarding Islamism in general and the sectarian anti-Muslim Brotherhood discourse on the other side. Such an equation might be clear in addressing the role of the authoritarian regimes in delineating the intra-social relation between the different actors and reconfiguring these relations to ensure the hegemony of the regime in the political field. Moreover, the state monopolized the coercive actions in any suitable time, similar to the state's oppression for jihadists in the 1990s (Skocpol, 1985, pp. 4-7). The role of these different actors, whatever their tendencies and ideological or religious backgrounds are, is to be prepared prior to their engagement in the social and political terrains, which took place through prolonged processes of social and political negotiations. This argument was obvious since the beginning of Mubarak's reign in 1981 and its appeasement with the different opposition actors including the Church as I formerly explained (Banson & Kim, 2015, p. 15).

Mubarak's regime was an extension of the Egyptian authoritarian regimes since 1952; therefore, the inherited social and political dynamics were continuous in these succeeding regimes. Moreover, Mubarak did not give priority to any reform initiative, and his political tendencies were exclusive to oppressing the opposition; mainly Islamists and the Muslim Brotherhood. This aimed to ensure the continuity of the regime amongst the regional and global fluctuations, particularly after 11th September 2001 (Pevehouse, 2002, pp. 5-6). Frankly, the absence of democracy is threatening the social and political stability and is creating problematic outcomes leading to social and political chaos when the society decides to change the regime, which was similar to what took place in the 2011 uprisings (Forje, 2009, p. 79).

On the Church side, Mubarak's regime created mutual interests with the Church hierarchy to ensure the subordination of the Church as a religious institution to the regime from the head, the Pope himself, to the least Church priest. Therefore, the Church was fully subject to the state, even if there was any opposition among the Christian Copts for such subjugation (Rowe, 2014). Consequently, the social uprisings endangered the stability and the continuity of these mutual economic, political, and security interests, and threatened the hegemony of

the Church over the Christian Coptic community. Hence, the reactions of the Church Papacy and the Church hierarchy to the uprisings from the first moment were consistent with the Church's position in the social and political contexts as the sole Christian Coptic representative before the state (Al-Beshry, 2011, p. 35).

This was even most obvious when the Church rejected to boycott the 2010 parliamentary elections and introduced lists with Christian Coptic names to be elected on the regime's National Democratic Party. Therefore, from the first moment, the Pope declared his support for the president, which revealed how far the Church was consistent with its pre-prepared social and political role. The Pope said: "*We thank Mr. President to promptly intervene in the outgoing incidents and his assignment of Mr. Omar Suleiman as the vice-president. I called the president to thank him and to express my support and the people's support amidst these incidents. May Lord grant him strength to protect Egypt and sustain peace, order, and power*" (Shenouda III, 2011).

This support came amongst the chronic sectarian incident when the explosion took place prior to the uprisings, an incident proved to be implemented by the regime itself after Mubarak's ousting. This questions how far the relations between the Church's hierarchy and the security apparatus are to ensure the full subjugation of the Christian Coptic Christians to the Church which was itself a subject to the state (Salah, 2011). This behavior even casts doubt on the Church's engagement in the 2013 coup and how far it was engaged in the anti-Church attacks (Rowe, 2014, p. 4).

Nevertheless, Christian Copts participated in the uprisings from the first moment which was surprising to the Church itself, especially when it gave its orders to the Christian community to avoid engaging in the protests. The Orthodox Church perceived the uprisings as an existential threat being part of Mubarak's regime. Consequently, the Church's hierarchy engaged in the post-revolutionary incidents to restore its position among the Christian Coptic community and before the following regimes (Guirguis, 2012, p. 2). I can categorize the Church's behaviors since Mubarak's ousting in four main stages: *political marginalization after Mubarak*; *unstable relations with post-Mubarak regimes*; *contentious politics with the advent of Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists*; and *political repositioning by 2013 coup and its consequences*.

3.3.1. Political Marginalization in post-Mubarak's Egypt

Promptly after Mubarak's ousting, democratization of the political sphere was initiated to reset the leading rules of the political arena, which started with the constitutional referendum in March 2011 and ended by the presidential elections in 2012. These procedures were threatening all Mubarak's regime elements, including the Church of course. The regime that lasted for three decades was about to wither away. The Church's mutual benefits with the regime will collapse with the collapse of the regime. This transformation would lead to marginalizing the Church's Papacy and hierarchy in the upcoming regime which would open the gates to different Christian Coptic surrogates to the Church's role in the political sphere. It is worth mentioning that the struggle over the Church's monopoly of the Christian Copts' representation before the state started earlier in 2004 when *Kefaya* movement was launched by a Christian well-known figure, George Issac. The movement at that time called for a multiparty political system that adopts democracy to be the leading reference for the political system to defeat the authoritarian regime. This initiative was endorsed by the US foreign policy to support democracy in the Middle East (Rowe, 2014, p. 4).

Internally, Christian Copts protested in 2005 against the Papacy when the latter supported Mubarak in the 2005 presidential elections. In addition, the triumph that Muslim Brotherhood achieved in the parliamentary election was unprecedented and supported *Kefaya* movement initiative to implement democracy, which endangered the centrality of the Church as the only representative of the Christian Copts before the State. These incidents threatened the Church's Christian representation monopoly and were even exploited by Mubarak's regime to involve the Papacy more in the ongoing incidents. The Church's monopoly greatly deepened and discredited the Church when the Christian Copts participated in the 2011 uprisings (Guirguis, 2013, p. 3).

Moreover, the revolutionary discourse during the 2011 uprisings succeeded to include Copts as mere Egyptian citizens away from the Church's citizenship for the first time since Mubarak's rulership in 1981. However, this inclusive discourse failed to be developed and continued by the revolutionary actors especially after the advent of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists in the following elections. Also, many Christian Coptic movements had been established to conduct a political role in the post-revolutionary incidents (Rowe, 2014, p. 6).

Worth to be mentioned, the calls for democracy and democratization concealed secularism as an important pillar for democratizing the political sphere, which presented a profound threat in its essence to the Church's political role. Such concept was strongly resisted by Islamists and Muslim Brotherhood as I referred to in the previous chapter, even if Muslim Brotherhood worked on re-defining the concept and merging it with democracy to achieve their political interests. However, such endeavors never exceeded the theoretical limits and failed to be implemented in reality. Based on that pillar, the Church will be marginalized politically and would never continue its role as the sole Christian Coptic representative before the state (Stark & Iannaccone, 1994).

On the other side, the advent of Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists who represented an existential threat not only to the state but also to the Christian Coptic community that was exploited by the Church to legalize their political tendencies and orientation in the post-revolutionary incidents. What deepened the fears were the continuous calls by Islamists to return the *Dhimmi* position as a historical behavior over non-Muslims in the Muslim State, a concept which had a bad reputation among Christian Copts.

Consequently, the Church's leadership realized that they will be politically marginalized being part of Mubarak's regime, and the advent of many Christian Coptic movements as political actors in the new liquid political and social spheres accelerated that outcome. In other words, the Church's political, social, and economic interests will wither away eventually due to these political transformations, and the political theology that the Church created and framed over decades would disappear by withering the regime's pillars by time (Kitschelt, 1992, p. 3).

Even if the new political actors, mainly Muslim Brotherhood, adopted the political negotiations and understandings and averred the continuity of the Church's leadership as the sole Christian Coptic representative before the state, these perceptions will weaken away by time as well, and all Church leaders would be introduced to accountability being part of Mubarak's regime (Guirguis, 2012, p. 19). The revolution will lead to forming new leading strata and create a new elite coalition that would exclude the Church from the leadership. Therefore, the Church must adopt resistance to such transformations, even if it accepts to be silent in different revolutionary incidents, but such silence never sustained by the advent of Muslim Brotherhood in the following elections (Kitschelt, 1992, p. 3).

3.3.2. The Egyptian Orthodox Church and the Rise of Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists

Political transformation in 2011 provided the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists the chance to engage in the political sphere which was unprecedented. For the first time, the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic movements succeeded in founding political parties according to their religious backgrounds. This was conducted by modifying the laws related to issuing parties, which opened the path later to establishing religious parties like Freedom and Justice Party and al-Nour party. It is well-known that these parties reflected the political and social weight of the Islamic movements in the Egyptian society (Al-Anani, 2014, p. 2).

Most importantly, political transformation succeeded in including Christian Copts, which were optimistic moments for them to be a real social actor instead of being subject to the Church. However, the social and political weight of Islamists, and mainly the Muslim Brotherhood that is the historical political and religious rival to the Church, provoked the Church itself to exploit the Muslim Brothers' behaviors to devote its hegemony and its different religious identity clarified earlier. Therefore, the political transformation re-opened the gate to address the existence of Christian Copts and the ambiguity that this critical sectarian issue might be created in post-revolutionary Egypt (A. Mahmoud & et al, 2013, p. 2).

In the Christian Coptic imagery, Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists are calling for the revival of the Islamic theocratic state, in which Islam is the main arbiter for all social, political, or economic issues (Weeken, n.d., p. 57). Christian Copts did not forget the declarations of the former Muslim Brotherhood Guide, Mustafa Mashhoor, when he said: "*Christians are not allowed to be assigned in the military. They are not allowed to re-establish or build Church. They are not allowed to walk in the middle of the road and they must be pushed to walk at the margins. They are not allowed to ring their bill*" (Guindy, 2006, p. 5). Also, the return of Shaykh al-Qaradawi to Egypt after Mubarak's ousting and his peroration in Tahrir Square devoted the Christian Coptic panics, whether by the sectarian Islamists' discourse or by the sectarian Church policies and discourses as well (Brownlee, 2013, p. 13).

Therefore, the Church's religious leaders produced sectarian discourse, and even all Christian Coptic figures, which devoted sectarian tensions and accelerated the Christian Coptic fears from the Islamists' emergence after the revolution. The main argument in that sectarian

discourse was that the Muslim Brotherhood is practicing sectarian religious terrorism concealed with political terrorism against Christian Copts since the establishment of the Brotherhood in 1929 (Weeken, n.d., p. 58). Moreover, the huge presence that *Salafis* achieved after the revolution deepened the sectarian feelings of the Christian Copts due to the *Salafis'* sectarian declarations regarding Copts and implementing *Shari'ah* (Rowe, 2014, p. 5). Hence, the Church's religious figures provoked sectarian discourse in the Constitutional referendum when Islamists adopted a sectarian discourse as well as calling the referendum with the "*box conquest*" (Shehata, n.d., p. 8). These hostile political discourses created more profound and chronic sectarian stands by both parts, Christians and Muslims.

In another context, some Church's religious leaders adopted different stands towards the Muslim Brotherhood, which was exploited by the Muslim Brotherhood to ameliorate the sectarian tensions and lower the sectarian fears from the Islamists' attendance. This went in accordance with opening the gate for negotiating the sectarian incidents and the political incidents between some Church leaders and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Some Church's figures adopted such behaviors since they felt that the Muslim Brotherhood's arrival and their inheritance of the political authority are inevitable. Moreover, adopting such discourse and political orientation would appease the panics and tensions of the ordinary Copts to avoid more cleavages among the Christian Coptic community. On the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood adopted a different political discourse which focused on the Civilized Islam to achieve justice and equality for all Egyptian citizens including Christian Copts, and this was obvious in the Freedom and Justice Party's discourse and the writings of its vice president Rafeeq Habib who is a Christian himself (McCallum, 2010, p. 7).

Interestingly, the back-step the Church adopted was an outcome of the collapse of the security apparatus that presented itself as the safeguard of the Church and Christian Coptic community per se, according to the Christian perception. When the Church's leaders asked for the return of the security apparatus to its past performance, the apparatus asked the Church to include such request from the post-revolutionary government, a matter that showed how far the Church's hierarchy was correlated with the Mubarak's regime and its security apparatus.

Amongst such contentious politics in post-revolutionary Egypt, the mere important role the international organization is conducting during democratization had not been witnessed. This role was important to appease the tensions and the panics of the Christian Coptic community during the political transformations, and these international organizations played the converse

role. Such a role boosted social fragmentation in the Egyptian society in post-revolutionary Egypt (Pevehouse, 2002, p. 9).

Moreover, the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood to ameliorate such fears and panics was extremely obvious in their political discourse and even in the political discourse of other Islamists. The main political discourse was religious-sectarian in its very essence which deepened the sectarian tensions and led to a profound religious and political scene. Therefore, the optimism of the Christian Copts turned out to be terrifying nightmares for them, and skimming the international newspapers reveals such sectarian fears. Examples of this include: *Christians Under Threat*; *Copts fear Arab Spring is a Christian winter* (Dalrymble, 2011); *Egypt: Copts launch 'Christian Brotherhood' in challenge to Islamists*; *Copts under the Muslim Brotherhood* (Shafiq, 2013). Even many researchers described the conditions of the Copts after the revolution by claiming that: "*Generally, Copts are exposed to all kinds of religious, state, and social discriminations*," and the researchers finished their research by stating that: "*there would be a huge Coptic exodus from Egypt similar to the Jewish exodus to Israel. However, Copts will not migrate to Israel, they would migrate to US, Canada, & Australia; it would be a long tough Coptic winter*." (Tadros, 2011, p. 1).

Such political and social polarization was strongly exploited by the Coptic organizations in Diaspora, which was formerly mentioned, especially after the parliamentary elections in which the Muslim Brotherhood achieved almost 49% and al-Nour party achieved 25%, and eventually the coronation of the former president Muhammad Mursi as president in 2012. The National American Copts announced on its website a prompt call to rescue the Christian Copts in Egypt. The Coptic organizations represented an important pressure group especially in New Jersy State where the biggest number of Coptic Church and Coptic organisations did exist, and all belong to the Egyptian Orthodox Church (Tadros, 2011).

These Coptic organisations engaged in the Islamophobia propaganda in the US by its figures, like Muris Sadeq who leads the National Coptic Union in the United States. Sadeq announced that: "Islam *is a combination of paganism and worshipping stars and moon. Islam is not the religion of peace, it is the religion of surrender, whether to surrender or to die*." He warned that Muslims will control the US if this parade continues in Egypt. Even Sadeq participated with the famous priest *Terry Jones* in Florida to publicly burn the Quran.

Finally, the Orthodox Church found itself amongst a profound fluctuating political and social transformations where Muslim Brothers and Islamists are the leading actors, whereas the

Church adopted a contradicting political theology for decades. Therefore, reaching mutual understandings seemed to be extremely difficult and even impossible, which led to the rejection of all democratic outcomes after the revolution (Guirguis, 2012, p. 19).

3.3.3. The Orthodox Church-State Unstable Relations

2011 uprisings created unprecedented political liquidity in Egypt which impacted the social and political role of all actors, including the Church which found itself in changeable contexts that prevented it from continuing its political behaviors or defining its position amongst such rapid social and political fluctuations. Therefore, the Church-State relations were fluctuating as well. The Church-State relationship could be categorized into two main stages in post-revolutionary Egypt: the SCAF's reign which lasted till electing president Mursi in 2012; and the Muslim Brotherhood's reign which started with electing Mursi and his ousting by the military coup in 2013 after one year only from his rulership.

SCAF's reign was crucial in re-delineating the Church's role since it succeeded radical transformations which imposed hibernation and re-engaging in the political sphere after the advent of Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists. The main incidents that shaped the Church's political role were Maspero massacre and electing Muhammad Mursi.

Maspero incident was launched in Idfu, Aswan, southern of Egypt, when groups of indigenous Muslims attacked Marinab Church refusing its refurbishment. These attacks brought two important issues to the front again: the bill regarding places of worship, and the role of the state to protect the Church. Interestingly, the indigenous Muslims in the villages claimed that there was not any permission to establish a Church, and Christians in the village were allowed to construct a Church resort only. This was part of Mubarak's legacy as I indicated before when the Church was unable to issue a permit to construct new Churches and it was forced to construct the buildings first and then seek to issue the permit. Therefore, the Church engaged with the SCAF since the SCAF leaders couldn't protect the Church and it was burnt to the ground (Tadros, 2011).

Most importantly, the interim prime minister at that time Essam Sharaf ordered the Freedom and Justice Committee that belonged to the cabinet to inspect the incident's details, which ended by averring that the Church was permitted to be reformed and obligated the State to

reconstruct the Church. SCAF at that time did play a trivial role that imposed the Church to lower its minarets and ban the crosses on the buildings, and it recommended forming a reconciliation council between Muslims and Christians in the village to overcome the sectarian incidents (Tadros, 2011).

The Church's reactions to the incidents were revolutionary and outraging. Even one of the Salafi figures announced that the Church was mistaken and Christians offended a Muslim leader; referring to Tantawi. Therefore, the priests and pastors in one of the key Churches in Cairo called for massive protests to challenge the discrimination and secure the Christian rights. One of the priests said that: "*Tantawi knows well what we can do. We will show them that we can arrange massive protests that will reach the T.V building, Maspero*." This reveals how far the sectarian tendencies could lead to epiphenomena that the state during such a liquid phase cannot address. The protests were provoked and reached Maspero seriously, but they were encountered with violent replies by the SCAF. Many of the Christian protesters had been killed and detained or even smashed and grounded with the military armors (Taha, 2011). This incident particularly re-forced the Church to play the main representative role before the state and the revolutionary actors, and it regained its political position after the uprisings (Tadros, 2011).

The Second stage started when Mursi was elected as the representative of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Church continued its anti-Islamist behaviors that had been adopted for decades. Although Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood tried to absorb the panics and tensions between the Church and the F.J party, the Church continued its perceived struggles and resistance against Islamists since they pose existential threats to the Church and the Christians as I mentioned earlier. These tensions deepened with many incidents. First, after electing the Pope Tawadros to succeed Pope Shenouda, president Mursi did not attend the coronation of the new Papacy, which was negatively perceived by the Church. Second, many Islamist figures called for lowering the Church's representation in the political sphere and separating between its religious spiritual role and its political one. These calls were as if imposing the *Dhimmi* position again on the Church and Christians, or reinstituting the *millet system*. These calls were inconsistent with such revolutionary moments.

Different stances could be mentioned here to refer to such calls, mainly by Salah Sultan and Muhammad Emmarah, and the former had a long negative history in the Church's perception for decades. The very essence of these calls declared that the Church had negative impacts on

the political sphere and aggravate polarization and sectarianism among Muslims and Christians. The calls even claimed that the Church's leaders are forming an alliance with figures of Mubarak's regime and even Coptic Diaspora associations to hinder Muslim Brothers form its political rulership (Sultan, 2012). Moreover, the sectarian tensions which increased during Mursi's reign were exploited by the media channels and were hugely exaggerated. They were also criticized by the amnesty when it called for protecting Christian Copts in Egypt (Amnesty, 2013). Even Baroness Ashton, the European Union's foreign minister condemned the conditions of the Christian Copts under Mursi frequently (Copts United, 2013).

A more important battle took place between the Church and Islamists during Mursi was regarding the constitution's articles. There was an agreement regarding the second article; which was added by Sadat in 1970s. The article stated the following: "*Islam is the State's religion. The Arabic Language is the Official language, and the principles of Islamic Shari'ah are the main resource for legislation*" (Egyptian Constitution, 2012). The third article in the constitution referred to the position of the Christian Copts and non-Muslims when it stated the following: "*The principles of Christian and Jewish canonical backgrounds are the main resources for the legislations organizing their personal and religious issues and opting their religious spiritual leaders*" (Egyptian Constitution, 2012).

The Church didn't introduce any criticism or rejection so far. The tensions erupted when the second Islamic party, al-Nour party, recommended adding an article regarding the Shari'ah rules which contradict the position of the Church and the Christians Copts. Consequently, representatives of the Church decided to withdraw from the committee (Sheata, n.d., p. 10). However, after long negotiations, the second Constitution committee finalized the constitution and it was submitted for a referendum in 2012 and passed by 64% as well known. Worth to be mentioned, the Church refused the introduced articles fearing to go back to the millet system, although this was a continuous situation during the reign of all former Egyptian presidents, and was re-instituted by Mubarak under the new-millet system as I previously explained. However, these articles were contradicting the political role of the Church in the Egyptian political sphere (Brownlee, 2013, p. 18).

Simply, the relations between the Orthodox Church and Muslim Brotherhood were extremely bad and in continuous tensions, which forced the Church to go back to its well-known contexts which enabled it to practice the religious and political role according to its interests.

This stage was described by some researchers as "*Mubarakism without Mubarak*" (Goldberg, 2011). The return of the Church to its ordinary allies enabled it to control the Christian Coptic movements that went away from its hegemony after the uprising earthquake in 2011, which ended by the military coup in 2013.

3.3.4. The Egyptian Orthodox Church and its Political Re-positioning by the Political Transformations in June 2013

The radical political transformations in June 2013 were similar to the transformation in 2011. Two main questions could be asked and different answers might be introduced in order to understand the very essence of the transformations in 2013. The questions are: *why democracy couldn't continue as the leading political system?* And *why did the coup against democratization take place?* There were different factors and reasons resulted from the different political actors in such contentious political and social spheres.

The first question could be answered in this way: democracy failed to continue since the important political actors neglected the democratic principles as the leading principles for their political behaviors and their strategic views after the uprisings in 2011. The main political actors in the Egyptian political sphere intentionally ignored democracy and considered democracy as existential threats to their interests and their political and social positions (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 15).

The answer for the second question could be simply explained within endurance of the political loyalty and the continuous desire by the influential political actors of the military to sustain its political and social role. Simply, the interests of the main political actors were associated with the existence of the military as a key arbiter and mediator in the political arena, and the result was re-establishing authoritarianism (Haggard & Kaufman, 1996, pp. 31-32). Therefore, the Church found that protecting its political, social, and even economic interests necessitated its support and alliance with the military intervention in the political scene, since democratization represents a threat to the Church's interests (Pevehouse, 2002, p. 13). The Church found in the coup an important chance to reposition itself politically and monopolize the Christian Coptic representation before the state.

In spite of the repeated declarations by Pope Tawadros since his coronation in the Papacy that the Church does not interfere in politics, and its role is only religious and spiritual (Fahmy, 2013); the Pope's attendance in the military declaration of Mursi's ouster is considered demolition and omission of his previous stands on involvement in politics (Shehata, n.d., p. 3). In such moments, the Church's stands before the political transformation in 2013 were completely contradicting its role during the uprisings in 2011, which means that the Church rejected the revolutionary incidents from the very beginning, and found in reforming the political regime a chance to return the situation as it was during Mubarak's era.

"*Christians had been marginalized and ignored by the Muslim Brothers and the election of Mursi in the presidency. We seek a peaceful society in spite of the existential threat the Muslim Brothers represent to the Christians. Muslim Brothers may have good intentions toward us; however, these intentions were not translated into actions in reality,*" The previous quote was a part of the Pope's declarations prior to the 2013 transformation (Tawadros, 2013). Such political orientations were presented later on by the Church when it allowed the Christians to participate in the protests in 30th June 2013; "*the Pope praises the protests and encourages his sons and daughters to participate in the revolutio;*" and even the Pope himself declared that: "*Egyptians Must retain the stolen revolution*" (Copts United, 2013).

Moreover, the declarations of the Church leaders during the incidents came in line with the Church's political orientations. Priest Floupatier announced that: "*We will play a crucial role in directing the political changes in Egypt. Only the Bible ousted Mursi and Muslim Brothers.*" "Christians *are delighted with Mursi's ouster, but they also fear the future if the regime adopts any discrimination against them similar to Mursi.*" "*The military is in our side, we feel safe, we feel that Egypt is back to us;*" a Christian student.

The previous declarations and announcements by the Church leaders and even ordinary Christians expressed their happiness with ousting Mursi and the Muslim Brothers from leadership, creating more profound sectarian tensions to the extent that Muslim Brothers accused the Church explicitly that they conspired to oust them from leadership. Interestingly, these moments during the coup were a starting stage to more sectarian and bloody incidents.

On 14th of August 2013, the military forces in cooperation with police forces attacked the protests in Rabi'ah Square, which led to the murder of more than 2000 persons according to the state official statistics. Moreover, the sectarian tensions between Muslims and Christians massively increased, and waves of attacks against Church, monasteries, and Christian

properties started, leaving tens of deaths and hundreds on injuries and creating more chronic sectarian tensions and feelings between Muslims and Christians (Rowe, 2014, p. 12). Even the official magazine of the Church referred to the attacks against Copts and Church properties in Minia city (Ilya, 2013, p. 5).

As a researcher, I doubt accusing Islamists only of being responsible for the attacks against the Church's properties, since the leading actor during these moments and even till today is the security apparatus which may ignore securing the Christian properties to create a phase of panic and fear from Islamists, although some Islamists engaged in such sectarian incidents for sure. Moreover, the real terrorists for conducting such attacks remained unknown, and the accusations may include all actors and players during these flammable incidents.

The Orthodox Church benefited from the political transformations and the incidents, mainly by re-monopolizing the representation of the Christian Coptic community before the state and oppressing any Christian Coptic voice seeking to separate the religious and the political role of the Church. At the ordinary Christian level, Christians became more attached to their religious leaders because they felt that the threats surrounding their existence are inevitable. These fears evaporated when the interim president, 'Adly Mansour introduced his compliments to the Pope in the Papacy (Ilya, 2014, p. 6). Even the Pope visited the Ministry of defence, the UAE embassy in Cairo, the Saudi embassy (Ilya, 2013, p. 5), besides meetings with members in the presidency office, like Mustafa Hijazzy (Tawadros II, 2014, p. 2). The Pope also met with the Egyptian Prime minister after the coup, Ibrahim Mahlab, and other state figures. He himself visited the UAE on 9th May 2014, and also met delegates from the European Union and the British ambassador to Cairo.

On the other side, Muslim Brothers and major Islamist actors perceived the Church's role as sectarian and they suspected the Church's role in devoting sectarianism and ignoring burning them in Rabi'ah square and other violent attacks by the state's coercive apparatus. Moreover, the Church achieved more benefits by omitting any article in the post-2013 transformations' constitution that hinders its political role in the Egyptian political sphere.

The Church mobilized the Christian Coptic community to vote *yes* in the constitution referendum in 2014 and supported Marshal al-Sisi in the presidential elections in 2014 and in 2018. The cover page of the Church magazine displayed the president al-Sisi with the Pope when the former visited the Church to pay his compliments in the Christmas sermon. Pope Tawadros said that: "*Voting yes brings blessings*" (Tawadros, 2014, p. 1). The Pope even

declared it publicly that: "*Muslim Brothers will have a social role in public life when it leaves violence and apologize for Egyptians regarding the damages and the hurts they created for them*" (Khalil, 2014).

The Pope finally announced the Church's stands on the Arab Spring when he said that: "*Arab Spring was not a spring, it was an Arab destructive winter transplanted in our countries by evil hands to destroy and fragment our countries and societies*" (Tawadros, 2014). The Church turned out to be a subject to the political regime again to conduct its role as the sole representative of the Christian Coptic community before the state under the same neo-millet system that Mubarak instituted in 1984, and the new post-coup regime adopted the same strategy to re-establish the Egyptian authoritarianism.

According to George Fahmi, the Church did not need to disguise or hide its political stands on the Muslim Brothers and Mursi; therefore, it adopted a hostile behavior since it felt the existential threats in the arrival of Muslim Brothers to the authority in Egypt (George Fahmi, personal communication, 24th August, 2018). This view that al-Gharabawy is endorsing since he believes that the Church deeply engaged in the Egyptian politics and put itself against the Muslim majority which led to chronic sectarian tensions (Yaser Al-Gharabawy, personal communication, 15th August, 2018). Interestingly, none of the articles or columns in the Church's official magazines addressed the Arab Spring, democracy, democratization, or secularism. This reveals how the Church and other religious institutions in Egypt, as I will tackle in the next chapter, dealt with the political transformations and the calls for democracy after the uprisings in 2011.

CHAPTER FOUR: Al-AZHAR FROM HISTORICAL LEADERSHIP TO A STATE INSTITUTION

"*I aver that continuity of the protests after all the adopted procedures by the regime will lead to chaos, and protests are religiously prohibited,*" Shaykh al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in January 2011. "*Clashes between the components of the Egyptian society, and the bloodsheds, both are provoking awe and bitterness. Therefore, according to the Islamic Shari'ah: conducting the lesser of the two evils, and according to this profound polarization and dichotomy that Egyptian society is witnessing; I endorse the procedures being adopted by the fellows in the meeting to carry out an early presidential election to overcome the persistent political crisis,*" Shaykh al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb on 3rd June 2013.

Both previous quotes were announced by Shaykh al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyeb; however, the period of time between both was almost three years. Despite the continuous declarations that al-Azhar has no political role in Egyptian politics, several stances negate this claim. Al-Azhar did play a pivotal excessive role in the post-revolutionary incidents in the Egyptian political sphere which did not end by legalizing the military coup on 30th June 2013 that the second quote denoted, but supported the coup's leader in the presidential election in 2014 (Salamah, 2013).

Al-Azhar's engagement in the political incidents was not a recently recorded behavior; it has never been halted until writing these lines. Al-Azhar had had a profound role socially and politically since its very establishment more than a millennium ago by Fatimids; a role that never halted till writing these lines. Nevertheless, tackling al-Azhar's political role being the oldest Islamic institution is a multifaceted and fledged mission, especially the last couple of centuries due to the decline that the Muslim world generally and al-Azhar itself particularly suffered and went into. Moreover, the role of European colonialism, which started and became a dominant political phenomenon during the last two centuries, was a decisive factor in framing the social and political transformations in al-Azhar's role.

In order to understand the political role of al-Azhar as the main Islamic religious institution in Egypt, it is necessary to refer to al-Azhar's role before Muhammad Ali and after assigning him as the Ottoman representative ruler in Egypt. It is also important to address the political fluctuations that this institution passed through since the beginning of the 19th century

immediately after the failure of the French campaign on Egypt until the establishment of the republic. Moreover, al-Azhar was also exposed to numerous transformations since the 1950s until the end of the last millennium. These transformations delineated its role in the politics of the Arab Spring until today.

4.1. Al-Azhar from Establishment to Muhammad Ali's Period

4.1.1. Establishment of Al-Azhar

Al-Azhar was founded by the Fatimids in 969 CE in Egypt, a Caliphate that was established based on the Shi'ite political understanding of Islam. The mosque was established in order to be a beacon for Shi'ism in Egypt to endorse the Fatimid political orientations and to ensure their state legality. Although it is perceived that the Fatimid Caliphate could be categorized as a theocratic state, they didn't claim that they possessed any divine position. This was dissimilar to the perception which was pervasive in the ancient empires like Egyptian, Babylon, Chinese civilizations, or even the divine right which some European kings claimed (Ali 1986). The very essence of the caliphate in Islam is different since the caliph himself is obligated to implement God's divine orders. However, Fatimids took the universality of Islam and prophet's divine legacy as religion and minimized it to the personal and familial heritage of the prophet which is undoubtedly against the main principles of the prophet's role as God's messenger. Interestingly, different Muslim scholars suspect the authenticity of the Fatimids' affiliation to the prophet's family; however, the affiliation does play a marginal role in establishing the great Fatimid Empire in Egypt and the neighboring territories (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

The Fatimid call reached Egypt during the Ikhsheedy era when the Fatimid caliph sent a message to al-Ikhsheed asking his approval to preach for the Fatimid mission in Egypt. This request was denied firstly and approved later on when the relations between al-Ikhsheed and Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad had been deteriorated. Due to the worsened relations, al-Ikhsheed turned his orientation from Iraq to Morocco when he shunted the imams' du'aa for the Fatimid caliph in the Friday prayers (Ali, 1986).

The Fatimid call established strong alliances with some Egyptians who played a supportive role in facilitating and fortifying the Fatimid conquest later on led by Jawhar al-Sakkaly, who managed to enter Alexandria without any resistance in 358 H; 969 AD. Promptly after the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, a new capital Cairo was established, and the mosque was the center of this new capital in order to be the base for the Fatimid's call officially in Egypt (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

Although some scholars deny that the establishment of al-Azhar was based on political tendencies, it is perceived that al-Azhar was the political front of the Fatimids. Al-Azhar officially did not represent the Fatimid doctrine in its early years, and even the Fatimid caliph established another university titled *Dar al-Hikmah* in 395 H - 1005 AD to represent the state's political and religious orientations. The established university was granted sufficient funds and enriched policies to be the state's tool to enlist Egyptians in the new state. However, al-Azhar played the main role in preaching the Fatimids' political tendencies which were based on their belief frameworks, especially Taqeyyah, the main and fundamental Shi'ite creed (Ali, 1986).

When Jawhar al-Sakkaly held the oath with the Egyptians, he granted them his commitment to secure the religious beliefs, to ensure the diversity of Islamic doctrines, and to guarantee freedom of worship (Al-Shennawy, 2013). Although these former articles were set forth in the agreement, al-Azhar started its mission as a Shi'ite mosque in 365 H, 975 AD at the hands of Abu al-Hasan al-No'man al Qayrawany when he started to teach the Shi'ite jurisprudence books in al-Azhar studying groups, *halaqat*, a tendency that was adopted by other jurists and scholars in the mosque. Moreover, the Shi'ite orientation was fortified when Ya'qoub ibn Kallas; a long-lived Fatimid minister, in 369 H; 980 AD, wrote his treaty in the Shi'ite jurisprudence and started to teach it in al-Azhar to the ministers and the state's officials in a tendency to affirm the loyalty to the dominant Shi'ite doctrine. Ibn Kallas especially was the first to turn al-Azhar to a university besides being the official mosque of the state when he assigned numerous scholars; 37 scholars; and jurists particularly, to teach their editions and transfer their knowledge to the populace (Ali, 1986).

Education at al-Azhar mosque was structured around informal study circles (*halaqat*). Every study circle was presided over by a particular shaykh. The shaykh sat on a stool, resting his back either against the wall or against one of the mosque's many pillars. Students were seated on the floor, arraying themselves in a circle in front of him. These study circles varied widely

in size. They usually used to meet a number of times every week in accordance with a loose schedule determined by the presiding shaykh (Nakissa, 2014, p. 95).

Despite the mentioned fundamental Shi'ite tendencies, the Fatimids were not that sectarian state form to enforce their belief on the society. Interestingly, Fatimids in Egypt were not able to frame the legal system and judiciary according to their doctrinal belief, especially after they managed to completely control Egypt and convert it to be their caliphate base. Consequently, they reckoned on the secret preaching in order to secure and protect their rulership and endure their reign (Petry, 2006). In order to achieve this aim, Fatimids invented a state position to manage the secret Isma'ili call titled as the *Da'ey al-Do'aah*; the chief preacher of the preachers. This state position was equal to *Qady al-Qudah*, Judge of the Judges, and most often one person was recruited to carry out both positions (Ali, 1986).

Da'ey al-Do'aah himself was communicating with the call delegates in Egypt and other countries in the name of the caliph, and he was the mediator between the caliph and the followers and the believers everywhere, even the perorations that he was presenting were exposed to the caliph in advance to affirm his approval. All these missions and tasks were conducted in al-Azhar, which gave it the political influence in Egypt and in the Fatimid caliphate (Petry, 2006). Interestingly, the caliph himself was leading the Friday prayers himself from al-Azhar since he was stressing the importance of the religious Imamate. This influential behavior that until his mosque Al-Hakim be'amr Allah was established later on (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

Al-Azhar denominational attitude was ameliorated gradually when the caliph instituted *Dar al-Hikma* which was formerly mentioned in order to be the beacon for the Fatimid call. Worth to be mentioned, *Dar al-Hikma* was supplied by a huge library that the caliph himself funded to provide with all books and textbooks in all scientific and scholastic fields. That library was the greatest and most prestigious library in the world in its era. Although the university was free of sectarian orientations in the beginning since different scholars from all doctrines, mainly Sunni of course were invited to teach in it, it converted to be a monochromatic beacon for the Fatimid Isma'ili sectarian orientations and tendencies. It was directed by *Da'ey al-Do'aah* himself to ensure the Fatimids' policies and the religious Shi'ite belief (Ali, 1986). Due to these transformations, al-Azhar was purified from the denominational features and turned to be neutral institute where all Islamic beliefs and doctrines were presented scholastically (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

4.1.2. From Shi'ite to Sunni Rulership

In 567 H; 1771 AD, Salah al-Deen al-Ayuby put an end to the Fatimids in Egypt, and since that date, the administration of Egypt altered from Shi'ite to Sunni rulership. Nevertheless, most of the Egyptians were not influenced by the Shi'ite doctrine during the era of the Fatimids and they remained as Sunni believers (Ali, 1986).

Salah al-Deen followed the education policies and orientations of Al'adel, Noor al-Deen in Al-Sham lands since he was his representative in Egypt. He established different universities that were rivals for al-Azhar and even attracted al-Azhar's scholars and graduates since the newly established universities were more prestigious politically and financially and had been supported by the rulers. Consequently, al-Azhar lost its prestigious position under the new leadership and was neglected and even closed for more than a century. Consequently, the scientific and scholastic movement even was suspended during this long period of time in al-Azhar (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

Al-Azhar returned to its position during the era of Mamluks and Ottomans who paid attention to it, especially when it played the role of the mediator between the Egyptian society and the rulers who were aliens to the Egyptian society. What helped al-Azhar to be an autonomous entity was the financial independence that it enjoyed which equipped it with enough tools and capabilities to adopt the society's demands. Al-Azhar was supporting the rights of the populace against any despotic and autocratic behaviors by the rulers who possessed the most influential military and powerful decisive word. Moreover, the huge trusts granted by time to al-Azhar enabled it to fund education and scholarships to educate the society and made it intertwined with its transformations and needs (Goldschmidt, 2008).

Al-Azhar scholars, ʿ*ulama*ʾ, who were the literate elite of the society, acquired their distinctive prestige not from their ethnic origins or by inheritance, but from their intensive training in the various branches of religious scholarship. They did not constitute a hierarchical establishment, as did the Christian clergy, and their social and geographic profile was relatively heterogeneous, including non-Cairene and even non-Egyptian backgrounds. This ethnic and geographic diversity reflected the attraction of Cairo as a cosmopolitan focus of the orthodox Islamic learning in that period. This combination of moral authority, political ties, and economic backing also made them less vulnerable to pressures from the state's authorities (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

Al-Azhar scholars were more privileged than those affiliating to other schools or universities in Egypt. Interestingly, they filled the different positions in other colleges, which enabled them a super-optimal role in the Muslim world by receiving knowledge seekers from other countries (Ali, 1986). They divided themselves into three groups:

a) Distinguished Elders who occupied official administrative and symbolic positions within the educational and Sufi hierarchies. Those scholars represented the Egyptian subjects before their Mamluk and Ottoman rulers: as local administrators; as financial administrators; as creditors; as tax collectors; as guardians of families, houses, and wealth; as judges, teachers, notaries, and preachers; and in general as guarantors that God's command be carried out in society (Gesink, 2010).
b) Mid-level 'ulama usually taught at al-Azhar or lesser schools, *madaris*, or served as jurisconsults or judges. Their incomes were sufficient for their families' livelihood (Gesink, 2010).
c) "The lesser 'ulama, who depended upon the charitable services provided by waqf-supported religious institutions, such as bread rations and stipends for scholars, were devastated by the reduction of these services. The distinguished status of the scholars was not influenced by the regime's change from Mamluks to Ottomans; instead, Ottomans were interested in enduring the scholars' prestigious status and protected their influence since Ottomans focused on the political challenges" (Hatina, 2010, p. 20).

4.1.3. Al-Azhar under the Rulership of Ottomans

With the advent of Ottomans, Egyptian scholars in al-Azhar and Egyptian people praised the Ottomans' conquest in Egypt. They appreciated their military epics in the Arab peninsula and the Arab Red Sea after they defeated the Portuguese troops in Adan Gulf and the Indian Ocean, besides the victories Ottomans achieved in Central Asia and Europe. Interestingly, despite the Ottoman political administration over Egypt, no Turkish Ottoman had ever held the office of Shaykh al-Azhar since the conquest. This denoted the Ottoman policy to endorse al-Azhar's position amongst the Egyptian society (Hatina, 2009).

Worth to be mentioned, al-Azhar's role started to decline academically and scientifically by the advent of Ottomans when they displaced many scholars, scientists, artisans, and handicrafts to Istanbul after the conquest. This decline was even noticed by the Ottoman governor in Cairo when he realized that al-Azhar scholars banned teaching or studying philosophy and excluding it from the curriculum. According to the Ottoman representative, this was contradicting the previous situation of Egypt as the "*Land of Islamic Science*" according to Martin Hartmann (Hatina, 2010).

Nonetheless, Azhari Scholars did not legalize or support any separatist movement in Egypt by Mamluk's. During the Ottoman era, however, al-Azhar from time to time cooperated with heads of the Sufi community from al-Bakri and al-Sadat families to champion economic grievances. But the leading shaykhs of al-Azhar took care not to go too far in opposing their political patrons and benefactors; or in destabilizing the social order. Shaykhs favored opposition without actual violence or compromise over the frontal attack – a strategy that often proved productive (Hatina, 2010, p. 24).

Shaykh al-Azhar was one of the arbiters to verify the rulership of the Pasha over the Egyptian territories. In 1543, Dawoud Pasha was assigned as the Pasha in Egypt and the delegation from the military leaders and al-Azhar scholars led by Shaykh al-Azhar himself went to meet the new Pasha (Ismail, 1996). Interestingly, the new Pasha was still a slave and was not liberated by the Sultan. It was well-known that the rulership of slaves was unaccepted politically and according to the Shari'ah rules. Therefore, his assignment was rejected by Shaykh al-Azhar who informed the new assigned Pasha in their first meeting that his rulership was unaccepted and refused until he was liberated from his slavery. The new Pasha's frenzy was about to end his rulership on the first day; however, the military leaders intervened in favor of Shaykh al-Azhar and verified what he said (McGregor, 2006). Consequently, the new Pasha was sent back to the Sultan in Istanbul asking him for his liberty in order to be accepted religiously and politically as the ruler of Egypt – a request that was promptly and easily received by the Sultan and replied to the new Pasha his liberation document from slavery (Goldschmidt, 2008).

It was a frequent behavior during the Ottoman control in Egypt for some Ottoman rulers to launch separatist movements, like Ahmad Pasha's separatist movement (Al-Shennawy, 2013). The Sultan granted Ahmed Pasha the rulership of Egypt which was the greatest Ottoman province and normally it was ruled by al-Sadr al-A'zzam. Consequently, al-Sadr al-A'zzam

unofficially rejected the rulership of Ahmad Pasha in Egypt and prepared a coup against him secretly. The conspiracy was discovered by Ahmad Pasha which caused the separatist movement of Ahmed Pasha against the Ottoman state (Ismail, 1996).

The separatist movement started when Ahmad Pasha confiscated the properties of the state's princes, and he asked to make perorations for him in the Fridays prayers and called for Safaways to cooperate with him and to be his allies against the Ottoman state. He went beyond the socially and politically accepted limits by confiscating the properties of any suspect including the traders and ordinary citizens which provoked the social zeal, especially when the rumors revealed his intention to convert into Shi'ism. In 1524 protests and insurgency were launched all over Cairo and there were epics between the ordinary citizens and Ahmad Pasha's troops which ended in the defeat of the latter. When Egyptians entered the Pasha's palace, they found the flags and the crown of the Safawy empire, which endorsed their stands before the Sultan in Istanbul. These resistance movements were directed and led by al-Azhar scholars (Ismail, 1996, p. 25).

Also, al-Azhar Scholars were the leading power to oust Musa Pasha in 1630 when his corruptions reached unprecedented levels. Musa Pasha began his epoch by killing two administrative figures and confiscated their wealth and properties. Then he started to depose the ministers who already belonged to al-Azhar and granted these state positions to his allies. The situation deteriorated and worsened when Musa assassinated the prince who was assigned to prepare the Ottoman campaign against the Safawys in Egypt (Goldschmidt, 2008).

As a result, the rebellions broke out in Cairo against him. Musa Pasha declared that he killed the assigned prince by a Sultanate order without introducing this order as a proof. Therefore, a delegation led by the Sultanate Mufti went to Musa Pasha asking him to hand over the murderers of the prince to him or accept to be deposed. Musa denied that he was embattled in the assassination operation (Ismail, 1996, p. 28). Consequently, the military princes surrounded the castle and the roads leading to it then the scholars announced the ouster of Musa Pasha and appointed Prince Hasan. The military princes then sent three messages to the Sultan, al-Sadr al-A'zzam, and the Grand Mufti accompanied by the approval of the Ottoman military leaders in Egypt. They explained the situation then they were verified by the Sultan in their conducted procedures (Ismail, 1996).

The scholars were conducting the role of Human Rights organizations in our contemporary modern era. Noah Feldman states that "Scholars had impressive potency to control the

political authority's commitment to the limits of Shari'ah, a role that was reckoned on the very essence of the political role of religion". Scholars were independent social stratum that determined their traditions and rules themselves which enabled them to impose their religious understandings of the very essence of religion on the political authority and even legalizing it before the society due to their authenticity and commitment to the religious principles and morals (pp. 2-5).

Al-Azhar scholars had the political influence and the prestigious role to even contradict the state orders and directions. A good example could be introduced is their political protection to the 26 Fakkary princes in 1660 after they were deposed and the orders were released to confiscate their wealth and properties. A delegation visited Ibrahim Pasha in the Castle to overcome and solve the contemporary crisis regarding the 26 princes, and they assured to Ibrahim Pasha that the decision he made was inaccurate and revealed political tensions than realistic wisdom. Interestingly, Ibrahim Pasha accepted Shaykh al-Azhar - Abi al'Azaaem Sultan al-Mezahy - political mediation and cancelled the former decisions and returned the princes to their former positions, and nothing of their wealth or properties was confiscated. Shaykh al-Azhar then requested the Pasha's orders to be written in three copies and distributed to the Pasha himself, and the rival Kassemy party, and the third one in the possession of Shaykh al-Azhar himself (Ismail, 1996, pp. 32-36).

Moreover, al-Azhar scholars abated the insurrections when Sultan Murad 14th started his reign by deposing Mustafa Pasha in Egypt and assigned new Pasha, Ali Pasha. The supporters of Mustafa Pasha rejected justifying that he was assigned three months ago. When the country was about to delve into military insurrections, al-Azhar scholars intervened to suppress the insurrections. The scholars sent messages to the Sultan explaining the circumstances, a message that was promptly replied by the Sultan and he endorsed Mustafa Pasha in his rulership and cancelled his decision to assign Ali Pasha (Ismail, 1996,p. 78).

In 1703 al-Azhar scholars intervened to defuse the financial crisis that the Jews in Egypt prepared to revenge for one of their known figures, the master Yusuf, after his murder at the hands of the military leaders due to his corruption in coining the currency (Al-Shennawy, 2013). The scholars understood the details of the conspiracy and informed the Pasha who rapidly intervened to overcome the financial crisis. Also, in 1766 and 1767 Shaykh al-Azhar Mohammad al-Hefnawy intervened in suppressing the most firing battles between the Mamluk princes, mainly Hussein Kashkah and Jin Ali. He sent messages to both to stop their

chaotic military disputes, but his endeavors swept away when he died shortly and the princes went for battles which ended by the triumph of Jin Ali (Ismail, 1996, pp. 109-120).

In 1795 the scholars intervened in reconciliation between the Mamluk princes who were about to enter into military disputes. Shaykh al-Azhar Abdullah al-Shabrawy led the protests and populace against corruption, greed, and violence of the princes (Ismail, 1996, p. 157). Al-Azhar scholars were a profound political influential actor and the arbiter between the rulership and the masses, a role that enabled them to deal with the French campaign later in 1798 (Keshk, 1990). The position of the scholars as the cultural elite and the mediator between the ruler and the society endured even during the French Campaign when Napoleon Bonaparte formed a committee from the scholars to govern the society through them, or even with the scholars' role being the center of the opposition to resist and defeat the campaign (Goldschmidt, 2008).

Finally, in the late 18th century and the beginning of 19th century, warfare, corruption, and bureaucratic centralization led to the collapse of Egypt's religious education system and altered the situation of al-Azhar scholars' independence. Mamluk princes were in constant warfare with one another; therefore, many of them turned their properties to waqf to protect their wealth from seizure in the event of deaths – an act that hugely increased the waqf of mosques and universities (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

4.1.4. Al-Azhar and the French Campaign

The French Campaign in 1798 was the coronation of Orientalism and the start of the Colonial Era in the Middle East and Muslim territories (Graf & et al, 2011). When Napoleon Bonaparte arrived in Egypt leading the French Campaign, he was aware enough of the influential role of al-Azhar and its scholars; therefore, he paid huge attention to al-Azhar and the scholars in order to impose his hegemony on Egypt socially and politically (Ali, 1986).

Once arrived in Cairo, Bonaparte started his campaign by forming the *Diwan*, a committee of the indigenous elite, in order to facilitate the campaign's control over the country. This committee was mainly composed of ten Azhari scholars who were: *Sh. Abdullah al-Sharqawy, Sh. Khalil al-Bakry, Sh. Mustafa al-Sawy, Sh. Suleiman al-Fayoumi, Sh.*

Mohammad al-Mahdi, *Sh. Musa al-Mursi*, *Sh. Mustafa al-Damanhoury*, *Sh. Ahmad al-'Areeshy*, *Sh. Yusuf al-Shabrakheety*, and *Sh. Muhammad al-Dawakhely* (Ali, 1986).

Socially and historically, the existence of these scholars in the committee was unaccepted since these scholars were supporting the campaign and legalizing the foreign existence religiously, justifying their stands by protecting the nation from the frenzy consequences of the occupation, which was unprecedented by the scholars (Keshk, 1990). This committee was a tool in the hands of the campaign. It was twisting and distorting the realities in favor of the political aims of the campaign, even converting the defeats to victories similar to what they claimed the triumph of Napoleon in Syria and *Al-Sham* territories although he was harshly defeated. Interestingly, *Sh. Muhammad al-Mahdi* was preparing the declarations linguistically and rhetorically to back the campaign's activities religiously (Petry, 2006).

In spite of the role that these scholars played as members in the *Diwan*, other Azhari scholars took leadership of the resistance which represented the continuum of al-Azhar as the main guard of the society's rights before the political authority which was more influential during the foreign interference, and mainly Omar Makram conducted this role. Omar Makram called the Egyptians to resist the occupation – a call which was promptly provoked and endured with the arrival of the campaign troops in Cairo. This even stimulated some scholars in the French-backed *Diwan* to reject the full subjection to the French campaign, like what Sh. Abdullah al-Sharqawy did when he refused Napoleon's French slogans being put on his shoulders (Ali, 1986). Also, the members in this *Diwan* rejected Napoleon's request to force the Egyptians to admit the oath of allegiance to Bonaparte as the only leader for Muslims when Napoleon asked the scholars in the committee to issue a religious sentence (Keshk, 1990).

Worth to be mentioned, the resistance movements were provoked very early after three months from the arrival of the campaign to Cairo in the Egyptian revolution in 1798, and it was suppressed violently by the French who tried to bury and suspend any resistance movement (Keshk, 1990). Interestingly, al-Azhar scholars formed an equal *Diwan* similar to the French-backed one in order to lead and manage the resistance movements, and the membership in this committee was open to the scholars and ordinary Egyptians. This *Diwan* was managing and preparing the operations against the foreign troops in Cairo by forming resistance points around al-Azhar and the neighboring suburbs (Ali, 1986). Therefore, the French troops targeted al-Azhar for being the leading actor to disturb their existence and resist their political and military tendencies. Despite the continuous resistance and violent

operations against the French in Cairo during the second revolution in 1800, the French soldiers succeeded in achieving mounted assaults on al-Azhar using heavy weapons and artillery. However, because of the profound and brutal resistance to the French campaign, the campaign finally failed and withdrew promptly after the flee of Napoleon to France due to the political instability, and the murder of his surrogate Kleber in Egypt (Ali, 1986).

Addressing religious institutions is an ambivalent mission due to the nature of these institutions. Religious institutions are conducting the sacred religious-oriented aims and activities, and the performance of these institutions in the social and political atmosphere regarding their resource flows, economic activities, and different non-religious behaviors. Beckford argues that secularization: "simultaneously eroded the distinctiveness of religious organizations and of the sociological understanding of them" (Raynard, 2014, p. 163). Religious institutions have unique characteristics, such as belief-based purpose and a voluntary membership which means either that they develop completely different forms, or react to the societal and state pressures in ways different from other institutions and organizations. Interestingly, al-Azhar had specific bureaucratic and hierarchical structures based on explicit qualifications of the staff running the institution (Raynard, 2014).

4.2. Al-Azhar and the Radical Metamorphosis during Muhammad 'Ali and his Dynasty

After the French evacuation, Egypt witnessed political and social instability which endured till 1805 when Muhammad Ali was chosen by the Egyptians and resistance leading figures, mainly Omar Makram, to be the leader because of his endeavors in suppressing the economic injustice, tax policies, and demolishing Mamluks. Al-Azhar was the main supporter of Muhammad Ali in 1805 due to his endeavors and stands on the inequalities and unjust practices conducted by the Sultan's representative Khowrsheed who denied al-Azhar decision and claimed that he must be ousted by the Sultan himself. Therefore, the scholars and Muhammad Ali wrote to the Sultan in Istanbul who accepted their choice and ratified Muhammad Ali to rule Egypt, which was a moment that changed and impacted the modern Egyptian history (Ali, 1986).

Although al-Azhar scholars supported Muhammad Ali in 1806 when the Sultan decided to move him to Salonik, the honeymoon between both did not continue. Tensions between the scholars and Muhammad Ali began when the former presented their endorsement to deal with the British invasion. Muhammad Ali negated any role for the scholars in the upcoming battles announcing that the scholars' mission was to finance the campaign according to their abilities, an attitude that started to withdraw the social and political leadership from the scholars' hand and caused their marginalization over time (Ali, 1986). The political theology of al-Azhar as an Islamic institution and its scholars started to change and deviate from the main principles of Islam (Goldschmidt, 2008).

These tensions were exaggerated and deepened when the scholars visited Muhammad Ali in 1808 in order to remove the new 4% taxes that he imposed on foods which created disturbance among the poor due to traders' monopolies. Interestingly, Muhammad Ali said that he already excluded the scholars from such tax previously, and he announced that their behaviors were asserting inequalities and injustice. "The scholars were struggling to maintain their independence—and integrity—with many recognizing the corrupting influence of political power both on themselves and on Islamic doctrine" (Hibbard, 2014, pp. 52-53).

Muhammad Ali worked on fragmenting the scholars after he realized their persistence and their support to Sh. Omar Makram as their leader in challenging Muhammad Ali's policies in Egypt. Muhammad Ali adopted the same strategy that Napoleon conducted. He started to create cleavages between Makram and his followers by attracting some scholars to be in his party in front of Makram. Interestingly, these scholars had the previous experience during the French campaign, like *Sh. Mohammad al-Mahdi* and *Sh. Muhammad al-Dawakhely*. These two Azhari figures were jealous of Makram due to his reputation and his role during the campaign previously, and they found that the opportunity to cooperate with Muhammad Ali against Makram was a chance to restore their prestigious position in al-Azhar and in the society (Ali, 1986).

The previously mentioned tensions between Muhammad Ali and Makram reached their end when Makram refused to ratify the letters sent by Muhammad Ali to the Sultan regarding the imposed taxes, and he claimed that the information mentioned in the documents was inaccurate. Consequently, Muhammad Ali decided to depose Makram from al-Azhar's leadership and he did that when he dismissed Makram. By this forceful retirement, Muhammad Ali became the only controller and arbiter in directing al-Azhar and scholars in

his policies (McGregor, 2006). Muhammad ‘Ali became the main arbiter of forming the new political theology of the scholars and al-Azhar according to his new Western-based orientations. Internally, the scholars started to compete for al-Azhar’s positions and they fought each other to gain the prestigious positions inside and outside the institution (Ali, 1986, p. 140).

Also, the well-known castle massacre that Muhammad Ali conducted against Mamluks achieved his complete political hegemony over Egypt and al-Azhar. As a consequence, for the continuous tensions, Muhammed Ali did not show any respect to al-Azhar scholars similar to that which was granted to them by previous Mamluk leaders. He was exploiting their mundane ambitions to be prestigious and respected socially and politically, and addressing their social and political appreciation in order to be dependent and subjugate their status (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

By 1814 Muhammad Ali issued a decree preventing any further agricultural land from being alienated from taxation through endowment as waqf, which caused resistance and confrontation between scholars and Muhammad Ali. Moreover, Muhammad Ali and his successors subjected higher-level religious office to state control by appointing men who were loyal to the ruler and to the European models of education (Gesink, 2010). By 1815, and after the state’s control over the trusts, the religious institutions and many small Katatib were in ruins. Moreover, he started to confiscate the mosques’ properties and trusts including al-Azhar’s ones which shrunk these mosques’ influence and hugely decreased their social services in education and supporting the poor. In another aspect, al-Azhar’s role in education massively deteriorated and was made exclusive only to Islam’s knowledge and religious studies (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

Similar to the traditional medieval Muslim religious and learning institutions, al-Azhar knew nothing akin to modern schooling techniques and modern forms of bureaucratic institutions’ characteristic of modern education (Nakissa, 2014). Therefore, when Muhammad Ali adopted the Western education system and style, the different scientific fields were nurtured by non-Azhari graduates since al-Azhar was not updated with the needed sciences, and they were even prevented from such orientations due to the previous disputes and competitions among the scholars (Ali, 1986). Then, Muhammad Ali established a new modern European-based education system in parallel to al-Azhar traditional conventional system, which withdrew the social and political legitimacy from al-Azhar to the new nation-state concept in which the

state is the only arbiter to form the individual's identities (Nakissa, 2014, p. 95). In 1872 Dar al-'Ulum was established as a rival, and ambitiously as a surrogate, to al-Azhar. Interestingly, many of the social and political elites were graduates of this schooling system, including Hasan al-Banna, who was away from the umbrella of al-Azhar, which created antagonism among these different outcomes even if they had the very aim to reform al-Azhar itself and address the deteriorations in Egypt (Hatina, 2009).

Despite the perceived and advanced belief about the homogeneity of the religious institutions, al-Azhar was a heterogeneous entity which was dissimilar to the European Western Catholic Church. Religious institutional logic is revolving around their practices and beliefs which are oriented towards the supreme figures in the institution and their influence on society. Therefore, the competition among the scholars to be granted a respected position inside the institution never halted (Peifer, 2014, pp. 40-47).

Muhammad Ali's successors followed the same tendencies with al-Azhar, a policy that marginalized al-Azhar utterly. When Ibrahim Pasha promptly succeeded Muhammad Ali, he deposed the grand Mufti Sh. Ahmed al-Khalily from his position and assigned Sh. Muhammad al-Abbasi al-Mahdi. The former, Sh. al-Khalily, was usually showing his contradiction to Ibrahim during Muhammad Ali's reign and Ibrahim could do nothing due to al-Khalily's closeness to Muhammad Ali. In addition, during the rulership of Khedive Ismail, Sh. Hasan al-'Adawy conspired to oust Shaykh al-Azhar Sh. Mustafa al-'Aroosy wishing to be appointed in his position. Although the intrigue succeeded, al-'Adawy has not been assigned to be al-Azhar's Shaykh, since the Khedive appointed Sh. Muhammad al-Abbasi al-Mahdi (Ali, 1986, p. 158).

Scholars even had been fragmented and grouped around their interests and neglected their social role in leading the society towards justice and equality, and their attitudes towards the continuous political incidents prove their internal rivalries. For example, many scholars rejected Urabi's revolution for different reasons, and others supported it. Al-Azhar's official stand on Urabi's revolution was denying and rejecting the revolution. Therefore, when the revolution succeeded in achieving its goals and the government of Riyadh Pasha has been ousted, Urabi sought to oust Sh. Muhammad al-Abbasi al-Mahdi from al-Azhar's grand position through his allied scholars inside al-Azhar. These endeavors succeeded to oust Sh. Muhammad al-Abbasi al-Mahdi, and assigned Sh. Muhammad al-Inabani on 11th December 1881 (Ali, 1986, p. 164).

Another example was recorded during the British invasion in Egypt, which forced Urabi and his army to interfere to resist the invasion. Numerous scholars supported Urabi in the well-known battle in *Kafr al-Dawwar* northern Egypt, and they adopted contradicting stands after Urabi's defeat. For instance, Sh. 'Alyeesh, Sh. Abdulrahman al-Ibiary, Sh. Muhammad Basiyoni and others supported Urabi in the battle and, after his defeat, they returned to the Khedive and expressed their allegiance to his authority. These fluctuated behaviors expressed how the scholar's political theology was excessively changed by Muhammad 'Ali and his successors (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

Intellectually, the gates of innovation remained closed until the advent of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani in Egypt. His endeavors were unprecedented and were aiming to reform al-Azhar and Muslim intellectuality. These efforts continued their path which was surrounded by difficulty and challenges with his disciple Muhammad 'Abdu. The latter particularly had had an impressive impact on education in al-Azhar and in shaping the Muslim mentality even until today. The previous endeavors were arranged and categorized under the modernist salafiyyah school which believed in the holistic view of Islam; religion, life, and state (Ayubi, 1993). These efforts were fundamental in formulating the Islamic movements in Egypt which arranged themselves under the title of Muslim Brotherhood instituted by Hasan al-Banna, opening the gate for Islamism which overwhelmed the social and political phenomena in the Middle East and the Muslim World until today (Wickham, 2002, p. 96).

Most importantly, Muhammad Ali's tendencies cancelled out the political and economic influence of the scholars, although they failed to weaken their status as the country's intellectual elite (Hatina, 2010). "This era had a lasting impact on the modernization of the Egyptian public life. The construction of an intrusive state by Muhammad Ali and Ismail was very much intertwined with a program of secular modernization, indicating a desire among Egypt's political elite to emulate the European model of development" (Hibbard, 2014, p. 53). In spite of these orientations, "Muhammad Ali's successors, ʿAbbas I (1848–54) and Saʿid (1854–63), adopted a more restrained policy regarding the reform of al-Azhar, showing a greater interest in re-pairing al-Azhar's building complex and augmenting its revenues. ʿAbbas made a practice of visiting al-Azhar frequently to distribute coins to its residents and sit in on lectures by the Shaykh al-Azhar Ibrahim al-Bayjuri who treated him as one of his students " (Hatina, 2010). However, most of these efforts undermined the economic basis of al-Azhar scholars by abolishing their tax concessions and confiscating the trusts which al-

Azhar was dependent upon for centuries. Consequently, the position of the scholars socially and economically declined in painful and sharp procedures (Hatina, 2009, p. 110).

4.2.1. The Role of the Authority to Reform Al-Azhar

When Abbas Helmi became the Khedive, he worked on restoring some features of independence under the British occupation, and he addressed the deteriorations in al-Azhar. He started by suspending Muhammad Ali's 1846 prohibition against endowing lands as *waqf*, which returned to the scholars their chief means of protecting their agricultural lands from the state. In another step, Abbas demoted Tahtawi who had developed a reputation as a critic of the Azhari legal education and sent him to Sudan (Gesink, 2010) and assigned Muhammad Abdu in al-Azhar and granted him the authority to modernize the education inside it. The latter was known for his distress regarding the education style in al-Azhar and with his tendencies to modernize the institution to meet the needs and update the innovations according to their contemporary contexts (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

In endeavors to support Abdu's ambitions, the government assigned Sh. Hassouna al-Nawawy as al-Azhar deputy director to implement the reformation initiatives in al-Azhar and deposed Shaykh al-Azhar Sh. Muhammad al-Inabani. The government even granted al-Azhar other mosques with their trusts to be part of al-Azhar and to unify education in religious institutions. Although Abdu sought a radical reform in al-Azhar, he was forced by the political leadership to implement gradual reform – a matter that he barely accepted in order to achieve changes on the long run (Ali, 1986, p. 208).

These modifications were not welcomed by different scholars who rejected the modernization initiatives by Abdu, and they felt the threats of these endeavors to their positions inside al-Azhar especially their economic gains; therefore, they turned to be a blocking stone against Abdu's initiatives. For example, they were resented when Sh. Hassouna al-Nawawy was assigned to be Shaykh al-Azhar claiming that he wanted to impose the Western sciences like mathematics and other Western sciences to change al-Azhar's main religious knowledge mission (Ali, 1986).

Interestingly, despite the political support that Abdu's endeavors achieved in the beginning, the political authority was part of hindering the reform endeavors later on when the new

Khedive deposed Sh. Hassouna al-Nawawy and assigned his cousin Sh. Abdelrahman al-Qutb al-Nawawy as Shaykh al-Azhar due to conspiracies around Sh. Hassouna (Ali, 1986, p. 217).

Nevertheless, the endeavors of Abdu continued and have been twisted and adapted to cope with the newly updated contexts. Rashid Rida, Abdu's student, in collaboration with his teacher launched the popular journal al-Manar, in which both revealed and instituted their perception and viewpoints for reform, modernism, and secularism (Keskin, 2011). The excessive role of Abdu and his fellows to reform al-Azhar were about to succeed had it not been that the Khedive suspended their efforts indirectly when he realized their influence and their resistance to imposing his authority on al-Azhar (Ali, 1986, p. 227). He assigned Sh. Abdulrahman al-Shirbeeny, an anti-reform initiative figure in 1905, in Shaykh al-Azhar's position – a step which forced Abdu and his main collaborator Sh. Abdul-Kareem Salman to resign from their positions in al-Azhar after six days only from Sh. Abdulrahman al-Shirbeeny's appointment. Moreover, the Khedive worked on isolating 'Abdu from his fellows who believed in reforming al-Azhar. The Khedive sent Muhammad Shaker and Botros Ghaly to 'Abdu offering his permission to 'Abdu to conduct his reform initiatives without his main friend Rashid Rida the owner of al-Manar magazine. 'Abdu rejected this offer justifying that nothing could be conducted without Rida (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

The anti-reform behaviors endured even after Abdu died. Promptly after 'Abdu's demise, Rashid Rida experienced numerous accusations and attacks by his rivals and anti-reform Azhari figures. Such incidents encouraged him to write his book: "Al-*Azhar wa al-Manar*" in 1933 to narrate the experience that he lived with 'Abdu in their reform initiatives (Al-Shennawy, 2013). Worth to be mentioned that the reform initiatives were not exclusive to 'Abdu and his students. In 1904, Sh. Al-Zawahry wrote a book titled: "al-*'ilm wa al-'Olamaa*", expressing his resentment from the deteriorated conditions in al-Azhar and clarifying his views to reform the old institution. Although Sh. Al-Zawahry was not among 'Abdu's students, he was suppressed by the Khedive who accused him of affirming 'Abdu's reforming initiatives. Even the anti-reform figures threatened Sh. Al-Zawahry and informed his father who was also a scholar in al-Azhar to collect his son's books and burn them (Ali, 1986).

The political leadership worked on confiscating the reform initiatives by introducing a specific perception of reform and modernism. In March 1908 the government issued a law arranging education inside al-Azhar: "*the sciences that being taught in the religious institutes*

are the religious sciences, the Arabic Language, Mathematics, and other rational sciences which not harm the Islamic creeds..." This article was imposing a specific definition for reform that the government was imposing. This law caused anxieties among the students who rebelled against it, and the scholars could not keep silent and neutral when the students were suppressed by the government. Therefore, they formed an association to endorse the students' requests and assigned Mustafa Abdul-Raziq to be the chief director (Al-Shennawy, 2013). The consequences caused fluctuations inside al-Azhar, which were in ups and downs periodically until a formed committee introduced specific requests to overcome the instability in al-Azhar. These requests were mainly focusing on scholars' salaries and student's financial aids, neglecting the main law consequences on education in al-Azhar, to prove that al-Azhar was a complete subject to the political authority (Ali, 1986, p. 250).

Another law was issued in 1911 AD increasing the studying years to 15 instead of 12 to go back to the former education system. Although the mentioned law was prepared by famous figures, Ahmad Fathy Zaghlool the brother of Saad Zaghlool and Ismail Sedqy the interior ministry deputy, they were committed to the political tendencies of the government and the Khedive. The final report reported by this committee even stressed the religious role of al-Azhar away from any educational reform initiatives: "*the ultimate aim of al-Azhar is to teach religious sciences .. al-Azhar couldn't be perceived as a modern school*" (Ali, 1986, p. 251).

Tensions between al-Azhar and the political leadership were continuous and never ended. Another main conflicting issue was the Christian missionaries which started and allowed by Muhammad Ali and had an influential impact on the ground. These missionaries resented al-Azhar scholars and provoked them to carry out antagonistic reactions against the missionaries' activities (Berg, 2006).

In 1933, al-Azhar scholars met and declared that the activities of the missionaries are threatening not only the society but also al-Azhar itself. It is recorded that the American Missionary Samuel Zwemer entered al-Azhar two times to distribute the missionary pamphlets among the students. Worth to be mentioned, due to the decline in al-Azhar's role to confront the missionary activities, other Islamic social movements, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood, engaged in anti-missionary activities (Ali, 1986). However, al-Azhar didn't stop expressing its anger from the missionaries although the decisions adopted by al-Azhar directorship were dull and ineffective. In June 1933, Shaykh al-Azhar al-Zawahiri discussed the activities of the missionaries in order to protect the Muslim society from these surges.

Interestingly, even the Copts and Coptic Church devoted the same attitude since these missionaries were threatening the Orthodox Church and influencing its hegemony over Christians in Egypt (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

From a different angle, al-Azhar's perception of the universe and the compulsory burying of the universality of Islam on the hands of Muhammad Ali is a crucial reason for the deterioration of al-Azhar itself. It was turned to be a national Egyptian entity although al-Azhar coped with it but failed at the end (Ezzat, 2015, p. 102). The very first steps in this direction were undertaken as early as the 1860s; but approximately a century passed before, al-Azhar finally lost its medieval character and was transformed into a nationalized institution that we designed to legitimize the nation-state. This finally politicized al-Azhar and "helped paving the way to the scholars to increase their involvement in Egyptian politics later on (Hatina, 2009, p. 112).

During the monarchy, the successive governments gained profound and excessive control over al-Azhar through reorganization laws in 1906, 1911, and especially in the 1920s. These laws radically transformed al-Azhar's decentralized structure and its role in the Egyptian society. By re-centralizing the authority within al-Azhar, the successive reorganizations enabled al-Azhar's manipulation by the state, instituting common interests between the state and the influential actors inside al-Azhar. This overlapping justified the cooperation of numerous Shaykhs with the state in spite of the increased regulations imposed on the religious institutions. This was clear when al-Azhar was exploited by the British occupation (Moustafa, 2000, pp. 4-5).

4.2.2. Al-Azhar until the 1952 Revolution

While the WWI was ongoing, the British were curious about al-Azhar, and they even worked to halt its activities but they couldn't since al-Azhar was a mosque opened for daily prayers. The British were extremely afraid of al-Azhar since they were fighting the Ottoman Empire, the Islamic Caliphate, and they succeeded to issue a statement from al-Azhar scholars encouraging the masses to avoid engaging in any political activities away from their daily livelihood interests. The statement was signed by 12 prestigious scholars out of 15. Even al-Azhar leadership sent an announcement all over al-Azhar's institutes asking the students to

keep silent and avoid interfering in any political circumstance. In addition, the British provoked Shaykh al-Azhar to dismiss any student who was known for his antagonism to the occupation – a request that Shaykh of al-Azhar accepted and dismissed 3006 students out of 8222 students (Ali, 1986, pp. 252-256).

The previously mentioned was the al-Azhar's official stand; however, the ordinary Azhari scholars had different views. Promptly after World War I, al-Azhar scholars engaged in the 1919 revolution which was not anticipated according to the profound changes and transformations which al-Azhar witnessed over more than a century. On the other hand, the authority paid more attention to al-Azhar's excessive role in the former revolutionary incidents. Therefore, there was a long struggle between the King and its political rival, al-Wafd government, over assigning al-Azhar's rector, which ended by the triumph of the palace. In spite of the scholar's stands on WWI, both al-Azhar scholars and students were the vanguards in leading the protests in 1919's revolution (Hatina, 2009, p. 115).

Scholars, preachers, students, and even priests and pastors from the Egyptian Church as mentioned previously were giving perorations in al-Azhar mosque to support and inspire the masses. This role was recorded from the first day when the British authority witnessed the protests staging from al-Azhar. General Allenby sent to the minister of foreign affairs in England on 4th April 1919 after three weeks of the revolution, informing him that: "*al-Azhar students do not obey the orders of their leading scholars. They are leading the masses to revolt against us, and empower them with all intolerance and violent behaviors through their night speeches in their mosque*" (Ali, 1986, p. 262).

Importantly, the leading scholars realized that these complicated incidents would not end until the declaration of independence of Egypt from the British occupation. Therefore, on 17th of December 1919, they announced their support to the protests requesting the complete independence from England: "*al-Azhar scholars believe that the only way to avoid the violently excessive incidents is to declare the independence of Egypt which considered to be the oldest country in the east. The scholars are declaring this due to their historical religious and social role to avoid any instability*" (Ali, 1986, pp. 266-267).

Al-Azhar rectorship adopted such a stand late after they realized that they were repeating the same attitude during the French Campaign. Interestingly, the British documents revealed that the excessive role of al-Azhar and the scholars in leading the revolution was extremely dangerous, especially when the scholars founded a primitive National Police apparatus to

control the masses and the surrounding suburbs - a matter that would enable al-Azhar to behave independently and will rule the country eventually (Al-Shennawy, 2013).

When Saa'd Zaglool and his colleagues were detained, the scholars replied by leading the protests and arranging secret movements to purify the protests from betrayals. This role by the scholars provoked the British to inform Shaykh al-Azhar Sh. Mohammad Abu al-Fadl al-Jizawy to suspend al-Azhar activities to overcome the fireball of the revolutions, a request that Shaykh al-Azhar denied (Ali, 1986). Finally, on the 29th of December 1919, al-Azhar students conducted a meeting and announced their requests to suspend their protests and revolutionary activities, which were (Ali, 1986):

1- *omitting the position of the British Consultant in the ministry of education*;
2- *dismiss all British teachers and schools' directors*;
3- *cancelling teaching the English language in all schools*;
4- *declaring the end of the British mandate in Egypt*.

Eventually, these endeavors achieved the main aim by declaring the independence of Egypt from the British mandate formally.

Due to the participation of al-Azhar in the 1919 revolution, and their support to Saa'd Zaglool, the king turned al-Azhar to be his alley and evacuated it from its authenticity in the political sphere. After the alleged and incomplete independence of Egypt, the political actors tried to control al-Azhar. The palace imposed some articles in the constitution to ensure the subjugation of al-Azhar and its scholars to the King. These articles granted the King the very power and authority to assign al-Azhar positions in the university and the religious institutes all over the country (Al-Shennawy, 2013). Simply, King Fouad exploited al-Azhar to defeat his rivals and announced himself the caliph after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as the last Muslim Caliphate. Therefore, he tried to induce al-Azhar to achieve this goal by offering his financial support to al-Azhar. Interestingly these initiatives failed and did not gain any valuable outcomes (Ali, 1986).

The new King Farouq also exploited al-Azhar to legitimate his political authority in 1930s and 1940s. In spite of the continuous endeavors by the Egyptian government to isolate the new King and limit his political capabilities, the king exploited al-Azhar to defeat his political opposition. This was clear during the actual coronation celebrations of the new King in the Castle when Shaykh al-Azhar backed the new king religiously. Moreover, Shaykh al-Azhar

al-Maraghy was supporting the palace in front of the political opposition, and he even was exploited by the British occupation to affirm the political authority of the new king. This support continued until the first moments of the military coup by the Free Officers, which became the 1952 revolution, and announced the establishment of the republic (Ali, 1986).

According to all mentioned details, al-Azhar turned to be a very Egyptian national institution that became a tool in the hand of the state instead of its traditional role to deal with the state itself whenever the political authority deviates. The oldest Islamic institution was re-shaped to go along with the main aims of the imposed Western form of modernism by the state's new elites who were outcomes of the Western education system. Even the advent of other resistant rivals like Islamists and other Islamic entities was an epiphenomenon to the weakness of al-Azhar. This witnessed phenomenon was obvious after shunting al-Azhar's role from a socio-religious based institution, to a state subject legalizing the political behaviors and tendencies of the ruling elite.

4.3. Al-Azhar since 1952 until the Arab Spring:

The 1952 revolution caused radical and profound social and political changes that shaped the role of the religious institutions, and al-Azhar of course, in a way that endured until the moments of the Arab Spring in January 2011. In spite of the alleged dichotomy and antagonism between the Egyptian monarchy of Muhammad Ali and his dynasty, and the republic, both had similar impacts on al-Azhar's role in the Egyptian social and political spheres. Interestingly, the changes conducted by the post-revolutionary regime were concealed in the disguise of modernization and secularism in spite of claiming the converse (Zeghal, 1999, p. 372).

4.3.1. Political Exploitation by Nasser's Regime

Since the 1952 revolution, the Egyptian governments incorporated al-Azhar as an arm of the state through the control over al-Azhar's finances and as a religious actor securing fatawa legitimizing the government's policies. Gamal Abdel Nasser was aware enough of al-Azhar's

influence, so he worked on controlling al-Azhar to ensure accomplishment of his domestic and foreign policy objectives. Consequently, he sought to subordinate al-Azhar to its political authority in order to balance the influence of the regime's main internal rival, the Muslim Brotherhood, and to extend the Egyptian influence in the Arab and Muslim world (Moustafa, 2000).

Nasser's regime encountered three main challenges addressing religion-politics conflicts promptly after the coup (Zeghal, 1999, p. 372):

a) the loyalty of scholars to the landowning class;
b) the popularity of Muslim Brotherhood; and
c) the grip of traditional Islam on the population.

According to these challenges, the regime worked on creating a surrogate to the deep influence of the Muslim Brotherhood - changes which became a social capital for the regime later on. Firstly, the regime worked on mobilizing the popular religious sentiment for their own purposes, and religious leaders and scholars were exploited to ensure the compatibility of Islam with the socialist policies. Second, it worked on confiscating the financial assets of al-Azhar to ensure its subjugation to the regime and to facilitate the upcoming reforms, in similarity to Muhamad Ali's orientations (Hibbard, 2014, p. 59).

Prior to the land reform policy, Nasser's regime launched several press campaigns to downgrade the scholars' status denying any relation of them to religion. These tendencies were conducted by the name of modernization in order to radically transform the political identity of the scholars since it was challenging their religious nature, in order to go along with the national and the social ideological orientations of the new regime. These procedures that were carried out by the regime were aiming to enhance the scholars' living status without questioning their existence. Therefore, many of the scholars enrolled in the leading party to be more influential socially and politically (Zeghal, 1999).

The first attempt to undermine the influence of the scholars was the regime's 1952 land-reform law, which placed all waqf lands under the state's control, under the newly invented Ministry of Endowments (Moustafa, 2000). These lands were the main source of income and confiscating them undermined the capability of the religious institution to function properly (Hibbard, 2014). In 1955, Nasser also abolished all Shari'ah courts and changed them into the

secular courts established by Muhammad Ali. Simply, Nasser succeeded to undermine the religious institutions to serve the interests of the state (Moustafa, 2000).

Another step took place in June 1961, when the Nasserist regime transformed al-Azhar with two radical laws. First, this reform modernized the content of knowledge transmitted in the institutes and al-Azhar University. New subjects such as natural sciences, mathematics, and geography were introduced into the curriculum alongside the religious subjects in new institutes which were replacing the structure of the ancient religious school *Al-kuttab*. At the level of the university, the reform also introduced modern faculties (such as medicine, pharmacy, and engineering), first in Cairo, and later in the big cities, alongside the religious ones (Shari'ah, or Islamic law; usul al-din, or the foundations of religion; and Arabic language).

Second, the 1961 law reorganized the administration of al-Azhar and subjected it entirely to the Egyptian head of state (Zeghal 1999, 374). The regime succeeded in turning al-Azhar into a state university with academic, non-religious departments (Albo & Meital, 2014, p. 168). These reforms intended to transform the student of al-Azhar into a two-sided person: a religious scholar who was aware of the religious creed and could practice a technical profession that would link him to the people, in contradiction to what was conducted during the monarchy before (Zeghal, 1999).

Interestingly, in contradiction to the anticipated consequences of modernization, secularization did not succeed although the regime officially fortified secularism. Al-Azhar scholars engaged in the political and social arenas which proves that the scholars had different forms of modernism away from the alleged form endorsed by the state. Moreover, the forced expansion of al-Azhar into the so-called secular fields of study in contradiction with the law issued by the successive governments prior to the 1952 revolution, which were mentioned previously, ensured the increasing number of deans in non-religious fields who would be represented in al-Azhar High Council, which led to a very little autonomy from the government's interference (Zeghal, 1999).

The second law subjugated the entire institution under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Religious Endowments and granted the president of Egypt the power to appoint Shaykh al-Azhar (Hibbard, 2014). The law placed al-Azhar under the formal jurisdiction of the Ministry of Endowments, and all finances of al-Azhar were run through the appropriate state channels which gave non-Azhari state officials influence and impact over al-Azhar's activities. These

transformations were conducted by the regime very cautiously to avoid any resistance from other scholars inside the institution and to ensure al-Azhar's allegiance to the regime. However, it was anticipated that these transformations would face strong resistance inside al-Azhar which forced Nasser to assign temporary directors from the military in order to halt any internal resistance (Moustafa, 2000).

As a result and a reaction to this reform, the regime issued the Law 818 of 1963 which set up committees that were designed to purge al-Azhar of all staff who were unwilling to support Nasser's policies. These committees between 1963 to 1968 purged forty-five Islamic scholars replaced by younger ones who received their degrees under Nasser's regime in the 1960s and 1970s. These younger scholars allied with the regime in endeavors to reform al-Azhar which led to the erosion of the institution's autonomy (Moustafa, 2000). It worth highlighting that the social and economic transformations changed the effective social classes inside al-Azhar where its social and political components changed dramatically in a process that could be titled as ruralization of al-Azhar (Kenney, 2012). Consequently, al-Azhar turned to be a state institution fortifying its political, economic, and social orientation.

In return, the institution gained important state resources. For example, al-Azhar's budget increased more than four times from 1,537,000 to 7,000,000 Egyptian pounds. This budget increase strengthened al-Azhar's capabilities to carry out the capital project such as establishing new campus and expanding its nationwide program of primary and secondary education (Moustafa 2000). The regime also established the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs for this purpose; it was an organization whose raison d'être was to demonstrate the compatibility between socialism and Islam (Hibbard, 2014).

In spite of the regime's alleged Islamic orientation, it never claimed any commitment to religion. Therefore, after the 1967 defeat by Israel, there were impressive surges of religiosity among the populace to overcome the disaster (Hibbard, 2014). The profound sweep of Islamists in the society and their establishment of Islamic networks through civil society organizations, later on, was adopted and exploited by Sadat's regime after the demise of Nasser in 1970.

4.3.2. Cooperation with Sadat's Regime

Sadat's relationship with al-Azhar was reckoned on completely different context. He put himself in much greater pressure to religious legitimacy and moved away from Arab socialism and liberalized the political arena in order to get rid of the leftist Nasserist influence. Therefore, he gave the scholars a relatively more open space for expression and diversification that mobilized them to break out of the rigid institution's frameworks. He succeeded to exploit the scholar's frenzy from the 1967 defeat due to their excessive engagement in the political sphere especially when they called for political and social repentance (Zeghal, 1999, pp. 380-381). Also, he shunted his predecessor's orientation from Gulf countries, mainly Saudi Arabia, and strengthened the ties and the relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia in an explicit contradiction with Nasser's regime. Interestingly, this allowed Saudi Arabia to play a more excessive role in the internal Egyptian politics, and al-Azhar was an arena for such manifestations (Hibbard, 2010).

Sadat continued funding the religious education through al-Azhar system; he was funding religious publications produced by al-Azhar and other religious institutions. This supportive stands by him facilitated securing Fatawa that justified his tendencies to overturn Nasser's land-reform program, especially his opening policy aiming to overcome the ill-treatment of landowners under the previous regime (Hibbard, 2010). This was ongoing simultaneously with his appeasement to the Muslim Brothers who had been executed by Nasser regime. Therefore, the Islamic tendencies through scholars have been granted a larger space to carry out a more effective role socially and politically (Ayubi, 1993, p. 55). Interestingly, this role of Islamists was not suspended after Sadat's assassination. Although it was halted for some time, it was resumed after the understandings between Mubarak and the political opposition leaders at the beginning of his reign.

A very prominent figure that played an important role during the 1970s was Shaykh al-Azhar Abd al-Halim Mahmud (1973-1978). Abd al-Halim Mahmud was well aware of the enormous pressure that was brought to be carried on his institution by the political brass, especially when sensitive issues pertaining to state and religion were at stake. He viewed himself as the custodian of faith during a very turning point when Sadat adopted the Opening Policy to the West. Although Abd al-Halim Mahmud accedes to legitimizing the regime's political agendas, he advanced his own Islamic agenda in the political and public spheres by taking advantages of his being Shaykh al-Azhar (Albo & Meital, 2014).

While being in his post, Al-Azhar's top scholars re-emerged as a significant player in the Egyptian scene, and his orientations enhanced al-Azhar's reputation and status in the society. "During his tenure, the number of affiliated educational institutions swelled from 212 to 1,273 and the number of students reached 89,744. Moreover, thanks to the foundation he laid down, enrollment to al-Azhar surpassed 300,000 by the early 1980s. The principal reasons behind this success were the enlargement of governmental budgets via constant pressure on the Finance Ministry and substantial fundraising throughout the Muslim world, especially from Saudi Arabia" (Albo & Meital, 2014, p. 167).

Most importantly, Saudi Arabia financed al-Azhar with huge budgets after the understandings between the regimes in both countries happened to be in contradiction to Nasser's era. Its recorded that in 1970 al-Azhar received $3 million in donations from the Saudi monarchy. The majority of these funds were invested in the organization's infrastructure, manpower, logistics, and construction (Albo & Meital, 2014).

Sadat's regime didn't consider the religious institution to be a source of power in its own right; however, he perceived al-Azhar scholars as an effective and impressive tool for blunting the criticism of social and political rivals. In general, under Sadat and then Mubarak, the state withdrew from the social commitments conducted by Nasser's regime, adopting new liberal economic policies demanded by Western powers and institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The state depended on more authoritarian measures to assert itself as the only unique actor in formulating the political and even the religious terrains (Kenney, 2012). Western values and lifestyles had been transmitted through President Sadat to his successor Mubarak, which created hostility to the state's policies and had been accused of backing the Western hegemony and Westernization of the social and political spheres as vehicles to facilitate intervention in the society's internal affairs (Yadlin, 2006).

In spite of these implicit understandings and cooperations between the political authority and al-Azhar, tensions existed from time to time especially after Sadat's tendency to enter into a peace treaty with Israel in March 1979 (Moustafa, 2000). Although Sadat was able to secure his Opening Policy, and most importantly his peace treaty officially, many of al-Azhar scholars rejected the Egyptian-Israeli agreement. Although this refusal was not the official one, al-Azhar rectorship tried to appease with the political tendencies of the regime (Zeghal, 1999). These tensions continued and exaggerated socially due to the excessive role that

Islamists played and formerly fortified by Sadat himself, and finally led to his assassination on 6th October 1981.

4.3.3. Al-Azhar and Backing the Regime during Mubarak's Reign

Mubarak's regime pursued a pivotal strategy addressing the excessive Islamism as a consequence of Sadat's era. He exploited the official religious apparatus – al-Azhar and even the Church - to withdraw the legality of the Islamic movements, allowing Islamization of the state itself dependent on the specific imagination of the religion's role in the political sphere (Wickham, 2002). The transformation had been carried out in the 1980s when the government was increasingly reliant on the scholars to establish its own Islamic credibility against Islamists. These orientations were profoundly deepened based on Sadat's practices and his addition of the 2nd article in the Egyptian constitution which granted scholars a bigger role being the custodians of Islam and Shari'ah. Consequently, al-Azhar scholars engaged not only in the religious affairs socially and politically but also introduced themselves as the only religious entity in the state and in the society (Zubaida, 2000).

The strategy that the state adopted criticized politicization of religion then monopolized politicization of religion itself by imposing the concept of the authentic religion and monopolizing the implementation of this authentic religion, a concept that created more cleavages. Politicization of religion in a long-term mundane –de-secularized– nationalization of religion, un-sacred crawl by the state for religion, and banned the religious actors, institutions or movements, from politicizing religion to monopolize its directing and re-directing (Abdulfattah, 2016, pp. 38-39). One of the manifestations of such strategy was al-Azhar scholars striving to legitimate the distinction between themselves and other religious actors, Islamists, considering them as not only their rivals but also as sources for heresies. They consider Islamists a challenge to the authority of the religious institution when the Islamists are lacking the academic and professional expertise to conduct such a role (Keskin, 2011).

Most importantly, the religious authority of the scholars was gained after long processes of accumulating knowledge as a capital for religious knowledge which the Islamists are lacking. This caused long disputes and contradictions among the scholars themselves on one hand, and between them and Islamists on the other. This took place while Islamists were looking at scholars as agents of the political authority in their state positions, unlike their traditional role

that the society was witnessing historically. On the other hand, the scholars perceived the accusations of Islamists as threats to their indigenous role that al-Azhar acquired over centuries (Keskin, 2011). Although Mubarak recognized al-Azhar's central role in his struggle with Islamists, he was suspect, curious, and cautious about strengthening scholars' status. This was obvious when the regime exploited the scholars to ameliorate the extremists in the 1990s and to lower their social and political impacts (Hatina, 2007).

The emergence of violence in the Egyptian scene in the second half of the 1980s led most official scholars to reactivate their functions as political and social mediators. Frankly, al-Azhar lost its monolithic and monopolistic nature which Nasser had given it and became a plural and diversified body that is now itself in competition with other religious actors. Interestingly, the behaviors of the scholars were perceived as reactions to the external aggression and never as contributions to the social changes (Zeghal, 1999). Therefore, al-Azhar became closer to the state orientations by time, which exposed it to continuous criticism.

"Al-Azhar's reputation was adversely affected by its close association with the government, but at the same time, the rise of militant Islam allowed al-Azhar to distance itself from the government while retaining its privilege to the state's financial resources" (Moustafa, 2000, pp. 15-16). When Mubarak promptly arrested 4,000 suspect members of Egypt's most radical groups, he appealed to prominent Shaykhs from al-Azhar to engage with them in a nationally televised "prison dialogue." This attempt failed when the prisoners rejected to conduct such dialogue with al-Azhar scholars. In endeavors to justify the scholars' position in Egyptian society, Shaykh al-Azhar Sh. Jad al-Haqq recalled that the Prophet once said, "*the superiority of the knowledgeable man over the [simple] worshiper is like my superiority over the lowest of you*". In addition to defending al-Azhar's role in Egyptian society, Jad al-Haqq found himself in the awkward position of defending the government's policies on theological grounds. He argued that Islam continues to thrive in Egypt and that, for the most part, the government has fulfilled its duty of safeguarding and promoting Islam.

The government felt that the legitimacy of al-Azhar scholars was eroding, and was more eroded when the government asked the Muslim Brotherhood's help to conduct the revision attempt (Moustafa, 2000). Consequently, in order to grant the scholars a more authentic and profound impact, the government re-opened al-Azhar mosque for study-circles in the 1990s. For decades, or even a century, traditional study-circles (*halaqat*) did not convene at al-Azhar,

but the government gave permission to revive teaching inside al-Azhar mosque, in spite of its unofficial degrees granted to the enrolled audience. These study-circles attracted a large number of students in endeavors to shape social awareness and compete with the exaggerated role of Islamic movements, Salafis and Muslim Brothers mainly (Nakissa, 2014).

This provoked many scholars to appreciate such decision by the state. For example, the eminent Azhari scholar 'Abdal-Fattah Abu Ghudda explains that taking knowledge from books rather than through oral transmission means disregarding acquiring knowledge from the good and righteous example of a living person by smelling him, sitting with him, hearing him, and looking upon him. He cites a Qur'anic verse which states: {*In the Messenger of God there is a good exemplar for you*} al-Ahzab 21. The official role of al-Azhar was subordinated to the government since scholars, *'ulama*, were issuing fatawa to legitimate whatever the current policy was. These numerous attitudes put the scholars in contradiction with Islamists who most frequently accused the scholars of being part and parcel of the regime, which even created more cleavages among the scholars (Nakissa, 2014).

In spite of the internal conflict and disputes among al-Azhar scholars, and their opposition to the behaviors of the government from time to time, especially the role of the Front of Azhar Ulama, the government monopolized the assignment of al-Azhar's rectorship and its university presidency. This was very obvious when Shaykh al-Azhar Muhammad Tantawi was appointed as Shaykh al-Azhar although he was contradicting the Front of Azhar Ulama frequently and his legalizing of the banks' interests. This was a clear example of such contradiction and conflict between him and other scholars (Zubaida, 2000, p. 70).

Nevertheless, the endorsement of al-Azhar to the regime by legitimizing its overall policies, al-Azhar engaged with the regime in different issues such as the Personal Status law, the sale of alcohol, and the integration of Islamic values into the education system's curricula (Albo & Meital, 2014, p. 161). Because of the engagement of al-Azhar in the Egyptian political sphere, many scholars sought to adopt neutral path and they distanced themselves from the official voice of al-Azhar, which could be called as the "peripheral scholars" (Zeghal, 1999, p. 372). On the other hand, al-Azhar adopted an increasingly opposing stand regarding the Egyptian government policies in the mid1990s like birth control, the practice of clitoridectomy, and censorship rights. These opposing stands were obvious in the United Nation International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994 (Moustafa, 2000).

The Egyptian government carried out long-term policies to ensure the subordination of al-Azhar institution to its political orientations, and to ratify the regime's domestic, regional, and global tendencies. Despite the loss of its autonomy, al-Azhar gained valuable financial resources that were unprecedented and had the access to government corners which enabled al-Azhar to expand its influence in the society (Moustafa, 2000, p. 9).

4.4. Al-Azhar Amongst the Political Fluctuations of Arab Spring

Prior to the beginning of 2011, Egypt's politics witnessed critical incidents that envisaged the public opinion against Mubarak's regime which endured for almost three decades. The last scene was the falsifications of the 2010 parliamentary elections and the boycott that the oppositions practiced before the results of the elections, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, the beginning of the uprisings in Tunisia and the success that it achieved to oust the president Bin Ali accelerated the clashing moments with the regime that was engaged in long practices against its citizens through its coercive apparatus. Al-Azhar's political behaviors can be categorized into two main stages since the Arab Spring: *continuous tensions with Islamists since Mubarak's ousting*, and *backing the counter-revolution since Mursi and supporting the military coup*.

On 1st January 2011, a huge explosion took place in front of one of the biggest Churches in Alexandria that caused tens of deaths and injuries. Al-Azhar took the advantage to condemn the accident, which was conducted by Islamist terrorists according to the official state sources (Ali, 2011). In addition, al-Azhar called for instituting a committee by its directorship titled "*Bayet al'Aelah al-Masriyyah*", The Egyptian Family House, to gather and address any sectarian or mutual issues in order to overcome the consequences of the social and political polarization; an initiative which was appreciated by many figures in Egypt (Abdul Khaleq & et al, 2011). Interestingly, the tensions between the regime and al-Azhar were continuous, especially when these tensions went around the financial resources, and it was clear when Shaykh al-Azhar himself requested more funds in the 2011 state budget from the ministry of economics.

The cover page of al-Azhar magazine promptly after the accident in Alexandria displayed the president's photo in his speech commenting on the attacks. All al-Azhar's directors, Shaykh

al-Azhar, the head of al-Azhar University, and the Republic Grand Mufti, condemned the attacks, justifying their attitude with Quranic verses that what happened was prohibited, and it was a terroristic attack and anti-Islam (Al-Azhar, 2011). Moreover, the scholars in Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy condemned the attacks and even issued a sentence that suicide is prohibited, and ousting the leader by force is against Shari'ah objectives, in reaction to the main reason for the revolution in Tunisia when Bou'zizy set fire to himself (Ali, 2011). This attitude was even clearer and more explicit when the uprisings started in Egypt on 25th of January 2011; both religious figures Shaykh al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church Pope expressed their support to and confidence in Mubarak and his regime (Al-Ahram, 2011).

The official attitude that Shaykh al-Azhar adopted during the uprisings withered away when Mubarak has been ousted by the Military on 11th February 2011, and this was obvious when he praised the role of the Military leaders and youth protests to oust the head of the regime (Al-Ahram, 2011). These adopted stands were contradicting al-Azhar's primordial previous attitudes when al-Azhar imams hindered any protest to start and gather in al-Azhar mosque. Even many Azhari scholars called the protests to withdraw (Hasan, 2011), in spite of the participation of many other Azhari scholars in the protests all over Egypt. This reveals how far the dichotomy of the stands inside al-Azhar and the ambiguity of its perceptions during the incidents were.

Promptly after ousting Mubarak, al-Azhar altered its previous stands before the incidents and worked on involving more in the political arena. For example, al-Azhar tried to be the arbiter of Islamic understanding and to monopolize the religious role before the excessive engagement of Islamists, mainly the Muslims Brothers and Salafis, who succeeded to achieve a majority in the parliamentary elections (Al-Ahram, 2011). Al-Azhar magazine in its issue in May 2011 displayed the Military council meeting merged with the photos of the protests during the revolution. In its first pages, it presented the role of Shaykh al-Azhar in endeavors to balance the consequences of the protests and the chaotic liquidity incidents that took place after the protests and ouster of the president Mubarak (Al-Azhar, 2011). It titled its cover page with the following verse: {*O you who believe! If a rebellious evil person comes to you with a news, verify it, lest you harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful to what you have done*} al-Hujurat: 6. Inside the magazine, a writer was celebrating the huge transformation after the revolution justifying his attitude by supporting the youth movements and depicting them with encouragement and purity to conduct such a change since they have endorsed by God: {*You killed them not, but Allah killed them. And you (Muhammad SAW)*

threw not when you did throw but Allah threw} al-Anfal: 17;{*Allah will not change the good condition of a people as long as they do not change their state of goodness themselves*} al-Ra'd: 11(Bayoumy, 2011).

4.4.1. Continuous Tensions with Islamists since Mubarak's Ouster

In spite of these new orientations in appeasing the consequences of the revolution, the tensions between al-Azhar and Islamists were rapidly provoked and exaggerated by time, especially when different Azhari scholars called for electing Shaykh al-Azhar post (Essam, 2011). That step was followed traditionally for centuries until the advent of Muhammad Ali as I previously clarified. Shaykh al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyeb, earlier a leading member of the leading National Democratic Party, held his tongue to a remarkable degree. He called for an end to violence while withholding the full-throated support to other top state officials giving to the tottering regime and simultaneously refusing to take up the revolutionary's cause (Brown, 2012).

Since the revolution, groups of religious scholars and preachers, many of them are members in al-Azhar, have protested, demanding Azhar's independence from the government, both financially and administratively, and the election of its Shaykh instead of his appointment (Scott, 2012). The tensions increased when youth movements requested not only Shaykh al-Azhar, but even the former Pope Shenouda III, to isolate themselves from politics and avoid engaging in the ongoing events (Al-Muzahem, 2011). These requests occurred when Shaykh al-Azhar engaged more in politics considering al-Azhar as the only authentic religious institutions that will determine the leading principles to overcome the existing tensions between Islamists and liberals and secularists from one hand, and between Islamists and al-Azhar on the other.

Al-Gharabawy believes that al-Azhar tried to enhance its position after the incidents in 2011 as a soft power socially and politically after being marginalized or exploited by the regime for decades (Yaser Al-Gharabawy, personal communication, 15th August, 2018). Al-Azhar magazine in July 2011 preluded its edition by Shaykh al-Azhar's comment and vision regarding Egypt's future after the revolution. It stated the framework to manage the relations between Islam and State ensuring the main principles that al-Azhar is fortifying to overcome the critical moment as follows:

1- Support instituting the modern democratic constitutional Egyptian state;
2- Adopting democracy as the state political system to ensure the peaceful circulation of power;
3- The commitment to thinking freedom rights
4- Respecting diversity and conflict ethics;
5- Respecting the international treaties and laws

In spite of the previously mentioned principles which look elastic and very primitive, most of al-Azhar magazines are starting by articles prepared by Muhammad Emmarah tackling Islam and politics and presenting his viewpoints regarding secularism. Interestingly, as formerly mentioned, Emmarah is one of the main figures in the *far right school* which was mentioned in the second chapter (Al-Azhar, 2011). Not only Emmarah, but other authors and writers were also granted the opportunity to show their stands on secularism and modernism like what Muhammad Sha'ban wrote in his article: "*A Polish Philosopher: Modernism is a genocide for the other... and Secularism is trading in human fear*". The title of the article is self-explaining the content (Shaban, 2011).

Also, Muhammad al-Bahy, who was mentioned before in the second chapter as well is writing periodically in the magazine. In his articles, he addressed secularism and accusing it of infidelity since its implementation: "*Secularism and its implementation in Islam; believe in some parts of the book .. and deny other parts*". This reveals the official stands on secularism; and maybe other Western adopted concepts, which go along frequently with the stands of Islamists, a matter that compiles both of them – al-Azhar and Islamists - in the same ditch.

Interestingly, in spite of the alleged support for the transformation, the mutual cooperation between al-Azhar and the ministry of interior and the SCAF never suspended, and the meetings that gathered Shaykh al-Azhar and the Minister of Interior and Military leaders were continuous (Al-Ahram, 2011). According to H A.A, al-Azhar was against the transformations from the beginning. Shaykh al-Azhar and the Grand Mufti issued *fatawa* to prohibit and condemn the protests. However, al-Azhar started to play a greater role after the incidents to express its religious authority as an arbiter amongst the political fluctuations.

There is a primordial antagonism between al-Azhar and Islamists since Islamists are representing a religious rival and political threat. Georges Fahmi believes that al-Azhar gave priority to two interests and two blights. The interests are: monopolizing representation of Shari'a and being the main Islamic actor in the society. On the other hand, al-Azhar tried to achieve its independence and being hacked by the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis; and

suspend any social and political anarchy. Also, C. E. agrees with Fahmi that al-Azhar from the very beginning was curious and panicked from any social and political anarchy during and after the incidents in 2011.

According to G. Fahmi, al-Azhar was resented by Islamists generally and the Muslim Brothers in particular, since they are sharing the same audience and populace, Muslims. Therefore, al-Azhar worked on enhancing and improving its reputation socially and was politically panicked by Islamists' advent, similar to the Church in spite of their different backgrounds. A good stance could be recorded when al-Azhar rejected the law prepared by representatives of the Freedom and Justice Party to enhance al-Azhar as a religious institution (Kenney, 2012, p. 447). The spokesman of al-Azhar declared explicitly that "*the parliament is not responsible for interfering in our issues*" (Abdul Khaleq, 2011). Not only that, but even al-Azhar tried to ameliorate the tensions between the conflicting actors, Islamists and secularists, when their disputes were warming up during forming the committee to draft the constitution; al-Azhar introduced an initiative to reform the committee under its sponsorship (Al-Ahram, 2011).

4.4.2. Backing the Counter-Revolution since Mursi and Supporting the Military Coup

Challenges which al-Azhar was countering after Mubarak's ouster reached their optimal level when the Muslim Brotherhood succeeded in the presidential elections in June 2012. The newly elected president, Mohammad Mursi, represented a critical threat to the religious institutions, especially the Church as mentioned in the last chapter. Therefore, al-Azhar was continuously asserting its independence and practiced direct and indirect challenge to the newly elected leadership in order to protect itself from any pressure that might be practiced by the new authority. Un-ended examples for al-Azhar's continuous fear could be easily recorded, like what the new assigned Mufti in 2013 said that any practice against al-Azhar is threatening Egypt's security.

In an attempt to redraw the ties and the frameworks, Mursi met with Shaykh al-Azhar and the Pope to discuss the challenges during his first year. In spite of these announced endeavors, Shaykh al-Azhar was extremely curious and resented from the practices of the regime. For example, Shaykh al-Azhar withdrew from a conference coordinated by the presidency as a reply for neglecting him by the coordinators. However, Mursi had done nothing in the area of

religion except appointing the Minister of Awqaf, *Jamal Abdulsattar*, in endeavors to control the financial resources of al-Azhar, an attempt which promptly disappeared after the coup (Hallyer, 2012). Jamal Abdulsattar said in an interview that the massive and huge corruption found in the ministry hindered any effort to reform the trust sector since most of the leaders and CEO in the ministry were ex-military leaders who held their posts for decades.

The year that Mursi spent as Egypt's president was overwhelmed by social and political polarization, and even the role of other regional actors in interfering in Egypt's domestic politics was clear. For example, Shaykh al-Azhar was granted the UAE Shaykh Zayed Present for his endeavors during the incidents, which called him as the *year's most influential cultural figure*. Such praise took place when hundreds of al-Azhar students were poisoned and the head of the university was deposed due to the accident.

Amongst such tensions, Shaykh al-Azhar declared that al-Azhar is resistant to meltdown and dissolving in the Muslim Brothers, and appreciated the historical Egyptian – UAE relationships after his visit to receive the present; a visit that was suspected by many including Fahmi Howeedy (Koroom, 2013). In the same context, Shaykh al-Azhar met the UAE ambassador to Cairo, appreciated the military role in the post-Mubarak era. Even the al-Ahram national newspaper was stressing the pressures that al-Azhar was encountering, and how the new authority worked to subjugate the religious institutions, especially after the court safeguarded its enquiry against Shaykh al-Azhar himself (Abu Al-Azm, 2013).

The confrontation between al-Azhar and the Muslim Brothers reached its peak in June and before the coup with almost few weeks. George Fahmi said that Shaykh al-Azhar in his peroration on 30th June 2013 asserted al-Azhar's primitive stands on the social and political anarchy that the Egyptian society was heading to since the election of Muhammad Mursi, M.B representative in the authority. Amongst these profound fluctuations, al-Azhar tried to be the mediator and connecting nexus between Islamists and the Military leaders, a role that totally smashed by Rabi'ah incidents. H. A.A considers al-Azhar one of the main coup's provocateurs before and after the incidents in 2013. He said that he was informed that Shaykh al-Azhar told his fellows after Rabi'ah that "*the SCAF deceived us*."

Before the coup, the Grand Mufti declared that peaceful protests are allowed in Islam to deal with injustice in contradiction to the former fatawa before Mubarak's ouster; a stance that was verified by Shaykh al-Azhar himself when he allowed the peaceful opposition. This mandated a reply by the Muslim Brotherhood that protests must be banned especially if they will lead to violence and ousting the elected president. In the same context, Shaykh al-Azhar asserted that al-Azhar document is the only guarantee to overcome the social and political tensions, and

this came promptly after the meeting that Mursi held with Shaykh al-Azhar and the Pope (Kortam, 2013).

After the coup in 2013, al-Azhar was neutral and tried to avoid any interference in the political sphere or any engagement with the regime except in few cases that touched its religious stands. Interestingly, H A.A. considers al-Azhar aware enough of its political exploitation by the regime. This goes along with what Yasser al-Gharabawy asserts that Al-Azhar became a complete subject of the state. Since 1952 Al-Azhar's culture has profoundly altered and shunted away from its traditional role. However, Fahmi believes that the behavior of al-Azhar during the transformation in 2013 is asserting its endeavors to secure its independence from the state even in its suboptimal levels.

However, the Grand Mufti and the Minister of Awqaf involved more in the political sphere than Shaykh al-Azhar. Therefore H A.A. believes that al-Azhar was marginalized and exploited by the coup leaders to play such a role, and Shaykh al-Azhar and al-Azhar directors understand that they cannot interfere in politics greater than the limits allowed by the regime; otherwise, al-Azhar will experience more pressures by the regime. Hence, al-Azhar ignored the consequences of Rabi'ah incidents, especially when many Azhari students had been detained and were introduced to the civilian courts after being accused of their enrollment in outlawed MB. Moreover, many Muslim Brotherhood members who were working in al-Azhar university had been deposed and dismissed by al-Azhar directorship, to ensure the purity of al-Azhar's institution from any opposition to the practices of the new coup regime.

Regarding secularism, democracy, and democratization, al-Gharabawy thinks that al-Azhar does not introduce an authentic or realistic discourse on such concepts due to its subjugation to the continuous regimes since 1952 until now; al-Azhar is an outcome for the social and political context in Egypt. H A.A believes that these concepts are elastic and changeable according to the leading regime. Therefore, there was not any real intellectual or academic discourse on such concepts, and they are defined according to the interests of these institutions. Fahmi also agrees with what has been mentioned, since he thinks that the religious institutions are chasing their religious, economic, social, and political interests. Interestingly, although Mohammad Emmarah was received with huge respect and appreciation from al-Azhar leadership, he was resigned when he was required to alter the policy orientation of the magazine in favor of the coup.

Al-Azhar failed to retain its social and political influence as an Islamic institution that defended the rights of the populace through centuries as I explained previously. Although C. E. believes that al-Azhar is an international Islamic institution which is committed to the

Egyptian state laws, and cooperates with it whenever the necessity requires the cooperation, the religious role is thoroughly independent of any state interference. Therefore, the tensions over different religious issues such as the oral divorce, which put Shaykh al-Azhar himself under spot by the regime since the election of Abdul Fattah al-Sisi to be the president in 2014. It was exploited by the regime to back its political orientations whenever the regime is in need to legalize its position socially and politically. This happened most frequently since the coup in 2013 until today. However, the presence of al-Azhar socially and politically was slight and dull due to the continuity of the social and political polarization after the coup, which was the main the reason for its stands to oust Mursi.

CHAPTER FIVE: COMPARISON OF AL-AZHAR AND THE EGYPTIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The uprisings on 25th January 2011 provided a chance to many social, religious, and political actors to interfere in the Egyptian political sphere. The incidents came after long decades of hindering any political actor except the regime and its allies. The political actors in Egypt found in those moments an opportunity to re-shape and re-draw the limits and the rules of the political arena. These limits and rules became unsuitable after the political and social developments internally in Egypt, in accordance with the regional and global political changes since the 1990s.

Although Mubarak's regime didn't expect any protests in Egypt similar to the Tunisian protests in December 2010, the start of the protests in Cairo streets and squares was shocking and surprising. Promptly after the flee of the Tunisian former president Zain al-'Abedeen Bin 'Ali to Saudi Arabia, the Egyptian regime was panicked by an expected end to its head. Therefore, the regime started to legalize its legitimacy religiously. On one hand, Shaykh al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb declared promptly after the Tunisian revolution that protests are religiously prohibited. He announced that committing suicide by setting fire to oneself is religiously rejected and prohibited. Such declarations went in accordance with the T.V shows in Egypt which assured that "*Egypt is not Tunisia*". On the other hand, Pope Shenouda was busy in the suicide attack on the main Orthodox Church in Alexandria, northern Egypt. That terroristic attack devoted sectarianism and hostility between Christian Copts and the regime from one side, and between the Christian Copts and Muslims on the other side.

In spite of the previously mentioned attitudes towards protests in Tunisia, Egyptians spontaneously protested in the main squares of Egypt, mainly in Cairo. However, the participation of the main opposition actors, Islamists and liberalists, the spontaneous incidents turned to be an important revolution led to radical social and political changes. These social and political transformations had a massive influence on the Egyptian social and political scene until today.

Amongst the revolutionary moments in 2011, the roles of the main Egyptian religious institutions were highlighted and became under focus by most of the Egyptians. Interestingly, both institutions backed the regime against the protests, which were questionable and odd. Shaykh al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb declared that "*I aver that continuity of the protests after*

all the adopted procedures by the regime will lead to chaos and protests are religiously prohibited." This attitude was similar to the Pope's attitude when he said: "*We thank Mr. President for promptly intervening in the outgoing incidents and his assignment of Mr. Omar Suleiman as the vice-president. I called the president to thank him and to express my support and the people's support amidst these incidents. May Lord grant him the strength to protect Egypt and sustain peace, order, and power*."

Although both religious institutions backed Mubarak's regime until the end, their attitudes regarding the protests changed after Mubarak's ousting by the military council SCAF on 11th February 2011. For al-Azhar, the protests were supported. Defending the rights of the society became clearer and more obvious after the revolution. The Orthodox Church adopted the same attitude from the protests after Mubarak's ousting. These attitudes withered away by the advent of Islamists, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis. Worth to be recorded and mentioned in this context is that both institutions were exploited by the regime to desecularize and illegalize the Islamist's political tendencies and orientations against the political regimes since 1952.

Moreover, the compatibility between Islam, Democracy, and Secularism was recalled again, opening the gates to address the colonial and post-colonial legacy in the Middle East. It is well known that Islamism, in general, is against secularism since Islam is a Religion and Politics according to most of Islamists. This attitude was devoted through long debates during the recent centuries, which attached to the European imperialism and modernism. Modernism, democracy, and secularism were tackled and addressed differently in Egypt and Middle Eastern societies. This created social and political cleavages that had profound impacts until today. The advent of Islamists and their success to gain power in Egypt evoked these social and political antagonisms, which had a huge influence on the path of the political transformation in post-Mubarak Egypt.

Finally, the military coup which took place in June 2013 devoted tackling the role of the religious institutions in the political arena again since both Egyptian Religious institutions backed the military intervention to oust the former president Muhammad Mursi and to finish the Islamists' reign. Therefore, this study sought to find answers to the following main questions:

1- How to address the convoluted ties between Islam, Democracy, and Secularism?

2- How to examine the role of the Egyptian religious institutions in backing the political regimes and in devoting authoritarianism in the Egyptian political sphere?

The main arguments that this study tried to address and testify:

1- There is an inverse relationship between the political role of religious institutions and democracy. Whenever the political role of the religious institutions retreats, democratization succeeds and the converse.
2- In order to democratize the political regime, there must be a secularization of the political realm which threatens the historical roles of many political actors, mainly Al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church.

5.1. Islam, Democracy, and Secularism

Before I delve into the comparison of Al-Azhar and the Egyptian Orthodox Church it would be important and necessary to introduce a summary of the relationships between Islam, Democracy, and Secularism. In order to delineate the clear ties between the three concepts, it is necessary to refer to the numerous main arguments to settle down the alleged antagonism among them. First, the very essence of democracy is to restore the human dignity individually and socially and to return the right to the individuals and to the human societies to determine their path in this life in order to achieve justice, equality, and freedom for the human being.

Second, this essence was implemented historically throughout a long path overwhelmed with convolutions, sacrifices, and radical transformations in the mere understanding of religion and its role in this life after being fledged with mysteries and Church's despotism in Europe. This had been a characteristic of the European history for centuries known as the *dark ages*.

Third, and most importantly, the existence of religious institutions is a very concept and pillar for any developed and sophisticated civilization whether being Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, etc. History reveals that religious institutions did exist in all civilizations and Islam was not an exception. The claim that Islam doesn't know religious institutions and denies the priesthood that implemented historically in other religions like Christianity, is a two-edged reality simultaneously. In other words, Islam denies the existence of religious institutions which existed in Europe, but in reality, there are different religious institutions that dare to claim to

represent the very essence of Islam, like al-Azhar in Egypt, Zeytona in Tunisia, Shi'ite religious institutions which exist in Iran and among any Shi'ite community, or even the Salafi religious institutions in the Gulf countries, mainly Saudi Arabia. These institutions don't stop issuing absurd religious sentences (*fatwa*) frequently. Therefore, this delusion must be clarified, and I will address this in the following.

Regarding Islam, from the very beginning and from the starting moment, Islam instituted three main political pillars that were the fundamental arguments accompanied its advent. These principles were *Justice*, *Equality*, and *Freedom*. Implementation of these principles was conducted comprehensively by the prophet himself, and many pieces of evidence could be mentioned to endorse these principles, and the examples are extremely numerous and endless. In addition, the prophet's successors who were known historically as the *Rashidun caliphs* implemented these principles.

Nevertheless, the prophet combined between the religious and the political roles; Muslim scholars did understand and realized that this was one of the prophet's unique functions granted to him by God. Scholars even distinguished between his traditions and behavior being political, religious commands, and human innate characteristics; and they depended on the mere understanding of the companions who realized the differences between the prophet's divine religious role and his human nature being a leader, judge, and social reformer (Al-'othmany, 2015, pp. 13-30). These arguments refute numerous claims that were surrounding Islamic history and philosophies, like Islamic theocracy. Two crucial examples underpin this perception:

a) In his farewell pilgrimage peroration, the prophet stated and asserted the human equality when he declared: "*All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; white has no superiority over black, nor does a black have any superiority over white; [none have superiority over another] except by piety and good action*."
b) The canon that the second caliph announced: "*How could a man enslave his fellow man when both were born free*?"

According to the comparison of the very essences of Islam as a political surge and democracy as a political tool to govern societies, then Islam instituted the same principles that democracy instituted. The claim that Islam and Democracy are in contradiction is aspersion and even fabricated.

Regarding the perceived contradiction between secularism and Islam, it is mandatory to refer to different flaws in such a claim. It is well-known and strongly perceived in the Islamic literature, based on Quran, the prophet's tradition, and even the implementations of the prophet's successors, that the very essence of Islam is to emancipate individuals and societies from the autocratic states and entities. Islam seeks to grant the very rights for human beings, the mere naked right to believe in any religion, and follow any legality that they desired.

It is inaccurate to claim that Islam filled the legal vacuums with Islamic terminology to assert its existence. The reality is profoundly different since Islam was conducting radical transformations and modifications to the legalities that existed in the previous civilizations. In other words, the main principles mentioned before; justice, equality, and freedom, were the leading principles when Islam dealt with the existing legal systems during its advent. Islam did inherit the legalities of the collapsed and diminished states like the Roman state, or the Persian state, but it modified them to meet the principles that Islam instituted for all humanity.

The main difference in the nature of religious institutions in Muslim societies and European context was the commitment of the Islamic institutions to the main principles which are universal for all humanity. Whenever any religious institution, being Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, etc. rejects to admit the implementation of these principles in its social context, it turns to be a tool in the hand of state's authority, or even the state itself similar to the European Church. Then, the resistance of this deviance even if it is claimed to be religious is a must and necessity.

Finally, I can then denote that the very essence of secularism took place from the very beginning with Islam's advent. It was a form of secularism that negated forcing any autocratic authority over human individuals or their minds to emancipate human beings from any authority and grant them their rights back to choose all their life details including their religion, even if they reject Islam as a creed and a belief system. Interestingly, Islam conducted this secularization process in the name of the religion itself to grant this operation sufficient legality and to open the doors to add any human universal political values or principles to be part of it as a religion in order to achieve its main aims in any human society.

The alleged contradiction between Islam and secularism is a distortion of the realities and the very essence of both. In my opinion, it's important to separate between Islamism, which was a social and political phenomenon tied with the European colonialism and its consequences in Muslim societies, and Islam as a religion that underpins the main principle guaranteeing existence and continuity of human societies on earth.

According to all that has been mentioned before, I can refer to two important new concepts; ***rational secularism*** and ***arrogant secularism***. ***Rational secularism*** is the form of secularism that distinguishes between the excessive existence of religious beliefs in the political spheres according to the main principles of democracy which overlap and congregate with Islam's main political principles. It does exploit the main principles, justice, equality, and freedom, and considers them as the leading principles for policy-making, decision-making, and legality. The second type of secularism is the ***arrogant secularism***, which is a form of secularism that forces a specific type of Western secularism and neglects the main principles; justice, equality, and freedom, that are mandatory for building any civilized and well-being society, whatever the social, historical, and religious affiliations of this society.

According to the previous definitions, the Western secularism was implemented internally as ***rational secularism*** and as ***arrogant secularism*** in the Middle East and in the Third World according to the Western terminology during the colonial era and the post-colonial era. What the Middle East societies, including the Muslim societies for sure, are experiencing and witnessing is the ***arrogant secularism***. The implementation of this type of secularism, in the name of democracy in some cases, was underpinned and endorsed by the West-backed authoritarian regimes, which aim to persist and devote underdevelopment and fragmentation among the societies in this part of the world to ensure the Western European and American superiority and hegemony. This claim could easily be averred by the contemporary crisis and the destructive consequences of the so-called Arab Spring in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen, and previously US invasion of Iraq.

5.2. Al-Azhar and the Egyptian Orthodox Church in Comparison

Although it is difficult to put al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church in comparison because of their religious backgrounds, tackling the political role of both institutions became necessary. Both religious institutions backed Mubarak's regime against the protests. Both religious institutions played an influential role since Mubarak's ousting until electing Mursi. Both religious institutions backed the military intervention in the political sphere again in 2013. And both institutions backed the minister of defense to be elected as the Egyptian president in 2014 and 2018. They expressed their support to the regime and its leader, whether by an explicit way like what the Pope did or implicitly by turning a blind eye to any violation against human rights similar to Shaykh al-Azhar's stands during and after Rabi'a incidents.

This necessitated understanding the political role of both religious institutions in a comparative way since there was not any study conducted such comparison, and which gives this study its importance.

5.2.1. Al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church before Founding the Republic in 1952

The study tried to introduce an understanding of the transformations which both religious institutions experienced since Muhammad 'Ali and his dynasty. It was a must to examine and address the transformations which both institutions exposed to from that date until declaring the republic in 1952. While examining the role that both institutions conducted in the Arab Spring and until today, the historical background of that period was clear and important to shape both institutions in the Egyptian political sphere. Since Muhammad 'Ali and his dynasty claimed to modernize the country according to the Western modernism and secularism, building the nation-state was a product for all these endeavors. That attempt was including radical transformations of both religious institutions' roles to go along with the authority's political tendencies.

5.2.1.1. The Egyptian Orthodox Church before 1952

Regarding the Egyptian Orthodox Church, its political role changed radically based on the profound changes in its ***political theology***. Conceptually, ***political theology*** refers to two concepts: ***theology*** and ***politics***. This means that the religious belief is intertwined with the political ideology to eventually produce and attribute the political behaviors of the Church as one of the major religious institutions in the Egyptian context. Both concepts confirm that the Church's political tendencies have been formed in an environment full of social, political, and religious interrelated contexts which produced the political theology of the Church. This requires, of course, understanding the dynamics of these contexts and their backgrounds, and how they interacted separately and mutually. This makes separating such contexts from their environment, in which this political theology had been elevated, impossible. These contexts are *the historical context, the religious context, the political context, and the social context*.

The Islamic conquest of Egypt and Egypt's liberation from Roman's domination to the nascent Muslim state represented the beginning of a new era for the Copts. A radical change took place when Egypt moved from the Byzantine Romans' rule to the rule of Muslims, under the leadership of al-Madinah al-Munawara, the religious capital after Mecca. These historical

moments represented a deep wound for Christian Copts. Many of them converted to Islam, and the Arab tribes began to overlap and merge in the Egyptian Coptic society. Consequently, the Coptic Christians became a religious minority under the rule of Muslims; what was historically known as *ahl al-Dhimmah*. This situation required the subjugation of Christian Copts to the protection of Muslims and pay *Jizyah* as in return for that protection while respecting their beliefs, churches, and religious sanctuaries. This has resulted in several religious reactions by the Church, in the attempt to re-institutionalize the Church to protect and root out the Christian strain, and preserve what was remained from the Christian community in the Egyptian society in particular.

In addition, Muhammad Ali's orientations contributed to the establishment of the ethnic trend in the last century. One of the most important outcomes of this period was the renaissance of the Coptic society. The tribute was waived from the Coptic Christians for the first time since the Islamic conquest in the era of Khedive Sa'eed in 1855, and to allow them to become a main actor in the modern Egyptian army founded by his father (Tadros, 2013, p. 34). Although Christian Copts have different identities consolidated as Egyptian-Christian Middle Eastern, the archaeological discoveries of the Pharaonic antiquities at the eve of the 19th century during the English occupation increased the national feelings of the Church and the Christian Copts. These discoveries exaggerated the feeling of having the Pharaonic root and expanded the mindfulness of Coptic Christians as the owners of the nation, and that they were very authentic community since they adhered to Christianity being the apparent heir of that connected Pharaonic heritage (Zeidan, 2007, p. 56).

Interestingly, the alleged adoption of European secularism and building the state based on the European modernism – nation-state – did not enhance the social status of Copts and the Orthodox Church. Muhammad Ali followed the same Ottoman methodology while dealing with Christians in Egypt under the historical well-known *millet-system*. This represented a profound problematic issue in defining modernism and European nation-state that Muhammad Ali emulated, which fragmented the society and even was well-exploited by the British occupation later on based on the famous policy: *divide and rule* (Nicola, 2005, p. 12).

The period between (1882 – 1950) is considered to be the most precious era for the Church's engagement in the social and political Egyptian context due to its success to delve into the political arena as the main arbiter of the Christian community and the sole representative of them before the state. It brought about emancipation from the historical political subjugation to the Muslim community and the state and turned to be an equal social and political actor (Zeidan, 2007). What proved this radical transformation in the position of the Church was its

participation in the 1919 revolution officially by its religious figures promptly after its triumph on its lay Christians who believed in separating the religious and political role of their Church for centuries. That moment particularly represented a profound change in monopolizing the Christian community representation before the state; a change that was deepened with the resurgence of Islamism in the last century and never ended until the current moment (Zeidan, 2007). Such political and social alienation to Islamism, which was an epiphenomenon to the Western Colonialism, was rooted by founding the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920s in spite of the existence of other liberal and secular movement which was led by Sa'd Zaghlool (Purcell 1998; Philipp 1988).

Consequently, the Church connected all these disputes to its religious belief that Islam is an alien and odd component in Egypt, which devoted fragmentation and divisions in the Egyptian society (Philipp, 1988, p. 383). This phase was ended with the 1952 revolution, which imposed the Church's return to be a state subject after independence (Philipp, 1988, p. 385).

5.2.1.2. Al-Azhar before 1952

Al-Azhar also witnessed radical transformations which shaped its political and social role until the Arab Spring. Although al-Azhar scholars supported Muhammad Ali in 1806 when the Sultan decided to move him to Salonik, the honeymoon between both did not continue. Tensions between the scholars and Muhammad Ali began when the former presented their endorsement to deal with the British invasion. Muhammad Ali negated any role for the scholars in the upcoming battles announcing that the scholars' mission was to finance the campaign according to their abilities, an attitude that started to withdraw the social and political leadership from the scholars' hand and caused their marginalization by time (Ali, 1986). The political theology of al-Azhar as an Islamic institution and its scholars started to change and depart from the main principles of Islam (Goldschmidt, 2008).

Muhammad Ali worked on fragmenting the scholars after he realized their persistence and their support to Sh. Omar Makram as their leader in opposing Muhammad Ali's policies in Egypt, because of Makram's role in resisting the French Campaign before. Muhammad Ali adopted the same strategy that Napoleon conducted. He started to create cleavages between Makram and his followers by attracting some scholars to be in his part in front of Makram. Muhammad Ali and his successors subjected a higher-level religious office to the state control by appointing men who were loyal to the ruler and to the European models of education (Gesink, 2010).

Similar to the traditional medieval Muslim religious and learning institutions, al-Azhar knew nothing akin to modern schooling techniques and modern forms of bureaucratic institutions characterizing modern education (Nakissa, 2014). Therefore, when Muhammad Ali adopted the Western education system and style, the different scientific fields were nurtured by non-Azhari graduates since al-Azhar was not updated with the needed sciences, and they were even prevented from such orientations due to the previous disputes and competitions among the scholars (Ali, 1986). Scholars even had been fragmented and grouped around their interests and neglected their social role in leading the society toward justice and equality, and their attitudes before the continuous political incidents prove their internal rivalries.

In spite of the existence of many reform initiatives by many figures to reform al-Azhar, the political leadership worked on confiscating the reform initiatives by introducing a specific perception of reform and modernism. The consequences caused fluctuations inside al-Azhar, which were in ups and downs periodically until a formed committee introduced specific requests to overcome the instability in al-Azhar.

Al-Azhar's perception of the universe and the compulsory burying of the universality of Islam on the hands of Muhammad Ali is a crucial reason for the deterioration of al-Azhar itself. It was turned to be a national Egyptian entity although al-Azhar coped with it but failed at the end (Ezzat, 2015, p. 102). The very first steps in this direction were undertaken as early as the 1860s; but approximately a century passed before, al-Azhar finally lost its medieval character and was transformed into a nationalized institution, designed to legitimize the nation-state. This finally politicized al-Azhar and "helped paving the way for the scholars to increase their involvement in Egyptian politics later on" (Hatina, 2009, p. 112).

5.2.2. Al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church since 1952 until Arab Spring

The 1952 revolution caused radical and profound social and political changes that shaped the role of both religious institutions in a way that endured until the moments of the Arab Spring in January 2011. Interestingly, every regime since the declaration of the republic has its distinctive nature and characteristic to shape the social, political, and religious contexts according to its interests. The common character of all previous regimes in the second half of the 20th century was the hegemony of the military elites on the state structures, and the enforcement of their visions on the state up-down hierarchy to implement their political orientations (Skocpol, 1985, pp. 7-8). Amongst all such fluctuations in the state orientations,

both religious institutions experienced different contexts which impacted their behaviors according to the main features of each regime (Afifi, 1999).

5.2.2.1. Both institutions during Nasser's regime

The advent of Arab Nationalism contributed to the unrests that the Orthodox Church expressed after the revolution which imposed its political isolation and subjugation to the state (Ibrahim, 1998, p. 234). First, there was an absence of any Christian Copt in the revolution leadership council; which was a negative sign for the Church. Second, it was the political orientation of Nasser's education policies to merge Islamic teachings in the study curricula and to impose the state surveillance over the Church's schools (Povery, 2013, p. 68). The third thing was the low representation of Copts in the government and even in the public sphere. During Nasser's regime, the Church adopted the political hibernation and devoted its religious existence. Such orientation by the Church came as a result of the political authoritarianism which confiscated the political rights and even the political and social impacts of any regime's rivals after the 1952 revolution. This impacted all political actors including the Church of course (Philipp, 1988, p. 385).

Regarding al-Azhar, since the 1952 revolution, the Egyptian governments incorporated al-Azhar as an arm of the state through the control over al-Azhar finances, and as a religious actor securing fatawa legitimizing the government's policies. Gamal Abdel Nasser was aware enough of al-Azhar's influence, so he worked on controlling al-Azhar to ensure his domestic and foreign policy objectives secured. Consequently, he sought to subordinate al-Azhar to its political authority in order to balance the influence of the regime's main internal rival, the Muslim Brotherhood, and to extend the Egyptian influence in the Arab and Muslim world (Moustafa, 2000).

5.2.2.2. Both institutions during Sadat's regime

By the demise of Nasser, Egypt delved into a new different context in which Islamists were the main actors to fill the political and social vacuum caused by the collapse of Nasser's Pan-Arabism project. This transformation necessitated the return of the Church to engage in its existential battle (Leenders, 2010, p. 12). The resurgence of Islamists and changing the constitutions to appease their existence forced Church's adoption of the social and political unjust position again to be the main element of its political theology (Delhaye, n.d., p. 73). And the sectarian incidents erupted during Sadat, the "*believer president*", envisaged the social and political isolation of the Christian community. It also asserted the Church's role to

be its sole representative before the "*Muslims' injustice and the sectarian state*". This transformation shunted the Church's national stands to be closer to the Western US policies.

Sadat's relationship with al-Azhar was built upon completely different context. He put himself in much greater pressure to religious legitimacy and moved away from Arab socialism and liberalized the political arena in order to get rid of the leftist Nasserist influence. Therefore, he gave the scholars a relatively more open space for expression and diversification that mobilized them to break out of the rigid institution's frameworks. He succeeded in exploiting the scholar's frenzy from the 1967 defeat due to their excessive engagement in the political sphere especially when they called for political and social repentance (Zeghal, 1999, pp. 380-381). Sadat also shunted his predecessor's orientation from Gulf countries, mainly Saudi Arabia, and strengthened the ties and the relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia in an explicit contradiction to Nasser's regime. This allowed Saudi Arabia to play a more excessive role in internal Egyptian politics, and al-Azhar was an arena for such manifestations (Hibbard, 2010).

5.2.2.3. Both institutions during Mubarak's regime

Mubarak's era was precious and full of social, political, and economic transformations due to his long reign lasted for almost three decades. Therefore, the relations between the Church and regime changed radically since the arrival of Mubarak to the presidency. The Church leaders instituted long and strong ties with the Mubarak's regime hierarchy (Rowe, 2014, p. 237). This created the Church's religious leaders who engaged more in the political sphere to overwhelm the activities of the Christian Copts before the state. This change adversely affected the inter-relationships between Muslims and Christian Copts, and increased the feeling of discrimination by Copts which turned every single conflict to be a sectarian incident (Povery, 2013, p. 75).

The security apparatus considered the Church's religious leaders the only sole figures responsible for the Christian Coptic community which devoted the political authority in the hands of those religious leaders (Povery, 2013). Simultaneously, these leaders formulated a mere religious discourse in response to any political incident which deepened the sectarian tensions socially. These religious leaders adopted the same political discourse of the regime toward the Islamic movements and mainly the Muslim Brotherhood. When the regime exploited the Islamic movements as a pretext to overwhelm the Egyptian society, the Church leaders adopted the same orientation to overwhelm the Christian Coptic community.

Mubarak's regime pursued a pivotal strategy addressing the excessive Islamism as a consequence of Sadat's era. He exploited the official religious apparatus to withdraw the legality of the Islamic movements and allow Islamization of the state itself dependent on a specific imagination of the religion's role in the political sphere (Wickham, 2002). The transformation had been carried out in the 1980s when the government was increasingly reliant on the scholars to establish its own Islamic credibility against Islamists. In spite of the support that al-Azhar enjoyed during Mubarak's era, the reputation of al-Azhar and its scholars adversely affected by this regime's support. The government felt that the legitimacy of al-Azhar scholars was eroding and was more eroded when the government asked the Muslim Brotherhood's help to conduct the revision attempt (Moustafa, 2000). The Egyptian government carried out long-term policies to ensure the subordination of al-Azhar institution to its political orientations and to ratify the regime's domestic, regional, and global tendencies.

5.2.3. Al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church since 2011 until today

5.2.3.1. The Egyptian Orthodox Church during the Arab Spring

The uprisings in 2011 threatened the rules which were controlling and inducing the political behaviors of both religious institutions. The main axiom in such political context was the profound alliance between the Church and the regime in order to be protected from Islamists on one side. Hence, the Church adopted the State's discourse regarding Islamism in general and the sectarian anti-Muslim Brotherhood discourse on the other side. In addition, the political alliance between the Church and the regime was even most obvious when the Church rejected to boycott the 2010 parliamentary elections and introduced lists with Christian Coptic names to be elected on the regime's National Democratic Party list. The Orthodox Church perceived the uprisings as an existential threat being part of Mubarak's regime. Consequently, the Church's hierarchy engaged in the post-revolutionary incidents to restore its position among the Christian Coptic community and before the following regimes (Guirguis, 2012, p. 2).

Promptly after Mubarak's ousting, the political transformation led to marginalizing the Church's Papacy and hierarchy in the upcoming regime which would open the gates to different Christian Coptic surrogates to the Church's role in the political sphere. However, the advent of Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists who posed an existential threat to not only the

state but even to the Christian Coptic community that was exploited by the Church to legalize their political tendencies and orientation in the post-revolutionary incidents.

Therefore, the social and political weight of Islamists and mainly the Muslim Brotherhood, which was the historical political and religious rival to the Church, provoked the Church itself to exploit the Muslim Brothers' behaviors to devote its hegemony and its different religious identity. Therefore, the political transformation re-opened the gate to address the existence of Christian Copts and the ambiguity that this critical sectarian issue might be created in post-revolutionary Egypt (A. Mahmoud & et al, 2013, p. 2). The Church's religious leaders produced sectarian discourse, and even all Christian Coptic figures, which devoted sectarian tensions and fastened the Christian Coptic fears from the Islamists' advent after the revolution.

The main argument in that sectarian discourse was that the Muslim Brotherhood is practicing sectarian religious terrorism concealed in political terrorism against Christian Copts since the establishment of the Brotherhood in 1929 (Weeken, n.d., p. 58). Moreover, the huge attendance that *Salafis* achieved after the revolution deepened the sectarian feelings of the Christian Copts due to the *Salafis'* sectarian declarations regarding Copts and implementing *Shari'ah* (Rowe, 2014, p. 5). Hence, the Church's religious figures provoked sectarian discourse in the Constitutional referendum when Islamists adopted a sectarian discourse as well as calling the referendum with the "*box conquest*" (Shehata, n.d., p. 8). These hostile political discourses created more profound and chronic sectarian stands by both parties, Christians and Muslims. The Orthodox Church found itself amongst a profound fluctuating political and social transformations where Muslim Brothers and Islamists are the leading actors whereas the Church adopted a contradicting political theology for decades. Therefore, reaching mutual understandings seemed to be extremely difficult and even impossible, which led to the rejection of all democratic outcomes after the revolution (Guirguis, 2012, p. 19).

In spite of the repeated declarations by Pope Tawadros since his coronation in the Papacy that the Church does not interfere in politics, and its role is only religious and spiritual; the Pope's attendance in the military declaration of ousting Mursi represented demolishing and omitting his previous stands before engaging in politics (Shehata, n.d., p. 3). In such moments, the Church stands on the political transformation in 2013 were completely contradicting its role during the uprisings in 2011, which means that the Church rejected the revolutionary incidents from the very beginning and found in reforming the political regime a chance to

return the situation back to Mubarak's era. The Orthodox Church benefited from the political transformations and the incidents, mainly by re-monopolizing the representation of the Christian Coptic community before the state and oppressing any Christian Coptic voice seeking to separate the religious and the political role of the Church.

5.2.3.2. Al-Azhar during the Arab Spring

Al-Azhar's political behaviors can be categorized into two main stages since the Arab Spring: *continuous tensions with Islamists since Mubarak's ousting*, and *backing the counter-revolution since Mursi and supporting the military coup*. Promptly after ousting Mubarak, al-Azhar altered its previous stands on the incidents and worked on involving more in the political arena. For example, al-Azhar tried to be the arbiter of Islamic understanding and to monopolize the religious role before the excessive engagement of Islamists; Mainly Muslims Brothers and Salafis, who succeeded to achieve a majority in the parliamentary elections.

In spite of these new orientations in appeasing the consequences of the revolution, the tensions between al-Azhar and Islamists rapidly provoked and exaggerated by time, especially when different Azhari scholars called for electing Shaykh al-Azhar post. The tensions increased when youth movements requested not only Shaykh al-Azhar to isolate himself from politics and avoid engaging in the ongoing events. These requests occur when Shaykh al-Azhar engaged more in politics considering al-Azhar as the only authentic religious institutions that will determine the leading principles to overcome the existing tensions between Islamists and liberals and secularists from one hand, and between Islamists and al-Azhar on the other hand.

Finally, challenges which al-Azhar was encountering after Mubarak's ouster changed al-Azhar's official behaviors against the democratic transformations. The newly elected president Mohammad Mursi represented a critical threat to the religious institutions. Al-Azhar was continuously asserting its independence and took on the direct and indirect challenge to the newly elected leadership in order to protect itself from any pressure that might be practiced by the new authority. Amongst such tensions, Shaykh al-Azhar declared that al-Azhar is resistant to meltdown and dissolving in the Muslim Brothers.

The confrontation between al-Azhar and the Muslim Brothers reached its peak in June and before the coup with almost few weeks. Shaykh al-Azhar in his peroration on 30th June 2013 asserted al-Azhar's primitive stands on the social and political anarchy that the Egyptian

society was heading to since the election of Muhammad Mursi, M.B representative in the authority.

After the coup in 2013, al-Azhar was neutral and tried to avoid any interference in the political sphere or any engagement with the regime except in few cases that touched its religious stands. However, the Grand Mufti and the Minister of Awqaf involved more in the political sphere than Shaykh al-Azhar. Al-Azhar was marginalized and exploited by the coup leaders to play such a role, and Shaykh al-Azhar and al-Azhar directors understand that they cannot interfere in politics greater than the limits allowed by the regime; otherwise, al-Azhar will experience more pressures by the regime.

However, the tensions over different religious issues such as the oral divorce were continuous, which put Shaykh al-Azhar himself under spot by the regime since the election of Abdul Fattah al-Sisi to be the president in 2014. It was exploited by the regime to back its political orientations whenever the regime is in need to legalize its position socially and politically. This happened most frequently since the coup in 2013 until today. However, the presence of al-Azhar socially and politically was slight and dull due to the continuity of the social and political polarization after the coup. Figure 2 below shows the comparison of the two institutions which was developed according to the research of this study.

Figure 2: Comparison of Al-Azhar and the Egyptian Orthodox Church

Indicator \ Institution	Al-AZHAR	THE EGYPTIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
During Nasser's Regime	support as a soft power tool	support and was subjugated to the regime
During Sadat's Regime	support the regime policies	conflict with the regime becuase of Islamic tendencies

During Mubarak's Regime	**legalize the regime behaviors**	**neo-millet system – Church is only representative for Christian community before the state**
Stands Toward Arab Spring in 2011	**reject the political transformations**	**reject the Political transformations**
Stands Before Muslim Brotherhood	**reject Muslim Brotherhood tendencies – Al-Azhar is the only representative for Islam**	**panicked becuase of Islamists and Muslim Brotherhood**
Stands Toward Democracy Outcomes	**reject the outcomes**	**reject the outcomes**
Stands Toward Military Intervention in 2013	**support the Military Intervention**	**support the Military Intervention**
Stands Toward Pharaonic Legacy	**----------**	**praise the legacy as a reason for authenticity**

CONCLUSION

This study sheds light on the role of religious institutions in Egypt during the political transformations that took place in the last seven years, starting in 2011, a phenomenon labeled as the Arab Spring. Since the beginning of the uprisings in Egypt, Al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church played an important role in the political transformations till today. Both institutions stood against Mubarak's ousting while backing the military coup against Mursi. Obviously, both institutions stood against the political changes and the democratization of the political regime. Not only so, but they legitimized the coup and supported Abdul Fattah el-Sisi to be elected as a post-coup president. The study came in four main chapters which address the main problem of the research; *the role of religious institutions in the Egyptian Political sphere*.

Firstly, the study tried to address the three main concepts which are overwhelming the sociological and political academic field, *democracy*, *secularism*, and their relationships with *Islam*. *Democracy* historically and theoretically was addressed according to the Western political understanding, and also according to the Middle Eastern Arab context theoretically; endeavors which are rare and may be lacking in my opinion for sure. Then, *secularism* was addressed theoretically and historically according to the Western perception and Middle Eastern Muslim perception as well. According to the researcher, there are three main schools addressing *secularism* in the Arab context: *the moderate school*, *far right school*, and *far left school*.

Dissimilar to the Western academic imagery, and in contradiction with the pervasive understanding of the Western concepts, especially *secularism*; the study stresses the very essence of each concept and concludes that this essence does not oppose the very essence of Islam and its political experience historically. Islam from the very beginning and from the starting moment instituted three main political pillars that were the fundamental arguments accompanying its advent. These principles were *Justice*, *Equality*, and *Freedom*. Implementation of these principles was conducted comprehensively by the prophet himself, and many pieces of evidence could be mentioned to endorse these principles, examples which are extremely numerous and endless. In addition, the prophet's successors who were known historically as the *Rashidun caliphs* implemented these principles.

Then, two main new concepts were coined and invented by the researcher; *rational secularism* and *arrogant secularism*. According to the definitions of these two concepts, the Western secularism was implemented internally as *rational secularism* while implementing the second type, *arrogant secularism*, in the Middle East and in the Third World according to the Western terminology during the colonial era, and even the post-colonial era.

Secondly, the study addressed the Orthodox Church and examined its role in the Egyptian political sphere, not only during the Arab Spring but also how this role evolved throughout recent centuries. The most important factor in delineating the Church's political stands and behaviors is its *political theology*. The transformations that this political theology exposed to since long period of time, especially since the 19th century, altered the political behaviors of the Church. The Church's stands on politics in Egypt varied according to many other factors, especially its relationship with the successive regimes and its stands on Islamists.

The Church worked on securing its political position in the Egyptian political context since the uprisings in 2011, and this was very obvious by the Church's engagement in ousting the former president, Mursi. The Orthodox Church benefited from the political transformations and the incidents in 2013, mainly by re-monopolizing the representation of the Christian Coptic community before the state and oppressing any Christian Coptic voice seeking to separate the religious and the political role of the Church. Simply, the Church turned to be a real political entity in the Egyptian political context and utilizes its religious influence to enlist the Christian Coptic community according to the Church's political orientations which go along and overlap with the successive Egyptian regimes.

The study tried to shed light on al-Azhar as the main Islam's religious institutions in Egypt and in the Muslim World. Since its establishment, al-Azhar had important social and political roles, which created its prestigious position. However, since the French campaign, and Muhammad Ali's leadership, the role of al-Azhar deteriorated and re-determined in the Egyptian context to be fully subjected to the political authority. Such transformations were conducted throughout long reactions between al-Azhar and the political authority in order to alter the institution's main role to mediate between the society and the authority and to be a full state institution legalizing its behaviors and political tendencies whenever required.

This radical metamorphosis was explicitly clear since the uprisings in 2011. The stands adopted by the head of the institution Shaykh Ahmad Al-Tayyeb fluctuated radically from backing Mubarak's regime to be a mediator and important Islamic actor hindering Islamists'

tendencies in post-Mubarak Egypt, and finally backing the military intervention in June 2013. In spite of the available opportunity since 2011 to restore its traditional role as a mediator between the society and the political authority, the head of the institution worked on perpetuating al-Azhar's role according to the authority's orientations.

Finally, the study tried to put al-Azhar and the Egyptian Orthodox Church in comparison. Although it is difficult to put al-Azhar and the Orthodox Church in comparison because of their different religious backgrounds, tackling the political role of both institutions became necessary. Both religious institutions backed Mubarak's regime against the protests. Both religious institutions played an influential role since Mubarak's ouster until electing Mursi. Both religious institutions backed the military intervention in the political sphere again in 2013. And both institutions backed the minister of defense to be elected as the Egyptian president in 2014 and 2018. They expressed their support to the regime and its leader, whether by an explicit way like what the Pope did or implicitly by turning a blind eye to any violation against human rights similar to Shaykh al-Azhar's stands during and after Rabi'a incidents. This necessitated understanding the political role of both religious institutions in a comparative way since there was not any study conducted such a comparison, and that what gives this study its importance.

In order to connect all previous arguments which were proved by fieldwork through interviews and analyzing the political discourses of the main figures in newspapers and their official magazines; one important linkage should be created and visited. In spite of the alleged secularism and modernism, only the newly introduced concept of *arrogant secularism* is existent in all the previous details. In contradiction to the declarations repeated by the political authority for adopting *Western Secularism*, only *arrogant secularism* was implemented and imposed up-down to facilitate the authority's hegemony over the social and political spheres. This *arrogant secularism* was the main tool to re-delineate the social and political roles of both religious institutions in the Egyptian contexts.

In the Orthodox Church, *rational secularism* had been ignored intentionally by the political authority which changed the role of the Church from being a religious and spiritual one to be a perpetuating political representation and profound role in alien and inconsistent Muslim contexts, which adversely affected the social consistency and balance between the Muslim and Christian components. The tensions between the Church and the state on one side and between Muslims and Christians on the other side were continuous after the independence,

especially under Sadat and Mubarak who exploited these tensions differently to deepen sectarianism and hostility in the Egyptian society.

On the other side, al-Azhar's role had been shunted throughout long processes to be fully subject to the state. Instead of conducting its traditional role of defending the rights of the society before the state, al-Azhar was busy and engaged in its own prestigious positions internally among scholars and externally before the political authority. The traditional role of al-Azhar scholars had been radically altered to legalize the legitimacy of the political authority – a behavior common by both religious institutions. Although the previous changes were conducted in the name of secularism, only arrogant secularism was existent and overwhelming the transformations. *Arrogant secularism* changed the role of both religious institutions in Egypt to be subject to the state and to be separated from its role to defend its main values, justice, equality, and freedom. Al-Azhar was conducting the converse by legalizing despotism, so was the Orthodox Church.

A final important point is the Islamists' perception of secularism that rejects the *Western secularism* continuously. This study proves that only *rational secularism* is the tool to solve the excessive political role of both religious institutions, a tool that cannot be neglected or overlooked under the previous social and political transformations since the uprisings in 2011 till the moment. The engagement of the religious institutions in the political sphere hindered and undermined democratization that both institutions refused religiously by backing the regime, being part and parcel of the state, and the alleged secularism by the regime which only focuses on subjugating the society and the religious institutions to implement their political and social orientations.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions:

1. How do you assess the incidents on 25th of January 2011 and their consequences on the relationships between (al-Azhar – Church) and the state?
2. What is the real attitudes regard the Muslim Brothers and other Islamic - and non-Islamic revolutionary - actors after the incidents in 2011 and their excessive prticipation in the political transformation after Mubarak's fall?
   (*The interviewer payed extreme attention to the sensitivities of the participants*)
3. How do you understand concepts *Secularism – Democracy – Democratization*? What is the official – personal attitudes of (al-Azhar – Church) towards them?
   (*Asking about each concept was in separate question to facilitate the mission for the interviewees and try to clarify his/her understanding clearly*)
4. How does (al-Azhar – Church) assess their participation in the political transformation in 3rd July incidents in 2013 in ousting Morsi and MB from authority?
5. How does (al-Azhar – Church) manages the relationships with the new regime led by the current president Sisi?
6. How does (al-Azhar – Church) perceive the role of the other religious institution (al-Azhar – Church) in the political sphere?
7. How does (al-Azhar – Church) envisage the relations with the other religious institutions and what are the ruling indicators for such relations?
8. How does (al-Azhar – Church) manage the relations with the current leading regime and other state authorities ?
9. How does (al-Azhar – Church) evaluate the performance of the current regime in general ?
10. How does (al-Azhar – Church) perceive the future of the relations with the current regime; and how does (al-Azhar – Church) evaluate its position in the current political sphere ?

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TURKISH SUMMARY

25 Ocak 2011'deki isyanlar, pek çok sosyal, dini ve siyasi aktörün Mısır siyasetine müdahale etmesine olanak sağladı. Olaylar, uzun yıllar boyunca rejim ve müttefikleri dışındaki herhangi bir siyasi aktörün ortaya çıkmasını engelledi. Mısır'daki siyasi aktörler, siyaset sahnesinin sınırlarını ve kurallarını yeniden şekillendirmek ve yeniden çizmek için bir fırsat buldu. 1990'lardan beri devam eden bölgesel ve küresel çaptaki politik gelişmelerden sonra, bu sınırlar ve kurallar Mısır'daki politik ve sosyal gelişmeler için uygun değildi.

Mısır'da Mübarek rejimi, Aralık 2010'daki Tunus protestolarına benzer bir protesto beklemezken, Kahire sokaklarında ve meydanlarında protestoların başlaması beklenmedik ve şaşırtıcıydı. Tunus eski cumhurbaşkanı Zeynel Abidin Bin Ali'nin Suudi Arabistan'a kaçmasından hemen sonra, Mısır rejimi Mübarek'in başına gelebilecekler yüzünden panikledi. Bu nedenle rejim meşruiyetini dinsel olarak meşrulaştırma çabasına girdi. Bir yandan el-Ezher Şeyhi Ahmed El-Tayyeb, Tunus devrimi ilan edildikten hemen sonra, protestoların dinen caiz olmadığını ilan etti. Kendisini ateşe vererek intihar etmenin dinen haram olduğunu ve yasaklandığını açıkladı. Bu tür söylemler daha sonra televizyon programlarında *"Mısır Tunus değil"* şeklinde devam etti. Öte yandan Papa Shenouda, İskenderiye (Kuzey Mısır)'deki ana Ortodoks Kilisesi'ne karşı yapılan intihar saldırısıyla meşguldü. Bu terörist saldırısı, bir yanda Hıristiyan Kıptiler ve rejim arasında ve diğer tarafta Hıristiyan Kıptiler ve Müslümanlar arasında mezhepçiliği ve düşmanlığı hedeflemişti.

Tunus'taki protesto gösterileri öncesindeki tutumlara rağmen, Mısırlılar Mısır'daki ana meydanlarda ve esas olarak Kahire'deki meydanlarda toplanarak protesto gösterilerini başlattılar. Bununla birlikte, ana muhalefet aktörlerinin, İslamcıların ve liberallerin katılımı, spontane gelişen olaylar, radikal sosyal ve politik değişimlere yol açan önemli bir devrim haline geldi. Bu sosyal ve siyasi dönüşümler, bugüne kadar Mısır sosyal ve politik sahnesinde görülmemiş bir etkiye sahipti.

2011'deki devrim sürecinde, Mısır'daki başlıca dini kurumlarının rolleri vurgulanmış ve çoğu Mısırlı tarafından bu dini kurumlar dikkate alınmıştır. İlginçtir ki, bu kurumlar tartışmalı ve ilginç protestolara karşı rejimi desteklediler. El-Ezher Şeyhi Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, *"Rejim tarafından kabul edilen bütün düzenlemelere rağmen gerçekleşen protestolar kaosa sebep olacaktır ve bu dinen yasaktır"* dedi. Papa'nın tavrı da aynı minvaldeydi: *" Sayın Cumhurbaşkanı'ndan, çıkan olaylara derhal müdahale etmesi ve Sayın Ömer Süleyman'ın*

başkan yardımcısı olarak görevlendirilmesini rica ediyoruz. Başkanıma, teşekkür ediyor ve bu olayların ortasında benim ve halkımın desteğinin onunla beraber olduğunu ifade ediyorum. Tanrım, Mısır'ın barış ve düzenini korumak için ona güç versin."

Her iki din müessesesi Mübarek rejimini sonuna dek desteklemesine karşın, protestolarla ilgili tutumları Mübarek'in 11 Şubat 2011'deki askeri konseyinden (SCAF) sonra değişti. El-Ezher protestolara destek vermeye başladı. Devrimden sonra toplumun haklarını savunmaları daha açık ve belirgin hale geldi. Ortodoks Kilisesi, Mübarek'in devrilmesinden sonra, protestolarda aynı tavrı benimsedi. Bu tutumlar, esas olarak Müslüman Kardeşler ve Selefiler olmak üzere İslamcıların bölünmesiyle sona erdi. Bu bağlamda kaydedilmeye ve dile getirilmeye değer olan şey, 1952'den beri her iki kurumun da rejime karşı olan İslamcıların siyasi eğilimlerini ve yönelimlerini bertaraf etmek ve yasadışı hale getirmek amacıyla rejim tarafından sömürülmesidir.

Dahası, İslam, Demokrasi ve Sekülerizm arasındaki uyum, Orta Doğu'daki sömürge ve sömürge sonrası mirasa hitap etmek için yeni kapılar açmıştır. İslamcılığın, İslamcıların çoğuna göre İslam bir din ve siyaset olduğu için genel olarak laikliğe karşı olduğu iyi bilinmektedir. Avrupa emperyalizmi ve modernizmle bağdaşan bu tutum, son birkaç yüzyıl boyunca uzunca tartışılmıştır. Modernizm, demokrasi ve sekülerizm, Mısır ve Ortadoğu toplumlarında farklı ele alınmıştır. Bu, günümüze kadar derin etkileri olan sosyal ve politik ayrılıkları ortaya çıkardı. İslamcıların ortaya çıkışı ve Mısır'da iktidar kazanmadaki başarıları, Mübarek sonrası Mısır'daki siyasi dönüşümün gidişatı üzerinde toplumsal ve politik olarak etkili oldu.

Son olarak, Haziran 2013'te gerçekleşen askeri darbe, hem dini kurumların siyasetteki rolünü ortadan kaldırmak hem de İslamcıların saltanatını bitirmeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma aşağıdaki soruların cevaplarını bulmayı amaçlıyor:

1- İslam, Demokrasi ve Sekülerizm arasındaki karmaşık bağları nasıl ele alabiliriz?

2- Mısır dini kurumlarının siyasi rejimleri desteklemedeki rolünü ve Mısır siyasi alanındaki otoriterliği incelemek.

Bu çalışmanın bağlı olduğu ana argümanlar şunlardır:

1- Dini kurumların siyasi rolü ile demokrasi arasında ters bir ilişki vardır. Dini kurumların siyasi rolü azaldığı zaman, demokratikleşme başarılı olur ve aksi durumda demokratikleşme başarısızlığa uğrar.

2- Siyasi rejimi demokratikleştirmek için, başta el-Ezher ve Ortodoks Kilisesi olmak üzere birçok politik aktörün tarihsel rollerini tehdit eden siyasi alanın sekülerleştirilmesi gerekmektedir.

İslam, Demokrasi ve Sekülerizm

Üç kavram arasındaki açık bağları açıklamak için; İslam, demokrasi ve laiklik gibi olguların arasında iddia edilen karşıtlığın yerleşmesi için birçok ana argümana başvurmak gerekir. Birincisi, demokrasinin özü, insan haysiyetini bireysel ve toplumsal olarak yeniden tesis etmektir. İnsanlığa adalet, eşitlik ve özgürlük sağlamak için bireylere ve insan toplumlarına bu yaşamdaki yollarını belirleme hakkını vermektir.

İkincisi, bu durum, dinin anlaşılması, dinin bu hayattaki rolü ve Avrupa'daki Kilise'nin despotizmiyle birlikte geçen tarihsel olarak kargaşa, fedakârlıklar ve radikal dönüşümlerden sonra uygulandı. Bu, Avrupa tarihini yüzyıllar boyunca *karanlık çağlar* olarak nitelendirilmesine neden oldu.

Üçüncüsü ve en önemlisi, dini kurumların varlığı ister İslam, ister Hıristiyan, ister Budist olsun, gelişmiş ve sofistike her medeniyet için bir önemli bir unsurdur. Tarih, dini kurumların tüm medeniyetlerde var olduğunu ve İslam'ın bir istisna olmadığını göstermektedir. İslam'ın dini kurumları bilmediği ve Hıristiyanlık gibi diğer dinlerde histolojik olarak uygulanan rahipliği inkâr ettiği iddiası, aynı anda hem yararlı hem zararlı bir gerçekliktir. Başka bir deyişle, İslam, Avrupa'da var olan dini kurumların varlığını reddeder, ancak Mısır'daki El-Ezher, Tunus'taki Zeytona, İran'da bulunan Şii dini kurumlar ve başta Suudi Arabistan olmak üzere Körfez ülkelerindeki selefi dini kurumlar İslam'ın özünü temsil ettiğini iddia eder. Bu kurumlar sık sık absürt dini hükümler (fetva) yayınlamayı da ihmal etmezler. Bundan dolayı bu yanılsama açıklığa kavuşturulmalıdır ve bunu aşağıda ele alacağım.

İslâmla ilgili olarak, başlangıçtan bu zamana dek, temel tartışmalar olan üç ana politik dayanağı oluşturdu. Bu ilkeler Adalet, Eşitlik ve Özgürlük idi. Bu ilkelerin uygulanması,

peygamberin kendisi tarafından kapsamlı bir şekilde yürütülmüştür, bunun sayısız örneklerini gözden geçirmek için birçok kanıttan söz edilebilir. Buna ek olarak, tarihsel olarak Raşid halifeleri olarak bilinen din adamları da bu ilkeleri uyguladılar.

Yine de peygamber dini ve politik rolleri birleştirdi; Müslüman Alimler bunun peygamberin uzmanlık alanlarından biri olduğunu, yalnızca peygambere Allah tarafından verildiği şeklinde yorumladılar. Alimler, peygamberin geleneklerine dayanan davranışlarını, siyasi hareketlerini, dini emirlerini ve insanın doğuştan gelen özellikleri arasında ayrım yapmışlardır; ve onlar peygamberin ilahi dini rolü ile onun insani niteliği, lider, yargıç ve sosyal reformcu arasındaki farkları ortaya koydular.

Bu argümanlar İslami teokrasi gibi İslam tarihini ve felsefelerini çevreleyen sayısız iddiaları reddediyor. İki önemli örnek bu fikri destekliyor:

a) Peygamber veda hutbesinde, insanların eşitliğini şöyle ifade eder: *"Tüm insanlık Âdem ve Havva'dır. Bir Arap'ın Arap olmayanlara karşı bir üstünlüğü yoktur, Arap olmayanın da bir Arap'a üstünlüğü yoktur, beyazın siyah üzerine üstünlüğü yoktur, siyahın da beyaz üzerine üstünlüğü yoktur; üstünlük ancak takvadadır."*

b) İkinci halife şöyle der; *Her ikiside özgür ve eşit doğmuşken, biri diğerini nasıl köle yapabilir?*

İslam'ın özünü siyasi bir tasfiye ve demokrasiyi de toplumları yönetmeye yönelik bir siyasi araç olarak kıyaslarsak İslam, demokrasinin sahip olduğu aynı ilkelere sahiptir. İslam ve Demokrasinin çeliştiği iddiası, birer saplantıdır ve yapaydır.

Sekülerizm ve İslam arasındaki çelişkiyle ilgili olarak, böyle bir iddianın kusurlarına bakmak gerekir. İslam'ın özü, Kuran'a, Peygamberin geleneğine ve hatta Peygamberin haleflerinin uygulamalarına dayanarak otokratik devletlerden ve varlıklardan bireyleri ve toplumları özgürleştirmek İslam literatüründe çok iyi bilinen ve algılanan bir gerçektir. İslam bireye, insan hakları, herhangi bir dine inanma ve arzu ettikleri yasallığı takip etme hakkı vermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

İslam'daki yasal boşlukların İslami terminolojiyle doldurulduğunu iddia etmek yanlıştır. Gerçek olan, İslam'ın önceki medeniyetlerde var olan yasalara radikal dönüşümler ve modifikasyonlar yaptığıdır. Diğer bir deyişle, daha önce bahsedilen ana ilkeler; adalet, eşitlik ve özgürlük, İslam'ın gelişmesi sırasında mevcut yasal sistemleriyle başa çıktığı öncül

ilkelerin olduğu yerlerdir. İslam, Roma devleti ya da Fars devleti gibi yıkılmış ve kurumsallaşmış devletlerin meşruiyetlerini reddetmedi, fakat onları, tüm insanlık için İslam'ın kurduğu ilkeleri karşılamak üzere değiştirdi.

Müslüman toplumlarda ve Avrupa bağlamında dini kurumların doğasındaki temel farklılık, İslam'ın kurumlarının tüm insanlık için evrensel olan temel ilkelere olan bağlılıktır. Her dini kurum Hristiyan, Budist, vb., bu ilkelerin uygulanmasını sosyal bağlamda kabul etmeyi reddeder, devletin elindeki yetkiler de, hatta devletin kendisi de Avrupa Kilisesi'ne benzeyen bir araç haline gelir. Daha sonra bu sapkınlığın, dindarlık olduğu iddia etmek onlar için, bir zorunluluk ve gerekliliktir.

Son olarak, sekülerizmin özünün İslam'da en başından beri var olduğunu söyleyebilirim. Bu durum, yani bu sekülerizm biçimi, birey ya da akıl üzerinde herhangi bir otokratik yönetimi empoze etmeme, insanı herhangi bir otoriteden kurtarmaya ve İslam'ı bir inanç sistemi olarak reddetmiş olsa bile onların dinleri de dahil olmak üzere tüm yaşam ayrıntılarını seçme haklarını geri vermeyi kabul eden bir laiklik biçimiydi. İlginçtir ki, İslam bu sekülerleşme sürecini işlemesi için yeterli yasallığı vermiş ve ana amaçlarına ulaşmak için bir din olarak insanın evrensel siyasi değerlerini veya ilkelerini bir araya getirecek imkanları sağlamaya çalışmıştır.

İslam ile sekülerizm arasındaki iddia edilen çelişki, gerçeklerin çarpıtılmasıdır ve her ikisinin özü aynıdır. Benim düşünceme göre, Avrupa sömürgeciliği ve Müslüman toplumlardaki sonuçları ile ilişkili bir sosyal ve siyasi fenomen olan İslamcılık ile insanlığın bu dünyadaki var oluşu ve devamı için temel prensipler ortaya koyan bir din olarak İslam'ı birbirinden ayırmak önemlidir.

Daha önce bahsettiğimiz tüm görüşlere göre, iki önemli yeni kavramdan bahsedebilirim; **rasyonel sekülerizm** ve **kibirli sekülerizm**. **Rasyonel sekülerizm**, İslam'ın temel siyasi ilkeleriyle örtüşen ve bütünleşen demokrasinin temel ilkelerine göre, siyasi alanlardaki dini inançların aşırı varlığı arasında ayrım yapan bir laiklik biçimidir. Adalet, Eşitlik ve özgürlük gibi temel ilkeleri kullanır ve onları politika yapma, karar verme ve yasallık için önde gelen ilkeler olarak görür. İkinci tür sekülerizm, **kibirli sekülerizm ise** belirli bir Batı sekülerizmini zorlayan ve medeni ve iyi niyetli bir toplum inşası için zorunlu olan adalet, eşitlik ve özgürlük gibi temel ilkeleri ihmal eden bir sekülerizm biçimidir

Önceki tanımlara göre, Batı sekülerizmi Batı terminolojisine uygun olarak sömürgecilik döneminde ve hatta sömürge sonrası dönemde de Ortadoğu'da ve Üçüncü Dünya'da **rasyonel sekülerizm ve kibirli sekülerizm** olarak uygulanmıştır. Müslüman toplumlar da dahil olmak üzere Ortadoğu toplumlarının deneyimledikleri ve tanık olduklarını biçim ise kibirli sekülerizmdir.

Bu tür bir sekülerizmin uygulanması; bazı durumlarda demokrasi adına, Batı Avrupa ve Amerikan üstünlüğü ve hegemonyası sağlamak için dünyanın bu kısmının sosyopolitleri arasında azgelişmişliği ve parçalanmayı sürdürmeyi amaçlayan Batı patentli otoriter rejimler tarafından desteklenmiş ve onaylanmıştır. Bu iddia, günümüz krizleri ve Mısır, Tunus, Suriye, Yemen ve daha önce ABD'nin Irak'a girmesi için sözde Arap Baharı'nın yıkıcı sonuçlarıyla kolayca anlaşılabilir.

El Ezher ve Mısır Ortodoks Kilisesi Karşılaştırması

El-Ezher ve Ortodoks Kilisesi'ni dinsel kökenden dolayı karşılaştırmak zor olsa da, her iki kurumun siyasi rolünü ele almak için gereklidir. Her iki dini kurum da Mübarek rejimini protestolara karşı desteklemiştir. Her iki dini kurum da Mübarek'in devrilip Mursi'nin seçilmesi sürecinde etkili bir rol oynamıştır. Her iki dini kurum da 2013 yılında tekrar siyasal alana giren askeri müdahaleyi desteklemiştir. Ve her iki kurum da 2014 ve 2018 yıllarında Mısır cumhurbaşkanı olarak seçilecek savunma bakanını desteklemiştir. Her iki din kurumu da Papa'nın yaptığı gibi açık bir şekilde olsun ya da Rabi'a olayları sırasında ve sonrasında Şeyh el-Ezher Şeyhinin yaptığı gibi zımni bir şekilde insan haklarına yönelik herhangi bir ihlale karşı duyarsız kalarak rejime ve liderine olan desteklerini ifade etmiştir. Bu alanda, herhangi bir araştırma yapılmadığından, ki bu çalışmanın önemini de ortaya koymaktadır, dini kurumların siyasi rolünü karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde anlamak gerekir.

1952'de Cumhuriyet'in Kuruluşundan önce El-Ezher ve Ortodoks Kilisesi

Bu çalışma, Muhammed Ali ve hanedanından beri dini kurumların yaşadığı dönüşümlere bir anlayış getirmeye çalışmaktadır. Her iki kurumun da 1952'de cumhuriyet ilan edinceye kadar o tarihten itibaren maruz kaldığı dönüşümleri incelemek ve ele almak gerekmektedir. Her iki kurumun da Arap Baharı'nda ve günümüze kadar yürüttüğü rolü incelerken, bu dönemin tarihsel geçmişi Mısır siyasi alanında her iki kurumun şekillenmesinde oldukça önemlidir. Muhammed Ali ve hanedanı, ülkeyi Batı modernizmine ve sekülerizmine göre

modernleştirmeyi istediğinden, ulus-devlet inşası tüm bu çabalar için bir araçtı. Bu girişim, dini kurumların rollerinin radikal dönüşümleri ile birlikte otoriter politik eğilimlerle birlikte ilerlemiştir.

Mısır Ortodoks Kilisesi ile ilgili olarak, siyasi rolü ***politik teolojisindeki*** köklü değişikliklere bağlı olarak önemli düzeyde değişmiştir. Kavramsal olarak, ***politik teoloji*** iki kavramı ifade eder: ***teoloji*** ve ***siyaset***. Bu, dini inancın nihai olarak kilisenin Mısır bağlamında en önemli dini kurumlardan biri olarak üretilmesi için politik ideolojiyle iç içe olmasını ifade etmektedir. Her iki kavram da Kilise'nin siyasi eğilimlerinin, Kilisenin siyasi teolojisini üreten sosyal, politik ve dinsel bağlamlarla dolu bir ortamda oluşturulduğunu doğrulamaktadır. Bu elbette, bu bağlamların dinamiklerini ve arka planlarını ve bunların birbirleriyle nasıl karşılıklı olarak etkileştiklerini anlaşılmasını gerektirmektedir. Bu durum, bu tür bağlamları, siyasi teolojinin yükseldiği çevrelerinden ayırmayı imkânsız kılar. Bu bağlamlar: ***tarihsel bağlam, dini bağlam, politik bağlam ve sosyal bağlam***.

Mısır'ın Müslümanlar tarafından fethi ve Roma egemenliğinden kurtuluşu Kıptiler için yeni bir dönemin başlangıcını temsil etmektedir. Mısır, Bizans Romalılarının yönetiminden Müslümanların yönetimine geçtikten sonra Mekke'den sonra dini başkent olan Medine'nin el-Munevvere liderliğinde radikal bir değişime uğramıştır. Bu tarihsel olaylar Hıristiyan Kıptileri için derin bir yarayı temsil ediyordu. Birçoğu Müslüman oldu ve Arap kabileleri ile Mısır Kıpti arasında etkileşim ortaya çıkmaya başladı. Sonuç olarak, Kıpti Hıristiyanlar *ahl el-Dhimmah* olarak Müslümanların egemenliği altında dini bir azınlık haline geldi.

Bu durum, Hıristiyan Kıptilerinin Müslümanların koruması altında ve inançlarına, kiliselerine ve dini kutsal alanlarına saygı gösterilmesine rağmen boyun eğmesini ve cizye ödemesini gerektiriyordu. Bu, Kilisenin çeşitli dinsel tepkileriyle sonuçlandı. Kilise'yi yeniden kurumsallaştırmak ve özellikle Mısır toplumunda Hıristiyan cemaatinden kalanları korumak bunlardan bazılarıydı.

Ayrıca Muhammed Ali'nin kökeni son yüzyılda etnik eğilimlerin varlığını da beraberinde getirdi. Bu dönemin en önemli sonuçlarından biri, Kıpti toplumun rönesansıydı. İslamın fethinden bu yana ilk kez Kıpti Hıristiyanlar 1855 yılında Khedive Sa'eed döneminde başlamış Mısır siyasetinin önemli aktörlerinden biri olmaya başlamasıdır. Hıristiyan Kıptilerin Mısır, Hıristiyan, Orta Doğulu olarak pekiştirilmiş farklı kimliklere sahip olmasına rağmen, 19. yüzyılın arifesinde, İngiliz işgali sırasında Firavun eserlerinin arkeolojik keşifleri, Kilise ve Hıristiyan Kıptilerin milli duygularının yeşermesine yol açtı. Bu keşifler,

Firavundan gelen köklere sahibi olma duygusunu ve Kıpti Hıristiyanlarının kendilerini ulusun sahipleri olarak tanımlamasını beraberinde getirmiştir (Zeidan, 2007, p. 56).

İlginçtir ki, Avrupa sekülerizminin kabul edilmesi ve Avrupa modernizmine dayanan devlet inşa edilmesi – ulus-devlet – Kiptilerin ve Ortodoks Kilisesi'nin sosyal statüsünü yükseltmedi. Muhammed Ali, , Mısır'da Hıristiyanlarla ilgili olarak, Osmanlı usulünü kullandı ve *millet sistemini* uyguladı. Bu durum aslında modernizmin ve Muhammed Ali'nin taklit ettiği Avrupalı ulus-devleti kavramlarının tanımlanmasında derin bir sorunsal meseleyi temsil ediyordu: toplumu parçalara ayıran ve hatta daha sonra İngiliz siyasetinin meşhur politikasına dayanarak sömüren bir politika: *böl ve yönet.*

(1882- 1950) arasındaki dönemin, Kilisenin Hıristiyan topluluğunun ana savunucusu ve tek temsilcisi olarak siyasi arenaya çıkma başarısı nedeniyle Kilise'nin sosyal ve politik alanda katılımının en değerli dönemi olarak kabul edilir. Bu durum Hristiyanların Müslüman toplumuna ve devlete olan bağlılıktan kurtulması ve eşit sosyal ve politik aktör olarak geri dönmesidir (Zeidan, 2007).

Kilise'nin statüsündeki bu kökten dönüşümünü kanıtlayan husus, Kilise'nin dini ve siyasi rolünü yüzyıllar boyunca ayıran dindar Hıristiyanlar üzerindeki zaferinden hemen sonra 1919 devriminin din adamları tarafından resmî olarak desteklenmesidir. Bu durum özellikle devlet karşısında Hıristiyan cemaat temsilinin tekelleştirilmesindeki büyük değişimi temsil etmiş ve bu da geçen yüzyılda İslamcılığın yeniden dirilmesi ile derinleşen ve şu ana kadar süregelen bir değişikliktir. İslamcılığa dönük bu tarz siyasi ve sosyal yabancılaşma, ki bu Batı sömürgeciliğine bir epifenomendir, Sa'd Zaghlool tarafından yönetilen diğer liberal ve laik hareketin varlığına rağmen 1920'lerde Müslüman Kardeşler'in kurulmasıyla kök salmıştır (Purcell 1998; Philipp 1988).

Sonuç olarak kilise, tüm bu anlaşmazlıkları ve Mısır toplumundaki parçalanma ve bölünmeleri, İslam'ın Mısır'da yabancı ve farklı bir unsur olduğuna olan kendi dini inancına bağlamıştır (Philipp 1988, 383). Bu süreç, kilisenin bağımsızlıktan sonra devlete bağlılığını sağlayan 1952 devrimi ile sona erdi (p. 385).

El-Ezher de Arap Baharı'na kadar siyasi ve sosyal rolünü şekillendiren radikal dönüşümlere tanık oldu. Her ne kadar el-Ezher alimleri 1806'da Sultanın Muhammed Ali'yi Selanik'e göndermeye karar verdikten sonra Muhammed Ali'ye destek verseler de bu ilişkilerini sürdüremediler. Alimler ve Muhammed Ali arasındaki gerginlikler, alimlerin İngiliz işgaline

karşı desteklerini sunmalarıyla başladı. Muhammed Ali, din adamlarının yaklaşan savaşta din adamlarının herhangi bir rol oynamasına müsaade etmedi, bu da din alimlerinin zamanla marjinalleşmesine yol açtı. İslam kurumu olarak el-Ezher'in ve alimlerinin siyasi teolojisi değişmeye ve İslam'ın temel ilkelerinden ayrılmaya başladı (Goldschmidt, 2008).

Muhammed Ali, daha önce Fransız müdahalesine direnme konusundaki Makram'ın rolü nedeniyle, kendisinin Mısır'daki politikalarına karşı çıkan Ömer Makram'a verdikleri desteği fark ettikten sonra alimleri parçalamaya çalıştı. Muhammed Ali, Napolyon'un yaptığı benzer stratejiyi benimsedi. Makram'ın yenmek için bazı alimleri kendi tarafına çekerek Makram ve Halefleri arasında bölünme yaratmaya çalıştı. Muhammed Ali ve halefleri, hükümdara ve Avrupa eğitim modellerine sadık olan kişileri yönetime atayarak bu kişileri bir ölçüde sadık hale getirdiler (Gesink, 2010).

Geleneksel orta çağ Müslüman dini ve öğrenme kurumlarına benzer şekilde, el-Ezher, modern eğitim tekniklerineden ve modern eğitimin karakteristik-bürokratik yeniliklerinden uzaktı (Nakissa, 2014). Bu nedenle, Muhammed Ali, Batı eğitim sistemini ve tarzını benimsediğinde, el-Ezher'in modern çağa uymaması nedeniyle, Ezher mezunu olmayan kişilerle bu alandaki boşluğu doldurdu (Ali, 1986). Bilim adamları, çıkarlarının etrafında parçalı ve gruplaşmış duruma gelmiş ve toplumu adalet ve eşitliğe doğru yönlendirme hususundaki toplumsal rollerini ihmal etmişlerdi ayrıca devam eden siyasi olaylara dönük tutumları da kendi aralarındaki iç muhalefeti gösteriyordu.

El-Ezher'i yeniden düzenlemek için birçok reform girişiminin varlığına rağmen, siyasi otorite bu reform girişimlerini engellemeye çalıştı. Bu da istikrarsızlığın üstesinden gelmek için çeşitli düzenlemeler yapılıncaya kadar periyodik olarak iniş ve çıkışlarla el-Ezher'de dalgalanmalara neden olmuştur.

El-Ezher'in evrenin algısı ve Muhammed Ali'nin düşüncelerini esas alıp diğer düşüncelerin terk edilmesi, el-Ezher'in bozulmasının çok önemli bir nedenidir. El-Ezher ulusal bir Mısır unsuruna dönüştü, her ne kadar bu değiştirilmeye çalışılsa da başarısız olundu. Bu yöndeki ilk adımlar 1860'ların başında atıldı; bir asır geçmesine rağmen, el-Ezher sonunda Orta çağ karakterini kaybetti ve ulus-devleti meşrulaştırmak için tasarlanmış bir kuruma dönüştü. Bu da sonuç olarak el-Ezher'in siyasi bir karakter almasına ve "alimlerin daha sonra Mısır siyasetine katılımlarını artırmasına neden oldu" (Hatina, 2009, p. 112).

1952'den Arap Baharı'na kadar El-Ezher ve Ortodoks Kilisesi

1952 devrimi, her iki dini kurumun rolünü Ocak 2011'de Arap Baharına sürecinde de etkili olacak şekilde radikal ve derin sosyal ve siyasal değişikliklere neden oldu. İlginçtir ki, Cumhuriyet ilanından bu yana her rejim, çıkarlarına göre sosyal, siyasi ve dini bağlamları şekillendirmek için kendine özgü bir nitelik ve karakteristik arz etmektedir. 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında önceki tüm rejimlerin ortak karakteri, askeri elitlerin devlet yapıları üzerindeki hegemonyası ve siyasi yönelimlerini uygulamak için yukarıdan-aşağıya bir hiyerarşi kurmasıdır (Skocpol, 1985, pp. 7-8). Devlet yönelimlerindeki tüm bu dalgalanmalar arasında, her iki dini kurumu da her rejimin temel özelliklerine göre davranışlarını etkileyen farklı bağlamlar tecrübe etmiştir (Afıfı, 1999).

Arap Milliyetçiliğinin ortaya çıkışı, devrimden sonra Ortodoks Kilisesi'nin, siyasal yalnızlığını ve devletin boyunduruğu altına girmesiyle birlikte çeşitli huzursuzluklara neden olmuştur (Ibrahim, 1998, p. 234). İlk olarak, devrim liderlik konseyinde Hristiyan Kıptileri temsil eden kimse yoktu. İkincisi, okul müfredatında İslam öğretilerini birleştirmek ve kilisenin okulları üzerinde devlet gözetimini empoze etmeyi amaçlayan Nasır'ın eğitim politikalarıdır (Povery, 2013, p. 68). Üçüncüsü, hükümet ve hatta kamu alanında kıpti kilisesi mensuplarının düşük temsiliydi. Nasser rejimi sırasında kilise siyasi olarak sessiz kalmayı benimsedi ve daha çok dini konulara odaklandı. Kilisenin bu yönelimi, 1952 Devrimi'nden sonra rejimin rakiplerinin siyasi haklarına ve hatta siyasi ve sosyal etkilerine el koyan siyasi otoriterliğin bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu, elbette kilise de dahil olmak üzere tüm siyasi aktörleri etkilemiştir (Philipp, 1988, p. 385).

Nasır'ın ölümü ve sonrasında Pan-Arabizm projesinin çöküşüyle siyasi ve toplumsal alanda İslamcıların güçlenmesine yol açtı. Bu dönüşüm kilisenin varoluşsal savaşına dahil olması için etkin hale gelmesini gerektirmiştir (Leenders, 2010, p. 12). İslamcıların yeniden dirilişi ve hatta anayasanın değiştirilmesi, tekrardan siyaset sahnesinde etkin olmak için Kilisenin adaletsiz olan sosyal ve siyasi konumunu değiştirmeye zorlamıştır (Delhaye, n.d., p. 73). Ayrıca Sadat döneminde tahrik edilen mezhepsel farklılıklar; *"mümin (inaçlı) Başkan" gibi*; Hıristiyan topluluğunun sosyal ve siyasi olarak yalnızlaşmasına yol açtı. Aynı zamanda *"Müslümanların adaletsiz ve mezhepçi devleti"* karşısında kilisenin tek temsilci olduğu fikrini beraberinde getirdi. Bu dönüşüm, kilisenin Batı ve ABD politikalarına daha yakın olmasını sağladı.

Yaklaşık otuz sene süren Mübarek dönemi sosyal, siyasi ve ekonomik dönüşümlerle dolu olmasından ötürü oldukça önemlidir. Bu nedenle, Mübarek'in devlet başkanlığına gelmesinden sonra kilise ve rejim arasındaki ilişkiler kökten değişmiştir. Kilise liderleri, Mübarek rejimi hiyerarşisi ile uzun ve güçlü ilişkiler kurdular (Rowe, 2015, p. 237). Bu da, devlet karşısında Hıristiyan Kıptilerin faaliyetleri ile meşgul olan kilise dini liderlerini ortaya çıkardı. Bu değişim, Müslümanlar ve Hıristiyan Kıptiler arasındaki ilişkileri olumsuz yönde etkiledi ve her çatışmayı mezhepsel bir farklılık haline getiren Kıptiler tarafından ayrımcılık nedeni sayıldı (Povery, 2013, p. 75).

Güvenlik güçleri dini liderleri, Hıristiyan Kıpti topluluğunun tek sorumlu aktörleri olarak değerlendirdi. (Povery, 2013). Aynı zamanda bu liderler, mezhepsel gerginlikleri toplumsal olarak derinleştiren herhangi bir siyasi olaya karşılık olarak sade dini bir söylem geliştirdiler. Bu dini liderler, İslami hareketlere ve esas olarak Müslüman Kardeşler'e yönelik rejim ile aynı siyasi söylemi benimsediler. Rejim, İslami hareketleri Mısır toplumunu bastırmak için bahane olarak istismar ederken aynı şekilde kilise liderleri de Hıristiyan Kıpti topluluğunu bastırmak için bu çatışmaları istismar etmiştir.

El-Ezher'e ilişkin olarak, 1952 devriminden itibaren, Mısır hükümetleri el-Ezher maliyesini kontrol ederek hükümet politikalarının meşrulaştırılmasında bir araç olarak kullandı. Cemal Abdul Nasıl, el-Ezher'in etkisinin yeterince farkında olduğu için iç ve dış siyasi hedeflerini gerçekleştirmek amacıyla el-Ezher'i kontrol etmeye çalışmıştır. Sonuç olarak, rejimin içteki başlıca muhaliflerin ve Müslüman Kardeşler'in etkisini dengelemek ve Arap ve Müslüman dünyada Mısır'ın etkisini genişletmek için el-Ezher'i baskı altına almıştır (Moustafa, 2000).

Sadat'ın el-Ezher ile ilişkisi ise tamamen farklı bir bağlam üzerine inşa edilmiştir. Sedat, meşrulaştırıcı işlevi için Ezher'i daha fazla kullandı. Arap sosyalizminden uzaklaşarak solcu Nasırcı etkiden kurtulmak için siyasi hayatta birtakım özgürlükler getirdi. Bu nedenle alimlere, kurumun katı çerçevelerinden kurtulmaları, kendilerini ifade etmeleri ve farklılaşmaları için görece daha fazla imkanlar sağladı. Sedat, Ezher alimlerinin 1967 yenilgisinden duydukları büyük memnuniyet duygularını siyasi otoritesini güçlendirmek ve Nasırcıları yenmek için kullandı (Zeghal, 2016, pp. 380-381). Sadat, selefinin Körfez ülkeleri, özellikle Suudi Arabistan ile ilgili stratejiyi değiştirerek önceki yönetimin aksine Mısır ve Suudi Arabistan arasındaki bağları ve ilişkileri güçlendirdi. Bu durumda, Suudi Arabistan'ın Mısır'ın iç siyasetinde daha fazla rol oynamasına yol açmış, el-Ezher de bu tür tezahürlerin bir parçası olmuştur (Hibbard, 2010).

Mübarek rejimi, Sadat döneminin bir sonucu olarak aşırı İslamcılığa dönük önemli bir strateji izlemiştir. İslami hareketlerinin yasallığının zayıflatılması için resmi dini araçlar kullanılmıştır (Wickham, 2002). Bu dönüşüm 1980'lerde hükümet islamcılara karşı kendi İslami itibarını kurmak için alimlere giderek daha fazla bağımlı olduğu zaman gerçekleşmiştir. El-Ezher Mübarek döneminde destek görürken, El-Ezher'in ve alimlerinin itibarı bu rejim desteğinden olumsuz etkilenmiştir. Hükümet, el-Ezher alimlerinin meşrutiyetini aşındığını ve Müslüman Kardeşler'in revizyon girişimleri için destek istendiğinde de bu aşınmanın daha fazla arttığını anladı (Moustafa, 2000). Mısır hükümeti, el-Ezher kurumunun siyasi amaçlarına boyun eğmesini sağlamak ve rejimin iç, bölgesel ve küresel eğilimlerini onaylamak için uzun vadeli politikalar yürüttü.

2011 yılından bugüne kadar El-Ezher ve Ortodoks Kilisesi

2011 yılındaki ayaklanmalar, her iki dini kurumun siyasi davranışlarını kontrol eden unsurları tehdit etmiştir. Bu siyasi bağlamda ana aksiyom, İslamcılardan korunmak için kilise ile rejim arasındaki derin müttefikti. Bu nedenle, kilise genel olarak İslamcılığa ve diğer tarafta mezhep karşıtı Müslüman Kardeşler'e karşı devlet söylemini benimsemiştir. Ayrıca, Kilise ve rejim arasındaki siyasi ittifak, kilisenin 2010 Parlamento seçimlerini boykot etmeyi reddettiği ve Milli Demokrat Partisi'nde seçilecek Hıristiyan Kıpti isimlerinin listesini sunduğunda da söz konusuydu. Ortodoks Kilisesi, ayaklanmaları Mübarek rejiminin bir parçası olarak kendilerine dönük varoluşsal bir tehdit olarak algıladı. Sonuç olarak, kilise hiyerarşisi, devrim sonrası dönemde de Hıristiyan Kıpti topluluğunun konumunun korunması için de faaliyetlerde bulundu (Guirguis, 2012, p. 2).

Mübarak'in devrilmesinden sonra,. kilise papazlığının ve hiyerarşisinin marjinalleşmesi ve farklı Hıristiyan Kıpti temsilcileri ortaya çıktı. Bununla birlikte, kilise, yalnızca devlet için değil, Hıristiyan Kıpti topluluğu için de varoluşsal bir tehdit unsuru olan Müslüman Kardeşler'in ve İslamcıların ortaya çıkışını, devrim sonrası olaylarda siyasi eğilimlerini ve yönelimlerini meşrulaştırmak için istismar etmiştir.

Bu nedenle, kiliseye tarihsel siyasi ve dini rakip olan Müslüman Kardeşler'in ve İslamcıların güçlenmesi, hegemonya ve farklı dinsel kimlikler için kilise tarafından kullanılmıştır. Bu nedenle, siyasi dönüşüm Hıristiyan Kıptilerin varlığını ve bu kritik mezhep meselesinin devrim sonrası Mısır'da yaratılabileceği belirsizliği gidermek için yeni kapılar açtı (A.

Mahmoud & et al, 2013, p. 2). Kilise dini liderleri mezhepsel farklılıkları kullanarak mezhepsel bir söylem üretti ve devrimden sonra İslamcıların ilerleyişinden korkan Hıristiyan Kıptilerin bu korkularını daha da artırdı.

Mezhepsel söylemin temel argümanı, Müslüman Kardeşler'in 1929'da kurulmasından itibaren Hıristiyan Kıptilere karşı siyasi terörizmle gizlenen mezhepsel dini terörizm uyguladığıdır (Weeken, n.d., p. 58). Dahası, devrimden sonra *Selefilerin* elde ettiği büyük güç, *Selefilerin* Hristiyanlara karşı mezhepsel beyanları ve *Şeriat'ın* uygulanması nedeniyle Hristiyanların mezhepsel duygularını daha da derinleştirdi (Rowe, 2015, p. 5). Bu nedenle, Kilisenin dini önderleri İslamcıların anayasal referandumda mezhepsel bir söylem benimsemesi ve seçim sonuçlarını *"Sandık Zaferi"* olarak adlandırması nedeniyle kışkırtıcı bir tutum takındılar (Shehata, n.d., p. 8). Bu düşmanca siyasi söylemler, hem Hıristiyanlar hem de Müslümanlar tarafından daha derin ve kronik mezhepsel durumlar yaratmıştır. Ortodoks Kilisesi, on yıllar boyunca izlenen siyasi teolojiyle çelişecek bir biçimde, Müslüman Kardeşlerin ve İslamcıların önde gelen aktörler olduğu derin dalgalı bir siyasi ve sosyal dönüşümün parçası olmaya başladı. Bu nedenle, devrimden sonra karşılıklı anlayışlara ulaşmak son derece zor ve hatta imkansız görünüyordu, bu da tüm demokratik sonuçların reddedilmesine yol açtı (Guirguis, 2012, p. 19).

Papa Tawadros'un, göreve geldikten sonra kilisenin siyasete müdahale etmediğini ve rolünün sadece dini ve manevi olduğunu tekrar eden beyanlarına rağmen; Mursi'nin görevden alınmasına yol açan askeri bildirisine destek vermesi bu beyanlarla çelişmiştir (Shehata, n .d., p. 3). Böyle durumlarda, kilisenin 2013'teki siyasi dönüşümden önceki dayanaklarıyla 2011'deki ayaklanmalar sırasındaki rolünün çelişmesi kilisenin devrimci olayları en başından beri reddettiğini göstermektedir. Ortodoks Kilisesi, esas olarak, devlete karşı Hıristiyan Kıpti topluluğunun temsilini yeniden tekelleştirerek ve kilisenin dini ve siyasi rolünü ayırmaya çalışan herhangi bir Hıristiyan Kıpti sesini bastırarak bu siyasi dönüşümlerden ve olaylardan yararlanmıştır.

El-Ezher'in siyasi tutumları Arap Baharı'ndan bu yana iki ana aşamaya ayrılabilir: *Mübarek'in devrilmesinden sonra İslamcılarla yaşanan sürekli gerginlikler, ve Mursi'den sonra karşı devrimin desteklenmesi ve askeri darbenin desteklenmesi*. Mübarek'in devrilmesinden hemen sonra, olaylar karşısında el-Ezher, önceki duruşlarını değiştirdi ve siyasette daha fazla etkin olmaya çalıştı. Örneğin, el-Ezher İslami konularda hakem olmaya

ve parlamento seçimlerinde çoğunluğa ulaşmayı başaran İslamcıların ,özellikle de Müslüman Kardeşler ve Selefilere karşı dini rolü tekelleştirmeye çalıştı.

Devrimin sonrası siyasette belli bir yatıştırma söz konusu olmasına rağmen, el-Ezher ve İslamcılar arasındaki gerginlikler, özellikle de farklı El-Ezher alimlerinin el-Ezher Şeyhinin tarafını seçmeye çağırmasıyla tekrar tahrik edildi. Yine bazı gençlik hareketlerinin, Şeyh el-Ezher Şeyhinin sadece kendisini siyasetten izole etmesini değil, devam eden olaylara karışmaktan kaçınmasını talep ettiği zaman gerginlikler daha da arttı. Bu talepler aslında el-Ezher Şeyhinin bir yandan İslamcılar, liberaller ve laikçiler öte yandan İslamcılar ve el-Ezher arasındaki mevcut gerginliklerin çözümü için sürece karışmak istemesiyle ortaya çıktı.

Son olarak, Mübarek'in devrilmesinde sonra el-Ezher'in karşılaştığı zorluklar, el-Ezher'in demokratik dönüşümlere karşı resmi davranışları değiştirdi. Yeni seçilmiş Cumhurbaşkanı Muhammed Morsi, dini kurumlar için ciddi bir tehdit olarak algılandı. El-Ezher bağımsızlığını sürekli olarak savunuyordu ve yeni otorite tarafından uygulanabilecek herhangi bir baskıdan korunmak için yeni seçilmiş liderliğe doğrudan ve dolaylı bir meydan okumaya başladı. Bu tür gerginlikler arasında el-Ezher Şeyhinin, el-Ezher'in Müslüman Kardeşler'in kendilerini eritme ve çözülme çabalarına karşı oldukça dirençli olduğunu açıklaması da vardı.

El-Ezher ve Müslüman Kardeşler arasındaki çatışma Haziran ayında ve darbeden neredeyse birkaç hafta önce zirveye ulaştı. el-Ezher şeyhi, 30 Haziran 2013'te yaptığı konuşmada, el-Ezher'in, Mısır toplumunda Muhammed Mursi'nin seçilmesinden sonra ortaya çıkan sosyal ve siyasi anarşinin karşısında olduğunu ileri sürdü.

2013 darbesinden sonra el-Ezher tarafsızdı ve dini konulardaki birkaç durum dışında siyasi alanda herhangi bir müdahalede veya rejimle herhangi bir etkileşimde bulunmaktan kaçınmaya çalıştı. Ancak, Büyük Müftü ve Evkaf Bakanı, el-Ezher şeyhinden daha fazla siyasette daha fazla ön plana çıktı. El-Ezher'in böyle bir rol oynamaması için darbe liderleri tarafından marjinalize edilmişti ve aslında el-Ezher Şeyhş ve el-Ezher yöneticileri de, rejimin izin verdiğinden daha fazla siyasete müdahale edemeyeceklerini anladılar, aksi takdirde el-Ezher'in rejim tarafından daha fazla baskıya maruz kalacağını biliyorlardı.

Bununla birlikte, el-Ezher şeyhinin 2014'te Abdul Fattah El-Sisi seçiminden sonra dile getirdiği sözlü boşanma gibi farklı dini konular her ikisi arasındaki gerilimin devam ettiğini göstermekteydi. Aslında rejim, kendi sosyal ve politik konumunu meşrulaştırmak istediğinde el-Ezher'i kullanmaktadır. Bu, 2013'teki darbeden bugüne kadar çok sıklıkla oldu. Bununla

birlikte, darbeden sonra sosyal ve siyasi kutuplaşmanın sürekliliği nedeniyle el-Ezher'in sosyal ve politik olarak varlığı hiç denilecek kadar küçük ve donuktur.