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THE POLITICIZATION OF THE EGYPTIAN *SALAFIYYA*:
PRINCIPLED PARTICIPATION AND ISLAMIST COMPETITION
IN THE POST-MUBARAK ERA

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Introduction

Egypt's political system witnessed broad changes in 2011 that caused numerous domestic actors to reevaluate the benefits of participating in Egyptian politics. Among the groups overcoming their prior abstention from politics was the Salafi Trend. Due to the fact that the Salafis often couched their reasons for abstention in religious terms, many non-Salafi observers concluded that Salafis would refrain from participation in political life under all foreseeable circumstances. However, our research has found that the Salafis' abstention from politics was not based on any monolithic ideological prohibition of political activity in general. Rather, the Salafis believed Egypt's political system under President Hosni Mubarak was illegitimate and lacking in Islamic reference. According to the Salafis, participating in a non-Islamic system in which they had no opportunity to alter the rules of the game would have required them to make unacceptable compromises on basic Islamic principles, and thereby their Islamic identity. From these reasons for their prior abstention, we can identify the conditions under which Salafi political participation would be expected. *First*, the Salafis must believe that they can participate in a political system that does not require them to sacrifice on these basic Islamic principles. *Second*, they must perceive that they have the opportunity to measurably shape the political order to ensure that these principles are upheld.

In this paper we argue that Egyptian Salafis did have political inclinations prior to the Mubarak's departure in 2011, and that the establishment of political parties should not have been as unexpected as it was characterized to be. In addition, we argue that Egypt's 2011 uprising and Mubarak's subsequent exit from the Egyptian political scene constituted a political opening for the Salafis that met their two conditions for political participation. Firstly, the more open

political environment allowed the Salafis to articulate their political message relatively freely; Salafis were not forced by outside actors to self-censor or alter their rhetoric significantly. Secondly, for the first time in decades, the Egyptian constitution was open to renegotiation and newly elected parliamentarians would have a significant role in deciding who would draft the new document and what it would contain. The Salafis thus viewed this as an unprecedented opportunity to participate in a newly forming political system in such a way that they could significantly impact the political order while not having to compromise on their core Islamic principles. The Salafis altered their position towards political participation gradually, first sanctioning politics notionally, then deciding to support other Islamists for political office, then organizing independent political parties and ultimately sanctioning Salafis' own direct electoral contestation with the rest of Egypt's political actors.

The second half of this study examines the dynamics that characterized the Salafis behavior after they entered politics. Once the decision to politicize the trend was made, the Salafis immediately found themselves in a competitive electoral environment, which shaped their perceptions and decision-making. In this competitive environment, it was important to distinguish themselves from rival groups in society. This inevitably put them on a trajectory of direct competition with other groups participating in Egypt's new political order, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood. It is evident that the electoral competition that developed between the Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood was a continuation of decades of friction between the two groups; Salafis had criticized the Muslim Brotherhood under Mubarak for constantly sacrificing their Islamic principles for political gain in a system that was insufficiently Islamic. The main themes upon which the Salafis campaigned, and which they employed to distinguish themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood, were the Salafis' authenticity and consistency in adhering to their

Islamic principles. Having become a politicized trend, however, the Salafis most important campaign credentials have also become their greatest source of internal tension, as participating in a non-Islamic political system while trying to maintain these lofty principles has been a difficult balancing act for the Salafis. These tensions are evident from the Salafis' sometimes internally conflicting views on democracy, the role of women, and the place of liberals and secularists in government, as well as the fairness and legitimacy of the current political system in general.

We begin by discussing Salafi political ideology and the complex Salafi map in Egypt. Next, by looking at the statements of a number of prominent Salafi sheikhs and the actions of Salafi activists prior to the revolution, we show that Egyptian Salafis were indeed more political during the Mubarak era than many believed them to be. From there, we explore the 2011 Egyptian political opening, and how Salafis mobilized into political action in a fairly short period of time. We then explore the development of the competition between the Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood, including how the Salafis used the message of authenticity and principled participation to contrast themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood. We then examine the challenges the Salafis have faced in attempting to maintain "principled participation" in a non-Islamic political system, specifically investigating their conception of democracy, non-Islamic political actors, and the role of women in political life. Finally, we look at the challenges the Salafis are likely to face in the future as they attempt to maximize their impact on the political system while facing pressures from their base to maintain their Islamic principles.

Characterizing the Salafiyya

The cornerstone of Salafi creed is the concept of *tawhid*, or the unity of God. *Tawhid* is

based on three ideas – 1) there is one God, 2) God has supremacy over man in all matters, and 3) only God can be worshipped.¹ In order to preserve the fundamentals of tawhid, Salafis use only the Quran, Sunna, and the consensus of the companions of the Prophet as sources of Islamic guidance.² Any form of guidance outside of these three sources is considered dangerous human innovation (*bid'a*) that endangers the purity of *tawhid*. Rationalism, human logic, and non-Islamic influences are considered particularly damaging to the original message of Islam. As a result, Salafis treat differently two of the central methods used by most scholars of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), namely independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) and imitation (*taqlid*). *Ijtihad* refers to “the interpretation of a legal issue by a qualified jurist (*mujtahid*) using analogical or syllogistic reasoning.”³ Salafis reject independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) as a pillar for making a ruling in Islamic law (*shari'a*),⁴ while cautiously still permitting its use.⁵ This effectively makes the *Salafiyya* a religious trend that emphasizes textualist approaches to religious questions. Salafi views on imitation or *taqlid*, that is, “legal precedent in forming legal rulings,”⁶ are even less nuanced. Salafis reject *taqlid* outright, claiming that no intermediary between the Qur'an and the Sunna is necessary and that accepting the verdicts of scholars of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) without a concurrent explanation of the process which led to that conclusion betrays the textualist imperative they posit is essential.⁷ This orientation further reinforces the interest of Salafis in

¹ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006): 208-209.

² Wiktorowicz, 208-209.

³ “Ijtihad.” *Islamopedia Online Glossary*. 20 March 2011. <http://www.islamopediaonline.org/glossary/ijtihad> (12 April 2012).

⁴ Stéphane Lacroix, “Between Revolution and Apoliticism,” in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 61.

⁵ Debates among Salafis still continue over its permissibility due to the fact that it entails a personal effort, or *jihad* as its primary basis, even though *ijtihad* must be supported by the Qur'an or the Sunna.

⁶ “Taqlid.” *Islamopedia Online Glossary*. 20 March 2011. <http://www.islamopediaonline.org/glossary/taqlid> (12 April 2012).

⁷ Lacroix, 60.

using the *hadith* for finding answers to legal questions, and entails a rejection of the four canonical schools (*madhab*) of Islamic jurisprudence.⁸ Placing the Salafis ideologically, it is crucial to note Egyptian Salafis' great ideological interest in the *ahl al-Hadith* movement led by influential Islamic theologian Nasir al-Din al-Albani, who influenced a number of Egyptian Salafi scholars, including Abu Ishaq al-Huwayni, as a religious mentor.⁹

As a result, Salafis' sources of knowledge about Islamic practice and how to order society take their cues directly from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna*,¹⁰ and apply it to the questions before them without any mediation.¹¹ To the extent that Salafis' creed (*'aqida*) distinguishes them from other Muslims (and therefore, other Islamists), the principles that form the basis of this *'aqida* are relevant to examinations of Salafis' political behavior. As a religious trend, Salafis emphasize the paramount importance of abiding by these Islamic principles without compromise or equivocation. As a result, an ethos of protecting the community against malign external influences pervades Salafis' thinking on moral and political issues. It is in this context that concepts such as democracy, pluralism, and liberalism, which, it is argued, do not come directly from these sources, run into some difficulty, and require a level of ideological

⁸ Lacroix, 61. The schools are Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanafi, and Hanbali.

⁹ Jonathan Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt". *Post-Revolutionary Egypt: New Trends in Islam*. Jonathan Brown, Khaled Elgindy, Nathan J. Brown, Marina Ottaway. October 6, 2011. Washington, D.C.

¹⁰ "Sunna." *Islamopedia Online Glossary*. 20 March 2011. <http://www.islamopediaonline.org/glossary/sunna> (12 April 2012). "The deeds, utterances, rules, and tacit approvals of the Prophet Mohammad, as reported by his companions." "Sunna" March 20, 2011.

¹¹ Anecdotally, the importance of this was evident to the researchers when they attended an Islamic religious gathering of Salafis in Alexandria, led by a local cleric, on January 10, 2012. Speaking directly on moral issues, the cleric continually cited the textual basis for his position after each point he made during the lecture. This is a demonstration of the preference of Salafis to interface directly with the sources of revelation (*al-'amal bi-l-dalil*) every instance where they wish to reach an Islamic opinion or judgment on a moral, religious, or political issue. See Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 42.

dynamism.¹² Thus, Sheikh Yasser Borhamy justified Salafis' participation in electoral politics not on the basis that the sovereignty of the people was a fundamental principle of human rights, but rather that the concept of consultation (*shura*) is one that is prescribed by the Qur'an.¹³ Still, as Quintan Wiktorowicz has argued, Salafi ideology is not monolithic and in and of itself does not predict Salafi political behavior. Rather, it is how Salafis interpret religious texts that shapes their political ideology.¹⁴

Wiktorowicz claims that Salafis can be divided into three categories based on political inclination: the purists, the politicians, and the jihadis. Purists focus on spreading the Salafi creed and "combating deviant practices." For purists, society is not yet sufficiently Islamic and thus political activity will only lead to corruption. The purists are against overt political action, and they choose to reform society at the individual level by calling on Muslims to emulate the prophet and reform the self by embracing the Salafi creed of fighting polytheism, human reason, and human desire.¹⁵ For purists, inviting individuals to Islam (*da'wa*), nurturing their Islamic education (*tarbiya*), and purifying them religiously (*tazkiyya*) should be the primary earthly focus of Muslims. The purists' view of politics as less important than these activities has been the predominant strain among Salafis throughout the Middle East until recently.¹⁶

¹² Any principle found in these philosophies is considered to be innovation (*bid'a*) unless it finds a textual basis in the Qur'an or the Sunna. *Bid'a* doctrines, including Salafis argue, push faithful Muslims off of the path of correct practice.

¹³ Ali Abd el-'Al, "al-Mawqif al-Salafy min al-Musharika al-Siyasiya fi Misr wa Tatwirat hatha al-Mawqif." *Yahoo: Maktoob blog*. 14 March 2012. <http://ali-abdelal.maktoobblog.com/1236493/> (4 April 2012). *see also*: Qur'an 42:38 "and who respond to [the call of] their Sustainer and are constant in prayer; and whose rule [in all matters of common concern] is consultation among themselves; and who spend on others out of what We provide for them as sustenance"

¹⁴ Wiktorowicz, 210.

¹⁵ Wiktorowicz, 217.

¹⁶ Nathan Brown, "Do the Salafis Really Want to Party?" *Abu Aardvark: A Blog by Marc Lynch*. 21 May 2008. <http://abuaardvark.typepad.com/abuaardvark/2008/05/nathan-brown-do.html> (30 March 2011).

The second strain Wiktorowicz describes is the *politicos*. *Politicos* follow the same essential creed as the purists, stressing the necessity to purify Islam by preserving the *tawhid*. However, they follow a different method of implementation or *manhaj*. *Politicos* criticize purists for being out of touch with the modern world and claim to have a better grasp of contemporary issues than the purists. Unlike the purists who have refrained from criticizing Muslim rulers, *politicos* have actively demonstrated their willingness to criticize Arab regimes for un-Islamic behavior, and believe that such political critiques are necessary for ensuring preservation of the *tawhid*. Without them, Muslim leaders might steer the community away from the *tawhid*.¹⁷ The last strain Wiktorowicz identifies is the *jihadis*, who believe that neither of the previous two strains fully understands the level of corruption and un-Islamic influence of Arab rulers today. For the *jihadis*, the only solution to correct this grievous situation is to remove leaders by force.¹⁸

While Wiktorowicz's three-category framework for describing Salafis may describe how they look in a semi-authoritarian environment, in which "political" activity is limited to criticizing the political leadership of the country from the outside, this frame cannot be transposed onto the contemporary Egyptian *Salafiyya* and the political scene in which currently exist. For decades, Egyptian Salafis might reliably have fit in the purist framework due to their abstention from political activity. However, in the aftermath of the revolution the majority of Egyptian Salafis supported political activity, either through voting or through direct participation. Nor can all Egyptian Salafis have been considered *politicos*. While some strains within the Egyptian *Salafiyya* launched criticisms against the Mubarak regime in the pre-2011 era, many did not. It was not until the January 2011 uprising that Egypt's Salafis reached a

¹⁷ Wiktorowicz, 222.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

consensus that allowed them to sanction active, vocal support of political participation. Thus, it seems that Egypt's Salafis were of a different sort, and their political behavior could not have been reliably predicted using Wiktorowicz's framework.

We have briefly stated above that Egypt's Salafi Trend is not a monolithic movement and that Salafis differed in the pre-2011 era in their views on political participation. To understand the Salafi trend in Egypt and the varying views on democratic participation and electoral politics, it is necessary to examine the Salafi Trend with a view to its component parts.

Mapping the Salafi Trend in Egypt

In contrast with Salafi movements elsewhere in the Middle East, comparatively little scholarly literature has focused on the complex religious current known in Egypt as *al-taiyyar al-salafi*, or the Salafi Trend.¹⁹ One of the first challenges of trying to map the pathway, ideology, and goals of this religious trend as it ventures into politics for the first time in Egypt is actually defining the borders of this religious community. In contrast to hierarchical, centralized non-Salafi organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood,²⁰ answering the question of “Who is a Salafi?” is more difficult. While the Brotherhood has a defined roster of “members” (complete with different classes of membership); has been bureaucratically and hierarchically institutionalized as a *single* organization for a period of decades; has a *single* authoritative leader (its General Guide),²¹ and is lay-led (and thus necessarily has a less prominent role for clerics).²²

The Egyptian *Salafiyya* does not exhibit any of these characteristics. The Arabic term “Salafi”

¹⁹ For a visual representation of the Salafi Trend's complexity in Egypt, see Diagram 1.

²⁰ It should be noted that scholars have explored the role of Salafi ideological influences on and *within* the Muslim Brotherhood. See Houssam Tammam, “The Salafization of the Muslim Brothers.” Marased. *Biblioteca Alexandrina* (2011).

²¹ Amani Maged, “Salafism: The Unknown Quantity.” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*. 18 May 2011.

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1047/eg40.htm> (16 February 2012).

²² Nathan Brown, Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (April 30, 2012).

refers merely to the followers of *al-salaf al-salih*—the righteous forefathers, i.e. the first generations of Islam. As a result, Salafi is appropriately a term of self-designation among Muslims who live their lives in accordance with the practices of the first generations. Nevertheless, there are still disagreements among Salafis about who is appropriately considered one.²³

As noted, Wiktorowicz argued that Salafis ultimately fall into the purist, politico, or jihadi camps. In the Egyptian context, the terrain is more complex. Some of these categories, which in the past have been thought of as mutually exclusive, in the Egyptian context, actually overlap. In Egypt, where the 2011 uprising has led to more open electoral contestation, the vast majority of Salafis, inasmuch as they no longer call for political abstention, can be said in some sense to have moved in a political direction. While in Wiktorowicz's frame politics' political activity merely consisted of speaking out on political issues, in the Egyptian context, we define political Salafis as those that have used pre-existing networks to directly contest elections; furthermore, these Salafis have justified this participation on religious grounds.²⁴ A second category, apolitical Salafis, have chosen not to compete in elections, but at the same time have refrained from condemning the elections or those who do choose to participate, on a religious basis. Finally, anti-political Salafis, consisting of a small minority of Salafis, protest political

²³ Gama'a al-Islamiyya has been called a semi-Salafi organization due to the fact that it "shares thoughts and practices similar to mainstream Salafism;" however, its unique history of employing violence towards its political goals and then renouncing these activities sets it apart from the main Salafi currents in Egypt. See Jonathan Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt". Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Also, Roel Meijer, "Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong as a Principle of Social Action," in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 191. Gama'a al-Islamiyya later went on to found the Building and Development (*Bin'a wa tanimiyya*) Party which joined the Salafi Islamic Alliance, as detailed *infra*.

²⁴ Some Salafis in the Arab World have embraced political activity in the form of electoral contestation. See Steve Monroe, "Salafis in Parliament: Party Politics and Democratic Attitudes in the Gulf." (Bachelor's Thesis, Stanford University, 2010) for an examination of Salafi electoral participation in Kuwait and Bahrain.

participation among Salafis in any form for different reasons of conscience; while this category includes Salafis of a *jihadi* ideological orientation,²⁵ it also includes a number of sheikhs, known as followers of al-Salafiyya al-Madkhaliyya,²⁶ who believe participation in electoral politics in an un-Islamic political system is absolutely impermissible.²⁷ Other anti-system groups that abstain from electoral participation, but are politically active in protest movements include the Salafyo Costa organization,²⁸ which believes that participation at this stage is a mistake as the “revolution has not yet been completed,” and thus enjoins its members against voting in parliamentary elections.²⁹ However, these figures are clearly marginal, and many of the Salafis we spoke with characterized the anti-political Salafis or those actively not choosing to participate as not being “real Salafis” at all.³⁰

Egypt’s three most prominent Salafi religious movements are Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadeyya, the Activist Salafis of Cairo, and al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya. Egypt’s oldest and perhaps largest³¹ Salafi organization is known as the Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadeyya Society. Founded in 1926, Ansar Al-Sunna traditionally has refrained from addressing issues of

²⁵ Among those in this third category, it is important to note that anti-political attitudes refers only to their rejection of politics in an un-Islamic political system in Egypt. Most Salafis will admit is still not yet an Islamic political system, but believe participation is permissible in spite of this.

²⁶ This ideological current is named after Rabi’i ibn Hadi al-Madkhaly, a Saudi Islamic scholar.

²⁷ These include: The most prominent Madkhaly scholar in Egypt is Mahomud Lutfi Amir. Others include Mohammad Saeed al-Islam, who stood against participation in politics, and who has been accused of connections to the former regime. Additionally, Abu Hafez Sami al-Arabi, who stood against participation on the grounds that he is unsure than Islamic state can be created through democratic means. [Abu Rumman, Mohammad. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (March 12, 2012).]

²⁸ Salafyocosta is an interesting anomaly among Salafi thought. An interesting group of Salafis that defy the conventional wisdom on Salafis by meeting in upscale coffee shops and organizing soccer games between Salafis and Copts. [Mohammad Tolba. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 14, 2012).]

²⁹ Mohammad Tolba. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 14, 2012).

³⁰ Source close to the al-Nour Party. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 9, 2012).

³¹ Due to its apolitical character, many Salafis involved with Ansar al-Sunna have connections with other Salafi organizations. Prominent Salafi cleric Mohammad Hassan, for instance, is affiliated with both Ansar al-Sunna and al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya.

governance and has chosen to remain apolitical.³² The organization preferred to focus on such general causes as promoting monotheism, fighting polytheism (*shirk*) and un-Islamic practices, such as innovation in religion (*bid'a*), a classic Salafi program. As a result of these apolitical stances, the organization enjoyed freedom to operate outside of regime repression.³³ In fact, Ansar al-Sunna was officially licensed by the state in the prerevolutionary era,³⁴ and promoted a view that “strongly reject[ed the use of] the armed action against the government.”³⁵

Activist Salafis in Egypt began in the Shubra neighborhood of Cairo in the 1970s.

Activist Salafis believe in strict adherence to the *shari'a* and are willing to declare publicly that a ruler is an infidel if he does not govern by God's decree and abide by the *shari'a*.³⁶ The most prominent scholars among the Activist Salafis include Sheikh Fawzi Saeed and Mohammad abd al-Maqsud.³⁷ During the Mubarak era, Activist Salafi sheikhs went so far as to claim that the presence of unveiled women on Egyptian streets and the existence of corruption in Egyptian politics were indicative of the fact that Egypt was in a state of *jahiliyya*.³⁸ Prior to the revolution, activist Salafis rejected participation in representative bodies because they followed man-made constitutions rather than God's law. For Activist Salafis, parliamentary democracy did not correspond to the Qur'anic concept of *shura* because it did not use God's law as the sole source

³² “Salafi Groups in Egypt.” *Islamopedia Online*. <http://www.islamopediaonline.org/country-profile/egypt/Salafists/Salafi-groups-egypt> (10 February 2012).

³³ Salah el-Din Hassan, *Kharitat al-taiyarat al-salafiyya fih Misr*. Part I. (2011). <http://www.nokhbah.net/vb/showthread.php?t=9288> (March 31, 2012).

³⁴ Abd al-Latif, Umayma. “Al-salafiyun fi Misr wa al-siyasa”. Doha, Qatar: al-Markez al-'Arabi lil-Abhath wa Dirasa al-Siyasat. (Ma'had al-Doha), 5.

³⁵ Hassan, Salah el-Din. Part I.

³⁶ Activist Salafis notably condemned Mubarak in exactly these terms, and as a result were subject to a harsher course of regime suppression. This may partially explain the more decentralized character of the Activist Salafi movement, in comparison with groups like al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya.

³⁷ The brother of the latter of these two went on to found the al-Fadila and later the al-Asala Party, as detailed *infra*.

³⁸ Maged, para. 6.

of authority.³⁹ While activist Salafis refrained from participating directly in politics prior to the revolution, they encouraged their supporters to cooperate with political groups that aimed at creating an Islamic state.⁴⁰

Al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya, the focus of the greater part of this study, was established by a group of Salafi students at Alexandria University as the result of ideological and later violent clashes with the Muslim Brotherhood in 1976. The students, frustrated with the Muslim Brotherhood's overwhelming presence at the university, its ideology, and its domination of Islamic activism in Alexandria, created an organization known as the "Salafi School."⁴¹ During this time, the Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood engaged in fierce competition "to attract students and dominate mosques."⁴² By 1980, the friction between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi School had become so great that violent clashes broke out between the supporters of the two movements. Following these clashes, supporters of the Salafi School decided to further institutionalize their activities. They created an educational institution known as the Furqan Institute, a magazine called *Sawt al-Da'wa*, and a social service network. Notably, the first committee they established was a *zakat* committee to provide financial assistance to orphans and widows, relief work, and health care. By 1985, the "Salafi School" began calling itself al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya. Leaders of the organization subsequently "established an executive committee, a governorates committee, a youth committee, a social committee, and a general assembly" in

³⁹ Ibid, para. 7.

⁴⁰ Hassan, Salah el-Din. (2011). *Kharitat al-taiyarat al-salafiyya fih Misr*. Part I.

⁴¹ Tammam, 26. See also Omar Ashour. "Egypt's Salafi Challenge," Project Syndicate. January 4, 2012. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/egypt-s-Salafi-challenge> (February 4, 2012).

⁴² Maged, para. 4.

order to effectively manage its growing institutions.⁴³ At the same time, Salafi preachers built a strong base of support throughout Alexandria. As a result, Salafism had spread throughout Alexandria using a grassroots activist model and was particularly popular among the lower classes, which relied heavily on al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya for financial support. However, al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya, like Ansar al-Sunna, refrained from any overt political activity during this time. They faced constant harassment by the Mubarak regime, which repeatedly closed down the Furqan Institute, banned their publications, and required all Salafi leaders to obtain travel permits from the State Security Services in order to leave Alexandria. Additionally, Salafi leaders were frequently arrested and harassed.⁴⁴

Since Mubarak's exit, a number of other Salafi organizations have been established. The 'Ulama Shura Council (*Majlis Shura al-'Ulama*), established in March 2011,⁴⁵ is composed of many of the most prominent Salafi clerics in Egypt.⁴⁶ Members of the Council are prohibited from participating directly in politics in order that politics does not distract them from the *da'wa* [Islamic call];⁴⁷ however, all this effectively enjoins them against is taking up any formal leadership position in any political party, running in elections,⁴⁸ or explicitly becoming a partisan figure. In reality, a number of these clerics have made the preferences and support for the Salafi parties quite clear, and the Council as a whole even endorsed a candidate for the Egyptian

⁴³ Omar Ashour. "Egypt's Salafi Challenge," Project Syndicate. January 4, 2012. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/egypt-s-Salafi-challenge>

⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁵ "Majlis Shoura al-'Ulama bi-Misr," <http://www.shora-alolamaa.com/eg/> March 25, 2012.

⁴⁶ See Diagram 1.

⁴⁷ Hamdi Dabash. "Inqisam Salafy Hawl al-Indimam lil-Ahزاب wa-l musharika fil-intikhabat." May 22, 2011. Al-Masry al-Yawm. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/447571> (April 2, 2012).

⁴⁸ Abd al-Latif, 11.

presidency.⁴⁹

A number of other less politically influential Salafi organizations exist in Egypt; however, their influence has been marginal in comparison in comparison.⁵⁰ The Salafi movement prior to the 2011 Egyptian uprising was diverse and had a wide range of views on political activity. This map is showing signs of changing as a result of the Salafis' entrance into politics and new pressures on the Trend as a whole.⁵¹ While before the 2011 Egyptian uprising most Salafis abstained from political participation, evidence suggests that Salafi sheikhs and their constituents did allow for the possibility of Salafi political involvement even in the years before Mubarak's departure. It is to these ideological debates that we will now turn.

Political or Not? An Ideological Allowance

To be sure, Egyptian Salafis abstained from political life during the Mubarak years. This led many observers to assume that Salafis' abstention was due to the fact that they were "anti-political". Indeed, many Salafis seemed to fall into Wiktorowicz's purist camp during this time. They focused their activities on *da'wa* (calling individuals to Islam) and the preservation of Islamic principles. However, looking into the statements of some of Egypt's most prominent

⁴⁹ Majlis Shoura Al-'Ulama. "al-Bayan al-Tas'a 'Ashr li-Majlis Shoura al-'Ulama li-Ta'yid al-Sheikh Hazim Abu Isma'il li-Ri'asa al-Jumhoreyya." March 24, 2012. <http://www.shora-alolamaa.com/eg/play.php?catsmktba=66>> (March 2, 2012).

⁵⁰ These groups include: al-Gama'eyya al-Shra'eyya, a philanthropic organization led by al-Azhar scholar Mohammad Mokhta Mohammad el-Mahdy, similar to Ansar al-Sunna; the Madkhaliya Salafis, a group of anti-political Salafis who opposed political participation on the grounds that it is not permissible under any circumstance to disobey a Muslim ruler, see note 21 *supra*.

⁵¹ Two additional Salafi political organizations, which have arisen as a result of these pressures are the Salafi Front (*al-gabha al-Salafiyya*) and the Salafi Legitimate Authority for Rights and Reform (*al-hee'a al-shar'eyya lil-haqq wa-l islah*). Both of these organizations seem to be largely composed of Salafi youth who have become active in speaking out publicly, either for or against, the decisions made by the political leadership of the established Salafi political parties. See Hamdi Dabash. "Salafis Divided Over Whom to Support in Presidential Vote." Egypt Independent. April 25, 2012. <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/salafis-divided-over-whom-support-presidential-vote> (April 25, 2012).

Salafi sheiks during the Mubarak years shows political participation in and of itself was not deemed forbidden (*haram*). Rather, looking at Salafis' critique of political participation during this time shows that these sheikhs left the door open to the possibility of political participation under the right conditions. In a 2005 essay, Sheikh Mohammad Ismail Al-Muqaddam of al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya, speculated whether or not to support an Islamist candidate in parliament. Ultimately, Muqaddam claimed that the movement would "likely" counsel followers to abstain from voting because the system was based on democratic principles and not Islamic *shari'a*, but that if an Islamic candidate was running against an un-Islamic candidate, it would please the movement if he was elected. In addition, he said that such a candidate should attempt to reform the council to which he was elected.⁵² Thus, it seems that Muqaddam, while rejecting the basis of democracy, did not categorically reject the benefits of participating in a democratic system, at least for the purpose of advancing Islamic reforms.

Yasser Borhami, a prominent Alexandrian Salafi cleric and the current vice-president of al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya, wrote even more directly on the issues of Salafi political participation in a 2007 essay. In this essay, Borhami notes that Salafis are often accused of isolationism and passivity as a result of their abstention from "the political game."⁵³ However, he says that that religion and politics are one in Islam and cannot be separated. He cites the counsel of late Saudi cleric Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz,⁵⁴ who held that dividing religion and politics is an act of unbelief (*kufir*). In fact, he claims, it is the secularists who have separated religion and politics. After establishing that religion and politics are not mutually exclusive, Borhami explains that the

⁵² Abd el-'Al, Ali. "al-Mawqif al-Salafy min al-Musharika al-siyasiya fi Misr wa tatwirat hatha al-mawqif." *Yahoo: Maktoob blog*. 14 March 2012. <http://ali-abdelal.maktoobblog.com/1236493/> (4 April 2012).

⁵³ Yasser Borhami. "al-Musharika al-siyasiya wa muwazin al-qawa." March 20, 2007. *Sawt al-Salaf*. <http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=664> (April 2, 2012).

⁵⁴ Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz was Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia from 1993 to 1999.

Salafis' abstention from politics is due to the un-Islamic system in place in the 2007 context in which he is writing. He claims that the unfavorable domestic, regional, and global balance of power is currently heavily in favor of secularism and democracy which are ideologies preventing the formation of an Islamic state. Describing the semi-authoritarian environment in Egypt in 2007, Borhami effectively states that at this point the Salafis cannot participate in the "political game" without "the sacrifice of principles," and that this is an unacceptable avenue. He adds that Islamist groups who have participated thus far have done so only by sacrificing these Islamic principles and privileging political gains over them. Thus, Borhami claims that participating in politics was not inherently wrong; it was that participating in the system as it then was constituted and which required a sacrifice of Islamic principles that was forbidden. Therefore, it was better to abstain than compromise on these principles, and that this act of abstention was itself a political act.⁵⁵

Borhami would again suggest that political participation under the right circumstances was permitted. In 2010 he responded to a follower who wrote him on his website asking whether it would be permitted for him to vote in the parliamentary elections. He ultimately counsels the youth that his vote likely will not matter, but that he should do what he thinks "will benefit you in your religion and your worldly affairs" on an individual level. He also notes that, "If we find a suitable community for the great mission of leading the nation and the present balance [is] changed, then we would have a different position. But the matter is, at it seems, unresolved in favor of a certain class [of individuals]," i.e. the regime.⁵⁶ Changed circumstances might bring about the need for a change of behavior. Thus, from these statements we see that Borhami was

⁵⁵ Abd al-Latif, 6.

⁵⁶ Borhami, Yasser. "Istifsarat hawl maqal 'ta'milat hawl masa'la al-ikhtiyar'" *Sawt al-Salaf*. November 21, 2010. <http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=4929> (April 3, 2012).

not willing to categorically dismiss political participation, but rather he felt that the then-current un-Islamic political conditions and the need to sacrifice Islamic principles in order to be allowed to participate meant political participation was too costly. By inference, it seems that Borhami would not have been opposed to political participation in a sufficiently Islamic system in which the participants did not have to sacrifice their principles.

Abd-al Moneim al-Shahat, another prominent Salafi cleric and past spokesman for al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya, addressed the issue of political Islam in a 2008 essay.⁵⁷ He claimed that the issue of governance occupies a clear space in Salafi ideological thought. However, “political Islam” had gotten governance wrong when they accepted democracy, secularism, and (citing Turkey as an example) international law. The problem for Shahat was that, when operating in these un-Islamic systems, Islamists spent most of their time working to correct egregious moral problems, but that governing was about regulating all aspects of life and not simply correcting problems. He concludes by stating that Salafis do indeed have political opinions, citing the issues in Gaza as an example. He assails an Egyptian newspaper that asked an anonymous Salafi his position on Gaza, to which the man reportedly responded that he “is not concerned with political issues.” Shahat disagreed with the man’s position on politics (even suggesting the newspaper fabricated the story), but was more angry that the newspaper attributed this anti-political stance to all Salafi leaders. This, he rejected outright as a misrepresentation. Again, we see the theme that the Salafis were not categorically opposed to participation, but that they were opposed to participation in a system in which the rules of the game were already settled in favor of

⁵⁷ al-Shahat, Abd al-Moneim. "al-siyasa...ma na'ti minha wa ma nathir" March 8, 2008. Sawt al-Salaf. <http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=2265> (April 13, 2012).

secularism and parochialism, and stacked against Islamists, both rhetorically and when it came to counting votes.

From the statements of several prominent sheikhs,⁵⁸ we find that their ideology did not rigidly prevent them from political participation. Rather, we are able to determine the conditions under which Salafis could have been expected to participate. The Salafis would likely support political participation if they could operate in a system that allowed them to maintain their principles, which meant operating in a political order that used Islamic *shari'a* as its basis, rather than democratic or secular ideology. As a result, the Salafis would have needed to see an avenue in which to sufficiently change the political system into one more in line with Islamic principles.

In the post-Mubarak political environment, political Salafis seemed to have shared these same beliefs regarding political participation. Party politicians echoed the sentiments that they were not against politics, just against politics as they existed. Reflecting this, spokesman of the al-Nour Party, Muhammad Nour, stated in an interview that “politics was just a game, a façade, in the Mubarak era.” Member of al-Asala’s executive council Essam Sharif, also discussing the Mubarak years, said “This path [political participation] was not available to us before. The parties under the previous system were fraudulent” and, he claimed, “Mubarak did not act like a Muslim,”⁵⁹ which shows a religious element to this abstention. Deputy Speaker of the People’s Assembly Ashraf Thabit went even further and portrayed Salafi abstention from voting during the Mubarak years as a political statement in and of itself. Rather than indicating a lack of political interest, he said that Salafis did not vote because they wanted to register their

⁵⁸ Notably, all of these Sheikhs were affiliated with al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya, the organization that later became the driving force behind Salafi political participation in Egypt through its political wing the al-Nour Party, as detailed *infra*.

⁵⁹ Sherif, Essam. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 1, 2012).

dissatisfaction with the corrupt Mubarak regime.⁶⁰

A second factor given for Salafi abstention from politics was regime repression. Almost all of the politicians we interviewed discussed this element. Several members of al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya claimed that Salafis were interested in politics prior to January 25. However, Salafis necessarily had to confine their political views to private settings out of fear of retribution. While they did not publicly advocate for any specific political positions, many Salafis in Da'wa al-Salafiyya reported that during this time they stayed informed about political events through magazines and journals. In addition, they used the mosque as a place to exchange political opinions among friends.⁶¹ According to one Salafi we spoke with, members of al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya had informal debates prior to elections in which they discussed whether or not to cast votes for any party. However, they always determined that participating in elections and registering their dissatisfaction with the political system through voting would serve only to bring unwanted regime attention against them; they also determined that their votes were unlikely to have an impact in a system in which NDP members “would receive 99% of the vote anyway.”⁶² Thus, despite their public abstention from political involvement, it appears that these Salafis had ideas about politics before Mubarak was removed from power.

Structural Factors Aiding Salafi Politicization

Salafis had a number of institutions in place in the Mubarak years that, while socially oriented, proved important for political mobilization later. In fact, al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya had been active in Egypt, particularly Alexandria, for decades. Salafi political leaders claimed that

⁶⁰ Thabit, Ashraf. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 7, 2012).

⁶¹ Abd al-Qawi, Yasser. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 10, 2012).

⁶² Source Close to al-Nour Party Leadership. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 9, 2012).

their organizational structures, leadership, and support base, though not previously deployed to electoral ends, were crucial to their eventual success. When asked about the role of this network, President of the al-Nour Party Emad abd-el Ghaffour noted that the movement had been organizing since 1977, and as a result was deeply rooted in the communities in which it was operating.⁶³ According to al-Nour party spokesman Muhammad Nour, “The Salafis may not have had [political] structures before the revolution, but they were organized and popular among the people and it only took the revolution to bring these networks into activation.”⁶⁴ Since the 1980s, the Da’wa al-Salafiyya network has grown and has branches in essentially every governorate of Egypt,⁶⁵ meaning that as far as Salafi organizations go, al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya was perhaps the one best positioned organizationally to take a leading role in Salafi political activity.

A second important institutional factor that helped increase the prominence of Salafi figures within the broader groups of Egyptian society, and arguably prepare them for political activity, were the Salafis satellite television channels. In addition to societal involvement through charitable organizations such as al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya and Ansar al Sunna, a number of the activists we interviewed emphasized the importance of Satellite television.⁶⁶ Indeed, beginning in the 1990s, prominent Salafi sheikhs began to spread their message through satellite television broadcasts that allowed these religious figures to widely disseminate information about Islamic practice, and participate in debates over these issues. Satellite channels, in addition to contributing to the emergence of a new Arab public sphere by facilitating debates about political

⁶³ Abd Al-Ghaffour, Emad. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy (January 5, 2012).

⁶⁴ Nour, Mohammad. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 4, 2012).

⁶⁵ Maged, para. 5.

⁶⁶ Abd al-Qawi Interview; also, Abdullah, Ahmad. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 10, 2012).

issues,⁶⁷ have also done the same in the religious sphere.

In the 1990s, the Mubarak regime's economic and political liberalization programs allowed for some carefully controlled public debates between Islamists, and this coincided with an increase in verbal jousting between the Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood, which led to the development and later popularity of the Salafi satellite channels.⁶⁸ The Muslim Brotherhood, on the other hand, was barred from establishing any satellite television stations based in the country prior to the 2011 uprising.⁶⁹ These Salafi satellite channels emerged as a second generation of Egyptian satellite channels. By focusing on Islamic programming, specifically on non-political issues such as Islamic practice, the channels satisfied a local demand among religiously conservative Egyptians for religious programming years after more mainstream channels, which did not focus on these topics, had come into existence.

Generally, Salafi channels hosts, sheikhs and other religious 'ulama, have tended to use the channels as a means of instruction, rather than debates over the issues.⁷⁰ The Brotherhood, by contrast, have articulated that they aim to use their new satellite channel presence in order to show in a public way through debates between ideologically diverse actors that there exist modern Islamic solutions to Egyptian political problems.⁷¹ The Salafis have used their stations to

⁶⁷ Lynch, Marc. *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). 29-30.

⁶⁸ Skovgaard-Petersen, Jakob. "Islamic Fundamentalism in Arab Television: Islamism and Salafism in Competition," in *Fundamentalism in the Modern World: Vol. 2: Fundamentalism and Communication: Culture, Media and the Public Sphere*, ed. Ulrika Martensson et. Al. (London & New York: I.B. Tauris), 269.

⁶⁹ Field, Nathan. and Hamam, Ahmed. "Salafi satellite TV in Egypt". *Arab Media & Society*. Issue 8, Spring 2009. <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=712> (April 7, 2012).

⁷⁰ Skovgaard-Petersen, 282.

⁷¹ Abdel Rahman, Mohammad. "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood: Exploring the Airwaves." *Al-Akhbar English*. September 10, 2011. <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/egypt%E2%80%99s-muslim-brotherhood-exploring-airwaves> (February 2, 2012).

articulate their alarm at the spread of un-Islamic behavior in among individuals Egyptian society,⁷² a popular appeal among the conservative lower classes in Egypt. In this way, they have served as a source of conflict between *‘ulama* with different positions on key issues, highlighting, directly or indirectly, the ideological gulf between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis. Thus, the Salafis very effectively used the channels to introduce themselves to the general Egyptian population, promoting themselves as authoritative sources on issues of Islamic practice and jurisprudence and positioning themselves as the ultimate protectors of Islamic principles.

The Mubarak regime shut down the Salafi satellite channels in 2010, clearly demonstrating that the former regime considered the Salafis a political liability. Following the 2011 uprising that deposed Mubarak, the Salafis wasted no time setting up the channels again and using them to galvanize support for their causes. Both before and after the 2011 uprising, the extent to which Salafi satellite channels like al-Nas and al-Rahma brought Salafi ideas and perspectives into the public discourse and into the homes of average Egyptians was a significant development in Egyptian media.⁷³ Sheikhs such as Mohammad Hassan, Mohammad Yaqoub, Yasser Borhamy, and Ishaq al-Huwaiyny, rather than being able to access audiences only in Salafi mosques or on websites with a dedicated online demographic, such as AnaSalafy, were increasingly becoming more prominent in the Egyptian public sphere at large. This set the stage for the later electoral popularity of these groups in 2011-2012.

It is significant too that the Salafis were able to engage (during the operation of their

⁷² Skovgaard-Peteresen, 287.

⁷³ Richard Gauvain. (2010). "Salafism in Modern Egypt: Panacea or Pest?" *Political Theology*, 11, 6 (2010): 817, (November 29, 2011).

satellite channels from 2006 to 2010 and again from February 2011 onward) in a process of articulating to a wide audience their unabashed opposition to the voices of liberals, secularists, and the Muslim Brotherhood alike on issues as basic as the role of women in Egyptian society.⁷⁴ While these other groups were clear that women could have a prominent role in public life, the Salafis argued women should remain at home and raise the children. While commentators in liberal, state-sponsored, or even Islamist circles tried to characterize this as a backward, medieval attitude, it was one that actually had resonance with large segments of working and middle-class Egyptians for whom this is an accepted way of life. While the other groups' messaging on this issue has undergone adjustment and renegotiation for decades, the Salafi sheikhs' position has not changed substantially. Well before the 2011 protests against the Mubarak regime began, the Salafi satellite channels were "function[ing] as overarching agents of cohesion, providing Egypt's disparate Salafi circles with a way to unite behind common goals".⁷⁵ This has become all the more salient an observation in a political environment in which restrictions on Islamists' political activity have been greatly relaxed and open contestation for political support is permitted by the military authorities. Thus, the Salafis used their social networks and satellite television channels to reach the Egyptian public and establish themselves as defenders of Islamic principles, an idea that would prove important when the decision to politicize was made. These institutions combined with their ideological flexibility outlined in the previous section both converged as factors which laid the groundwork for the later politicization of the Egyptian *Salafiyya*.

⁷⁴ Gauvain, 817.

⁷⁵ Gauvain, 803.

The Decision to Participate: Salafis Move into Politics

Reene and Sanford have argued that Salafis will tend towards political participation where the political system is open and where there is a large Salafi constituency.⁷⁶ However, their study did not specify the conditions necessary for Salafi political participation to occur. As we have suggested above, for Egyptian Salafis those conditions were namely the ability to operate in a system that did not require conceding Islamic principles and in which they perceived they would be able to reshape the political order. To be sure, it appears that Egypt's Salafis did not spring headlong into political participation at the first sign of protests against the Mubarak regime, but rather waited long enough to determine whether the regime would survive, and thereby keep the same non-Islamic system in place. In fact, no Salafi organization endorsed the protests until enough time had passed that the endorsement was irrelevant to their outcome. They did, however, issue a number of statements reflecting their position regarding the political dimension of the developments. In its first official statement following the January 25 protests, al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya completely skirted the political implications of the protests and instead called for citizens to protect public properties and to cooperate with the armed forces.⁷⁷ On January 31 al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya issued another statement, which again called for the protection of public property and the prevention of bloodshed.⁷⁸ This statement, like the January 29 statement, refrained from making any political statements on the protests.

By February 1, however, it seems that the movement sensed that the political situation

⁷⁶ Jared Reene & Scott Sanford. "The Fortunes of Political Salafism in Gaza and Algeria," IMES Capstone Paper Series. The Institute for Middle East Studies. May 2010. Elliott School of International Affairs. The George Washington University. (March 19, 2012).

<http://www.gwu.edu/~imes/research/2010Capstones/Reene,%20Sanford.pdf>

⁷⁷ Abd al-Latif, 3-4.

⁷⁸ Abd al-Latif, 3-4.

had drastically changed and that the current political order was about to undergo a shift. In a statement released that day by the organization, al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya took a political stance, saying that changing the regime had “become an inescapable necessity” and that Mubarak’s regime which “took the country to the edge of the abyss cannot continue.”⁷⁹ The statement laid out the movement’s plans for the post-Mubarak period. The Da’wa called for a transitional period that would lay the groundwork for free and fair elections, and for the implementation of a package of reforms including “abolishing the emergency law; banning despotism, repression, torture, prison and arrest without trial; reforming education; a radical reform of the media; and the lifting of security repression directed at Islamists in the fields of employment, education, media, and others.”⁸⁰ The rapidity of the issuance of this structured multi-point political program, issued on February 1, suggests that a group within al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya had been thinking about these ideas for some time and was politically minded enough to have issued such a structured plan for a new political order in a relatively short period of time. In addition to these basic rights, al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya also called for the affirmation “of the Islamic identity of Egypt, as an Islamic country whose reference of legislation is the Islamic *Shari’a*, with everything contradicting it considered inadmissible” and “the protection of Article 2 of the constitution, reviewing all legislation contravening *Shari’a*, and reforming it in a manner consistent with *Shari’a*.”⁸¹ Thus, it appears that al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya had sensed the likelihood that the anti-Mubarak protests would succeed and that the regime would indeed fall; only at this point did it decide to enter the political conversation to push the organization’s chief agenda item – legislating of the Islamic *Shari’a*.

⁷⁹ Abd al-Latif, 3-4.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ ibid

Ansar al-Sunna took a different approach. The organization issued a fatwa on February 10, 2011 addressing the permissibility of participation in the demonstrations against Mubarak. The fatwa stated, “Going against a Muslim ruler who rules by the *Shari’a* of Allah, performed prayers among the Muslims, and did not show outright infidelity, ... *Ahl Al-Sunna* rules that this is not permissible, even if he transgresses and creates injustice.”⁸² Other Salafi leaders chose not to directly respond to the political events that were unfolding, and since the uprising have tended to focus only on topics of religious practice, rather than political issues.⁸³ As a result, after the Mubarak regime fell, Salafis who had previously articulated opinions stating political participation might be permissible under changed circumstances, such as al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya, were better ideologically equipped to press forward along the course of politicization. While other Salafis turned toward political organization at this time,⁸⁴ al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya in Alexandria was the first large scale Salafi group that took the significant step from notionally sanctioning politics to actively engaging in public debates about political issues.

Al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya waged its first political campaign in support of the March 2011 constitutional referendum. Alongside this, the Da’wa organized a “preemptive” campaign in support of retaining Article 2 in the Constitution,⁸⁵ which states that “Islam is the religion of the state, andThe principles of Islamic law are the chief source of legislation.”⁸⁶ This was despite

⁸² *ibid*

⁸³ An example of this is Madkhaly Egyptian Sheikh Mahmoud Lutfi Amer. *See* The Website of Sheikh Mahmoud Aamr. <http://mahmodamer.wordpress.com> (April 30, 2012).

⁸⁴ For instance, the al-Fadila Party, a small Salafi party, was founded in March 2011, before any other major Salafi party got off the ground. This party was electorally unsuccessful however and won no seats in the Egyptian parliament, as detailed *infra*.

⁸⁵ Abd al-Latif, 8.

⁸⁶ Carnegie Endowment. Supreme Council of the Armed Forces Constitutional Declaration. April 1, 2011. <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/04/01/supreme-council-of-the-armed-forces-constitutional-announcement> (April 24, 2012).

the fact that amending Article 2 was neither an active part of the public debate nor a provision on the ballot being voted on. Nevertheless, the Salafis created a website and Facebook page that emphasized the need to maintain Egypt's Islamic identity and sent out street organizers who collected more than 30,000 signatures of people in favor of maintaining Article 2.⁸⁷ Shortly after the constitutional referendum passed, al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya announced on March 22, 2011 that it had decided it was time for "positive political participation in the political process" due to the need to "direct the Egyptian people in a manner that conforms to its Islamic point of reference."⁸⁸ According to Sheikh Borhami, "No one can truthfully connect this people to its Islamic reference except for the Islamist [Salafi] current in its different stripes. Therefore we were required to work in politics."⁸⁹ The Da'wa reached a significant turning-point. Not only was al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya sanctioning its members' individual involvement in the political process (more forcefully than previously articulated) but the Salafiyya's religious leaders recognized as a necessity the drive to actively shape the political process and the construction of the new political order.

Another major political development occurred on March 30, 2011, when SCAF issued a Constitutional Declaration. Article 60 of the Declaration called for the People's Assembly and the Shura Council to jointly elect a provisional constitutional assembly tasked with drafting a new constitution. Earlier in March, Salafis based near Cairo created the first Egyptian Salafi political party called al-Fadila.⁹⁰ Not long after, in May-June, 2011, al-Da'wa-al-Salafiyya followed suit and officially established the al-Nour Party to compete in the upcoming

⁸⁷ Abd al-Latif, 8.

⁸⁸ Abd al-Latif, 8.

⁸⁹ Abd al-Latif, 8.

⁹⁰ "The Fadila Party," Al Masry Al-Yawm. June 18, 2011. <http://sharek.almasryalyoum.com/node/1252> (April 25, 2012).

parliamentary elections.⁹¹ A third Salafi party was created in July, 2011 when al-Fadila party president Adel Abd al-Maqsoud Afify left the party and founded, the al-Asala Party,⁹² which had the backing of the Activist Salafis of Cairo. Around this same time, the Gama'a al-Islamiyya created its own political wing, the Building and Development Party (*Hizb al-bin'a wa tanmiyya*).

Salafi leaders claimed that the political opening that developed was an unprecedented opportunity to shape the Egyptian political order going forward. According to Mahmoud Abd al-Hamid, a cleric in al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya, political participation at this particular stage offered the Salafis a chance to “make history,” noting the role of the new government in drafting the new constitution. He also claimed that Salafi political participation would be a means of “protection for the call to God,” i.e. the *da'wa*.⁹³ Salafi sheikhs held long meetings in these days discussing the issue of political participation at this historical moment. According to Yasser Borhami, the decision to support political participation was made because of “the availability of a large degree of freedom that protects the movement from having to make concessions; there is no fraud in the elections, and every person is free to offer what he wishes; and because, in the former regime, the price to pay was too high, and the outcome known in advance.”⁹⁴ Thus, it seems that the post-Mubarak political opening finally met the Salafis' threshold for one in which they could sufficiently shape the political order and participate while still maintaining their Islamic principles.

⁹¹ "Al-Nour Party" Jadaliyya. November 18, 2011. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3171/al-nour-party> (April 20, 2012).

⁹² "Al-Asala (Authenticity Party)". September 20, 2011.

<http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/20/al-asala-authenticity-party> (April 15, 2012).

⁹³ Ali Abd el-Aal. "al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya: Nas'y l-ikhtiyar al-ra'ees al-Ansub li-Misr wa laysa al-Aslah wa la al-Amthil Deenan," <http://ali-abdelal.maktoobblog.com/1236549/> الدعوة السلفية-نسعى-لاختيار-الرئيس-ال-الدعوة السلفية-نسعى-لاختيار-الرئيس-

⁹⁴ Borhami quoted in Latif, 8.

Essam Sharif of the al-Asala Party noted that the 2011 Egyptian uprising against Mubarak provided the necessary political opening which caused the benefits of political involvement outweigh the costs. Though he said Salafis do not yet view Egypt's political system as Islamic, al-Asala leaders decided it was better to participate in a non-Islamic system in which there was a chance to transform it into an Islamic system. Sharif says, "We entered into this work under an Islamic vision" while noting that the goal was to institute Islamic *shari'a*.⁹⁵ To emphasize this fact, Sharif used an analogy of eating a corpse in a desert. While cannibalism is normally forbidden in Islam, a person is permitted to eat a corpse if he is lost in a desert with no other food available to him. Thus, Sharif suggests that participating in a non-Islamic political system was as distasteful as eating a corpse, but was a necessary step to take in order to ensure that Egypt has an Islamic system going forward.⁹⁶ Al-Asala spokesman Tamer Nasar echoed this sentiment that it was necessary to capitalize on the political opening provided by the collapse of the Mubarak regime because it was the best path available to Salafis for reforming Egyptian society.⁹⁷ Al-Nour party President Abd al-Ghaffour expressed similar sentiments, saying Salafi leaders in al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya were confident that they were a popular current in Egypt, and that this was the first time in decades that they could repair and reform the system.⁹⁸

Thus, the Salafis viewed the post-Mubarak political environment as one in which they could shape the political order and participate freely without having to sacrifice Islamic principles. Al-Nour Party spokesman Muhammad Nour went so far as to say that the party believes that Salafis who continue to abstain from Egypt's political life are not real Salafis at all,

⁹⁵ Essam Sharif. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 1, 2012).

⁹⁶ Interview with Essam Sharif.

⁹⁷ Tamer Nasar. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 1, 2012).

⁹⁸ Interview with Emad abd al-Ghaffour

and are in fact tied to the Mubarak regime.⁹⁹ A consensus, then, on the part of the vast majority of Salafis has been reached that political participation in the current Egyptian political environment is religiously permissible and the correct course of action so long as Salafis are not forced to compromise their principles and in which Salafis will have an opportunity to measurably influence the character of the Egyptian political system in an Islamic direction.

Political Parties and the Activation of Salafi Networks

After surveying the political opening and determining that they had an unprecedented opportunity to shape the new political order into one in which they could participate without sacrificing their Islamic principles, the Salafis decided to participate. But how did Salafis succeed in this endeavor? Salafi political leaders began appealing to the grassroots network it had built over the preceding decades to new political ends. Indeed, party spokesmen admitted that the vast majority of the support the Salafi parties received came directly from their Salafi base. A source close to al-Nour Party leadership claimed that because the Salafis had been spreading their message for at least 30 years, “Once they went to the people and told them they were creating [the al-Nour Party], they got their support.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, rather than campaigning in a traditional sense and reaching out to the greater Egyptian population, Salafi parties instead employed a strategy of choosing candidates with deep ties to the local community who would be guaranteed success. One example of this is Deputy Speaker of the People’s Assembly Ashraf Thabit. Thabit was born and raised in Alexandria, received his education there, and works there. He runs a preparatory school from which hundreds of local students graduate, and he delivers the Friday sermon in his mosque. As a result, Thabit states that he was very well-known and played

⁹⁹ Interview with Muhammad Nour.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Source Close to al-Nour Party Leadership.

a major role in the community. He says, “It was natural for me to be a part of the [al-Nour] Party. It made sense for me to become a candidate.”¹⁰¹ Thabit recognizes that his support came primarily from the Salafi base, and he suggested this was likely true of other constituencies such as the liberals and the Muslim Brotherhood, who also relied on their respective bases for electoral support. Though he recognized the need to try and attract people outside of the Salafi community, he said “ultimately you are playing to your base.”¹⁰² A second example of al-Nour attempting to succeed using candidates popular within the community to attract votes is that of Ehab Yehia. Yehia, like Thabit, gave the Friday sermon in his mosque, gave *Qur’an* lessons to the community, and is an active member in al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya. He had no plans to run for office until party leaders asked him to be a candidate. Out of respect for party leaders who expressed their need for his candidacy, he ran for office but was not elected.¹⁰³ Thus, the al-Nour plan was to choose prominent community figures and capitalize on their popularity to mobilize support. While the Salafis’ wide presence in satellite media and other factors may have augmented their ultimate electoral winnings, including Egyptian Muslims voting for the Salafis as a “feel good vote” because of their religious message, the Salafis’ primary campaign strategy was selecting candidates well known by the community, for whom winning would be easy.

The Abandoned Path: Salafi Attempts at Electoral Cooperation

Having established the factors playing into Egyptian Salafis’ decision to enter into politics, which we describe as hinging on two factors—the ability to participate while maintaining Islamic principles and the ability to shape the political order, we now turn to the

¹⁰¹ Ashraf Thabit interview.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ehab Yehia. Interview with Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. January 10, 2012. Alexandria, Egypt.

competitive dynamic that followed the decision to participate; that is, the decision to compete with other Islamist actors. Competition among these groups should not be taken granted, and as we argue, was inevitable, given the basis on which the Salafis justified their entry into politics. There is a direct connection between the rhetoric of participation and the rhetoric of a political campaign. Salafis decision to participate was motivated by their principles, which they argue, set them above the rest of Egyptian society, including their political competitors, and their desire to shape the Egyptian political order in the image of these principles, which naturally puts them into conflict with other groups with competing visions.

Before the landscape of the new political order was well defined, however, the Salafis expressed plans to support the Muslim Brotherhood in its efforts to create a state that abides by the *shari'a*. This course was not surprising given the uncertainty that characterized the political system at this point, before the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces issued its Constitutional Declaration laying out the plans for a transition of power, which established the rules governing the creation of political parties and the electoral campaign. During this period of uncertainty, in February and March 2011, Salafi sheikhs in and around Cairo were encouraging their congregants to support the Muslim Brotherhood in the upcoming parliamentary elections while downplaying the differences between the two movements.¹⁰⁴ Prominent Salafi sheikh Mohammad Hassan, who has strong ties with Ansar al-Sunna and al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya, announced in April 2011 that Ansar al-Sunna would support any independent or religious party that supported the organization's religious and political goals, particularly the implementation of *shari'a* law in Egypt. Among the parties Ansar al-Sunna pledged to support in this effort was the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). Hassan noted that Ansar al-Sunna was

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Mohammad Tolba.

contemplating “forming an alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood for the upcoming parliamentary elections.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, in the first months following Mubarak’s exit, many Egyptian Salafis had decided to hold back from direct participation and instead chose to support other groups who most closely shared their values. However, this decision to support the Muslim Brotherhood’s FJP was short-lived, and competition between the Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood would begin in earnest soon thereafter. As noted, the al-Fadila Party, established by a group of Activist Salafis in the Shubra neighborhood of Cairo, became the first Egyptian Salafi party in March 2011. At the same time, however, discussions on whether to create a political party were underway within al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya in Alexandria, and in May the organization established the al-Nour Party. Thus, a shift in Salafi thinking had occurred. No longer were Salafis willing to simply give their vote to fellow Islamists under the banner of the Muslim Brotherhood. True to form, the Salafis chose to “challenge the authority of established groups,” such as the Muslim Brotherhood, “in iconoclastic manner.”¹⁰⁶ As a result of this mentality Salafis felt that only by running directly themselves could the success of their political goals be guaranteed.

In July 2011, all four of the Salafi parties¹⁰⁷ briefly joined the Democratic Alliance¹⁰⁸ with a number of other newly established parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood’s FJP. This joint electoral list was organized at a time when many political actors in Egypt were concerned about the possibility of a competitive presence on the part of the former ruling party the National

¹⁰⁵ "Salafists Will Not Run Candidates in Upcoming Elections." The Daily Middle East Reporter. April 15, 2011. Beirut Lebanon. <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Salafists+will+not+run+candidates+in+upcoming+elections.-a0255244488>

¹⁰⁶ Jonathan Brown, 5

¹⁰⁷ These were al-Nour; al-Asala; and the Gama’a al-Islamiyya’s Building and Development Party. See Diagram 1.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Tahaluf al-Dimuqrati (The Democratic Alliance). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. September 26, 2011. <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/26/the-democratic-alliance> (February 2, 2012).

Democratic Party. Al-Nour eventually left the alliance, observers noted, primarily due to disagreements over the with the FJP over what it considered an unfair allocation of seats on the joint electoral lists.¹⁰⁹ Official spokesman for the al-Nour Party Nader Bakkar claimed that his party disagreed with the FJP on the meaning of “Islamic frame of reference” as the basis for legislation and on the details for applying Sharia law. The other Salafi parties followed al-Nour’s lead and left the alliance the same week. In leaving the alliance, the Salafis signaled they were prepared to electorally compete with the Brotherhood head-on.

Still, as late as October 2011, even as he described the FJP as having sought to “dominate” the Democratic Alliance’s electoral lists at the expense of the Salafis, al-Nour Party president Emad Abd al-Ghaffour expressed a willingness to consider not running against FJP candidates in some first-past-the-post (FPTP) contests.¹¹⁰ Despite entertaining these ideas, pan-Islamist electoral cooperation never resumed after the Democratic Alliance splintered in August 2011 due to these same disagreements over the allocation of seats on the joint electoral lists.¹¹¹ A key sticking point for Al-Nour was their desire to be strongly represented in their stronghold of Alexandria,¹¹² where attempts to divide up seats were particularly fraught with conflict. Both groups asserted their right to greater shares of representation on the joint lists.¹¹³ Al-Nour’s

¹⁰⁹ Jadaliyya. "Al-Nour Party"; See also, Mohamed Abu Elenen, "Salafi Party Rejected Democratic Alliance Over Secular Members." Egypt Independent. November 13, 2011. <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/salafi-party-rejected-democratic-alliance-over-secular-members>

¹¹⁰ Noha El-Hennawy, "Splits in Islamic alliance raise questions about its electoral strength" Egypt Independent. October 19, 2011. <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/splits-islamic-alliance-raise-questions-about-its-electoral-strength> (April 19, 2012).

¹¹¹ Ahmed Al-Khateeb, “"Al-Islamiyyun Yatahalifun dud al-Ikhwan,” Al Masry al Yawm. October 15, 2011. <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=314050&IssueID=2289> (April 18, 2012).

¹¹² El-Hennawy. "Splits in Islamic alliance raise questions about its electoral strength" Egypt Independent. October 19, 2011. <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/splits-islamic-alliance-raise-questions-about-its-electoral-strength> (April 19, 2012).

¹¹³ Ibid.

leadership decided that they had the clout to act as leader of their own electoral alliance. At the time, the Nour Party's eventual junior electoral coalition partners, Al-Asala, and the Gama'a al-Islamiyya's Building and Development Party, were disorganized and unlicensed, and al-Nour found that it could become the kingmaker among the "Salafi" parties rather than a junior partner itself in the Democratic Alliance. At the time, the al-Nour Party attributed their decision not to stay in the Democratic Alliance to conflicts regarding the liberal and secularist parties' representation in the joint list.¹¹⁴ They also emphasized the fact that Islamist Salafi candidates would be competitive in the elections, despite the doubts of their detractors,¹¹⁵ which emboldened them enough to follow through with the decision to compete directly with the FJP in these runoffs, spurning any attempts to emphasize pan-Islamist unity.¹¹⁶

That this electoral alliance failed was no surprise. Egyptian Salafis had made the difficult decision to directly contest elections because they perceived an opening in which they would have an opportunity to shape Egypt's new political order while not betraying their core Islamic principles. For the Salafis, maximum representation was vitally important because the more representation they had, the better opportunity their opportunity to shape the system. Once it became clear that the Muslim Brotherhood intended to dominate the electoral lists and limit the number of seats available to al-Nour and the other coalition partners, the decision to leave was inevitable.¹¹⁷ The Salafis entered politics to take advantage of the historic political opening and

¹¹⁴ "Qedadat al-Nour Tarud al-Barnamaj al-intikhabi lil-Hizb fih mo'tamir bil-iskandriyya," Al-Youm al-Sabaa. October 27, 2011. <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=521585&> (April 18, 2012).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ "Brotherhood, Salafis to compete in runoffs." Egypt Independent. January 1, 2012. <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/brotherhood-salafis-compete-runoffs> (April 19, 2012).

¹¹⁷ That the Brotherhood suppressed the Salafis representation the lists, partially a result of pressure from the liberal and secularist partners, is likely considering the large winnings the al-Nour Party eventually secured, which it would not have benefitted from as greatly if it had stayed in the Democratic Alliance.

determined that remaining in the Alliance would have meant lessening their ability to shape the new political order.

The Political and Structural Context of Salafi-Muslim Brotherhood Competition

In a context in which two Islamist political groups won more than approximately 60% in the lower house and 83% in the upper house of parliament, their decision not to cooperate with each other is striking. While impressive, these gains could have been even greater had the two parties decided to coordinate jointly in the electoral campaign instead of directly competing against each other in literally hundreds of contests. This phenomenon is especially unusual when considering the fact that these two political groups, in their explicitly Islamist orientation, share much more in comparison with each other than they do with most of the rest of the Egyptian political spectrum. In addition to differences brought about by campaigning, during which the Salafis made use of the themes of authenticity and adherence to Islamic principles to undermine the Brotherhood as opponents (as detailed *infra*), several other factors exist which contributed to the developments preventing the Brotherhood and the Salafis from cooperating after the elections. These include the structure of the electoral system, which leant itself to inter-Islamist competition; and social class dynamics, which pitted a populist, lower-class Salafi movement against an established, middle class-led Brotherhood.¹¹⁸

Electoral Factors:

To be sure, while the ability to participate without betraying their Islamic principles and the ability to shape the political system were important factors in the Salafis choice to compete

¹¹⁸ Jayson Casper, "Salafism in Egypt: The Example of the Asala Party in Warraq, Cairo". January 30, 2012. *Arab West Report*. <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2012/week-3/49-salafism-egypt-example-asala-party-warraq-cairo> (March 2, 2012).

electorally, they certainly were not the only factors. The Salafis chose to participate in a political environment in which the rules of the game were uncertain, and largely under the control of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Despite these realities, the structure of the electoral system provided the Salafis some assurance a degree of electoral success.¹¹⁹ Although the March 2011 referendum prohibited the formation of political parties on the basis of religion,¹²⁰ Salafis recognized that even if they could not publicly describe their political party as “Salafi,” this would not preclude the adoption of a political program that embodied the Salafis’ vision for Egypt. As a result, some interviewees stressed that their political parties were not “Salafi parties” in a legal sense,¹²¹ and even claimed that their parties had some non-Salafi or even Christian membership, a claim that has not been publicly verified.¹²²

With their decision to leave the Brotherhood-led Democratic Alliance, the Salafis made a conscious decision to compete with the Brotherhood rather than cooperate because, as Salafi activists articulated, they were gradually becoming aware of their own electoral strength.¹²³ This resulted in gradual upward revisions in the number of seats they projected winning from only a

¹¹⁹ Awareness of this likely played into the Salafis decision to leave the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Democratic Alliance.

¹²⁰ Tamim Elyan, “Egypt generals ban using religious slogans in vote.” Reuters. October 9, 2011.

<<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/09/us-egypt-elections-idUSTRE79813420111009>> (November 11, 2011).

¹²¹ Hussein Thabit, Phone Conversation with Hussein Thabit by Mitchell Ford, Daniel Boehmer, and James Murphy. December 31, 2011. Others interlocutors stated that their party merely had a “Salafi frame of reference,” (*marja’iyya salafiyya*) language similar to that used by the Muslim Brotherhood who described their Freedom and Justice Party as having an “Islamic frame of reference” (*marja’iyya islamiyya*). See Nathan Brown, Nathan, “Egypt: Cacophony and Consensus in the Twenty-first Century” in Robert W. Hefner, (ed.) Shari’a Politics: Islamic Law and Society in the Modern World. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. 2011), 111. Interestingly, the Brotherhood in turn has appropriated this term from the al-Wasat Party. Nathan Brown. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. April 23, 2012.

¹²² Interview with Yasser Abd al-Qawi.

¹²³ Interview with Emad Abd al-Ghaffour.

handful seats anticipated in the summer,¹²⁴ to larger internal estimates in the fall that mirrored their final results. Their success was also in spite of electoral polls done by Western NGOs that had them in single digits from the summer right through the eve of the first round of voting,¹²⁵ which later proved to be wildly inaccurate. By contrast, as early as a month before the first round, the Salafis were (much more accurately) predicting winnings of between 30-35% of the vote, slightly higher than their eventual total. Salafi political activists actually lamented the difference between their prediction and their (slightly lower) actual results, attributing it to their lack of grass-roots organization, in comparison to the Brotherhood.¹²⁶ They believed that in future elections they would reach out more actively to a broader Islamist audience and capture the votes of “Salafi-leaning” parts of the electorate that did not go out to vote.¹²⁷ For those Egyptians who voted, but not for the Salafis, it is likely that the only possible constituencies they could appeal to are under the Islamist umbrella, and in the end these voters are likely to have supported the FJP if they chose not to support the Islamic Alliance. Supporting this, more accurate polling data produced after the elections has shown that in the final days of the campaign, undecided voters broke for the Islamist parties, particularly the FJP and al-Nour, with

¹²⁴ Conversation with Marc Lynch. Conversation with Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy during Presentation of Research Findings. April 27, 2012.

¹²⁵ Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI). Third National Voter Survey in Egypt. from <http://dedi.org.eg> (December 28, 2011). Most other polls conducted as early as July had similar findings.

¹²⁶ Interview with Emad Abd al-Ghaffour.

¹²⁷ Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, which notably employs an extensive network of “party whips,” each responsible for his own “family” (*usra*). Using this method, the Brotherhood is able to ensure party discipline in getting out the vote by keeping tabs on supporters who stays home *see* Shadi Hamid, “How the Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood Will Win”. November 3, 2011. *Arab Uprisings: Election Season*. Published November 28, 2011. Project on Middle East Political Science Briefings 7. Institute for Middle East Studies, Elliott School of International Affairs.

the greater share going to the FJP.¹²⁸

However, party leaders claimed that winning 25% of the seats in the People's Assembly was not the great success for Salafis it was made out to be by external observers. Abd al-Ghaffour believed that if Nour had been better organized and had better structures in place prior to Mubarak's exit, the party would have come in first in the elections. In addition to al-Nour's goal of improving organization and structures, Abd al-Ghaffour believed that the party must specifically target those Salafis who abstained from voting in the election. This, he stated, would certainly be a challenge because "it is hard to change something that has been static for so long," i.e. the non-political stances of Salafis."¹²⁹ While they achieved some success in the elections, Abd al-Ghaffour believed they must do better in the future by capturing even more from the Salafi base.

In the end, the Islamic Alliance, headed by al-Nour placed second behind the Democratic Alliance headed by the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in three rounds of elections that ran from November 2011 through January 2012, winning 108 of 427 seats in Egypt's lower house, the People's Assembly. This accounts for approximately 25% of the total seats in the lower house, second only to the FJP's 40%. In February 2012, the Islamic Alliance duplicated this level of success by winning 25% of seats in the Shura Council, second only to the FJP's 58% of seats. These election results surprised many analysts both inside and outside Egypt. Prior to 2011, the narrative was, Egyptian Salafis had no political organization and lacked a political leadership. Their long abstention and isolation from the Egyptian political scene meant

¹²⁸ H.A. Hellyer, "Egyptians shifted to Islamist parties as elections neared: But Egyptians' priorities were largely unchanged." Gallup. January 24, 2012. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/152168/Egyptians-Shifted-Islamist-Parties-Elections-Neared.aspx> (April 15, 2012).

¹²⁹ Interview with Emad Abd al-Ghaffour.

that they had no experience running an electoral campaign, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, which had participated for decades. As we have demonstrated, this was not an accurate picture of the Salafis role in Egyptian political life, and did not reflect the uniquely competitive relationship between the Brotherhood and the Salafis that characterized the campaign and many of its individual races.

It is likely that some of the increase of support for the Islamists in general may have been occurred in the form of increased support for the FJP among previously undecided voters who would never have considered voting for the Salafis. Supporting this notion is the fact that the al-Nour Party's disapproval rating essentially remained static from September through December, 2011 whereas the Brotherhood's decreased.¹³⁰ The Gallup poll notes that electoral support for parties is not mutually exclusive, meaning it is possible for Egyptians to express support for multiple parties. Additionally, while similar percentages of voters surveyed indicated they were undecided about al-Nour and the FJP at similar points in the campaign,¹³¹ it also stands to reason that al-Nour's undecided supporters were deciding between al-Nour and the FJP whereas the FJP's undecided supporters, while they may have contained this group, also likely included non-Islamists attracted to the FJP's more inclusive messaging. The Salafis, by contrast, were ultimately only able to compete among voters who supported Islamists generally, and for whom the only real competition for their vote came from parties with this ideological reference. An aspect of this phenomenon is even more pronounced in run-off races (many of which remained fiercely competitive), in which non-Islamist Egyptians predictably gave their support to the

¹³⁰ Hellyer. N.B: The FJP's disapproval rating went from 54% in September to 42% in December 2011 (a decrease of 12%) while the Nour Party's disapproval rating went from 57% to 58% in the same period (an increase of +1%). During this same period, both Islamist parties support increased. Nour's overall approval increased from 7% to 31% (+24%) and FJP's increased from 16% to 50% (+34%).

¹³¹ H.A. Hellyer.

Brotherhood in opposition to candidates from Salafi backgrounds.¹³² The fact that the Salafis were able to remain competitive (and even prevail) in many of these races (as detailed below) is a testament to their ability to attract voters, who, sympathetic to the political goals of Islamists, could have broken in favor of the Brotherhood and instead gave their support to the Salafis. In essence, the Salafis were not relying on any other bases for support.¹³³ At the same time, other politicians familiar with the Salafis emphasized the fact that although electorally the Salafis may have come in second, they were the “real winners” of the election because their supporters gave them their *full* support,¹³⁴ as opposed to supporting them as a second choice or alternative. It is too early to definitively determine the extent to which the Salafis maximized the voting power of their constituency or failed to do so. What is nevertheless clear is that their electoral campaign saw them adopt a competitive attitude towards the Muslim Brotherhood, which has changed the dynamic between the two groups since their period of alliance from February to July 2011.

On a purely structural level, the gradual reduction of the number of seats in the People’s Assembly elected by first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting, in favor of proportional representation (PR),¹³⁵ was a change that played to the Salafis’ and the Brotherhood’s electoral strengths in a similar way, and worked against other political groups. Whereas FPTP voting in small-sized

¹³² "Muslim Brotherhood makes more gains in election run-offs" (2011). *The Middle East Report*. December 10, 2011. Retrieved April 18, 2012 from NewsBank Database.

¹³³ Despite this, a source close to al-Nour Party leadership, referenced the fact that some of al-Nour’s potential supporters voted for the FJP because of their greater amount of political “experience”. [Interview with Source Close to al-Nour Party leadership.]

¹³⁴ Mamdouh Hosni Khalil. Interview by Daniel Boehmer and James Murphy. (January 10, 2012).

¹³⁵ It should be noted that while leftist parties like Tagammu and the Nasserist Party, and the January 25 Revolutionary Youth Coalition fiercely opposed and protested the inclusion of FPTP voting schemes in the elections, the Muslim Brotherhood’s response was more muted, saying they did not favor over another. See Gamal Essam El-Din, “Draft law introducing mixed electoral system triggers intense debate.” *Ahram Online*. May 30, 2011. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/~NewsContent/1/64/13291/Egypt/Politics-/Draft-law-draw-introducing-mixed-electoral-system-.aspx> (March 2, 2012).

districts under the Mubarak era had favored candidates coming from wealth or connected to a strong local tribe, the PR system introduced in 2011, coupled with larger sized districts, favored societal groups with “party organization and a clear ideological profile.”¹³⁶ This benefit is especially pronounced when this type of organization is relatively geographically expansive, as is also the case with Egypt’s Islamists.¹³⁷ Owing to this change and the expanded sizes of the districts, organizations with a high degree of community involvement, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya, greatly benefitted from the changes. Inasmuch as the two organizations that fit the bill of these qualifications most happened to have strong presences in similar areas, e.g. the Islamist stronghold of Alexandria and its suburbs, several neighborhoods of Cairo,¹³⁸ and the Nile Delta,¹³⁹ this not only helped them both, but also put the two groups on a competitive trajectory.

By October, however, the SCAF determined that one third of the seats in the People’s Assembly would still be elected using the FPTP system.¹⁴⁰ SCAF’s decision may have been motivated by a desire to see independent candidates run against Islamists, and thereby weaken Islamists’ electoral clout.¹⁴¹ Additionally, for the 2011-2012 People’s Assembly elections, the SCAF retained the electoral system, dating from the 1960s, which mandated that each FPTP

¹³⁶ Mazen Hassan, “The effects of Egypt’s election law.” November 1, 2011. *Foreign Policy: Middle East Channel*. http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/01/egypts_electoral_cunundrum (November 2, 2012).

¹³⁷ The liberals and secularist parties, by contrast, do not benefit from any history of institutionalization that would prevent too much infighting over the writing of electoral lists, or the ability to make sustainable alliances. See Mazen Hassan.

¹³⁸ These include poorer neighborhoods such as Imbaba, Shubra, and Nasr City.

¹³⁹ These include the governorates of Kafr el-Sheikh, Gharbiya, Qalyubia, Beheira, Monufia, and Daqahaliyya.

¹⁴⁰ The final version of the electoral law allowed candidates on the individual lists to be affiliated with parties, whereas previously they had been required to be independents. In the face of protests and threatened boycotting of the elections, SCAF amended the law.

¹⁴¹ This decision was also made in the context of what may be perceived as anti-Islamist decisions to maintain the women’s quota (later repealed).

constituency has to have one MP elected who is a “professional” and one who is a “farmer or laborer”. This system favors electoral deal-making between members in the towns and the rural areas, respectively, as alliances between partners allow the candidates to win votes from the other partner’s area of the constituency. It is a system that traditionally favored political independents.¹⁴²

Despite these obstacles, the Islamists performed well in the FPTP races; however, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis chose to do so through intense competition rather than cooperation or alignment. Early on that advantage was expressed largely in favor the Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party. The FJP won 68.7% of the FPTP seats in the first round of the elections to the People’s Assembly, versus 8.3% for the al-Nour Party. In the second round, al-Nour’s performance vis-à-vis the Brotherhood improved with the FJP winning 64.3% and the al-Nour Party taking 23.2% of the FPTP seats.^{143 144} The third round in particular, showed evidence of the kind of direct electoral competition in the FPTP races that characterized the entire legislative campaign. The third round included races in some of the outlying provinces of Egypt, as well as the Nile Delta,¹⁴⁵ many of which were Islamist strongholds, such as Daqahliyya.¹⁴⁶ In this round, the majority of the run-off elections on January 10-11, 2012

¹⁴² Mazen Hassan.

¹⁴³ The Official Website of the Supreme Committee for Elections. (2012). <http://www.elections2011.eg> (April 18, 2012). For statistics, see <http://www.jadaliyya.com>

¹⁴⁴ “Egyptian Elections: Preliminary Results [UPDATED]” *Jadaliyya*. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3331/egyptian-elections_preliminary-results_updated- (April 4, 2012). N.B. that these results do not include the runoff races.

¹⁴⁵ Third stage elections included the provinces of Daqahliyya, Gharbiya, Minya, Qalioubiya, Qena, Marsa Matruh, New Valley, North Sinai, and South Sinai. The last two provinces were partial exceptions to this general trend.

¹⁴⁶ “Daqahliyah Election Results: Islamists Dominate” January 6, 2012. *Jadaliyya*. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3933/daqahliyyah-election-results_islamists_dominate (February 10, 2012).

occurred between candidates of the FJP and the al-Nour Party.¹⁴⁷ Hence, electoral victories at this stage for the FJP were won at the expense Salafis and vice versa.

The Salafis and the Brotherhood could have chosen to cooperate by coordinating which candidates they ran in each FPTP constituency, but they did not do so. Had they cooperated, the two groups could have won a considerably larger number of FPTP seats through electoral coordination.

Social Class Dynamics:

That there is an economic dimension to Egyptian politics, particularly those of the Islamist variety, is without question. Many middle and lower-class Egyptians have turned to Islamist groups in significant numbers.¹⁴⁸ In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, this came in the form of charity organizations led by middle-class individuals who were committed to the Islamist movement and who mobilized popular grievances in order to challenge the legitimacy of the state, which had failed to provide social services to its citizens for decades. One of the first things al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya engaged in once it was established were these very same community-based activities; in essence, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis competition for poorer Egyptians' loyalties began over thirty years ago. It is unsurprising then that economic and social justice issues featured prominently in al-Nour's political platform, and these issues

¹⁴⁷ "Egyptian Elections: Preliminary Results [UPDATED]" Jadaliyya. N.B. Of the 90 candidates for 45 seats eventually determined through runoff races for the third round of voting, 32 candidates were from the FJP and 23 were from al-Nour. The remaining 35 were from other parties or unaffiliated.

¹⁴⁸ James Toth, (2003). "Islamism in Southern Egypt: A Case Study of a Radical Religious Movement." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35, (2003): 549.

resonated deeply with Salafi publics.¹⁴⁹ These issues also featured prominently in al-Nour Party campaign ads, which depicted lower class Egyptians' economic hardship (particularly rural Egyptians), and pledged the al-Nour Party's commitment to these groups.¹⁵⁰ Salafi politicians expounded that the Salafis and the founders of the al-Nour Party were "united as one", and that this unified group was part of a "silent majority" that had been sidelined—by Mubarak, the military, the rich secularists, and the Muslim Brotherhood alike.¹⁵¹ Previous discussions of policy have focused on the fact that the formal platforms promulgated by the Brotherhood and the Salafis were similar; however, many Islam-identifying Egyptians chose to vote for the less politically experienced Salafis over the Brotherhood; secondly, the Salafis themselves decided to vote for the Salafi party of their choice, regardless of these similarities. Ultimately, in a choice reflecting anger at multiple elites in Egyptian society, many lower-class Egyptians gave their votes to the organization that they felt provided them with social services *and* represented their local community most accurately; hence, Salafis in Alexandria voted for al-Nour, Salafis in the Waraq and Shubra neighborhoods of Cairo voted for al-Asala. Salafis involved in al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya voted for the Building and Development Party. For many Islamists, the party of choice was clearly not the Brotherhood, which despite its wide reach, had not reached all communities, at least according to some of the Salafis that lived there.¹⁵² Some Salafis even complained of Muslim Brotherhood condescension.¹⁵³ The leadership of the Brotherhood has articulated that they sense the Salafi challenge to their movement is the greatest on the level of working and

¹⁴⁹ David D. Kirkpatrick, "In Egypt, a Conservative Appeal Transcends Religion". *New York Times*. December 10, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/11/world/middleeast/salafis-in-egypt-have-more-than-just-religious-appeal.html> (April 19, 2012).

¹⁵⁰ "I'laan Hizb al-Nour". Youtube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8D384ekpNvc>

¹⁵¹ Interview with Source Close to the al-Nour Party Leadership.

¹⁵² Kirkpatrick.

¹⁵³ Kirkpatrick.

lower classes.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, the Muslim Brotherhood leadership has stated that because of the “simplicity” of the Salafi message and the “uneducated” nature of this population, the Salafis are unfairly robbing the Brotherhood of a key constituency, that is, the lower classes.¹⁵⁵ Strikingly, a constant refrain from Salafi supporters was that the Brotherhood’s participation in semi-authoritarian environment was evidence of their self-serving intentions. According to these Salafi activists, by participating in such an environment, with little hope of affecting policy in any meaningful way, the Muslim Brotherhood was merely engaging in political theater and neglecting more useful activities, such as helping the poor.¹⁵⁶ This class-based narrative features prominently at all levels of the Salafis’ messaging.

Activists in al-Nour emphasized that the Salafis’ commitment to social work, such as the promotion of educational establishments, both Islamic and technical, publication of magazines on cultural issues, the distribution of the Islamic *zakat*, and the administration of youth community organizations, endeared them to many communities who otherwise could not afford these services. Salafis were able to do this work, despite what they described as a lack of a steady funding stream. Essam Sharif, the Secretary of the al-Asala Party in Waraq, Cairo described a

¹⁵⁴ Email Conversation with Dr. Nathan J. Brown. March 30, 2012.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ One former independent member of parliament (later NDP) elected to the Egyptian lower house in the 2005 elections, who now supports the Nour Party, recounted to us his experiences with Ikhwan members in parliament. As vice-chairman of the Industry Committee of the People’s Assembly, Mamdouh Khalil, described attempts to collaborate with the Ikhwan on legislation for days at a time in committee, only to see the same deputies vote against the legislation when it came to the full parliament after getting orders from their “superiors”. This was frequently complemented by parliamentary walk-outs on days in which al-Jazeera and other Arab news networks were pre-positioned in front of the parliamentary building, presumably notified about the impending walkout before the non-Ikhwan deputies. Regarding the Brotherhood, Khalil also said “In five years [2005-2010] all [the Muslim Brotherhood] did was talk, but in terms of action they accomplished nothing.” Mamdouh contrasted this with the work of the Salafi organizations such as al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya, which engaged exclusively in religious education activities and provided social services for the poor, activities he considered in retrospect to have been more productive.

program that the party engaged in which cost no money but benefitted many poor residents of the neighborhood. By pressuring the governor to sell gas to their designated agents at the official rate to combat its sale at black market prices, al-Asala was able to bring the gas to Waraq for sale to its residents, adding only a small transportation markup.¹⁵⁷ This was an example of programs which benefitted the community but which were not costly.

Somewhat ironically, the Salafis lower-class based narrative runs in stark contrast to the prevailing narrative that the Salafis are the recipients of substantial amounts of foreign money from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. While Egypt may be the recipient of some economic aid from religious endowments in Saudi Arabia,¹⁵⁸ this characterization is often made to demonstrate that the Egyptian *Salafiyya* is a foreign ideological import; the political success of the Salafis in 2011, however, demonstrates the fact that this claim only goes so far.¹⁵⁹ Regardless, it is certainly not the case that the Salafis domestic constituencies are wealthy.¹⁶⁰ The Salafis, by contrast, while they have been described as having upper-class adherents, the extent to which this is the case is more anecdotal, and do not reflect the individuals driving the Salafis electoral success.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Casper.

¹⁵⁸ *Egypt Independent*. "Investigation: Salafi NGO received LE223 MN from foreign 'religious extremists'" March 6, 2012 <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/investigation-salafi-ngo-received-le223-mn-foreign-religious-extremists> (March 15, 2012).

¹⁵⁹ Gauvain, 804, 821.

¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, this characterization ignores the large international network employed by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, many of whose elites regularly traveled overseas or remained in exile for their political activities. The characterization also underplays the wealth to be found in the Brotherhood domestically. For instance, former FJP presidential candidate and Muslim Brotherhood Deputy Supreme Guide Khairat el-Sharter and Heliopolis furniture and clothing businessman Hassan Malek are both millionaires. Suzy Hansen, "The Economic Vision of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood". *Bloomberg Businessweek: Global Economics*. April 19, 2012. <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-04-19/the-economic-vision-of-egypts-muslim-brotherhood-millionaires> (April 19, 2012).

¹⁶¹ Paul Schemm, "Ultraconservative Islam on rise in Mideast." October 19, 2008. *USA Today*. http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-10-19-2058219712_x.htm (April 5, 2012).

The Rhetorical Role of Authenticity in Salafi Competition with the Muslim Brotherhood

In an environment of direct competition, the Salafis needed a means of sufficiently distinguishing themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood. To do this, the Salafis relied upon what they believed set them apart from Egypt's other Islamists – their authenticity and adherence to Islamic principles. Salafi leaders were well aware that they did not have the wealth of political experience or organizational capacity that the Muslim Brotherhood had built throughout decades of contesting elections.¹⁶² However, the Salafis viewed this long history of participation as evidence that the Brotherhood sacrificed Islamic principles in return for political gain. At the same time, the Salafis portrayed their own abstention from politics in the Mubarak years as evidence of their consistency in principles, attempting to turn their abstention into a positive. Sheikh Yasser Borhami even proclaimed that he was proud to have abstained from the prior system because he would have been tied to its corruption otherwise.¹⁶³ Hence, the Salafis attempted to transform their prior decision to abstain from politics from a political liability into a moral virtue, thus implying that those who participated in Mubarak's system were complicit in its corruption.

The message of Salafi authenticity compared to the Brotherhood's perceived lack thereof has been a common refrain among party leaders. It became clear in discussions with party leaders that the maintenance of principles and resistance to religious concessions is a major part of their political image and a way in which they intend to stand apart from the Muslim Brotherhood. When asked to explain the differences between al-Nour and the FJP, spokesman

¹⁶² Interview with Source close to al-Nour party leadership

¹⁶³ Quoted in Ali abd-al Al, "Qarar al-dakhoul lil-siyasa wa noua' al-niqashat alati atharaha dakhil al-tiyar al-salafy fi Misr," *Yahoo: Maktoob Blog*. March 14, 2012. <http://ali-abdelal.maktoobblog.com/1236497> (April 16, 2012).

Muhammad Nour stated that the FJP has similar goals to al-Nour, but that they are much more inclined to look after their own interests than al-Nour. He claimed that the Salafis work from a “micro level” and that their primary goal is helping Egyptians rather than securing political gains. In fact, Nour noted they have worked on this micro level for decades through al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya. On the other hand, he asserted that the Muslim Brotherhood works on the “macro level,” that the Brotherhood is simply more political, and that its primary goal is political success.¹⁶⁴ A similar sentiment was shared by a source close to al-Nour party leadership, who claimed that al-Nour was winning votes because they were known for adhering to Islamic values rather than being concerned with political gain, as is the Muslim Brotherhood. He said, “The Salafis have been working for years to help the Egyptian people and they are doing it out of love of Egypt and a love of God. They did not think about politics and parliament, and this is how they are different from the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood is looking for politics and power.”¹⁶⁵

Perhaps the starkest appraisal of the nature of the Muslim Brotherhood as compared to the Salafis came from al-Nour President Ghaffour, who said that the Muslim Brotherhood “has a history of making deals” and “has many faces.” He claimed that the Muslim Brotherhood has different messages depending on what constituency they are talking to – that they say “one thing for the government, one thing for the Christians, and one thing for other constituencies.”¹⁶⁶ His criticism of the Brotherhood implied that the Salafis are quite the opposite. Unlike the Brotherhood, the Salafis maintain authenticity and have a consistent message regardless of its recipient, sometimes even to their own detriment. Deputy Speaker of the People’s Assembly,

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Muhammad Nour

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Source Close to al-Nour Party Leadership

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Emad Abd al-Ghaffour

Ashraf Thabit, was more diplomatic when asked how the Salafis differed from the Brotherhood. Rather than discuss the Muslim Brotherhood directly, he chose to speak of al-Nour itself saying, “al-Nour has good qualities, is credible, does not cheat, does not betray, and maintains its principles. This is why people support al-Nour.” Thus, it seems that al-Nour party officials felt that their authenticity stood in stark contrast to the ever-shifting positions of the Brotherhood.

This emphasis on adherence to Islamic principles was a key component of al-Nour’s electoral campaign, and was used to attract votes from the conservative Salafi base. During the campaign for the People’s Assembly, al-Nour emphasized its religious credentials as protector of Egypt’s Islamic identity. One political advertisement released on the party’s website showed a man praying in a mosque and noted that the homeland reveres the *‘ulama*.¹⁶⁷ On the eve of the third round of elections for the People’s Assembly in Matrouh, the al-Nour party held a political rally at which al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya spokesman and unsuccessful al-Nour candidate Abd al-Moneim al Shahat emphasized to attendees that al-Nour offers Egypt a “clean policy without concessions.”¹⁶⁸ At the same rally, President Abd al-Ghaffour emphasized al-Nour’s intent to preserve Egypt’s Islamic identity while striving to “activate” Article II of the Constitution in form and in substance.¹⁶⁹ Members of al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya we spoke with stressed the Salafis’ authenticity and message of adherence to Islamic principles as grounds for winning people’s electoral support. In talking about Nour’s appeal, al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya member Ahmad Abdullah said, “The message of the Salaf is straightforward...they are not hypocrites, and they

¹⁶⁷ "I'laan Hizb al-Nour". *Youtube*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8D384ekpNvc>

¹⁶⁸ "Abd al-Mon'im al-Shahat bi-Matrouh: Nahnu nuqaddim siyasa nathefa la tajazilat fiha," January 1, 2012. *Al-Yawm al-Saba'* <http://www1.youm7.com/NewsPrint.asp?NewsID=567799> (February 2, 2012).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

do not deceive.”¹⁷⁰ As its name indicates, the al-Asala Party (Authenticity Party) has similarly made authenticity a key part of its message to the public. Spokesman Tamer Nasar stressed that al-Asala is not willing to concede its principles for the sake of political gain.¹⁷¹ Even Salafis who are not supportive of a political direction for the *Salafiyya* under the current system, including Mohammad Tolba of Salafyocosta, recognized the prominence of the Salafis’ message of adherence to Islamic principles and authenticity. He noted how the fact that “[Salafis] do not lie” could be a political liability for them as they attempt to navigate Egypt’s complex political scene that includes a number of non-Islamic actors in a non-Islamic system.¹⁷²

Thus, the Salafis have framed themselves as the most authentic and principled Islamists in politics. However, their desire to maintain this authenticity going forward may make it difficult for them to cooperate deeply with the Muslim Brotherhood, a movement they have characterized as inherently unprincipled. Born out of conflict with the Brotherhood over doctrinal and methodological differences,¹⁷³ al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya and its political arm al-Nour have attempted to build a reputation of privileging religion over political gains; however, now that they are participants in a parliamentary democracy and are accountable to their constituents, pressures to improve Egyptians’ living standards and reduce corruption, two common themes in their electoral platform, constitute factors pushing them in the direction of cooperation. The Salafis’ desire to preserve their reputation for authenticity means that cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood will be no easy process. While the political situation is still in a state of flux and a non-elected cabinet remains responsible for the administration of Egypt’s civilian

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Ahmad Abdullah.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Tamer Nasar.

¹⁷² Interview with Mohammad Tolba.

¹⁷³ Tammam, 26.

government, these pressures will likely remain in a state of relative dormancy. Following a transition to a fully civilian government with the election of a president in May 2012, however, these pressures will inevitably increase. The Salafis have placed themselves in a somewhat difficult political position. Making too many concessions with the Muslim Brotherhood and other Egyptian political actors on issues important to the Salafi base will open the Salafis up to the criticism that they are doing the exact thing they have criticized the Muslim Brotherhood for: making political deals that do not advance Islam.

Peculiarities in Principled Politics: Salafi Views on Democracy, Pluralism, and Women

The Salafis' emphasis on the protection of Egypt's Islamic identity and their desire to adhere to Islamic principles has shaped their stances on a number of key issues relevant in a political system that includes various non-Islamist actors. The Salafis' rhetoric on democracy, the existence of liberal and secular groups in Egyptian politics, and the role of women has been colored by their attempt to maintain Islamic principles. The platform of the al-Nour Party prominently features the principles the Salafis consider important. The platform devotes considerable focus to emphasizing the "Arabic-Islamic identity" of Egypt,¹⁷⁴ on the basis of the fact that the "creed and the religion of the vast majority of its people" identify with this language and culture.¹⁷⁵ The state, through its cultural institutes, government ministries, universities and

¹⁷⁴ The platform is not sectarian and was written, regardless of the electoral results, to elicit a wide appeal among Egyptian society, although with particular reference to those favoring an Islamic identity for Egypt. The platform opens by glorifying the "Revolution of the 25th of January" and decrying the corruption preceding it, both political corruption (in terms of election fraud and Mubarak's attempt to impose inherited rule, an indirect reference to Gamal Mubarak) and economic corruption (in the form of graft and corruption by the former ruling National Democratic Party. The platform even holds uses "the most eloquent of slogans," that employed by the largely secularist revolutionary youth in January and February 2011: "The people demand the collapse of the regime!" Political Party Platform of the Al-Nour Party. <http://alnoorparty.org/page/program_headers> (December 27, 2011).

¹⁷⁵ Political Party Platform of the Al-Nour Party.

higher institutes maintains responsibility for strengthening the cultural identity of the Egyptian nation.¹⁷⁶ At the same time, the platform calls for sharia to be the basis of Egyptian law. In terms of political rights, it describes the right of the people to self-representation as being within the framework of the Qur'anic concept of *shura*, as articulated by Sheikh Borhami. Likewise, the platform cites the “necessity of achieving democracy within the framework of *shari'a*.”¹⁷⁷ Thus, the platform stresses the prominence of the Arab-Islamic identity in Egypt while seriously qualifying all references to democracy by justifying them using Islamic principles.

Since entering the political scene, Salafis have sent mixed signals when outlining exactly what type of system of governance they envision going forward. According to Umayma Abd al-Latif, Salafis “insist that they will not practice democracy unless they are guaranteed that the legislature will not transgress religious laws.”¹⁷⁸ Indeed, different personalities within the movement have voiced different conceptions of democracy. Salafi sheikhs such as Yasser Borhami and Abd-al Moneim al-Shahat had claimed prior to the revolution that political systems

¹⁷⁶ The platform describes a more prominent role for al-Azhar (an institution which the Salafis have described as historically co-opted by and subservient to high political officials), and seeks to rebuild its reputation as a center for Islamic thought and learning. In order to do this, al-Nour recommends reforms be undertaken to make Al-Azhar independent from the political leadership in Egypt. This naturally leads into an elucidation of the party's stance on how to legislate the Islamic identity of Egypt. The platform gives a nod to retaining Article Two of the Egyptian Constitution, which affirms the fundamental principle of the Islamic Shari'a as the primary source of legislation; however, the platform quickly references the fact that this article ensures religious freedom for the Copts, and gives them autonomy in matters related to personal status laws. The platform also states that “the law of the state is applicable to all [its] citizens,” which may be an indirect way of saying that all citizens are equal before the law. The political platform evinces the al-Nour Party's notional support of a modern polity in Egypt, rejecting calls for the “theocratic model.” By contrast, they advocated a system of checks and balances between three co-equal branches to protect freedoms and administer justice. In terms of political rights, they describe the right of the people to self-representation as being within the framework of the concept of Shura or consultation. Likewise, they use the “necessity of achieving democracy within the framework of shari'a” (emphasis added) as the basis for free political association, a free media, and an independent judiciary. The platform would seem to evince a commitment on the part of the Salafis to a number of principles and positions with which not only the other Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, are in agreement, but also the liberal and secularist parties.

¹⁷⁷ Political Platform of the al-Nour Party.

¹⁷⁸ Abd al-Latif, 13.

based on liberalism and secularism are illegitimate because they do not follow *shari'a*.¹⁷⁹ Continuing to adhere to this principle since the entry of Salafis into politics, both Borhami and al-Shahat have made candid statements on where the movement stands in regard to democracy. Borhami stated in an interview that al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya accepts the “mechanisms” of democracy but that it rejects the “democratic philosophical idea that the people are the source of legislative power.”¹⁸⁰ At a Salafi conference in May 2011, al-Shahat said democracy was a “dirty game” because it was men, and not God, who legislate it.¹⁸¹ Despite this, al-Shahat ran for a seat in the People’s Assembly for al-Nour, but was defeated in runoff elections after saying in a television interview, among other things, that democracy was *bid'a*.¹⁸² Most Salafis, however, express some level of confidence in democratic processes. This variance in views might be expected from a group as new to electoral democracy as the Salafis, and they are certainly in the process of refining their views. However, it seems that the Salafis’ attempts to maintain consistency and adhere to Islamic principles is often at direct odds with democracy in ways that are rhetorically difficult.

Speaking with the leadership of the Salafi parties has also provided some important glimpses into the form of democracy these parties envision. Most Salafis we spoke with acknowledged certain benefits of democracy. Al-Asala spokesman Tamer Nasar believes that democracy is good in that it allows people to choose their ruler, but that a democracy in which

¹⁷⁹ Yasser Borhami. “al-Musharika al-siyasiya wa muwazin al-qawa.” March 20, 2007. *Sawt al-Salaf*.

¹⁸⁰ Ibrahim al-Eesouy, “Misr wa thawratiha: al-hasila wa al-aafaq.” March 7, 2012. *Markiz al-Jazeera lil-darasat*. <http://studies.aljazeera.net/reports/2012/02/2012226112854884980.htm> (April 13, 2012).

¹⁸¹ Abd al-Latif, 10.

¹⁸² Issandr el-Amrani, “In Translation: Fahmy Howeidy on Salafis” December 12, 2011. *The Arabist*.

<http://www.arabist.net/blog/2011/12/12/in-translation-fahmy-howeidy-on-salafis.html#fn:2> (January 2, 2012).

people can “do whatever they want” without limits “is not right”.¹⁸³ Al-Nour Party leaders were somewhat more guarded in their critique of democracy. When asked about the al-Nour Party’s comfort level in Egypt’s current democratic system of governance and what needed to be changed in order to bring it more in line with Islamic principles, spokesman Muhammad Nour pointed to the ongoing debate between Islamists and liberals as being a good thing because this level of debate rarely existed in Mubarak’s Egypt. Almost echoing Borhami’s statement on democracy, Nour said, “We inherently agree with the general tools of democracy that guard this debate...going to the ballot box is a good thing.”¹⁸⁴ However, Nour was unwilling to go much further in refining his democratic vision, claiming that he preferred not to get into a “philosophical debate” over the party’s position on the definition of democracy. Al-Nour President Abd al-Ghaffour also stuck to the generalities when discussing democracy, saying that democracy means accountability, justice, the ability to elect a leader, the ability to hold that leader accountable, and the ability to remove that leader. For Egyptians, Abd al-Ghaffour says, simply “having a say” in choosing their leaders is most important. Thus, as a result of their attempt to adhere to their Islamic principles, the Salafis have shown they are incapable of normatively embracing democracy on an independent basis.

The Salafis are not operating in an exclusively Islamist system and have run into challenges navigating a system that includes secularists and liberals. As noted previously, al-Nour stated that it broke away from the Democratic Alliance due to disagreements over liberal and secular parties’ representation on the joint electoral list.¹⁸⁵ Shortly after forming the Islamist Alliance with al-Asala and the Building and Development Party, al-Nour MP (and later Deputy

¹⁸³ Interview with Tamer Nasar

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Muhammad Nour

¹⁸⁵ Al-Tahaluf al-Dimuqrati (The Democratic Alliance). *Carnegie Endowment: Guide to Egypt's Transition*.

Speaker) Ashraf Thabit explained the decision to leave the Democratic Alliance by saying, “We [the Nour Party] cannot accept a liberal and secularist slate.”¹⁸⁶ Abd al-Ghaffour, when asked if al-Nour would be willing to work with non-Islamists on parliamentary initiatives, said that they would be willing to work with any party so long as they “see eye to eye” with regard to goals on particular issues, “especially if the goals we are working towards are informed by morals and the *Shari’a*.”¹⁸⁷ Thus, al-Nour seems willing to work with parties so long as the goal is in conformance with the *Shari’a*. Al-Asala holds a similar view. Spokesman Tamer Nasar said the party would work with non-Islamists and would even be willing to compromise on certain issues, but he emphasized that the party would under no circumstances concede its principles.¹⁸⁸ Once again, it seems that the Salafis’ desire to adhere to Islamic principles is likely to cause significant friction in its future dealings with non-Islamic political parties.

Finally, al-Nour and al-Asala were forced to take a stance on the issue of women in politics early on as a result of Egyptian electoral law requirements. The electoral law mandated that each proportional electoral list contain at least one woman, and Salafis responded by placing female candidates at the bottom of their lists.¹⁸⁹ Rather than including a picture of the female candidates on campaign posters as was regular practice for the male candidates, the Salafis chose to use a picture of a rose instead. However, by the second round of elections to the People’s Assembly, al-Nour began using pictures of women on its campaign posters.¹⁹⁰ Unsurprisingly,

¹⁸⁶ Mohamed Abu Elenen, “Salafi Party Rejected Democratic Alliance Over Secular Members.” *Egypt Independent*. November 13, 2011. <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/salafi-party-rejected-democratic-alliance-over-secular-members> (March 2, 2012).

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Emad Abd al-Ghaffour.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Tamer Nasar

¹⁸⁹ Isobel Coleman, “Is the Arab Spring Bad for Women?” *Foreign Policy*. December 20, 2011. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/12/20/arab_spring_women?page=0,1 (January 20, 2012).

¹⁹⁰ Jonathan Brown, “Salafis and Sufis in Egypt”, 10.

no women were elected to the People's Assembly from al-Nour given their place at the bottom of electoral lists. Indeed, the Salafis have not been coy about the reasons for putting females at the bottom of their lists. After stating that the traditional role of women was to work in fields such as education and medicine, al-Asala spokesman Tamer Nasar noted that the being placed at the bottom of their electoral lists meant that women "probably would not win" any seats.¹⁹¹ Therefore, it seems that the Salafis, while willing to abide by laws intended to boost female participation in politics, also intend to use tactics that will undermine the place of women in their parties, thus allowing them to maintain their Islamic principles.

Thus, it seems that Egypt's Salafi parties do not and cannot normatively embrace democracy, political pluralism, and a prominent role for women in politics while maintaining their consistency and adherence to Islamic principles. This is not surprising given their preconditions for participation. Rather, Salafi views on these issues are very much tied to their desire to maintain the authenticity that was so important to their entrance into political life and their electoral messaging that distinguished them from the Muslim Brotherhood. Refusing to enter Egyptian democracy for decades until they were confident that they could shape the political system into one in which they would not have to compromise on their Islamic values, Egypt's Salafi parties are now attempting to participate on their own terms, and so far have been permitted to.

Policy Implications:

We have attempted to demonstrate that Egypt's Salafis have entered politics only after certain conditions were met: 1) they had to be able to participate without compromising their

¹⁹¹ Interview with Tamer Nasar.

Islamic principles, and 2) they had to believe that their participation would enable them to shape the new political order in Egypt. Likewise, we have described an electoral situation in which the Salafis relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood has been characterized by competition, rather than cooperation, for the same reasons linked to the Salafis decision to enter politics. In this vein, several questions loom large with respect to the Salafis political participation:

Will the Salafis remain committed to democratic politics in the future?

Since the Salafis' decision to enter politics was dependent on the two conditions laid out above being met, it appears that their commitment to the mechanisms of democratic politics remain largely bound up in the continuation of these two factors being met. If political conditions change such that the Salafis no longer feel that they can participate without sacrificing their principles or that they are no longer being given the opportunity to impact the system, we would expect that the Salafis may choose to retreat from the political scene. Abstention is unlikely to take the course of a full-scale retreat among all Salafis, but rather a fracturing of the Egyptian *Salafiyya* between those who believe principled participation is possible and those who do not.

Will the Egyptian Salafiyya remain politically cohesive?

The recent disputes between the leadership of the al-Nour Party, prominent Salafi clerics, and the Salafi youth regarding the High Electoral Committee's decision to disqualify Hazem Abu Ismail from the Egyptian presidential election showed that fault lines exist within the movement that could become more prominent as some Salafis perceive the political system as unfairly stacked against them. At the same time, to the extent that Salafis are able to remain united and contrast themselves with the rest of Egyptian society (to their political benefit), they

will continue to remain an important power broker in Egyptian politics. Salafi political leaders remain optimistic on their continued electoral success, and they believe that better organization, community outreach, and policy successes could earn them more support, particularly from the more religiously conservative parts of the Muslim Brotherhood's base.

How will the experience of Egypt's Salafis in politics influence other regional Salafi movements?

It is important to emphasize that the Egyptian *Salafiyya*, as a political movement, is unique, and as such its experience will not transfer directly to other political contexts. However, like its regional counterparts, far from being an ideological import, the Egyptian *Salafiyya* is a home-grown movement that represents a significant portion of the population that identifies as Islamic, religiously conservative, and in opposition to local elites. While Salafi political parties currently exist in Bahrain and Kuwait,¹⁹² the electoral experiences of Salafis there are governed by different rules, conditions, and red lines, which do not necessarily exist in the Egyptian context. Nevertheless, the Egyptian example may encourage other Salafis to politically organize and participate in electoral campaigns. As a large country with significant historic regional sway, Egypt's experiences with political *Salafiyya* may prove to be inspirational to Salafis elsewhere. For example, Salafis in Yemen have decided to venture politics, specifically citing the success of al-Nour in Egypt as being a primary driver of this decision.¹⁹³ While the success or failure of the political *Salafiyya* in Egypt may influence other regional actors, the trend of increasing political participation by Salafis in electoral politics is indisputable and of great consequence throughout

¹⁹² Steve Monroe, "Salafis in Parliament: Party Politics and Democratic Attitudes in the Gulf." (Bachelor's Thesis, Stanford University, 2010).

¹⁹³ "Yemen Salafists form Political Party" March 14, 2012. *Khaleej Times*.
http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2012/March/middleeast_March339.xml§ion=middleeast&col (April 11, 2012).

the region.

What will characterize the Salafis' relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood during the remainder of the current parliamentary term?

Even as the gulf between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis became wider, and competition became sharper, Salafi politicians claimed they were attempting to reach out to the Brotherhood in order to coordinate policies. In fact, during our period of research, the Salafis and the Brotherhood were in the midst of a series of meetings on a number of political and programmatic issues. Perhaps due to the fact that the Brotherhood and the Salafis were in the heat of the third round of the People's Assembly elections, during which the most direct electoral competition with the FJP occurred, these meetings were far from fruitful. The Salafis efforts to position themselves as the most important power base with which the Brotherhood would have to negotiate have not entirely succeed. At that juncture, Salafi interlocutors complained of being "passed over" by the Brotherhood, which they believed was more concerned with negotiating with SCAF and the liberal blocs than with the Salafi parties. The Brotherhood, by contrast, likely feels pressure to move in the opposite direction from the Salafis in terms of both political cooperation (in order to avoid accusations of majoritarian Islamist collusion) and policy issues (in order to not incite hysteria over the application of an Islamist cultural program in Egypt). If current trends continue and the political leadership of the Salafi parties and the Freedom and Justice Party gain political ascendance, the prospect of the two groups to transition from a relationship characterized by cooperation will become more likely. To the extent these political leaders are forced to respond to outside political pressures, the possibility for cooperation will be more remote.

The Salafis are putting themselves in a difficult spot. As we have shown, the Salafis criticize the Muslim Brotherhood for sacrificing religious principles in the name of compromise, a fact that they view as a political liability. The Brotherhood, multiple Salafi politicians have said, has multiple constituencies and must appeal to each of them both within its party and its electoral alliance.¹⁹⁴ As a result, they are unable to abide by the virtues of consistency and authenticity that the Salafis (and their constituents) value. If this continues to be the clarion call of the Salafi campaign, opportunities for cooperation will decrease. On the other hand, if Egyptian politics move in a different direction, and it is the liberal and secularist groups who step away from the political system, the Brotherhood and the Salafis will necessarily have to cooperate to shape Egypt's future political order.

Challenges for the Salafis Going Forward:

The Salafis seem likely to face significant challenges going forward as they navigate the Egyptian political system. At times, the Salafis' desire to satisfy their religiously conservative base by adhering to Islamic principles will be in direct conflict with their desire to maximize their impact on the political system in key ways, such as the drafting of the Constitution; accomplishing the latter requires a level of political flexibility that worries and has the potential to anger their base. This dynamic appears to be creating tension between different factions within the Salafi Trend, and challenging the unity of the Salafi political movement, which increasingly appears to be composed of both pro- and anti-system factions.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Essam Sharif; Interview with Tamer Nasar; for scholarly writings on this topic, see: Alison Pargeter, *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Burden of Tradition*. (London: Saqi Books, 2010) and Robert S. Leiken & Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood" *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2007.

Presently, three distinct factions characterize the Salafi Trend—the political elite, the religious leadership, and the youth. The political leadership (a pro-system faction) includes the leaders of the Salafi political parties, Salafis elected as members of these parties to the People’s Assembly, Shura Council, Constituent Assembly, and the leadership positions in those bodies. The religious leadership includes the prominent sheikhs (*mashayik*) and preachers (*du’at*) active in Salafi networks organizations such as al-Da’wa al-Salafiyya and Ansar al-Sunna, especially those with wide media reach. Finally, the Salafi youth, while active in all parts of Salafi organization, including the political organizations, campaigns, and religious endowments, have also begun to organize into civil society organizations, such as the Salafi Front (*al-gabha al-Salafiyya*) and the Salafi Legitimate Authority for Rights and Reform (*al-hee’a al-shar’eyya lil-haqq wa-l islah*). These groups have come into conflict with one another over different interpretations of the relative prudence of uncompromisingly maintaining their principles versus making compromises designed to augment the Salafis ability to shape the political system through an expansion of their relative political power. While the political leadership has come out on the side of the latter (effect on the system), the religious leaders and the youth have come out on the side of the former (abiding by principles), and this has naturally led to conflict. The more the Salafi youth and the religious leaders feel dispossessed by the political system and abandoned by their own political leaders, the more they are likely to adopt increasingly anti-system rhetoric, and play an oppositional role within the Salafi Trend.

A glimpse of the future challenges the Salafis may face can be seen in the context of the 2012 presidential elections. Following Salafi candidate Hazem Salah Abu Ismail’s

disqualification from the presidential race,¹⁹⁵ al-Nour leaders remained silent on the issue. This was despite the fact that Abu Ismail had won the endorsement of the ‘Ulama Shura Council,¹⁹⁶ a body of the most preeminent Salafi sheikhs. This silence angered many Salafi youth who felt that Abu Ismail was unfairly disqualified from the race. In response, the Salafi Front launched a number of demonstrations protesting Ismail’s disqualification while also putting pressure on al-Nour Party leaders.¹⁹⁷ Additionally, a number of al-Nour party members resigned their posts in the party, some in apparent protest to the party’s failure to take a stand on the Ismail issue.¹⁹⁸

Soon after Ismail’s disqualification, al-Nour officially endorsed the candidacy of former Muslim Brotherhood member Abdel Moneim Abol Fotouh, despite his reputation for being a liberal Islamist,¹⁹⁹ and his role in the so-called “middle generation”²⁰⁰ of the Muslim Brotherhood, known for its more open, reformist positions.²⁰¹ This comes despite the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood’s candidate, Muhammad Morsy, is ideologically positioned farther right in the Muslim Brotherhood movement, and may also be considered more of a religious

¹⁹⁵ Ismail had gained the support of the Salafi Majlis al-Shura in March of 2012, though al-Nour refrained from endorsing any candidate until the official candidate registration period closed. However, shortly after this registration period closed, Abu Ismail was disqualified due to his mother holding United States citizenship. Some reports indicated that al-Nour was torn over whether to support Ismail prior to his disqualification. See "Abu Isma'il wa Azmat al-bayt al-Salafy". Al-Misryoon. n.d. <http://www.almesryoon.com/news.aspx?id=109070> (May 5, 2012) and Noha El-Hennawy "Abu Ismail Exclusion Could Bolster Shater, Prompt Salafi Rage." *Egypt Independent*. April 5, 2012. <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/abu-ismail-exclusion-could-bolster-shater-prompt-salafi-rage> (April 25, 2012).

¹⁹⁶ Majlis Shoura Al-‘Ulama. "al-Bayan al-Tas'a 'Ashr li-Majlis Shoura al-'Ulama li-Ta'yid al-Sheikh Hazim Abu Isma'il li-Ri'asa al-Jumhoreyya."

¹⁹⁷ Hamdy Dabash, "Inqisam dakhil al-taiyar al-salafy hawlaha: al-Nour yu'alim muqat'atihi wa al-jabha tada'u li-hashd ansariha ti al-maydan. March 26, 2012. *Al-Masry al-Yawm*.

<http://today.almasryalyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=336328&IssueID=2483> (April 25, 2012).

¹⁹⁸ "Mass resignations from Nour Party due to 'political failure'" April 23, 2012. *Egypt Independent*. <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/mass-resignations-nour-party-due-political-failure> (April 23, 2012).

¹⁹⁹ "Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh" Carnegie Endowment: Guide to Egypt's Transition. May 10, 2011. <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/05/abdel-moneim-aboul-fotouh> (April 2, 2011).

²⁰⁰ Also known as the *Wasatiyya movement*. Interview with Nathan Brown. April 30, 2012.

²⁰¹ "Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?" *Middle East/North Africa Report* No. 76. June 18, 2008, 4.

conservative; his conservative religious credentials are supported by his endorsement in April by the "The Islamic Legitimate Body of Rights and Reformation," a body that includes a number of Salafis, including Activist Salafi Sheikh Mohammad Abd al-Maqsud.²⁰² In this instance, it appears that the principled choice would have been to support the more religiously conservative of the two candidates – Muhammad Morsy. However, al-Nour chose to endorse the more liberal of the two, instead supporting the non-Muslim Brotherhood candidate, thereby perhaps attempting to forestall the Brotherhood from controlling both the parliament and the presidency. Indeed Salafis were sharply divided on the presidential issue. While al-Nour endorsed Fotouh, multiple media outlets reported that two youth-led Salafi organizations – the Salafi Front and the Salafi Legitimate Authority for Rights and Reform – endorsed the more religiously conservative Morsy after their favored candidate, Abu Ismail, was disqualified.²⁰³ A more informal test of the divisions created by al-Nour's decision can be seen in viewing al-Nour's official Facebook page on the day it endorsed Fotouh. While some commenters supported al-Nour's decision to endorse Fotouh, a large number of others voiced discontent with the decision and lamented that they passed over the more conservative Morsy. Still others continued to voice support for Abu Ismail.

The presidential election endorsement issue highlights some of the challenges Salafis are likely to face going forward. By stressing adherence to Islamic principles and casting the Muslim Brotherhood as the more political, less principled alternative in their electoral messaging, the Salafis have cultivated a base that expects the party's decisions to privilege religion first and political gain second. When principled decisions do not line up with political gains, problems can

²⁰² "Islamic Body Endorses Morsi for President," *Ikhwanweb*. April 26, 2012.

<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29925> (May 2, 2012).

²⁰³ "Rasmiyan: al-Gabha al-salafiyya tu'alim ta'yidiha li-Morsi rai'isan li-Misr." *Masrawy*. May 2, 2012.

<http://www.masrawy.com/news/egypt/politics/2012/may/2/4984921.aspx?ref=moreclip%20and%20http://almoslim.net/node/164071> (May 2, 2012).

be expected to arise. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafis do not have a strong hierarchical structure that can enforce movement unity. The sheikhs have one voice, the parties another, and Salafi youth still another. With a view to the Egyptian Salafiyya as a whole, it is as yet unclear the extent to which the Trend will act as or conceive of itself as an anti-system movement. The future will be determined by the relative ascendance of the competing factions within the Salafi Trend. This will be determined to a large extent by the political environment in which the Salafis exist. Greater political and policy successes will give ascendance to the political elites, while perceptions that the system is illegitimate, un-Islamic, or unfair will increase the latter two groups relative influence.

It is significant that a change in the dynamic within the Salafi community since 2011 has lent itself to greater expression of ideological diversity within the Salafi Trend. Whereas previously in the Salafi community, debates about religious issues were essentially controlled by the sheikhs, the post-Mubarak era has meant a democratization of debate within the Salafi community. In fact, this has perhaps been an inevitable result of what Nathan Brown has identified as the “democratization of shari’a-based discourse” in Egypt during the twentieth century.²⁰⁴ Although the generational gap between young Salafis and their most prominent religious leaders is definitely smaller than the same generational gap within the Muslim Brotherhood,²⁰⁵ the Salafis have still made a concerted effort to lend voice to the younger

²⁰⁴ Nathan Brown, “Egypt: Cacophony and Consensus in the Twenty-first Century” in Robert W. Hefner, (ed.). *Shari’a Politics: Islamic Law and Society in the Modern World*. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), 94.

²⁰⁵ Composed largely of Islamists who joined the Salafis when they split off from the Brotherhood in the 1970s, the newly formed Majlis Shoura al-Ulama’a is a grouping of some of the most prominent Salafi sheikhs and dua’at. It is essentially the equivalent to the Muslim Brotherhood’s Guidance office (Maktab al-Irshad). The ten members of the Majlis Shoura al-Ulama’a in 2012 are Abdullah Sharkr, Mohammad Hassan, Mohammad Hussein Yacoub, Mostafa al-‘Adawy, Waheed Bali, Abu Ishaq al-Huwaiyny, Saeed Abdl Adheem, Jamaal al-Murakibi, Abubakr al-Hanbali,

generation of Salafis whose support and assistance has been critical to their electoral successes, and give them a stake in the political activities of the Salafi political parties. Hence, it is significant, as Stephen Lacroix has pointed out, that most of the spokesmen of the Salafi parties are below the age of forty-five.²⁰⁶ It is these intergenerational connections that have been an important source of strength for the Egyptian Salafiyya, which yearns to reform Egyptian society and political life from the ground up. It is clear that the Egyptian *Salafiyya*, as a political and religious trend in Egypt, is going to be around for quite some time, is demographically young, and hence likely to continue to grow, and as a result, will have a prominent role to play in the shaping of the future of political life in Egypt.

and Jamaal Abdl Rahman. The average age of the membership of the Council is approximately 54 years old. This is most certainly older than that of the Maktab al-Irshad, whose membership contains Mohammad Badie (69), Osama Nasrideen (56), and Gami'a Amin (78). [See Diagram 1.]

²⁰⁶ Urix. March 27, 2012. "Egypt - salafister". Norsk rikskringkasting AS [Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation]. NETT-TV. <http://www.nrk.no/nett-tv/klipp/836924/> (April 6, 2012). It is important to note that one of the most prominent spokesmen for Al-Nour, Nader Bakkar, is in his twenties.

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Annex 1: List of Interviews:²⁰⁷Al-Nour Party and al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya:

Emad Abd-El Ghafour, *President, al-Nour Party*, Al-Nour Headquarters, Zizinia, Alexandria, Egypt. January 5, 2012. 4:15pm

Ashraf Thabit, *Deputy Speaker of People's Assembly, Al-Nour*, Al-Nour Headquarters, Zizinia, Alexandria Egypt. January 7, 2012. 10:30pm.

Muhammad Nour, *Official Spokesman, al-Nour Party*, al-Nour Party Headquarters, Maadi, Cairo. January 4, 2012. 3:30pm.

Hussein Thabit, *Secretary of al-Nour Party for Helwan Province*, Phone conversation, December 31, 2011. 9:00pm.

Yasser Abd-El Qawi, *Parliamentary candidate for Sidi Gaber District*, Alexandria, al-Nour, January 10, 2012, Alexandria, Egypt. 10:00pm.

Ehab Yehia Muhammad, *Zakat Committee, Al-Da'wa Al-Salafiyya*, January 10, 2012, Alexandria Egypt. 10:00pm.

Ahmad Abdullah, *Al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya*, January 10, 2012, Alexandria, Egypt. 10:00pm.

Source close to al-Nour Party, January 9, 2012, Alexandria, Egypt. 9:00pm.

Al-Asala Party:

Essam Sharif, *Member of Executive Council*, al-Asala, Headquarters of al-Asala Party, Waraq, Cairo. January 1, 2012. 12:30pm.

Tamer Nasar, *Official Spokesman, al-Asala Party*, at his home in Shubra, January 1, 2012, between the Maghrib and 'Ishaa prayers.

Other:

Mamdouh Hosny Khalil, *former MP, National Democratic Party*, current al-Nour Party supporter, January 10, 2012, Alexandria Egypt. 8:00pm.

²⁰⁷ Egyptians of Salafi politicians, activists, and religious leaders were conducted during a three-week period of research in Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt between December 27, 2011 and January 15, 2012; this period coincided with the third round of the parliamentary elections for the People's Assembly. In addition to the formal interviews, the authors gathered useful background information during Salafi religious gatherings, side discussions with staff of the respective party headquarters, informal conversations with Salafi activists, and from social media websites, particularly Facebook, which has an active Egyptian Salafi presence.

Mohamad Tolba, *founder, Salafiyocosta organization*, Costa Coffee, Mohandiseen, Cairo, January 14, 2012.

Doaa Yehia, *female Salafi*, Nasr City, Cairo, January 14, 2012. 10:00pm.

Academic Interviews:

Mohammad Abu Rumman, *Visiting Scholar*, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. March 12, 2012: 11:00am.

Ovimir Anjum, *Professor, Imam Khattab Chair of Islamic Studies, the Department of Philosophy*, University of Toledo, Phone Conversation, December 8, 2011. 11:00am.

Jonathan Brown, *Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies and Muslim Christian Understanding*, Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University. Georgetown, D.C., November 22, 2011. 12:00pm.

Nathan Brown, *Professor of Political Science and International Affairs*, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Washington, DC. Numerous Interviews between May 2011 and May 2012.

Annex 2: Al-Nour Party Electoral List for Alexandria.

Elections to the Egyptian People's Assembly. Second Round. November 2011.

حزب النور يتقدم بقوائم مرشحيه بالإسكندرية

تقدمت ابو الاربعة ١٩ / ١٠ / ٢٠١١ م أمنة الاسكندرية حزب النور بقوائم مرشحيها على الشعب والشورى بمختلف الدوائر الانتخابية بالإسكندرية ، كما تقدم الحزب للترشح على المقاعد الفردية بالمحافظة

مجلس الشعب:

قائمة الدائرة الأولى :- (وتضم اقسام: الرمل اول وثاني والمنتزه اول وثاني وسيدى جابر)

١. أشرف ثابت سعد الدين (فئات)

٢. أحمد رمضان على (عمال)

٣. د. إيهاب يحيى محمد (فئات)

٤. أ. حسني أبو اليزيد المصري (عمال)

٥. د. حنان محمد علام (فئات)

مجلس الشورى:

القائمة:

١. عبد الله عبد العزيز محمد بدران (فئات).

٢. أسامة محمد السيد محروس (عمال وملاحين).

٣. أسامة عطية عبد العزيز (عمال وملاحين).

٤. أ. إيمان عبد المنعم الصياغ (فئات).

والفردى للدائرة الأولى (المنتزه):-

م. عبد المنعم الشحات (فئات)

والفردى (الرمل وسيدى جابر):-

د. ياسر عبد القوي (فئات)

أ. مصطفى عبد اللطيف المغني (عمال).

والفردى للدائرة الثالثة (محرم بك) :-

أ. حسن كمال حسن شحاتة (فئات)

فردى الدائرة الرابعة (مينا الرمل):-

أ. عصام محمد حسنين (فئات)

مجلس الشورى:

القائمة:

١. إبراهيم رجب عبد المجيد (فئات).

٢. أ. عمرو شحاتة (عمال).

٣. أ. فداء الدين إبراهيم محمد (عمال وملاحين)

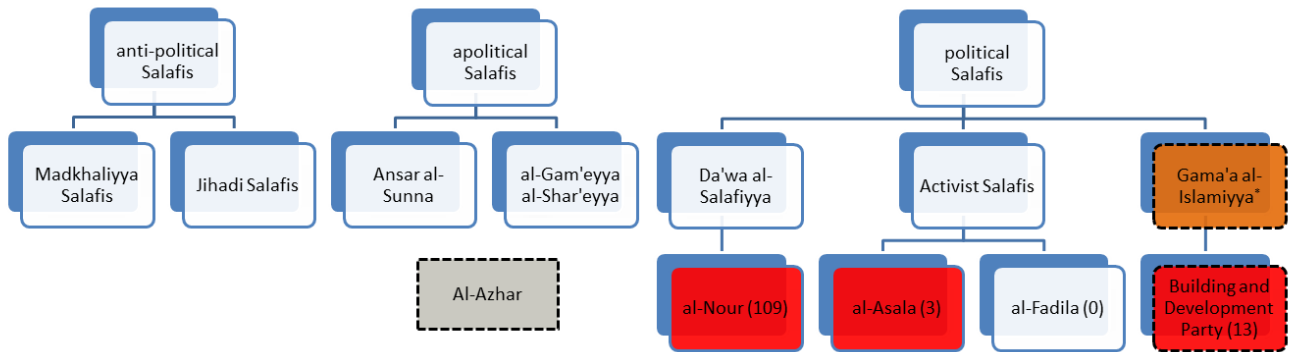
الفردى:

أعطني صوتك

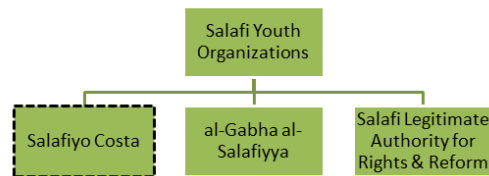
...كى نصلح الدنيا بالدين



Diagram 1: The Salafi Trend in Egypt.²⁰⁸



Salafi Satellite Channels in Egypt (c. 2009)



Majlis Shoura al-'Ulama (est. March 2011)



²⁰⁸ Sources: *Kharitat al-taiyarat al-salafiyya fih Misr*. Parts I & II by Salah al-Din Hassan; Salafi Satellite TV in Egypt by Nathan Field and Ahmed Hamam; and the Official Website of the Majlis Shoura al-'Ulama <http://www.shora-alolamaa.com/eg/>, in addition to supplementary information compiled by the authors. Parties listed in red are members of the Islamic Alliance. The total number of parliamentary seats won in the 2011-2012 elections to the People's Assembly is noted in parentheses. Organizations/institutions that are semi-Salafi in composition are marked with a dotted border.

Diagram 2: Timeline: Highlights of Salafis in Egyptian Politics (2011-2012)