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ABSRTACT

The American University in Cairo

Alaa Abdul-Majeed El-Shamy

“The Return of the Sacred: Collective Action of Copts during Muslim Brotherhood Rule”

Supervised by Dr. Kevin Koehler

The outbreak of the Arab Spring and the subsequent overthrow of Mubarak in 2011 gave way to the rise of Islamists to power. The Muslim Brotherhood’s regime was perceived by the Coptic community, in particular, as a real threat to Copts’ collective identities. In response, ordinary Christians started to organize around religion as well as the religious group to which they belong in order to manage perceived as well as real fears and uncertainties prevailing at the time. This has eventually incited new patterns of communal political activism among Christians, who seemingly embarked on “street politics” rather than “electoral politics” in resisting the incumbent, which was noticeably seen in the massive protests of June 30th, 2013.

This thesis is an engagement with the underlying causes and mechanisms that were motivating collective action of Copts during the Brotherhood’s rule. Broadly, it seeks to establish a linkage between religion and politics. Utilizing a social identity theory and a mixed-method consisting of both qualitative and quantitative indicators, I argue that communal behavior of Copts was basically shaped by growing religious fears shared by Coptic constituencies at the time while the Islamists were in office. Dynamics which were transforming religious worries into real action are further discussed. The current thesis contributes to literature on transition through its emphasis on the causes and mechanisms that construct and reconstruct identities of “subaltern” religious minorities (i.e., Egypt’s Copts) during times of sociopolitical transformation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this work would not have been possible without the indispensable contributions of dedicated individuals that I would like to highlight in this section. First, I am deeply grateful for the great and sincere effort that Dr. Kevin Koehler has devoted throughout the development process of this work, starting with the tentative proposals I used to draft and expand with him during my graduate classes until together they became a fully shaped thesis. His patience and constructive feedback has transformed the feelings of exhaustion, and sometimes uncertainty, I associated with the thesis writing process into a productive yet pleasant journey.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Gamal Soltan for the long hours he spent with me structuring the study's quantitative part, drawing my attention towards most relevant statistical models that could accurately measure my theoretical arguments. I am indebted to Dr. James Sunday as well for the productive discussions on qualitative methods that we used to have before conducting my field work, in which I learned how to apply the thematic analysis effectively. The comments provided by Dr. Soltan and Dr. Sunday in the defense were, in fact, very useful and productive.

My indebtedness is also attributed to Dr. Bahgat Korany, who has been a constant source of inspiration on both academic as well as personal levels, along with Susanne Rizzo, Senior Instructor in the Department of English Language Instruction (ELI), who has been a model of effectiveness and dedication in teaching. Special thanks also go to Yomna Amr and Sylvia Yacoub, the Administrative Assistants at the Department of Political Science, for their indispensable administrative assistance and continuous help.

During the course of my MA studies at AUC I have been busy in research for a long time away from my beloved family. Therefore, I owe a lot to my wife, Sally, and my lovely children, Malak and Marwan, for their understanding and patience.

Finally, I dedicate this work to Egypt's Christians who have been killed, persecuted, or humiliated based on distorted conceptualizations and interpretations of Islamic texts.

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Notes on Transliteration

I have utilized the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) system of transliteration in transliterating Arabic words into English, as the following table illustrates. However, well-known cities, personal names, and incidents (e.g., Aswan, Mubarak, and Maspero) were written as they are always used in the English form.

Consonant				Vowels	
أ	'	ط	ṭ	Long ا	Ā
ب	B	ظ	ẓ	Long و	Ū
ت	T	ع	‘	Long ي	Ī
ث	Th	غ	Gh	Doubled يّ	iyy
ج	J	ف	F	Doubled وّ	uww
ح	ḥ	ق	Q	Diphthongs وّ	au or aw
خ	Kh	ك	K	Diphthongs ئّ	ai or ay
د	D	ل	L	Short اَ	a
ذ	Dh	م	M	Short اُ	u
ر	R	ن	N	Short اِ	i
ز	Z	هـ	H		
س	S	و	W		
ش	Sh	ي	Y		
ص	ṣ	ة	A		
ظ	ḍ				

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On 6 March 1911, the Coptic laity held the so-called ‘Coptic Congress’ in Asyut (Southern Egypt) whose main goal was to shed light on the complaints and demands of the Christian community at the time. The organizers ended up with a list of grievances which included the following. 1) Religious discrimination against Copts since they were not given a day off in Sunday whereas Friday was a day of rest for Muslims. 2) The bias against Christians in employment, particularly in high-rank positions. 3) The underrepresentation of Copts in provincial councils. 4) The inequity in distributing educational privileges among Muslims and Copts. This was manifested in prohibiting Coptic children from studying in the *Kuttābs* (elementary religious schools) and public schools, whereas Muslim children were allowed. This was based on the premises that these places were deemed Islamic establishments.¹

Ironically, Coptic grievances have not entirely been resolved yet despite the fact that more than hundred years have passed since the Coptic Congress (see chapter 2). What is worse, the position of Copts has deteriorated due to several waves of sectarian violence they have encountered since the 1970s onwards, which culminated after the Arab Spring. In fact, the rise of Islamists to power in the wake of the 2011 uprisings has enhanced fears and worries among Copts. Furthermore, several legitimate questions concerning the roles and duties of religious minorities ruled by an Islamist government were raised. The following are just a few instances. What are consequences associated

¹ Kyriakos Mikhail, *Copts and Moslems under British Control* (London: Smith Elder & Co, 1911), 28-30; Ṭāriq al-Bishrī, *Al-Muslimūn wa al-'Aqbāṭ fī Iṭār al-Jamā'a al-Waṭaniyya* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-'Amma lil Kitāb, 1980), 81-82.

with the application of the *sharī'a* state, which has been advocated by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) even before assuming office, on Copts? Would Copts be granted equal political rights as those of Muslims? Socially speaking, would Christians be considered *ahl-dhimma* (i.e., protected religious minority) as mainstream Islamist tradition has confirmed (see chapter 2)? How would Copts proceed, socially as well as politically, within such a religiously-hostile public sphere? Would Copts revolve around Church and religious identity acting as “Christians”, or would they organize around the wider national identity behaving as “Egyptians”? What are implications of the religio-political polarization which dominated Egypt back then on the prospects of democracy in the post-2011 era?

The current thesis intends to address these questions by examining first Islamists’ conceptualizations of state and role of the *sharī'a* in the modern state. Then it investigates Coptic fears and concerns stemming from the ascendance of Islamists to power, emphasizing the association between these fears and subsequent collective actions seen later in the June 30th mass protests. Relatedly, this work explores the underlying factors constructing communal actions of Copts during the MB’s reign in particular, focusing on the potential roles played by religious collective identification and growing religious threats.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This thesis tries to answer the following two main research questions:

RQ 1: What are the underlying causes that shaped Copts’ collective action in the political realm during the Muslim Brotherhood’s rule (2012-2013)?

Taking other sociopolitical factors into consideration, this study argues that Copts' political communal actions were primarily constructed due to growing feelings of religious threats perceived at the time. In other words, it argues that Christians' religious identity became more salient under the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamist rule.

RQ 2: What are the mechanisms that transformed perceived religious threats into actual collective action?

This work contends that perceived religious threats were transformed into actual collective action through mechanisms occurring at both individual and communal levels. While the former included perceptions of unequal citizenship and personal insecurity, the latter involved processes of group identification and group consciousness.

Taken together, this thesis suggests a casual mechanisms model (see chapter 4) that helps explain the proposed association between perceived religious threats (i.e., the independent variable) and the collective action of Copts (i.e. the dependent variable), highlighting certain mechanisms that were transforming these perceived threats into real action. More specifically, perceived religious threats that dominated the Coptic community during MB rule generated growing feelings of personal insecurity and unequal citizenship among individual Copts. These individual-level mechanisms were transformed at the communal level yielding increasing incidents of group identification and group consciousness, which eventually incited Copts' collective action seen in the June 30 revolt. In essence, Christian collective action aimed at eliminating the main source motivating the perceived threats in the first place, namely the Brotherhood's Islamist regime.

Literature Review

Transitions have figured prominently in contemporary politics. Considerable intellectual capital has been devoted thus far to addressing the causes, processes, and consequences associated with times of political transformation, utilizing diverse theoretical and methodological approaches. A robust theory explaining when and why exactly political changes occur has not been generated yet. Nevertheless, scholars have agreed that all societies undergoing transitions experience a “condition of uncertainty” while departing from authoritarianism towards political democracy.²

According to O’Donnell and Schmitter, transition can be described as a movement from “certain authoritarian regimes toward an uncertain something else.”³ Much scholarly attention has been devoted to exploring the roles played either by agents⁴ and/or structures⁵ in shaping mechanisms and outcomes of transitions. Agreeing

² See for example, Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Valerie Bunce, “Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations,” *Comparative Political Studies* 33, no. 6/7 (2000): 703-734; Todd Eisenstadt, “Eddies in the Third Wave: Protracted Transitions and Theories of Democratization,” *Democratization* 7, no. 3 (2000): 3-24; Stephen King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz, “Democratization Theory and the ‘Arab Spring,’” *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 2 (2013): 15-30.

³ O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 3.

⁴ See for instance, Barbara Geddes, “What do we Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 115-144; Bunce, 2000; O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*.

⁵ Seymour Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy,” *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1 (1959): 69–105; Seymour Lipset, “The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address,” *American Sociological Review* 59, no.1 (1994): 1-22; Jason

with Charles Tilly, the structure-agency dichotomy should be abandoned while approaching the complexities associated with political transformations, leaving space for analyzing the dynamic interactions occurring among competing groups within a given society in transition.⁶

Reviewing the literature on transition reveals that while the influence of elite factions has been given much attention, less is known about “ordinary” citizens and how they handle the growing fears accompanied with times of political change. More importantly, the social and political behavior of religious minorities has received scant attention. Furthermore, whereas much emphasis has been placed on sociopolitical contexts as being key factors determining outcomes of political transformation, religiously-driven variables have frequently been overlooked in existing literature on transition and social mobilization.⁷ The current thesis is dedicated to filling this gap by analyzing collective action taken by ordinary Coptic citizens (i.e., non-elite and non-activists) during the Brotherhood’s transition, investigating potential influences of religiously-motivated factors driving these actions.

Understanding Christians’ sociopolitical behavior during the Brotherhood’s transition is incomplete unless the broader Muslim-Coptic relationship is explored. To

Brownlee, Tarek Masoud and Andrew Reynolds, *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁶ Charles Tilly, “Processes and Mechanisms of Democratization,” *Sociological Theory* 18, no. 2 (2001): 18.

⁷ See for example, Michael Hoffman and Amaney Jamal, “Religion in the Arab Spring: Between Two Competing Narratives,” *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 3 (2014): 593-606; Ceren Belge and Ekrem Karakoç, “Minorities in the Middle East: Ethnicity, Religion, and Support for Authoritarianism,” *Political Research Quarterly* 86, no. 2 (2015): 280-292.

begin with, Christian-Muslim relations are a multifaceted and complex issue as the literature has clearly shown. On the one hand, it can be addressed utilizing different levels of analysis: the state-church level; the societal level reflected in the daily interactions between Coptic and Muslim communities; the international level through which Coptic diaspora and international human organizations along with global powers intervene in local affairs for political ends. On the other hand, a wide array of historical, socio-political, economic, religious and cultural factors has together led to the construction of Christian-Muslim relationships over centuries.

Broadly, it can be argued that the relation between the Coptic minority, the largest Christian minority community in the Middle East, and the Muslim majority in Egypt has gone through different ebbs and flows over the past century. For instance, the 1919 revolution signified an unprecedented moment of national unity, when both Muslims and Copts fought shoulder-to-shoulder against British rule which eventually led to Egypt's independence. This harmony was seen once again in the drafting process of the 1923 constitution. For instance, the Committee of Thirty that had been formed to write Egypt's first constitution included 6 members representing non-Muslim minorities (twenty per cent of the committee).⁸ Furthermore, despite the negative implications associated with Article 194 of the constitution on the identity of Copts, which states that "Islam is the religion of the state and Arabic is its official language", this Article was approved

⁸ Ṭāriq al-Bishrī, *Al-Muslimūn wa al-'Aqbāt*, 174; Samīr Murquṣ, "al-'Aqbāt wa al-Sharī'a bayn Dustūr "al-Haraka al-Waṭaniyya" (1923) wa Dustūr "waly al-'Amr" (1971)," in *Al-Mūwāṭana fī Mūwajahat al-Ṭa'ifiyya*, ed. Amr al-Shūbakī (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lil Drāsāt al-Siyāsiyya wa al-Istrāṭijiyā, 2009), 81.

unanimously by the committee.⁹ Contrary to what had been known as the “golden age” for Copts, extending throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the status of the Coptic laity was weakened in the aftermath of the 1952 revolution due to the socioeconomic policies adopted by Nasser. These policies, however, enhanced the church’s power since it became the Copts’ sole representative before the state in return for Pope Kyrillos’ unlimited support to Nasser.¹⁰

The informal Nasser-Kyrillos “entente” was undermined under Sadat’s reign, during which political Islam was dominating Egypt’s public sphere. According to Saba Mahmood, “if Nasser’s policies are held responsible for the confessionalization of Coptic identity, then Anwar Sadat’s regime (1970-1981) is regarded as having opened the door for the polarization of Muslim identity along confessional lines.”¹¹ Muslim-Coptic interactions during Sadat were negatively shaped by several variables, such as the ostensible tensions between Sadat and Pope Shenuda III, the escalation of Islamism, and the religiously-inspired violent incidents targeting Copts and their assets.¹²

As for Mubarak’s era (1981-2011), the church’s social and political power was further consolidated and incidents of sectarian violence targeting assets and places of

⁹ Fahmī Huwyadī, “Al-Mādda al-Thāniya men al-Dustūr wa Qaḍiyat al-Muwāṭana,” in *Al-Muwāṭana fī Muwajahat al-Ṭa’ifiyya*, 26.

¹⁰ Mariz Tadros, “Vicissitudes in the Entente between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the State in Egypt,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 2 (2009): 272.

¹¹ Saba Mahmood, “Religious Freedom, the Minority Question, and Geopolitics in the Middle East,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 20 (2012): 436.

¹² Tadros, “Vicissitudes,” 273.

worship of Copts continued.¹³ The ascendance of Islamists to power following Mubarak's overthrow in 2011 has ushered in a new and fiercer wave of sectarian assaults against Copts and their assets, however. For example, Jason Brownlee contends that under president Mursī the "anti-Christian violence brought chilling validation to the concerns Copts harbored. Kidnappings in Upper Egypt continued, and anti-Christian attacks rocked the heart of the country as well."¹⁴ In fact, these attacks have greatly escalated after the ousting of Islamists in 2013. On 21 August 2013, a week after the clearing of the Raba'a and al-Nahda sit-ins, Human Rights Watch released a report entitled "Egypt: Mass attacks on Churches". The report states that:

Immediately following the violent dispersal of the Brotherhood's sit-ins in Cairo on August 14, crowds of men attacked at least 42 churches, burning or damaging 37, as well as dozens of other Christian religious institutions in the governorates of Minya, Asyut, Fayum, Giza, Suez, Sohag, Bani Suef, and North Sinai.¹⁵

As was shown above, Copts have encountered several phases of tolerance and persecution alike across different times and regimes. The challenging question posed now, however, is why does Copts' identity become more salient as noticed under the

¹³ Paul Sedra, "Class Cleavages and Ethnic Conflict: Coptic Christian Communities in Modern Egyptian Politics," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relation* 10, no. 2 (1999): 219-253; Mariz Tadros, "Copts under Mursi: Defiance in the Face of Denial," *Middle East Report* 267, (2013): 22-27.

¹⁴ Jason Brownlee, "Violence against Copts in Egypt," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, www.carnegieendowment.org/2013/11/14/violence-against-copts-in-egypt-pub-53606.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Mass Attacks on Churches," <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/08/21/egypt-mass-attacks-churches>.

Brotherhood's rule yielding such communal religious fears and insecurity (as will be elaborated later)? The literature on collective mobilization has traditionally focused on economic and political grievances as key factors determining why and when citizens mobilize.¹⁶ Nevertheless, a growing body of scholarship has recently called for shifting attention away from sociopolitical variables towards cultural and psychological ones while addressing causes triggering collective behavior. Within this tradition, some commentators have focused on religion as one of the main catalyst motivating political participation.¹⁷ Other analysts have highlighted the roles played by social identification and group categorization processes.¹⁸

¹⁶ See for example, Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Robert Dhal, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1971); Ricca Edmondson, ed., *The Political Context of Collective Action: Power, Argumentation and Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1997); Louise Tilly and Charles Tilly, ed., *Class Conflict and Collective Action* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981); Brownlee, Masoud and Reynolds, *The Arab Spring, Pathways of Repression and Reform* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁷ See for example, Dennis Patterson, Gamal Gasim, and Jangsup Choi, "Identity, Issue, and Religious Commitment and Participation: Explaining Turnout among Mosque-Attending Muslim Americans," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 11, no.3 (2011): 343-357; Kenneth Wald, Dennis Owen and Samuel Hill, "Churches as Political Communities," *American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 (1988): 531-548; Fredrick Harris, "Something within: Religion as a Mobilizer of African-American Political Activism," *The Journal of Politics* 56, no. 1 (1994): 42-68; Calhoun Brown, "African American Churches and Political Mobilization: The Psychological Impact of Organizational Resources," *The Journal of Politics* 58, no. 4 (1996): 935-953; Fiona McCallum, "Christian Political Participation in the Arab World," *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations* 23, no. 1 (2012): 3-18; Saba Mahmood, "Religious Freedom, the Minority Question, and Geopolitics in the Middle East," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 20 (2012): 418-446; Eva Pföstl and Will Kymlicka, "Minority Politics in the Middle East and North Africa: The Prospects for Transformative Change," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 14, no. 38 (2015): 2489-2498.

¹⁸ See for instance, Steven Greene, "Social Identity Theory and Party Identification," *Social Science Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2004): 136-153; Beth Uhler, "The

The current study belongs to the latter school of thought in that it explores the relationship between perceived religious identity threats and Copts' political behavior. Despite the fact that "religious affiliation became the Copts' main marker, not their citizenship" since Nasser's era as Mariz Tadros has indicated,¹⁹ Copts have never been exposed to such real threats as they were under the Islamist's rule (see chapter 2). In fact, it was the first time in Copts' modern history to be ruled by an Islamist actor, i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood.

According to Jason Brownlee, the Coptic minority perceived Muslim Brotherhood rule as aiming at transforming the national narrative from "Egyptianness" to an "Islamic" identity.²⁰ Agreeing, Andrea Rugh indicates that "[d]uring the year of President Morsy's tenure, Christians saw their position eroding as he moved quickly to institute measures more in line with the establishment of an Islamic state."²¹ Moreover, Christian

Escalation of Commitment in Political Decision-Making Groups: A Social Identity Approach," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 26 (1996): 611-629; Oral Muldoon, Karen Trew, Jennifer Todd, Nathalie Rougier and Katrina McLaughlin, "Religious and National Identity after the Belfast Good Friday Agreement," *Political Psychology* 28, no.1 (2007): 89-103; Stephan Stürmer and Bernd Simon, "The Role of Collective Identification in Social Movement Participation: A Panel Study in the Context of the German Gay Movement," *Personality and Social Psychology* 30, no.3 (2004): 263-277; Caroline Kelly and Sara Breinlinger, *The Social Psychology of Collective Action: Identity, Injustice, and Gender* (London: Taylor& Francis, 1996).

¹⁹ Tadros, "Vicissitudes," 271.

²⁰ Brownlee, "Violence against Copt," 5.

²¹ Andrea Rugh, *Christians in Egypt: Strategies and Survival* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 191.

communities have developed a common sense of social isolation during the rise of Islamists, which can be attributed to the growing feelings of lack of citizenship.²²

In sum, it can be contended that any analysis seeking to understand political actions adopted by Copts during the MB's rule is incomplete unless the cultural as well as psychological variables which helped construct these actions are taken into consideration. Therefore, the current work finds itself located at the intersection of three main traditions. The first is politics, where Copts' political behaviors are analyzed. The second field relates to social psychology, in which the influences of social identity-related threats in addition to social categorization processes on shaping social action are explored. The final discipline revolves around religion, where prolonged religious cleavages existing between the Coptic minority and the Muslim majority, furthered during Mursi's transition, are addressed.

Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory

Understanding a multifaceted issue such as the one at hand, namely Copts' sociopolitical responses to the rise of Islamists, requires a broader gaze outside politics analyzing the psychological, cultural, and religious context. This is due to the fact that the sociopolitical behavior adopted by religious minorities (i.e., Egypt's Christians) in times of political transformation cannot be explained based solely on political factors. Growing communal

²² Home Office, "*Country Information and Guidance Egypt: Christians*," <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=publisher&publisher=UKHO&skip=0&querysi=Egypt&searchin=title&sort=date>.

fears and uncertainties featuring in periods of political change are, hence, expected to play pivotal roles in shaping behavior. That is to say, socio-psychological variables such as identity salience, collective identification, and self-esteem are deemed equally important as other relevant political variables while approaching the positioning of religious minorities in times of social unrest. Based on this reasoning, the current study employs the social identity approach, which is considered the most relevant theoretical framework allowing for a deeper understanding of the research puzzle under scrutiny.

Broadly, social identity theory is a social psychological tradition explaining mutual relations between individual persons and social groups in a given society. It contends that the way in which one perceives the self and the group to which one belongs are significant for the construction of social actions and attitudes.²³ The theory was formulated by Henri Tajfel in the 1970s, and has received considerable scholarly attention since then. According to Tajfel, social identity is defined as “that *part* [Italic in original] of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.”²⁴ Clearly, this conceptualization emphasizes

²³ See for example, James Cameron, Deborah Terry and Richard Lalonde, “Perceptions of Self and Group in the Context of a Threatened National Identity: A Field Study,” *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 8, no.1 (2005): 73-88; Jolanda Jetten, Nyla Branscombe, Michael Schmitt and Russell Spears, “Rebels with a Cause: Group Identification as a Response to Perceived Discrimination from the Mainstream,” *Personality and Social Psychological Bulletin* 27 no. 9 (2001): 1204-1213; Julie Smurda, Michele Witting and Gokce Gokalp, “Effects of Threat to a Valued Social Identity on Implicit Self- Esteem and Discrimination,” *Group Processes Intergroup Relations* 9, no. 2 (2006): 181-197; Steven Greene, “Social Identity Theory and Party Identification,” *Social Science Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2004): 136-153.

²⁴ Henri Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (London: Academic Press, 1978), 63.

the crucial roles played by social groups (e.g., religion, gender, party, and ethnicity) in constructing not only cognitive and attitudinal perceptions of individuals, but more importantly social identities. That is, group membership becomes an integral part of one's conception of the self and other social groups. As Beth Uhler pointed out, "people gain a sense of who they are, and derive much of their self-esteem, from memberships in social groups...[and therefore] positive social identity produces strong relations when that identity is endangered."²⁵

While deconstructing the social-psychological meanings attached to group membership, Tajfel has provided three main dimensions. The first is cognitive, which refers to an individual's awareness that he/she belongs to a certain social group. The second is evaluative, where positive as well as negative meanings come into one's mind when his/her in-group is compared to other groups (i.e. out-groups). The final aspect is emotional, which signifies the extent to which individuals are emotionally committed (e.g., like or dislike) to their group based on the cognitive and evaluative aspects previously mentioned.²⁶

Accordingly, developing positive or negative social identities is strongly associated with diverse degrees of belonging to certain social groups as Hogg and Abrams have demonstrated.²⁷ These authors have emphasized the psychological and

²⁵ Beth Uhler, "The Escalation," 613-614.

²⁶ Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups*, 28-29.

²⁷ Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications: A social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 7.

functional roles played by social categories. As for the former, identification with a certain social category is deemed “phenomenologically real and has important self-evaluative consequences.”²⁸ With regard to the latter, social groups “fulfil individual and societal needs for order, structure, simplification, predictability according to the authors.”²⁹

Bearing these psychological and functional aspects in mind, the social identity perspective is deemed a sociological tradition as well since it primarily addresses reciprocal interactions among social groups on one side, and explores dialectical relations between individuals and society on the other. In other words, it explores how personal identities are being connected with social identities. Taking these main principles together, the social identity framework contributes substantially to the understanding of mutual interactions occurring within groups (intra-group level) and between groups (inter-group level). More importantly, it assists in predicting patterns of reactions that might be adopted by disadvantaged or threatened social categories particularly during times of social transformations.

Specifically, one of the theory’s core assumptions is organized around the idea that individuals are in crucial need to have and maintain a positive social identity. Henri Tajfel and John Turner provided three main social-psychological processes enabling

²⁸ Ibid., 7.

²⁹ Ibid., 18.

individuals to sustain a satisfactory image either about themselves or their respective groups: social categorization, social identity, and social comparison.³⁰

To start with, social categorization is a cognitive mechanism which helps individuals to organize and deal with the surrounding social environment on one side, and guide them towards more appropriate social actions on the other.³¹ According to Tajfel, categorizations are crucial mechanics because they assist individuals to draw social distinctions between the “us” and the “them,” or between the in-group and relevant opposing out-groups.³² As for social identification processes, the theory emphasizes that individuals’ self-perception is mainly derived from one’s awareness that his/her group is socially valued.³³ Literature on social identification has frequently highlighted the affective as well as behavioral consequences resulting from commitment to a certain social group.³⁴ With regard to social comparison, theorists of social identity argue that

³⁰ Henri Tajfel and John Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict,” (1979): 38-43, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226768898_An_Integrative_Theory_of_Intergroup_Conflict.

³¹ Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups*, 61.

³² *Ibid.*, 62.

³³ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁴ Bertjan Doosje, Naomi Ellemers and Russell Spears, “Commitment and Intergroup Behavior,” in *Social Identity*, ed. Naomi Ellemers, Russell Spears and Bertjan Doosje (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999), 84-106; Brent Simpson, “Social Identity and Cooperation in Social Dilemmas,” *Rationality and Society* 18, no. 4 (2006): 443-470; Christopher Burris and Lynne Jackson, “Social Identity and the True Believer: Responses to Threatened Self-Stereotypes among the Intrinsically Religious,” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 39 (2000): 257-278; Bert Klandermans, “How Group Identification Helps to Overcome the Dilemma of Collective Action,” *American Behavioral Scientists* 45, no. 5 (2002): 887-9000.

persons tend to conduct continuous social comparisons between the group to which they belong and out-groups, making sure that their own group is socially respected.³⁵

Since developing a satisfactory social identity is crucial for constructing a positive self-image according to the theory, people belonging to less favorable social groups utilize different alternatives by which perceived low self-esteem is addressed. Two main mechanisms are provided by the theory in this regard: social mobility and social change. To begin with, Social mobility occurs primarily on the individual level, when individual persons choose voluntarily to leave perceived disadvantaged groups, moving towards more favorable ones in an attempt to improve their social positioning.³⁶ When it is difficult or impossible for an individual to “pass” freely from one social group to another, people utilize the “social change” strategy. This could be seen when people act collectively in order to change general conditions of life threatening the position of the entire group.³⁷

The Relevance of the Social Identity Theory to the Research Puzzle

Several reasons can be provided elucidating why social identity is deemed the most relevant framework to the study’s main question. First, the theory basically addresses intergroup relations giving a special attention to minority groups whose social positions are disadvantaged and/or insecure. This type of understanding fits neatly with the main

³⁵ Tajfel and Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict,” 40-43; Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups*, 64-67.

³⁶ Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups*, 52; Tajfel and Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict,” 43.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 53, 88.

focus in this work, which is mainly directed to understanding how the Coptic minority responded to perceived threats during the MB's rule. In other words, it assists in explaining social behavior taken by a threatened minority group (i.e., Copts) living among a majoritarian community (i.e., Muslims) in times of transition.

Second, the rationale of this work is to identify mechanisms linking perceptions of identity threats (i.e., cognitive aspect) adopted on the individual level with real actions (i.e., behavioral dimension) adhered collectively by a certain social group. In fact, the social identity perspective helps accomplish this goal, since it primarily highlights dialectical relations between the self and the other (i.e., the in-group and out-group)³⁸ occurring through specific processes such as social categorizations and comparisons illustrated earlier. In other words, it moves from person to social group (i.e., from individual to society) which matches precisely with the current project's primary goal.

Third, the theory provides two main mechanisms enabling individuals to deal with perceived identity threats (i.e., social mobility and social change). These mechanisms are to be exploited in this study in order to track changes in the attitudes and behaviors taken by Copts, either on the individual or communal level, across times and regimes (i.e., SCAF's transition versus Mursī's transition).

Finally, the literature on democratization and regime change focused on political and economic factors, overlooking other social and psychological aspects. Since the main goal of this work is to reconsider these ignored yet important factors, it would greatly

³⁸ Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 24-25.

benefit from the social identity approach which is mainly considered a social psychological-based theoretical framework.

Methodology

This thesis adopts Lieberman's Nested Analysis Approach,³⁹ in which a complementary strategy of both quantitative and qualitative methods is employed. This strategy helps bridge "great holes in the relations between independent and dependent variables" as McAdam et al have illustrated.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it assists in an understanding of the potential variations that might exist in the participants' responses. Since the main aim of this study is to analyze collective actions taken by Copts under "Islamist" rule (namely, Mursī's regime), it is important to explore whether or not these actions varied under different regimes (i.e, SCAF's transition and Mursī's period). To trace these variations, the study further adopts Lijphart's "Diachronic Comparative Analysis,"⁴¹ which aims at "maximizing comparability" of results as the author elaborated. In other words, this approach would allow for comparing collective actions taken by the same unit of analysis (i.e., Copts) experiencing different types of regime (i.e., the SCAF and the MB), which ultimately helps to examine the main argument of study from its two sides.

Quantitatively, the Arab Barometer dataset (AB) will be utilized to empirically examine the study's main premises. Specifically, while the AB Wave II contains data

³⁹ Evan Lieberman, "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research," *The American Political Science Review* 99, no. 3 (2005): 435-45.

⁴⁰ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, "Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics," in *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, ed. Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 273.

⁴¹ Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *The American Political Science Review* 65, no.3 (1971): 689.

addressing SCAF's period (the fieldwork was conducted from 16 to July 3, 2011), the AB Wave III provides data covering events during Mursī's era (the interviews were conducted from March 31 to April 7, 2013). The uniqueness of the two waves lies in the fact that both include a wide variety of questions relevant to the research puzzle at hand. Some of the questions covered, for example, the following topics: diverse levels of trust in key political forces at the time, such as the MB, the SCAF, and the cabinet; perceived personal security threats; evaluations of equal citizenship status; levels of interest in politics; attitudes towards democracy and democratic systems; and attitudes towards the implementation of *sharī'a*. In fact, these questions allow for conducting several comparisons between Copts and Muslims across the two political transitions under investigation.

While the AB material help meet quantitative-related issues under scrutiny, in-depth interviews are employed as a primary qualitative strategy aimed at identifying possible mechanisms through which Copts' perceived religious threats were translated into collective action. Narratives of a selected group representing ordinary Coptic citizens are collected and analyzed. It is worth mentioning that the diversity of the interviewees was ensured so as to represent diverse socioeconomic backgrounds of Copts (e.g., social class, gender, age, education, etc.).

The dependent variable in this thesis is collective action of Copts (i.e., political engagement in protests, marches, sit-ins, meetings discussing political concerns, etc.) during the Brotherhood's regime, whereas the independent variable is perceived religious threats experienced by Copts at that time. Influences of other relevant mechanisms (e.g., perceptions of unequal citizenship, feelings of personal insecurity, in-group

identification) will also be examined. As for the variables and scales of measurement, they will be further elaborated once each one of them is used (see chapters 3 and 4).

Objectives

Generally, this thesis mainly addresses the relationship between religion and politics. More specifically, its main objective is to understand the extent to which religiously-driven fears helped construct Copts' communal political actions during the MB's reign (2012-2013). According to the literature, minorities are extremely concerned with how to preserve their religious identity especially in the midst of political transformations.⁴² Therefore, this study aims to measure perceptions of religious fears adopted by Copts and then compare them across two different regimes. In addition, it suggests some plausible dynamics through which these perceived fears were transformed into actual behavior. To accomplish these goals, the current work relies on a complementary strategy in which both quantitative and qualitative methods are utilized. Relatedly, it uses both primary and secondary materials. As for the former, narratives provided by a small-N representing diverse Coptic backgrounds were gathered and then analyzed qualitatively. With regard to the latter, the Arab Barometer (waves II and III) was employed as secondary material generating several statistical indicators examining the study's main arguments quantitatively.

⁴² See for example, Kanchan Chandra, "Making Causal Claims about the Effect of 'Ethnicity'," in *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, ed. Mark Lichbach & Alan Zuckerman (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007); James Fearon and David Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," *International Organization* 54, no. 4 (2000): 845-877; Baljinder Sahdra and Michael Ross, "Group Identification and Historical Memory," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 33, no.3 (2007): 384-395.

Adopting such a mixed - methodology consisting of both quantitative and qualitative indicators helps handle the shortcomings and limitations of surveys, such as social desirability bias. This strategy is crucially important in the current work, where respondents belong to a religious minority (i.e., Copts) are asked to participate in public opinion surveys during times of uncertainties on both social as well as political levels.

While existing literature on social mobilization has frequently explored the roles played by sociopolitical factors in determining why and when people get involved in collective mobilization, this work explores the influences of religion and identity. Specifically, it examines connections between religious threats perceived by Copts and the likelihood of engagement in politics. To achieve these goals, the social identity perspective is employed as the most relevant theoretical framework to the research statement under investigation.

Contribution

Given the research puzzle at hand, this work is more interested in political decisions taken by individual citizens than those adopted by elite factions or the “men with guns” during times of transition. While mainstream studies of transition follow the dominant “transition without citizens” approach, where the main focus is placed on the elites’ political agenda, this study emphasizes what can be described a “transition with citizens” model. In fact, the latter mainly focuses on choices of ordinary people in times of political unrest. Hence, the significance of this study lies on three levels: 1) the targeted unit of analysis (i.e., ordinary Coptic citizens); 2) the timeframe of analysis (i.e., collective action of Copts encountering an “Islamist” regime); and 3) the causal explanatory factors under investigation (i.e., religious and identity-driven variables).

CHAPTER II

The Rise of the Brothers to Power and its Sociopolitical Implications for Copts

Setting the Stage: Coptic-Muslim Relations

Over the last eighty years, the Muslim Brotherhood has been pursuing political power in Egypt through a slow and incremental process of Islamizing Egyptian society “from below”. Once they assumed power in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the Islamization process occurred “from above” as an Islamist President and his cabinet, along with the parliament, were speaking the same language. The Coptic minority communities were aware at the time that their collective religious identity was at stake. This is due to the fact that Copts have never been ruled by Islamists at least throughout their modern history. As the narratives expressed by the interviewees will elaborate (chapter 4), ordinary Christians felt that they were given a second-class placement due to religious rationalizations while the Islamists were in office. This has enhanced the already worsening perceptions of unequal citizenship they had developed since the Islamization wave they encountered during Sadat’s era.

Understanding the threats Christians perceived due to the Muslim Brotherhood’s rise to power is incomplete without addressing first the religious foundations upon which the Brothers’ political project is established. Two main principles are to be provided in this regard: the Brotherhood’s conception of the state and their perceptions of the role of *sharī‘a* in society. While the first section of this chapter explores how the Muslim Brotherhood perceives both of the state and of the role of *sharī‘a* in society, the second part addresses the sociopolitical implications resulting from adopting such as conceptualizations on the Coptic community in particular.

Main Tenets of the Brotherhood's Project

Recreation the Islamic Caliphate

The Muslim Brotherhood makes no separation between religion and state. For them, Islam should cover every single aspect of a Muslim's life. Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, made this point clear when he argued that "Islam is worship and leadership, religion and state, spirituality and work, prayer and jihad, obedience and rule, *Mushaf* [the *Qur'an*] and sword."⁴³ While explaining the foundations of the Brotherhood's *da'wa* (call), al-Banna indicated that "Islam is a comprehensive system, which touches upon all dimensions of Muslims' life. It is a state and a nation; a government and *umma*."⁴⁴

In his turn, Sayyid Quṭub (1906-1966), the most influential theorist not only for the Brotherhood but for all radical Islamist movements, argued that Islam provides a comprehensive methodology that should be followed by the Muslim community on both the individual and the communal levels.⁴⁵ According to the Brotherhood's reasoning, everything on earth, including the state, is owned by God and nothing is left for Caesar. As al-Banna has put it:

It is not our choice that politics is deemed an integral part of religion, and Islam governs rulers and ruled. Giving back to Caesar what is Caser's and to God what

⁴³ Hassan al-Banna, *Mudhakarāt al-Da'awa wa al-Dā'iya*, 145, <http://www.ikhwanwiki.com/index.php?title>.

⁴⁴ Hassan al-Banna, *Majmū'at Rasā'il al-Imām al-Shahīd Hassan al-Banna* (Cairo Dār al-Andalus, n.d), 223. <http://www.303030.com/cms/ar/page/viewpage/7194>.

⁴⁵ Sayyid Quṭub, *Ma'ālim fī al-Ṭarīq* (Beirut and Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1979), 49.

is God's does not exist in Islam. Rather, Caesar and all he possesses are owned by Allah, the one, the prevailing.⁴⁶

For the Brothers, it is not only the citizens who should abide by the Islamic doctrine but also the state itself. Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī (1926-), the Muslim Brotherhood's main theorist and spiritual leader, contended that the Islamic state is deemed one of the divinely revealed rites, and hence establishing an Islamic state is a precondition for creating a purely Islamic community.⁴⁷ Al-Qaradāwī provided the following five reasons explaining why the Islamic state is of great importance to Islam itself. For him, the state protects the Islamic creed, maintains religious rites and acts of devotion, educates Muslims in the basic ethics of Islam, implements Islamic laws and regulations, and prepares the *umma* for jihad once needed.⁴⁸

The state in the Brotherhood's collective mind is an Islamic caliphate-type of rule, which had been established in 622 when the Prophet Muhammad created what they thought the first "Islamic state" in Medina until it was demolished by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1924. Historically, the Brotherhood as an entity was established in 1928 meaning that its inception came only four years after the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate. Arguably, it can be contended that the movement came as a direct response to the breakdown of the caliphate system, and hence its ultimate goal has been the restoration of the caliphate since then.

⁴⁶ Al-Banna, *Mudhkarāt*, 147.

⁴⁷ Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, *Hatmiyyat al-Hal al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1977), 70.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 70-76.

The Islamic caliphate in al-Banna's thought is not only a symbol of Islamic unity but more importantly it is an Islamic rite, and hence Muslims in general and the Brothers in particular should pursue all possible means to regain it.⁴⁹ Abul 'Alā Maudūdī (1903-1979), a Pakistani Islamic philosopher whose writings have hugely influenced al-Banna's and Quṭub's thinking, claimed that the first Islamic state established in al-Medina was in its essence an Islamic caliphate.⁵⁰ By the same token, Muhammad 'Imāra (1931-), a conservative Islamic writer attached to the Muslim Brotherhood, assumed that regaining the caliphate is a religious duty that should be undertaken by the Islamic awakening's affiliates.⁵¹

Conceiving the Islamic state in such a broader sense requires demolishing existing geographical borders which separate Islamic countries. Thus, the Brothers tend to favor non-nation state entities, such as the Islamic community or *umma*, over the current nation-state model. This is due to the fact that the former is deemed the most effective bond unifying Muslims around the world. In other words, the Brotherhood's thinkers pay more attention to religious faith, rather than political borders while thinking of the state. Several decades ago, al-Banna has made this point clear stating that “[c]ontrary to others who believe in the geographical boundaries while thinking of nationalism, nationalism in

⁴⁹ Al-Banna, *Majmū'at Rasā'il*, 96.

⁵⁰ Abul A'lā Maudūdī, *Al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, trans. Ahmad Idris (Cairo: al-Mukhtār al-Islamī, 1977), 201.

⁵¹ Muhammad 'Imāra, *Hal al-Islām huwa al-Hal* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūk, 1995), 73.

our perception is bounded by faith. Hence, each spot where there is a Muslim who says ‘there is no God but Allah’ is considered our homeland.”⁵²

As a result, it should come as no surprise that Muhammad Mahdī ‘Ākif (1928-), the Muslim Brotherhood’s 7th Supreme Guide, announced publicly that he did not recognize the geographical borders existing among the Islamic countries. In a well-remembered journalistic interview held in 2005, ‘Ākif pointed out that “Muslims are one *umma*, where there is no difference between Malaysians, Egyptians and Saudis ... the Islamic caliphate ruled the entire Arabic and Islamic world ... This tells us that Islam is the citizenship.”⁵³

Accordingly, ‘Ākif did not consider Egypt under Ottoman rule an occupied country, nor did he care if a Malaysian caliph would come and rule Egypt simply because Muslims around the world are perceived as one community.⁵⁴ Evidently, ‘Ākif was not the first Brotherhood leader who envisaged the Islamic faith as the sole social marker of citizenship. Several decades ago, Sayyid Quṭub stated that the “Islamic faith is the only citizenship marker recognized in Islam, under which Arabs, Romans, Persians and all other nationalities are deemed equal figures living under Allah’s flag.”⁵⁵ Similarly, al-Qaraḏāwī confirmed that the Islamic linkage is superior to all other associations be it

⁵² Al-Banna, *Majmū‘at Rasā’il*, 9.

⁵³ http://awaydairy.blogspot.com.eg/2012/05/blog-post_28.html

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Quṭub, *Ma’ālim*, 25.

social, ethnic or blood-related bonds.”⁵⁶ He went on arguing that “any Muslim is closer to his fellow Muslim than to any other infidel, even if the latter was his father, mother, or brother.”⁵⁷

Since its inception, the Muslim Brotherhood has embarked on such universal - type of *da‘wa*, benefiting from the distinctive nature of Islam as a universal religion. Therefore, the Muslim Brotherhood’s eventual goal exceeds the construction of both a Muslim society and an Islamic country heading towards establishing an entire Islamic world for the common good of the whole globe.⁵⁸

In order to achieve this task, the Muslim Brotherhood adopts a fully-fledged strategy by which the caliphate system can be restored on the global level. According to a written manuscript found in a villa owned by a Brotherhood member in Switzerland, this strategy includes 12-incremental steps towards regaining the caliphate.⁵⁹ The proposed plan, written in 1982, calls for employing all possible means starting from peaceful *da‘wa* to violent *jihad* if necessary to impose Islamic *sharī‘a* laws in local communities on one hand, recreating the Islamic caliphate on the other.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, *Min Fiqh al-Dawla fī al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūk, 1997), 197.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Al-Banna, *Majmū‘at Rasā’il*, 125.

⁵⁹ The Clarion Project, “The Muslim Brotherhood Special Report,” 13, www.clarionproject.org/sites/.../Muslim-Brotherhood-Special-Report.pdf.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

The Application of *Sharī'a*

The underlying causes which motivated Egyptian revolutionary youth to occupy Egypt's main streets and squares on January 25 were to bring about social equality and freedom for all Egyptians. The main slogans raised at the time were '*Aish, Hurriyya, 'Adāla Ijtimaiyya* (Breed, Freedom, and Social Justice). However, these human dignity-related slogans were replaced by "*Islāmiyya, Islāmiyya*" only after six months in the *sharī'a* Friday millioniyya on July 29, 2011.

While implementing *sharī'a* was never thought of or raised throughout the 18-days of the revolution, the *Sharī'a* Friday's main demands were the assertion of Egypt's Islamic identity and the implementation of *sharī'a*. Despite that the Islamization of the 2011 uprising had begun several months earlier when al-Qaraḍāwī led the Friday ceremony on 20 February,⁶¹ it can be contended that the "spirit of Tahrir Square" was substantially undermined due to the *Sharī'a* Friday.

The call for the implementation of *sharī'a* was not noticed only in the massive rallies which were primarily led by the Brothers and Salafis, but also in Islamist political party platforms. For instance, the Freedom and Justice Party (the MB's political party) asserted in the very beginning of its platform that "the Islamic *sharī'a*, which the majority of Egyptians believe in, is deemed the fundamental *marj'iyya* (reference) upon which the Party is established."⁶² In addition, Islamic *sharī'a* law was given a top priority in the MB's Party platform, in that the first Principle in the platform's first Chapter,

⁶¹ Mariz Tadros, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 40.

⁶² http://www.fj-p.com/Party_Program.aspx.

entitled “Foundations and Starting Points”, which states that “the principles of Islamic *sharī‘a* are the main sources of legislation.”⁶³

The pressing question is why *sharī‘a* was given such as advanced priority in the Brotherhood’s agenda where the other sociopolitical issues inciting the revolution had not yet been resolved at that time? A profound gaze at the Islamist’s tradition reveals that establishing a *sharī‘a* state is considered a top priority not only for the Brothers but for all other Islamist movements.⁶⁴ Creating an Islamic state is not, however, an end for its own sake in the Brothers’ thought. Rather, it is only a vehicle which helps applying the *sharī‘at* Allah on earth, the Brothers’ ultimate mission.

The key point of departure in the Brothers’ scholarship is the idea that Allah is the sole source of legislation for mankind. Transforming this broad idea into a more robust conceptualization, Maudūdī coined the concept of *al-hākimiyya* (sovereignty), which

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ It is worth mentioning that advocates of the shar‘atization of society and state do not represent all schools of thought existing in Islam. In fact, there is another progressive Islamic tradition adopts contradictory arguments regarding the role of religion in politics in general and real meaning of *sharī‘a* and its role in society in particular. To be sure, this liberal Islamic discourse is not dominating Egypt’s public sphere compared to the traditional Islamic one due to two main reasons. First, the Egyptian military’s defeat in 1967 has given way to the escalation of Islamism which culminated during the Sadat’s reign over the 1970s. The shocking defeat of the 1967 war enforced both ordinary people and leading social forces to searching for an alternative to the “imported failure solutions”- namely nationalism and secularism, which were responsible of the *al-Naksa* (the military defeat). Back then, the proposed alternative was the religious faith, translated into reality through a systematic Islamization of Egyptian society. Second, the liberal Islamic project lacks essential logistics needed for promotion such as media outlets and money, whereas the Brothers’ and Salafis’ discourses have constantly been generously funded by the petro-Islamic countries.

literally means that Allah is the only one who has the right to legislate for the people.⁶⁵ Drawing on Maudūdī's writings, Quṭub has extensively elaborated on *al-hākimiyya* and *al-jāhiliyya* (period of ignorance).⁶⁶ In fact, the legacy of Quṭub has frequently been utilized by all radical Islamist groups to legitimize their violence against the regime or society. According to Quṭub, *al-hākimiyya* and *al-jāhiliyya* are two sides of the same coin. More specifically, *al-jāhiliyya* occurs when *hākimiyyat* Allah is violated by transferring rights of legislation to His mankind.⁶⁷ According to this understanding, Quṭub concluded that “the entire modern world lives in *Gāhiliyya*.”⁶⁸

Although the main goal in this part is to explain how the Muslim Brotherhood perceives *sharī'a* and its roles in society rather than arguing against these perceptions, it is worth elaborating a bit more on the gap exists between the MB and other Islamist traditions in conceptualizing *sharī'a* and the role it plays in society.

Despite the fact that *sharī'a* as a primary source for legislation has been emphasized in the Brotherhood's thought, one would be astonished to discover that the word *sharī'a* and its derivations have been mentioned four times⁶⁹ only throughout the

⁶⁵ For further details on *al-hākimiyya* and *al-jāhiliyya*, see: Maudūdī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*.

⁶⁶ While the term *al-jāhiliyya* is originally used in the Islamic literature to refer to a certain period of the Arabian history preceded the emergence of Islam, Quṭub enlarged this concept to include any society does not follow teachings of Islam. Therefore, he argued that the entire Egyptian society lives in *jāhiliyya* since both the state and people are not abided by the Allah's orders.

⁶⁷ Quṭub, *Ma'ālim*, 8.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Specifically, a content analysis of the entire Qur'an illustrates that the word *sharī'a* was used as a noun one time only in the following Qur'anic verse: “Then We set

Qur'an. More importantly, *sharī'a* in the four instances referred to a totally different meaning than legislation. Specifically, neither *sharī'a/shir'a* as a noun nor *shara'a* as a verb was employed in the Qur'an to refer to legislation or law enforcement. This conclusion is based on the actual usage of the word either in the Arabic language or in the Qur'anic text as Muhammad Sa'īd al-'Ashmāwī has stated.⁷⁰ According to al-'Ashmāwī (1932-2013), a former Egyptian Supreme Court judge, the word *sharī'a/shir'a* in the noun form is employed in Arabic and in Qur'an to mean the approach or the road leading to something, whereas *shara'a* as a verb means to make something clear.⁷¹

Based on this type of understanding to the real meaning of *sharī'a*,⁷² liberal Islamists diminish the essence of the Islamic *sharī'a* state as claimed by the Brotherhood.

thee upon an open way of the Command; therefore follow it, and follow not the caprices of those who do not know" (45:18). Furthermore, it was utilized as a verb in two times as follows: "He has laid down for you as religion that He charged Noah with, and that We have revealed to thee, and that We charged Abraham with, Moses and Jesus: 'Perform the religion, and scatter not regarding it (42:13); "Or have they associates who have laid down for them as religion that for which God gave not leave?"(42:21). Moreover, a final derivation of *shir'a* was used only once as it follows: "To every one of you We have appointed a right way and an open road" (5:48).

⁷⁰ Muhammad Sa'īd al-'Ashmāwī, *Uṣūl al-Sharī'a* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī al-Saghīr, 1996), 36.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Following the invaluable contributions advanced by a group of revolutionary Islamic intellectuals, specially Naṣr Hamīd 'Abū Zaid (1943-2016) and 'Abd al-Jawwād Yassīn (1954-), I would claim that the Qur'anic text is the only reliable source one can utilize either for reasoning or understanding teachings of Islam. However, it is crucial while employing the Qur'an in this regard to consider the historical contexts inciting the emergence of the Qur'anic text in the first place. To be sure, all resources other than the Qur'anic text including what is called the "Sunna" are not considered reliable, simply because they are deemed byproducts of history not religion. In other words, they are humankind's invention of traditions not sacred revelations. For more elaboration on this type of understanding, see: Naṣr Hamīd 'Abū Zaid, *Al-Naṣ wa al-Sulṭa wa al-Haqīqa* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqafī al-'Arabī, 2006); Naṣr Hamīd 'Abū Zaid, *Al-Itijāh al-'Aklī*

Thus, reformist Islamists distinguish between religious faith and teachings that are purely sent by Allah and other historical inventions introduced by man; between religion as a sacred text and Muslims' religiosity.⁷³ Broadly, Islam in the reformist Islamist's views is a mere religious faith, and hence it is not a *din wa dawla* (religion and state) as the Brotherhood's thinkers have always assumed.⁷⁴ For Bassam Tibi, "Islam is a faith and a cultural system that determines a way of life for ordinary Muslims. Islam is not a framework for a political state order."⁷⁵ Thus, Abdullahi An-Na'im confirmed that establishing an Islamic state, whose main function is to coercively applying *shari'a*, would definitely undermine the essence of Islam as a merely leverage assists maintaining social capital among Muslim communities.⁷⁶

fī al-Tafsīr (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-‘Arabī, 1996); ‘Abd al-Jawwād Yassīn, *Al-Sulṭa fī al-Islām* (Beirut: al-Mrkaz al-Thaqāfī al-‘Arabī, 2000); ‘Abd al-Jawwād Yassīn, *Al-Dīn wa al-Tadayun* (Beirut: al-Tanwīr, 2012).

⁷³ For more details on this revolutionary tradition, see for example: ‘Abd al-Jawwād Yassīn, *Al-Dīn wa al-Tadayun*; Naṣr Hamid Abu Zaid, *Al-Itijāh al-‘Aklī fī al-Tafsīr*; Muḥammad Maḥmūd Ṭaha, *Nahw Mashrū‘ Mustaqbalī lil Islām* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-‘Arabī, 2002).

⁷⁴ In fact, the first Islamic thinker who refuted the intertwining made between Islam and state was ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Raziq (1888-1966), a former Egyptian judge and a distinguished Islamic thinker. Only one year after the demise of the Ottoman caliphate, ‘Abd al-Raziq published the notorious book: *Al-Isālm wa Uṣūl al-Hukm* (Islam and The Fundamental Principles of Rule) in 1925. In a sharp contrast to the then dominant arguments that the caliphate system is an integral part of Islam, the book was mainly set to repudiate this claim on religious grounds. ‘Abd al-Raziq's main argument was that Islam did not advocate a certain type of rule, be it caliphate or otherwise. For further elaboration, see ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Raziq, *Al-Isālm wa Uṣūl al-Hukm* (Cairo: Maktabāt Misr, 1925).

⁷⁵ Bassam Tibi, *The shari‘a state: Arab Spring and Democratization* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 87.

⁷⁶ An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State*, 1.

Taken the liberal Islamic tradition⁷⁷ into consideration, it becomes clear that Hassan al-Banna was talking about politics not about religion while sending his infamous letters to the kings and prime ministers of the entire Islamic world in 1936. These letters contain fifty main demands by which the Islamic *umma* can regain its glorious history as al-Banna claimed.⁷⁸ The second of these demands calls for “restructuring laws so as to matching with the Islamic legislations, especially concerning the crimes and *hudud* [punishments].”⁷⁹

Similarly, the *al-hākimiyya* and *al-jāhiliyya* tradition introduced by al-Mudūdi and Qūṭub should be dealt with as being “religionized-politics” advancements not sacred discourses revealed by Allah. Moreover, the wide variety of slogans that have been generated since the emergence of the Brothers, such as “Islam is the solution,” “Qur’an is our constitution,” and “Islam is *din wa dawla*,” are all set to expressing political concerns rather than divinely religious issues.

⁷⁷ Advocates of liberal Islam emphasize the historicity of what has been called *sharī‘a*. They perceive *sharī‘a* laws as byproducts of the diverse interpretations of Qur’an and Sunna which have frequently been put forth by the Muslim *Ulama* (scholars) across time and place. Accordingly, progressive Islamic thinkers negate both the divine nature of *sharī‘a* and the existence of the *sharī‘a* state in Islam as traditional Islamists have frequently claimed. For further elaboration, see: Abdullahi An-Na‘im, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari‘a*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 35; Muhammad Arkūn, *Tarīkhiyyat al-Fikr al-‘Arabī al-Islamī*, trans. Hāshim Sālih (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thāqafī al-‘Arabī, 1998).

⁷⁸ Al-Banna, *Majmū‘at Rasā’il*, 224-228.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 225.

Sociopolitical Implications for Copts

Having defined the two main tenets characterizing the Brotherhood's political project (the restoration of caliphate and the enforcement of *sharī'a* law), it is appropriate to move on to exploring how the Brotherhood's rise to power influenced the positioning of non-Muslims in general and Copts in particular. In order to understand the threats non-Muslims perceived while Islamists were in office, it is crucial to explain first how the Muslim Brothers perceive Islam especially when it is compared to other religions. To begin with, the Brothers' thinkers believe in the supremacy of Islam over all other religions, since they think Islam is the only true religion revealed by Allah while all other Abrahamic religions have been distorted.

Sayyid Quṭub, for instance, contends that Islam is the superior religion among all other religions, pagan creeds, philosophies, and distorted scriptures. For him, Islam provides the perfect type of knowledge about the nature of Allah, and hence Muslim believers are superior to all their counterparts following other religious creeds.⁸⁰ Furthermore, al-Qaraḍāwī assumes that faith in Allah has never been known rightfully in the West. This is due to that the Western Christianity, as for him, is not the authentic version revealed by God but rather a distorted form that had been advanced by the Roman Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicaea.⁸¹ The nature of Christ in this fabricated version, al-Qaraḍāwī continues, was substantially changed from being one of God's servants to be worshiped like God.⁸² In "*Islam is the solution*", Muhammad 'Imāra

⁸⁰ Quṭub, *Ma 'ālim*, 165.

⁸¹ Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Hatmiyyat al-Hal al-Islamī*, 12.

⁸² *Ibid.*, (footnotes), 12.

confirms that “the Islamic *umma* has the sole authentic revelation among other existing divinely books, since Allah Almighty Himself had pledged to preserve it.”⁸³

The perceived superiority of Islam/Muslims over other religions/believers dominates the Brotherhood’s traditional literature. This type of reasoning is definitely undermining the social and cultural positioning of non-Muslims, especially those living among a majoritarian Muslim community like Copts. Unfortunately, the Islamic supremacy narrative is not to be found only in the writings of the Brothers but in the mainstream media and more dangerously in peoples’ daily interactions. The following section addresses the sociopolitical implications resulting from adopting such exclusionary traditions on non-Muslims in general and on Copts in particular.

The *Dhimma* Status and the *Jizya* Payment

In the *sharī‘a* state envisioned by the Brotherhood’s theorists, non-Muslims, including Copts, are not eligible to receive equal rights to that of Muslims. This is due to the fact that non-Muslims living in an Islamic state, according to the *sharī‘a* state’s advocates, are given a *dhimma* status which transforms them into *ahl dhimma* rather than being ordinary citizens like Muslim citizens.⁸⁴ This is how the Qur’anic word *dhimma* has mistakenly been interpreted by the Muslim Brotherhood’s scholars. To be sure, the word

⁸³ ‘Imāra, *Hal al-Islām huwa al-Hal*, 7.

⁸⁴ For further elaboration on *ahl al-dhimma*, their rights and duties, and their classifications according to classical Islamist thought, see for example: Maudūdī, Abul A‘lā, *Huqūk Ahl al-dhimma*, <http://www.fharis.com/?p=14941>; ‘Abd al-Karīm Zīdān, *Ahkām al-Dhimmīn wa al-Must’amanīn fī dār al-Islām* (Beirut: Mu’asasaa al-Risāla, 1982).

dhimma has been utilized in two instances only in the *Qur'an*⁸⁵ in the noun form (*dhimma*), meaning a treaty or an agreement.⁸⁶ Thus, while the word *dhimma* was never used in *Qur'an* to identify a certain group of people, it was later employed in the Islamist's tradition to exclusively describe the People of the Book, namely Jews and Christians.⁸⁷

Another controversial concept associated with the *dhimma* status is the *jizya*. According to the Brotherhood's reasoning, non-Muslims are deemed a group of people protected by the Islamic state due to the *dhimma* contract they are granted. Therefore, they are expected to pay the *jizya* (poll-tax) in exchange for this protection. Al-Qaradāwī, for example, asserted that non-Muslims are not religiously required to pay the *Zakāh* (an obligatory tax every Muslim must pay) or to get involved in the actions of *jihad*, and therefore they are expected to pay the *jizya*.⁸⁸ "If some of our fellow Christians dislike the word *jizya*," al-Qaradāwī elaborated, "they can call it whatever they want... *ahl al-dhimma* can be changed as well in case it intimidates Copts."⁸⁹

⁸⁵ "How? If they get the better of you, they will not observe towards you any bond or treaty, giving you satisfaction with their mouths but in their hearts refusing; and the most of them are ungodly" (9:8); "observing neither bond nor treaty towards a believer; they are the transgressors" (9:10).

⁸⁶ See for example, Qamus alma'ni: <http://www.almaany.com>; Fahmī Huwyadī, *Muwātinūn lā Dhimmiūn* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūk, 1999), 110.

⁸⁷ See for instance, Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī: *Ghayr al-Muslimīn fī al-Mujtama' al-Islāmī*, <http://www.al-mostafa.info/data/arabic/depot/gap.php?file=001078-www.al-mostafa.com.pdf>; Al-Maududi, *Huquk Ahl al-dhimma*.

⁸⁸ Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, *Al- 'Aqaliyyāt al-Dīniyya wa al-Hal al-Islāmī* (Cairo, Maktabat Wahba, 1996), 8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

In fact, the real issue here is not whether using the word *ahl al-dhimma* antagonizes Copts or not as al-Qaraḏāwī has simplistically put it. Rather, it is about depriving non-Muslims in general and Copts in particular of one of their political rights as being equal citizens using religious claims. In addition, non-Muslims living in Islamic states are straightforwardly granted a second-class placement once such religiously justified conceptualizations are put in effect. Ironically, while the *dhimma* status and the *jizya* payment completely undermine equal citizenship rights of non-Muslims and are seen by them as a sociopolitical stigma, the Brothers consider both as privileges. Al-Qaraḏāwī, for instance, argues that the notion of *ahl al-dhimma* is not perceived in the Islamic *sharī‘a* as a sign of non-Muslims’ defamation or offence, rather it is a symbol of custody and fulfillment towards non-Muslims.⁹⁰

Distribution of State Positions

Aside from the absence of full citizenship due to the *dhimma* status and the required *jizya*, Copts are not allowed to occupy certain types of posts in the proposed *sharī‘a* state. While they can have access to, for instance, low-profile positions they can never get access to the so-called *al-wilāya al-‘amma* (central authority).⁹¹

⁹⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁹¹ In fact, claims on *al-wilāya al-‘amma* are directly linked to several verses in the Qur’an. The following are just a few examples: “Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends, rather than the believers -- for whoso does that belongs not to God in anything -- unless you have a fear of them” (3:28); “Those who take unbelievers for their friends instead of believers -- do they seek glory in them? But glory altogether belongs to God” (4:139); “God will judge between you on the Resurrection Day, and God will not grant the unbelievers any way over the believers” (4: 141); “O believers, take not the unbelievers as friends instead of the believers; or do you desire to give God over you a clear authority?” (4:144). While these verses have frequently been interpreted by

Posts of *al-wilaya al-'amma* are not well specified by Islamic thinkers, and hence vary from an Islamic school to another. For some, *al-wilaya al-amma*'s positions are limited to both the presidency and the military's top leadership.⁹² For others, such as al-Qaraḍāwī, they however are expanded to include all judicial posts, different types of religiously-based positions such as those that are involved in managing the Muslims' *zakat*, and key executive posts influencing a state's decision-making processes.⁹³ Taking the term to the extreme, al-Qaraḍāwī argued that non-Muslims should not serve in the military in the first place. Similarly, the Muslim Brotherhood's former Supreme Guide Mustafa Mashūr contended in an interview that Copts are not trusted to serve in the military and to defend the nation, and hence they should pay the *jizya* in return.⁹⁴ Although al-Qaraḍāwī himself grants Copts the right to become members of parliament, this right is however enjoyed only so long as the vast majority of the parliament's seats are held by Muslims.⁹⁵

hardliners Brothers so as to depriving non-Muslims of the same rights of Muslims, other scholars tend to interpret these verses significantly differently. Muhammad al-Ghazālī (1917-1996), a renowned Egyptian Islamic preacher and scholar, emphasized the historical circumstances surrounding the time of its revelation. He contended that these verses were sent in the midst of the then ongoing war status existed between Muslims and their enemies, and therefore the *kāfirīn* (infidels) in these verses refer only to the Muslim's warriors of the time. For further elaboration, see: Muhammad al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ta'asub wa al-Tasāmuh bayn al-Masīhiyya wa al-Islām* (Cairo: Nahdat Misr, 2005), 38.

⁹² Zīdān, *Ahkām Dhimmiyn*, 78.

⁹³ Al-Qaraḍāwī: *Ghayr al-Muslimīn*, 17-18; Maudūdī, *Huqūk Ahl al-dhimma*, 35.

⁹⁴ The international Crisis Group, "Egypt Muslims Brothers: Confrontation or integration?", 2008: 5, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/egypt/egypt-s-muslim-brothers-confrontation-or-integration>; Mariz Tadros, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 89.

⁹⁵ Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Min Fiqh al-Dawla*, 194-195.

If this is the case regarding posts of *al-wilaya al-‘amma*, it can be argued that there is a consensus among all Islamist movements including the MB that non-Muslims are not eligible to hold *al-wilaya al-‘udhma*⁹⁶ (the presidency) in an Islamic state based on religious foundations. Al-Qaraḍāwī, for example, asserts that the Islamic state is an “ideological state”, and hence the president of an Islamic state is the “Prophet’s deputy whose main job is to guarding religion and governing people with religion.”⁹⁷

Rights of Non-Muslims to Building Places of Worship

In the Islamic *sharī‘a* state envisioned by the Brothers, attitudes towards building and renovating places of worship belonging to non-Muslims provide another manifestation of religious discrimination. Theoretically, there is a consensus not only among the Brotherhood’s thinkers but among almost all Islamists that freedom of religion and worship of non-Muslims must be maintained on religious grounds. The Qur’anic verse stating that “No compulsion is there in religion,”⁹⁸ has always been utilized advocating Islam’s tolerance towards non-Muslims. Transforming this virtual right into reality by allowing for the construction of places of worship for non-Muslims is a problematic issue, however.

⁹⁶ While *al-wilāya al-‘amma* refers to key positions of state including the presidency, *al-wilāya al-‘udhma* refers solely to the presidency.

⁹⁷ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Dīn wa al-Siyāsa* (Dublin: Al-Majlis Al-‘Urūbī lil ‘Iftā’ wa Al-Buhūth, 2007), 159.

⁹⁸ Qur’an (2:256).

Al-Qaraḏāwī, for instance, argues that non-Muslims living in an Islamic country should respect common feelings of Muslims not performing their rites in public nor building new churches in cities which had no previous churches.⁹⁹ Generally, traditional Islamic scholars distinguish between two different types of non-Muslims' places of worship. The first includes houses of worship that had been established on territories that were not considered a part of *dār al-Islam* (house of Islam). The second type contains new holy places non-Muslims want to construct in one of newly established cities of *dār al-Islam*.

The general rule put forward by the Brotherhood's classical preachers has been that while the former places of worship (i.e., old houses of worship) are allowed to be maintained and refurbished if destroyed, the latter holy houses (i.e., new places of worship) is religiously prohibited.¹⁰⁰ Muhammad Abdullah al-Khatīb (1929-2015), a former Mufti of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic preacher, issued an infamous *fatwa* (Islamic legal statement) during the 1980s prohibiting church construction in newly established Egyptian cities. According to al-Khatīb, Copts are not allowed to build new churches in the then emergent cities, such as Ma'adi and the 10th of Ramadan, since these new cities were originally built by Muslims, meaning that they are integral parts of *dar al-Islam*.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Al-Qaraḏāwī, *Ghayr al-Muslimīn*, 15.

¹⁰⁰ Maudūdī, *Huqūk Ahl al-dhimma*, 22-23.

¹⁰¹ Mariz Tadros, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 109-110; 'Abd al-Rahīm 'Alī, "Muhammad 'Abd Allah al-Khaṭīb wa Fatāwāh al-Muhariḏa 'alā al-Fitna, <http://www.islamist-movements.com/26244>.

Relatedly, the Brotherhood's thinkers agreed that having a permission to building non-Muslims' places of worship from *walī al-'amr* should be given in advance.¹⁰² Historically, since the *al-khat al-Hamayuni* (*Hamayuni* Edict) advanced in 1856, the "*walī al-'amr*" has been deemed the sultan or who became later the president. That is, building or renovating a church in Egypt, for example, needed a presidential signature which has been the case over the last fifteen decades.¹⁰³ However, this policy has recently been changed in August 2016 when the Egyptian parliament approved a new church building law,¹⁰⁴ by which these permissions are to be given by local governors rather than the president.¹⁰⁵

Despite the importance of adopting such a relatively more advanced legal step towards regulating non-Muslims' religious affairs, the underlying concern lies more in the hostile religious discourse that has been advanced against Copts over the decades. This discourse has eventually made it difficult for local Muslim communities to accept the idea of having churches inside their neighborhoods. Thus, it is not surprising to

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁰³ Jason Brownlee, "Violence against Copts in Egypt," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2014: 8, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/11/14/violence-against-copts-in-egypt-pub-53606>; Paul Rowe, "Christian-Muslim Relations in Egypt in the Wake of the Arab Spring," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 2 (2013): 267.

¹⁰⁴ It is revealing to note here that all members of the Salafi Al-Nur Party in the parliament refused the law by abstaining from voting.

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/1371256>.

discover that the vast majority of sectarian conflict in Egypt over the past several decades is mainly attributed to church construction/renovation-related issues.¹⁰⁶

Given the previously mentioned sociopolitical implications, it has become clear that Copts are given second-class citizenship due to religiously-based theories advanced mostly by the Brothers and Salafis. Moreover, bearing in mind the underlying foundations shaping the Brotherhood's political project helps understand several actions and decisions adhered by the Brotherhood's leaders since the 2011 uprising. Retrospectively, it is understandable now why President Mursi missed what Jason Brownlee described as a "golden opportunity for interfaith accord" with Copts by not appearing in the enthronement ceremony of Pope Tawadros II.¹⁰⁷ As Paul Rowe has argued, Mursi's absence "raised complaints from Copts who feared that it indicated an increasingly disdainful attitude for Christians within the regime."¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, it is obvious now why the entire Coptic community living across Egypt's governorates were given only presidential permission to construct an "apartment-sized" church during the Brotherhood's one - year tenure.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ See for example: Nelly Harder and Kari Vogt, "Coptic Community in Transition," Norwegian Center for Human Rights, 2013, <http://www.jus.uio.no/smr/english/about/programmes/oslocoalition/news/coptic-community.html>; Brownlee, Violence against Copts; Paul Sedra, "Class Cleavages, and Ethnic Conflict: Coptic Christian Communities in Modern Egyptian Politics," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relation 2* (1999); Mariz Tadros, *Copts at the Crossroads* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁷ Brownlee, "Violence against Copts," 16.

¹⁰⁸ Rowe, 271.

¹⁰⁹ US Department of State, "Egypt 2013 international religious freedom report," www.state.gov/documents/organization/222499.pdf.

Relatedly, yet on the societal level, the discriminatory religious discourse towards non-Muslims has cultivated patterns of sectarian beliefs and attitudes adopted by ordinary Muslim citizens. Sectarian tensions erupted in Qena once a Coptic figure was announced its governor in April 2011, for instance. This appointment has led to a wave of fierce riots and mass protests, led primarily by local Islamist leaders, sweeping across the entire governorate.¹¹⁰ As Mariz Tadros concluded, “it was the religion of the governor that served to unify all the different parties into one alliance, not the demand for a civil, democratically-elected governor.”¹¹¹

It is crucial to note that non-Muslims throughout the Brothers’ religious discourse refer exclusively to the Abrahamic religions’ followers, namely Jews and Christians. Utilizing such as narrow conceptualizations, non-Muslims are deprived of their basic human rights on religious accounts as it was illustrated throughout this chapter. However, religious rights and freedoms of non-Muslims on the broader sense, i.e., followers of the non-Abrahamic religions or others following no religion, are not recognized in the Brotherhood’s thinking in the first place. To mention only one example, Mahmūd Ghoslān, a prominent member of the Brotherhood’s Guidance Office, confirmed that non-Muslims other than the People of the Book do not have the right to worship in an Islamic state.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Mariz Tadros, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 85; Brownlee, “Violence against Copts,” 14.

¹¹¹ Mariz Tadros, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 85.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 111.

The Coptic Response

Copts were aware of the potentially devastating consequences resulting from the establishment of the Brotherhood's proposed Islamic *sharī'a* state. For them, the ascendancy of Islamists to power would not only endanger their sociopolitical position but also Egypt's identity and its civilian nature. This explains why religious minorities in the broader Middle East tend to support authoritarian regimes, sustaining the status quo and hence preserving their positioning. Based on a comparative field work conducted in several Middle East countries, Ceren Belge and Ekrem Karakoç concluded that religious minorities in the Middle East (i.e., Egypt and Jordan) are more likely to support autocratic regimes compared to the majority populations.¹¹³

This is attributed to three main reasons according to the authors. First, non-Muslims have enjoyed greater autonomy over their socioeconomic affairs since the Ottoman era, which considered them as distinct communities deserving state protection. Second, the Ottoman policies have eventually helped increase non-Muslims' economic powers particularly in the post-independence era. Third, Arab nation-states have been deemed the main guarantor of secularism, and consequently religious minorities have been hesitant to undermine states' authoritarian institutions which have assisted preserving their sociopolitical status over years.¹¹⁴

These results were visible on the ground in Egypt when pope Shenouda publicly supported the Mubarak regime during the 2011 uprisings, calling on Copts not to

¹¹³ Ceren Belge and Ekrem Karokoc, "Minorities in the Middle East," 288.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 288-289.

participate in protests and to stay at home instead, praying for Egypt.¹¹⁵ However, the rise of Islamists following the revolution has ushered in a new relationship pattern between the Coptic community as a whole on one hand and the state on the other. The following section explores these new patterns of interactions, analyzing the Coptic responses on both church-state level and ordinary individual level.

Reactions on Church Level

As for the relations between the church and the newly emergent Islamist regime, it was the first time in Egyptian Christianity's long history that leaders of the five largest Christian denominations¹¹⁶ got together forming an Egyptian Council of Churches.¹¹⁷ The Christian coalition, which was established on February 18, 2013, aimed at defending the interests and concerns of Egypt's Christian communities. Furthermore, it tried to generate a sense of belonging among all Egyptian Christians during times of uncertainty and fears sweeping Egypt's sphere at the time. More importantly, it sought to establish a counter coalition before the then Islamist ruling front led by the Brothers and Salafis.

Another manifestation of growing tensions in church-state interactions could be noticed in the revolutionary stances taken by the newly elected Patriarch at the time: pope Tawadros. Broadly, it can be assumed that unspoken pacts have been established between the leadership of the Coptic Orthodox Church and successive Egyptian presidents since

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth Iskander, *Sectarian Conflict in Egypt: Coptic Media, Identity and Representation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 162.

¹¹⁶ The five denominations are as follows: Coptic Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox, and Anglican.

¹¹⁷ Harder and Vogt, "Coptic Community," 12.

Nasser (see the literature review section). According to these informal pacts, the general rule has been that issues and concerns of the Copts are to be handled between top officials from both sides (i.e., state and church) behind closed doors. It seems, however, that the rise of Islamists to power put an end to these long-established pacts.

Specifically, Tawadros publicly blamed Mursī and the state apparatus, holding them responsible for the April 7, 2013 assault on the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Abbassiyya. In fact, it was the first time through its long history that the Coptic Cathedral was attacked. While commenting on the unprecedented assault on the Cathedral in a televised interview, Tawadros stated that “attacking the Cathedral exceeded all red lines and limits anyone can imagine ... The Cathedral, which is deemed Egypt’s national symbol, has never been attacked through its 2000-year-old history, even during worst historical junctures.”¹¹⁸ Furthermore, he publicly accused Mursī of not keeping his promises indicating that “president Mursī had promised me to do everything he could to protect the Cathedral, but none of his promises was maintained in reality.”¹¹⁹

During the drafting of the 2012 constitution, it was clear that the Brothers and Salafis were drafting a purely Islamic constitution. It is worth mentioning that Islamists were dominating the Constituent Assembly, where 66 out of its 100 members were Islamists.¹²⁰ Hence, it was not surprising that the committee refused any changes to Article 2 of the suspended constitution, for instance, stating that “Islam is the religion of the state, Arabic is its formal language, and the principles of Islamic *sharī‘a* are the main

¹¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0FZt3WwdFw>.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Andera Rugh, *Christians in Egypt: Strategies and Survival* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 191.

source of legislation.”¹²¹ While Article 2 was deemed problematic for Copts since its introduction by Sadat in the 1980s in an effort to placate the Islamists, Article 219 further enhanced the already growing fears shared by the Coptic community. According to this controversial Article, the principles of *shari‘a* were to be derived exclusively from the *mazahib ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama‘a* (the Sunni schools of thought).¹²² For Copts, this Article would jeopardize their position since “Wahhabi sources could be applied or that anyone could be given the power to criminalize a certain act.”¹²³ Agreeing with Clark Lombardi and Nathan Brown, the Islamic technical language used in writing this Article “provides firm evidence, if any was needed, that there were many Islamists in the room when this document was drafted.”¹²⁴

Islamizing the constitution could also be recognized in Article 4, which granted al-Azhar a significant role in that al-Azhar’s Council of Senior Scholars should be consulted in all Islamic law-related matters.¹²⁵ As Lombardi and Brown pointed out, “al-Azhar as an institution may feel authorized by Article 4 to institutionalize itself as the Islamic conscience of the country.”¹²⁶ Taken the 2012 constitution-related concerns

¹²¹ <http://sharek2012.dostour.eg/2012/>.

¹²² *Ibid*, 61.

¹²³ Harder and Vogt, “Coptic Community in Transition,” 6.

¹²⁴ Clark Lombardi and Nathan Brown, “Islam in Egypt’s new constitution,” *ForeignPolicy.com*, December 13, 2012, www.foreignpolicy.com/2012/12/13/islam-in-egypts-new-constitution/ (accessed August 20, 2016), para.6.

¹²⁵ <http://sharek2012.dostour.eg/2012/>.

¹²⁶ Lombardi and Brown, “Islam in Egypt’s new Constitution,” para. 26.

together, it was evident that “the Muslim Brotherhood appeared to be going from electoral dominance to institutional hegemony” as Jason Brownlee has indicated.¹²⁷

Responding to the Islamists’ hegemony over the constitution-writing process on one hand and their insistence on Islamizing society and state on the other, representatives of the Coptic Church withdrew from the Constituent Assembly in objection before the final draft was put to a public referendum.¹²⁸ After it was passed, pope Tawadros strongly criticized the new constitution in a journalistic interview with the Associated Press, in which he demonstrated that:

The only common bond between all Egyptians is that they are all citizens ... the constitution, the base for all laws, must be under the umbrella of citizenship and not a religious one ... Subsequently, some clauses were distorted by a religious slant and that in itself is discrimination because the constitution is supposed to unite and not divide.¹²⁹

Responses Adopted on the Individual Level

Generally, political transformation bears risks as well as threats to religious and ethnic minority communities especially in autocratic regimes.¹³⁰ As Samuel Tadros has clearly

¹²⁷ Jason Brownlee, “Sectarian Violence against Copts,”17.

¹²⁸ See for example, Andera Rugh, *Christians in Egypt*, 191; Jason Brownlee, “Violence against Copts,”17.

¹²⁹ Ahram Online, “Coptic Pope Tawadros II criticises Egypt's Islamist leadership, new constitution,” english.ahram.org.eg,February5,2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/64135/Egypt/Politics-/Coptic-Pope-Tawadros-II-criticises-Egypt's-Islamist.aspx> (accessed August 20, 2016), para.25.

put it, “it was the wisdom of centuries of persecution that taught minorities the eternal lesson of survival: that the persecuting dictator was always preferable to the mob.”¹³¹ Drawing on Coptic religious fears, Talal Asad rightly argued that “the Mubarak regime always maintained that it was the only force capable of keeping ‘religious peace’ precisely because it suppressed Islamic extremism.”¹³²

However, ordinary Copts were not afraid of the speculations that had frequently been advocated in the very beginning of the revolution, predicting that Islamists would dominate Egypt’s sphere once Mubarak was ousted. Thus, they actively participated in the 18-days of the uprisings beside their fellow Muslim citizens, opposing the church’s repeated calls to stay at home. At that time, Copts thought that toppling Mubarak’s long-standing authoritarianism would create a new more religiously tolerant Egypt they had been dreaming of. As time passed, they eventually had to encounter what was deemed a more problematic concern: “the increase in random mob violence by non-politicized Egyptian citizens against them.”¹³³

In response to the then growing Islamization of state and society following the uprising, many ordinary Copts chose to migrate even before the Brothers officially seized

¹³⁰ See, Belge and Karokoc, “*Minorities in the Middle East*”; Kanchan Chandra “Making causal claims about the effect of ethnicity,” in Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, ed., *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007); James Fearon and David Laitin, “Violence and the social construction of ethnic identity”, *International Organization* 54, no. 4, (2000): 845-877.

¹³¹ Samuel Tadros, *Motherland Lost: The Egyptian and Coptic Quest for Modernity*, (California: Hoover Institution Press, 2013), 209.

¹³² Talal Asad, “Fear and the Raptured State: Reflections on Egypt after Mubarak,” *Social Research* 79, no. 2 (2012): 281.

¹³³ Samuel Tadros, *Motherland Lost*, 205.

office. The Vatican suggested that up to 100,000 Christians fled the country during the first 6 months following the revolution.¹³⁴ Many other Copts, however, chose to engage in politics defending their political as well as religious interests. Furthermore, a wide array of Coptic movements was established to address Coptic grievances,¹³⁵ such as the Maspero Youth Union, the Christian Brotherhood, and the Mina Daniel Movement. Throughout the pre-revolution era, ordinary Copts used to raise their demands “within the confines of church walls”, using Jayson Casper’s words; however, the new Coptic movements which emerged after the rise of Islamists have altered this equation. In other words, the ascendance of Islamists to power has motivated ordinary Copts to go beyond church fences raising certain religious concerns at public sites and streets, which was considered a turning point back then.¹³⁶

It was not only the case that Copts got involved in “street politics” due to the rise of Islamists, but they also engaged in “real politics”. Despite a lack of robust evidence, it was widely speculated that the majority of Copts gave their votes either to Ahmad Shafiq or to Hamdin Sabbahi in the first round of the presidential election.¹³⁷ Also, they were said to favor Ahmad Shafiq, the ex-prime minister and the old regime’s representative,

¹³⁴ Ross Douthat, “Democracy’s Collateral Damage,” *NewYorkTimes.com*, October 15, 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/10/16/opinion/sunday/douthat-democracys-collateral-damage.html(accessed August 22, 2016).

¹³⁵ For further elaboration on Coptic social movements established in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings, see: Jayson Casper, “Mapping the Coptic Movements: Coptic Activism in a Revolutionary Setting,” *Arab-West Report Papers* 44 (2013). www.arabwestreport.info.

¹³⁶ Mariz Tadros, “Copts under Mursi,” 26; Jayson Casper, “Mapping the Coptic Movements,” 3.

¹³⁷ Mariz Tadros, “Copts under Mursi,” 22.

over Mursī in the run-off.¹³⁸ Expectedly, ordinary Copts rejected the 2012 “Islamic” constitution advanced by the Islamists when put to referendum.¹³⁹ A year before, they had been encouraged to say a previous “no” to the 19 March 2011 constitutional amendments since “yes” would have accelerated the transmission of power to the Brotherhood.¹⁴⁰

Still within Coptic individual reactions, Assistant President Samir Murqus resigned his position the day after Mursī issued his constitutional declaration in November 22 in condemnation.¹⁴¹ A few days later in December 6, the prominent Coptic scholar and a close friend of the Brothers, Rafiq Habib, resigned his post as a deputy chairman of the Freedom and Justice Party. Habib’s decision came one day after violent clashes had ensued between the protestors gathered outside the presidential palace demonstrating against Mursī’s declaration and the Brotherhood’s supporters.¹⁴²

Taken the Christians’ reaction adopted on both church and individual levels together, it can be assumed that the rise of the Brotherhood following the Arab Spring led eventually to the unification of the Coptic community against a common threat: the

¹³⁸ Brownlee, “Violence against Copts,” p. 16;

¹³⁹ Andera Rugh, *Christians in Egypt*, 191.

¹⁴⁰ Mariz Tadros, “Copts under Mursi,” 84.

¹⁴¹ Ethar Shalaby, “Coptic presidential assistant decides to resign, presidential team holds urgent meeting,” [dailynewsegypt.com](http://www.dailynewsegypt.com), November 23, 2012, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2012/11/23/coptic-presidential-assistant-decides-to-resign-presidential-team-holds-urgent-meeting/> (accessed August 20, 2016).

¹⁴² Zeinab El-Gundy, “Coptic FJP Leader and Presidential Advisor Quits Political Life,” english.ahram.org, December 6, 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/59931/Egypt/Politics-Coptic-FJP-leader-and-presidential-advisor-quits-p.aspx> (accessed August 20, 2016).

Islamization of state and society. Evidently, Copts actively participated in the revolution from its very beginning “not as Copts but as Egyptians.”¹⁴³ However, subsequent political developments instigated “Coptiness” among the Coptic society, driving them towards politics not as being Egyptians anymore but as Christians. This transformation has undermined the iconic scenes of national unity witnessed in Tahrir Square, where Copts were protecting Muslims with their bodies during prayers and vice versa. “To Copts,” Marlyn Tadros points out, “the image of the revolution was that which enabled the creation of an almost Utopian state of freedoms and liberties, not least of which religious freedom.”¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the Brotherhood’s exclusivity and the subsequent Coptic responses have destroyed what was seen at the time as another symbolic moment of national unity, resembling Egypt’s national unification of the 1920s.

¹⁴³ Marlyn Tadros, “The Not-So-Silent Minority: The Case of Egypt’s Coptic Minority in Post-Arab Uprising Egypt,” in *Multiculturalism and Democracy in the North Africa Aftermath of the Arab Spring*, ed. Moha Ennaji, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 211.

¹⁴⁴ Mariz Tadros, “Copts under Mursi,” 210.

CHAPTER III

The Road to Constructing a Threatened Coptic Identity

While millions of Muslims and Copts alike were taking to the streets in the 2011 uprising, a more religiously tolerant and politically democratic Egypt was being visualized in the demonstrators' hearts and minds. "In the tent city of Tahrir Square," Jason Brownlee writes, "Egyptians communed across the state's ethnic and political borders."¹⁴⁵ It can be argued that Muslims and Copts were acting as a unified community against Mubarak's regime. The national unity between Muslims and Christians seen throughout the 18-day revolt recalled the corresponding national solidarity that had previously been experienced during the campaign against British rule in the 1920s. However, the political developments that followed along with the decisions taken by political forces at the time, especially the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), have weakened this short-lived unification. This, eventually, gave way to the establishment of two conflicting identities/communities; the Coptic minority community versus the Muslim majority society, each of which started to pursue different goals employing varying strategies.

The current chapter is divided into two main sections. The first addresses the period of unity between Muslims and Copts, arguing that at first ordinary Copts trusted the MB as their fellow Muslim citizens did. Back then, Christians hoped that the Brotherhood would establish a more democratic country guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities, which had frequently been violated by the successive regimes. The second section traces changes in the Coptic community's trust in particular towards the Brotherhood after the latter seized power. The main premise is that declining trust in the

¹⁴⁵ Jason Brownlee, "Master Cleavages, Local Relationships, and Ethnic Violence," (Working Paper, n.p, 2016), 16.

Brothers has increased levels of political disillusionment among the Christian community, which in turn increased the readiness to defect from the whole democratic process among Copts, pushing them towards supporting the military.

Changes of Copts' Trust in the Muslim Brotherhood over Time

In his seminal work *Trust and rule*, Charles Tilly has emphasized the crucial influence of trust between ruled and ruler on the quality of democracy on one hand and the stability of rule on the other.¹⁴⁶ Tilly has defined trust in terms of risk, arguing that “[t]rust consists of placing valued outcomes at risk to others’ malfeasance, mistakes, or failures.”¹⁴⁷ This type of reasoning is proven right when applied to the political context following the 2011 revolt, in the sense that ordinary Copts took the risk of trusting the MB.

In order to examine changes of trust in the MB among Copts and Muslims over time, exploring how these changes influenced Copts’ sociopolitical behavior in particular, the Arab Barometer (AB) dataset was utilized. Before heading to discussing the results, it is important to elaborate first on the type of data as well as the questions employed, showing their relevance to the arguments at hand. To begin with, since the first part of this chapter seeks to compare levels of trust in the MB among different religious groups across different regimes, namely the SCAF-led regime and the MB regime, the AB waves II and III were used. Specifically, while wave II contains data addressing instances going back to SCAF’s rule (the field work was conducted from June 16-July 3, 2011), wave III reflects events which occurred during Mursī’s tenure (data were gathered from March 3-

¹⁴⁶ Charles Tilly, *Trust and Rule* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-29.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

April 7, 2013). The AB datasets, therefore, give an invaluable chance to investigate the arguments at hand since they help monitoring changes in attitudes and positions of both Copts and Muslims across different transitions under investigation.

As for the questions employed, trust in the MB was measured using a relevant item in which participants were asked to what extent they trusted the MB with a scale ranging from 1 (I trust it to a great extent) to 4 (I absolutely do not trust it). Since the main purpose here is to distinguish between those who trusted the MB regardless of degrees of trust and those who did not trust it at all, a dummy variable measuring general trust in the MB was created. That is, citizens who did not trust the MB at all were coded 2, whereas people who trust it either to a great or a medium or a limited extent were coded 1. In order to investigate the relationship between religion and trust in the MB, a Chi-Square Test was performed.

Table 1. Crosstabs between religion and trust in the MB during SCAF’s transition

Trust the MB	Muslims		Copts		
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
Yes	790	69	43	60.6	
No	354	31	28	39.4	
$X^2(1) = 2.237, p > 0.05 (0.1)$		1144	100	71	100

The results displayed in Table 1 support the assumption suggested: Copts took the risk of trusting the MB during SCAF’s tenure as their fellow Muslim citizens did. Specifically, no significant relationship was found between religion and trust the MB during SCAF’s transition as hypothesized ($p > 0.05$). Looking at the percentages displayed above reveals that large numbers of Copts (60.6%) and Muslims (69%) granted the MB relatively equal levels of trust during SCAF’s rule. That is to say, ordinary Copts followed Muslim

citizens giving the Brothers a full chance to rule Egypt after the SCAF would hand over power to a civilian government as had been pledged.

These results can be attributed to the fact that Egyptians, including the Coptic minority, might have believed frequent promises by the MB's leadership at the time who were assuring the group's good intentions to participate in, instead of dominating Egypt's politics. For instance, while addressing a crowd in Damanhur (lower Egypt), the MB's Supreme Guide Mohammad Badie stated that the movement would "demonstrate that it is a moderate and tolerant group promoting equality for all regardless of religion, colour and creed."¹⁴⁸ He went on emphasizing the "participation not domination" slogan, reminding his audiences that "the MB group was from the people, with the people and for the people."¹⁴⁹ Moreover, in May 2011 Mohamad Mursī, the then head of the MB's newly formed Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), announced that the new party would not force Islamic *sharī'a* laws on Egyptians.¹⁵⁰ He demonstrated that "[w]e only use Islam as the basis of our party ... which means that our general framework is Islamic sharia ... We don't issue religious rules in individual cases."¹⁵¹ In an attempt to resolve growing fears that swept across the Coptic community, especially regarding parliamentary representation, Mursī pointed out that "we want to see our Christian brothers elected in parliament ... We don't want one group to control the parliament, neither the Brotherhood

¹⁴⁸ IkhwanWeb. "MB Chairman: We Seek to Participate, not Dominate Elections," <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=28432>.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 1.

¹⁵⁰ Yasmin Shahin, "Brotherhood Says Won't Force Islamic Law on Egypt: Interview," May 30, 2011, <http://english.ahram.org/News/132291.aspx>.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, para. 4.

nor anyone else.”¹⁵² Furthermore, the MB’s former Supreme Guide Mahdī ‘Ākif declared publicly in May 2011 that the organization would not field a presidential candidate.¹⁵³

As time passed, political developments have clearly shown that “the MB was driven by hunger for power fueled by the immense vacuum left after the fall of Mubarak and the NDP” as Khalil al-Anani argued.¹⁵⁴ In addition, events on the ground proved that “the group’s actions were overshadowing its rhetoric” as Jason Brownlee has rightfully stated.¹⁵⁵ To mention just a few examples, the Brothers contested the parliamentary elections in full capacity after they had pledged a few months earlier that they would contest only 35 percent of the parliamentary seats as the MB’s media spokesman Essam al-Arian had said.¹⁵⁶ After the MB-led Democratic Alliance won 46% of the parliamentary seats,¹⁵⁷ the Brothers headed towards seizing the presidency as well. In another reversal yet on the presidential level, the movement fielded its deputy and strongman Khairat al-Shater for the presidency. In an attempt to justify this regression, the

¹⁵² Ibid, para. 18.

¹⁵³ <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=28541>, para. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Khalil al-Anani, “Upended Path: The Rise and Fall of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood,” *Middle East Journal* 69, no.4, (2015): 530.

¹⁵⁵ Brownlee, “Violence against Copts,” 16.

¹⁵⁶ IkhwanWeb, “Al-Arian: MB Will Contest 35% of Parliamentary Seats and No Need to Fear NDP,” <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=28213>.

¹⁵⁷ The Freedom and Justice Party won 213 (42%) of the entire 235 seats earned by the Democratic Alliance as a whole. Adding the 123 seats earned by the Islamic Alliance (i.e., the Al-Nour Party, the Building and Development Party, and Authenticity Party) to the Democratic Alliance’s seats means that 70% of the total parliament’s seats were in the hands of Islamists. For more details on the results of the parliament election, see: Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud and Andrew Reynolds, *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), 114.

FJP's chairman Muhammad Mursī claimed that "[w]e have chosen the path of the presidency not because we are greedy for power but because we have a majority in parliament which is unable to fulfill its duties."¹⁵⁸

A week before assuming office, Mursī had made several promises before a large number of Egypt's political leaders who mostly belonged to the non-Islamist camp and who had gathered in the Fairmont Hotel.¹⁵⁹ The main goal of what came to be known as the Fairmont Accord was a discussion of the new political developments that were threatening the revolution, especially given that Ahmad Shafiq, a representative of the ousted Mubarak regime and of the "deep state", had become Mursī's sole competitor in the runoff.¹⁶⁰ These promises varied to include the following: launching a "national unity project"; forming a "national salvation government" in which all political forces and orientations would be represented; appointing a presidential team representing Egypt's varied political trends; and forming an inclusive constituent assembly in order to draft a constitution for all Egyptians.¹⁶¹ Eventually, Mursī won the election by a tiny margin of

¹⁵⁸ Kristen Chick, "In Major Reversal, Muslim Brotherhood Will Vie for Egypt's Presidency," *The Christian Science Monitor.com*, April 1, 2012, www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/0401/In-major-reversal-Muslim-Brotherhood-will-vie-for-Egypt-s-presidency (accessed October 8, 2016).

¹⁵⁹ Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud and Andrew Reynolds, *The Arab Spring*, 118.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 117.

¹⁶¹ Salma Shukrallah, "Once Election Allies, Egypt's 'Fairmont' Opposition Turn against Morsi," *AhramOnline.org*, June 27, 2013, [www.http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/152/74485/Egypt/Morsi,-one-year-on/-Once-election-allies,-Egypts-Fairmont-opposition-.aspx](http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/152/74485/Egypt/Morsi,-one-year-on/-Once-election-allies,-Egypts-Fairmont-opposition-.aspx) (accessed October 9, 2016); Mariz Tadros, "Settling after the Revolts? Egypt's Political Settlements and Violent Transition," *Evidence Report*, 57 (2014): 24.

one percent over his rival Shafiq and became Egypt's first democratically elected president in June 30, 2012.

Broadly, none of these promises were fulfilled throughout Mursi's one-year tenure, however. More specifically, appointing the politically unknown figure Hisham Qandil as prime minister and allocating significant ministries such as higher education, housing, manpower, and information were deemed signs undermining "the power-sharing spirit of the so-called Fairmont Accord."¹⁶² With regard to the Coptic quest, sectarian attacks against Copts and Copts' holy places "increased in both frequency and intensity,"¹⁶³ reaching a climax in the unprecedented assault on the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in April 7, 2013 (see Chapter 1). Moving to the constitution, Islamists dominated the constituent assembly and hence "an overtly religious constitution" was advanced.¹⁶⁴ According to Muqtadar Khan, "the Egyptian constitution, passed by the Islamists, fudged on the equality of all citizens by privileging one religion, Islam, over others (articles 1 and 2), and subverting the equal status of women and minorities."¹⁶⁵

On the institutional level, the Brotherhood-ization of the state was further consolidated through consecutive cabinet reshuffles, in which the number of Brotherhood

¹⁶² Brownlee, Masoud and Reynolds, *The Arab Spring*, 120.

¹⁶³ Tadros, "Copts under Mursi," p. 22.

¹⁶⁴ Brownlee, "Master Cleavages," 17.

¹⁶⁵ Muqtadar Khan, "Islam, democracy and Islamism after the counterrevolution in Egypt, *Middle East Policy* 1 (2014):78.

members appointed increased.¹⁶⁶ Throughout his tenure, Mursī “focused more on consolidating his party’s power over government institutions than providing good governance.”¹⁶⁷ Assuming both executive and legislative powers, Mursī took a far-reaching decision issuing the shocking constitutional declaration of November 22, 2012. The declaration, which was deemed by Jason Brownlee as an “auto-golpe,”¹⁶⁸ placed the presidential office above all state establishments particularly the judiciary system.¹⁶⁹ Agreeing with Khan, “the Muslim Brothers did much in a very short time to squander their credibility in Egypt.”¹⁷⁰

Table 2. Crosstabs between religion and trust in the MB during Mursī’s transition

Trust the MB	Muslims		Copts	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	353	31.3	19	27.5
No	774	68.7	50	72.5
$X^2(1) = 0.435, p > 0.05(0.5)$	1127	100	69	100

The previously illustrated bad decisions and policies taken by the Brotherhood, especially those that were adopted during Mursī rule, are hence expected to have enhanced worries among Copts in particular about the real intentions of the MB compared to Muslims. The

¹⁶⁶ Nancy Youssef, “Mohammed Morsi Reshuffles Egypt’s Cabinet; 3 Posts Go to Muslim Brotherhood,” May 7, 2013, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24748909.html>.

¹⁶⁷ Khan, “Islam,” 79.

¹⁶⁸ Jason Brownlee, “Morsi Was No Role Model for Islamic Democrats,” Middle East Institute, July 17, 2013, www.mei.edu/content/morsi-was-no-role-model-islamic-democrats (accessed August 12, 2016).

¹⁶⁹ Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud and Andrew Reynolds, *The Arab Spring*, 122.

¹⁷⁰ Khan, “Islam,” 84.

results in Table 2 partially support this argument. Specifically, no significant associations were found between religion and trust in the MB during Mursī’s period contrary to expectation ($p > 0.05$). However, percentages of distrust among Copts (72.5%) were a bit higher than that among Muslims (68.7%), meaning that Copts became a bit more skeptical of the MB’s real intentions during Mursī’s transition than Muslims. Collectively, it can be argued that while levels of distrust in the MB have increased among Muslims and Copts during Mursī’s tenure, percentages of distrust among Copts were a bit higher, yet not significantly, than that of Muslims.

Table 3. Paired Samples Tests identifying changes of trust in the MB within each community over time

Levels of Trust ¹⁷¹	N	Mean	t	df	sig (2tailed)
Copts					
During SCAF’s transition	55	2.9	-4.709	54	0.000
During Mursī’s transition	55	3.7			
Muslims					
During SCAF’s transition	1012	2.6	-16.998	1011	0.000
During Mursī’s transition	1012	3.4			

Note: Higher scores meaning greater levels of distrust

After exploring patterns of change in levels of trust/distrust in the MB among both religious communities across different regimes (i.e., the SCAF and the MB), it is important to examine whether these patterns were changing over time within each individual community or not. For the Coptic society, Paired Samples’ results (Table 3)

¹⁷¹ Trust in the MB was measured here using the original scale given to the respondents, which ranged from 1 (I trust it to a great extent) to 4 (I absolutely do not trust it).

sustain the premise at hand: levels of distrust towards the MB during Mursī's transition were significantly higher ($M=3.7$) than during SCAF's period ($M=2.9$) [Paired Samples Test (54)= - 4.709, $P=0.000$]. With regard to the Muslim community, the results did not support the other half of the argument presented. The findings (Table 3) reveal that levels of distrust in the MB among Muslims have also increased during Mursī's presidency ($M=3.4$) compared to their counterparts during SCAF's transition ($M=2.6$) [Paired Samples Test (1011)= -16.998, $P=0.000$]. These results indicate that general distrust in the MB has increased among religious groups over time. Looking at the means of distrust above shows that Copts tended to distrust the MB ($M=3.7$) more than Muslims ($M=3.4$). Generally, the results presented in the previous three tables are partially supportive of the main theoretical argument suggested. More specifically, Copts were inspired by the "spirit of Tahrir Square" giving equal trust to the MB as those of Muslim citizens during SCAF's transition. What occurred afterwards was that general trust in the MB has statistically deteriorated among both Copts and Muslims. However, degrees of distrust in the MB among Copts remained a bit higher than their counterparts shared by Muslims over the two transitions.

Satisfaction with Government's Performance between Religious Groups over Time

Another manifestation indicating how the MB's ascendance to power was posing a real threat to Copts compared to Muslims could be noticed in the contradictory positions each group held towards the government's performance. Satisfaction with the government's performance was tested utilizing relevant question asking respondents whether they were satisfied/dissatisfied with the government's performance. Answers provided ranged from 0 (absolutely unsatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied).

Table 4. Paired Samples Tests identifying differences in satisfaction with governments among Muslims and Copts over time

Satisfaction Levels	N	Mean	t	df	sig (2-tailed)
Muslims					
Satisfaction with SCAF's government	1111	5.7	-2.110	1110	0.03
Satisfaction with Mursī's government	1111	7			
Copts					
Satisfaction with SCAF's government	61	6	9.102	60	0.000
Satisfaction with Mursī's government	61	2.4			

Note: Higher means meaning greater levels of satisfaction

The results presented in Table 4 enhance the argument presented. Specifically, the Paired Samples Tests demonstrate that general satisfaction with the performance of Mursī's government among Muslims (M=7) was comparatively higher than their satisfaction with SCAF's government (M=5.7) [Paired Samples Test (1110)= -2.110, $P=0.03$]. By contrast, levels of satisfaction with Mursī's government among Copts were statistically lower (M=2.4) than their satisfaction with SCAF's government (M=6) [Paired Samples Test (60)= 9.102, $P=0.000$]. Generally, these results are in congruence with the main hypothesis proposed in that each community was evaluating the same government's performance significantly differently. Initially, evaluations hence were based on beforehand suppositions rather than relying on substantive factors.

Implications on Minority-Related Politics

Distrust in the incumbent has its own consequences on citizens in general and on minority-related politics in particular. This section explores how these implications are linked with a certain array of concerns challenging minorities in transitions in general. Three main worries are provided in this regard: the potentiality of establishing a new

dictatorship, the rise of communal apathy, and the willingness to defect from the democratic process as a whole. The remainder of this chapter discusses each one of these concerns in a separate part.

Mursi's Rule: A New Islamist Dictatorship

Charles Tilly has introduced a political process-oriented definition highlighting the main features distinguishing democratic regimes from other types of rule. Tilly argues that:

a regime is democratic insofar as it maintains broad citizenship, equal citizenship, binding consultation of citizens at large with respect to governmental activities and personnel, as well as protection of citizens from arbitrary actions by governmental agents.¹⁷²

By this standard, it can be hypothesized that Mubarak's long dictatorship was replaced by a newly established one, yet with an "Islamist" face seen during Mursi's tenure.¹⁷³ Methodologically, three relevant questions were selected to evaluate the general assessment of Mursi's regime as perceived by Copts. Arguably, these three questions address the four main principles featuring democratic regimes as suggested in Tilly's definition. Specifically, tapping on both broad citizenship and consultation, the first question asked interviewees to evaluate the general status of democracy and human rights on a scale of 1 (very good) to 5 (very bad). The second question taps into the issue of equality, in which participants were asked whether they were receiving equal treatment

¹⁷² Charles Tilly, "Processes and Mechanisms of Democratization," *Sociological Theory*, 18 (2000): 4.

¹⁷³ See, Elizabeth Monier and Annette Ranko, "The Fall of the Muslim Brotherhood: Implications for Egypt," *Middle East Policy*, 4 (2013): 117.

compared to other citizens under different regimes. Responses given ranged from 1 (to a great extent) to 4 (not at all). The final question signifies the protection principle, in which respondents were asked whether they were able to criticize the government without fear or not. Answers given to this question were either 1 (yes) or 2 (no). A final composite scale aggregating scores of the three questions together was created, measuring whether the MB was establishing democracy or autocracy in the perception of Copts. Scores of the final scale ranged from 3 to 11, where greater points mean that the regime was perceived as more autocratic.

Table 5. Paired Samples Tests measuring differences in assessment of status of democracy over time

Status of democracy	N	Mean	t	df	sig (2-tailed)
Under SCAF's rule	56	6	-5.545	55	0.000
Under Mursī's rule	56	7.8			

Note: Higher scores meaning that the regime is authoritative

According to the results presented in Table 5, the status of democracy significantly deteriorated during Mursī's transition (M=7.8) compared to its counterpart during SCAF's period (M=6) as perceived by Christians [Paired Samples Test (55)= -5.545, $P=0.000$]. In other words, while the Brothers thought they were driving Egypt towards democracy, embarking on a limited conceptualization of democracy defined by electoral victories, opposing factions including Copts thought that the movement was establishing religious autocracy. According to Nathan Brown, successive elections held at that time "seemed only to deepen rather than ease or resolve differences"¹⁷⁴ between the

¹⁷⁴ Nathan Brown, "Egypt's Failed Transition," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 4 (2013): 46.

majoritarian ruling camp and the minority camp, be it political or religious. Relatedly, Mursī's dictatorship was evident for example in that "the Brotherhood ran afoul of Egyptian moderate sensibilities by trying to establish an Islamic state" as Tarek Masoud has pointed out.¹⁷⁵ In other words, despite the "civil state" discourse which was frequently advocated by the MB back then, the MB's underlying cause was to establishing an Islamic state.¹⁷⁶

Rise of Communal Cynicism among Copts

After assuming power, it was evident that Mursī "refused to compromise and argued that his electoral legitimacy gave him the right to ignore opposition demands."¹⁷⁷ This eventually created a new Islamist dictatorship as previously illustrated. Thus, a growing wave of communal cynicism dominated the Coptic community in particular and wider Egyptian society in general, especially liberals and leftists. Since the main focus of this part is allocated to Copts, three indicators signifying collective skepticism shared by Copts in particular are provided. These indicators are as follows: increasing political apathy; growing worries about economic situation; and rising willingness to emigrate.

¹⁷⁵ Tarek Masoud, "Egyptian Democracy: Smothered in the Cradle, or Stillborn?" *The Brown Journal of world affairs* 20, no.2 (2014): 7.

¹⁷⁶ Carrie Wickham, "The Muslim Brotherhood and democratic transition in Egypt," *Middle East Law and Governance* 3 (2011): 222.

¹⁷⁷ Hafez Ghanem, "Egypt's Difficult Transition: Why the International Community Must Stay Economically Engaged," <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/01/egypt-transition-economy-ghanem>.

Increasing Political Apathy

The political apathy which dominated the Coptic community could be seen in three main manifestations: perceptions of how transitions were managed; evaluations of basic freedoms; and interest in following political news. To start with, the management of transition was evaluated using a relevant question investigating attitudes towards the way in which political transition was handled. Responses given to answer this question varied from 1 (very good) to 4 (very bad). As for evaluating status of primary freedoms across regimes, the following question was selected: “To what extent do you think that ‘freedom to express opinions’ is guaranteed in your country?” Seven items covering different dimensions related to positioning of freedoms were directed to interviewees, with a scale rated from 1 (guaranteed to a great extent) to 4 (not guaranteed). These items are as follows: 1) Freedom to express opinions; 2) Freedom of the press; 3) Freedom to join political parties; 4) Freedom to participate in peaceful protests and demonstrations; 5) Freedom to join civil associations and organizations; 6) Freedom to sue the government and its agencies; and 7) Freedom to vote. After excluding item 7 since it was asked in wave II only, a separate aggregated scale (for each individual wave) adding up scores of the 6 items was created with a total points of 6 to 24. The newly created scales were highly reliable: Cronbach’s Alpha for the 6 items evaluating status of freedoms during SCAF’s transition is 0.912, whereas the Cronbach’s Alfa for the other 6 items measuring positioning of freedoms during Mursī’s period is 0.924. These high scores suggest that items of each scale have high internal consistency. The third variable addressing interests in following political news was measured using the following question: “To what extent

do you follow political news in your country?” Responses given to this item varied from 1 (to a great extent) to 4 (I don’t follow political news at all).

Table 6. Paired Samples Tests identifying differences in political apathy among Copts over time

Political apathy indicators	N	Mean	t	df	sig (2-tailed)
Management of transition					
Under SCAF’s rule	61	2.6	-6.567	60	0.000
Under Mursī’s rule	61	3.4			
Respect of basic freedoms					
Under SCAF’s rule	50	10.5	- 3.518	49	0.001
Under Mursī’s rule	50	14			
Following political news					
Under SCAF’s rule	69	2.2	-2.226	68	0.02
Under Mursī’s rule	69	2.5			

Note: Higher means refer to deterioration of the indicator at hand

During times of political transformation newly elected regimes are expected to build broader coalitions and provide several compromises, which are deemed preconditions for a consolidated democracy to occur in the first place.¹⁷⁸ As it has been indicated earlier, Mursī’s regime failed to establish either of these requirements. This conclusion was empirically proven right as the results in Table 6 point out. To start, the management of transition during Mursī was perceived by ordinary Copts to be statistically worse (M=3.4) than that of the SCAF (M=2.6) [Paired Samples Test (60)= -6.567, P=0.000]. As for respecting freedoms, the results demonstrate that essential freedoms deteriorated significantly during Mursī’s transition (M=14) compared to their counterparts during

¹⁷⁸ Zoltan Barany, “Exits from Military Rule: Lessons for Burma,” *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 2 (2015): 96.

SCAF's tenure ($M=10.5$) [Paired Samples Test (49)= -3.518, $P=0.001$] according to Christians' evaluation. The final indicator reflecting increasing political apathy among Copts during Mursi's tenure was observed in declining interests in following political news. The findings indicate that interest in following political news has significantly declined among ordinary Christians while the MB were in office ($M=2.5$) compared to their counterparts during SCAF's period ($M=2.2$) [Paired Samples Test (68)= -2.226, $P=0.02$]. It should be noted here that rising political skepticism among Copts does not mean that they abandoned politics entirely. Rather it means that while they might quit formal political process, they embarked on "street politics" to further their interests as it would be discussed thoroughly in the next chapter.

Growing Pessimism Concerning Economic Position

Increasing political apathy shared by Copts during Mursi's presidency was coupled with growing pessimism concerning economic-related matters. To evaluate participants' assessments of the economic situation, two related questions were selected. The first asked the participants how they would evaluate the economic situation in Egypt, with a scale that varied from 1 (very good) to 4 (very bad). The second question explored prospects for the economic situation in the foreseeable future as perceived by Copts, with responses ranging from 1 (much better) to 5 (much worse).

Table 7. Paired Samples Tests indicating increasing pessimism regarding economic situation among Copts over time

Evaluating economic situation	N	Mean	t	df	sig (2-tailed)
Current economic situation					
Under SCAF's rule	69	3.1	-3.506	68	0.001
Under Mursi's rule	69	3.5			
Foreseeable economic situation					
Under SCAF's rule	66	1.8	- 9.225	65	0.000
Under Mursi's rule	66	3.6			

Note: Higher means refer to deterioration of the economic indicator under investigation

According to the results presented above, Egypt's economic situation during Mursi's government was statistically worse (M=3.5) than its counterpart under SCAF's transition (M=3.1) [Paired Samples Test (68)= -3.506, P=0.001] as evaluated by Copts. Relatedly, Christians were skeptical of the MB's capacity to fix the then worsening economic position. Specifically, during SCAF's transition Copts were more optimistic about the future of Egypt's economic situation (M=1.8) than during Mursi's period, where levels of pessimism have statistically increased (M=3.6) [Paired Samples Test (65)= -9.225, P=0.000]. These results provide empirical evidence for what has frequently been emphasized in the literature concerning the MB's incompetence, and its failure to provide good governance.¹⁷⁹ Economic inefficiency of the MB could be attributed to the fact that

¹⁷⁹ For more information on the economic factor and how it helped toppling Mursi's regime, see for example, Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds, *The Arab Spring*; Hafez Ghanem, "Egypt's Difficult Transition"; Hafez Ghanem, "The Role of Micro and Small Enterprises in Egypt's Economic Transition," *Global Working Paper 53*, (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 2013), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-role-of-micro-and-small-enterprises-in-egypts-economic-transition/>.

the Brothers have primarily been trained to become religious preachers not statesmen as Khalil al-Anani has rightly indicated.¹⁸⁰ In his analysis of Egypt's economic situation under Mursī, Hafez Ghanem pointed out that the MB lacked a "serious macroeconomic stabilization program."¹⁸¹ The author went on identifying economic difficulties experienced under Mursī's regime stating that, "the economy deteriorated gradually with low growth and increasing unemployment and inflation...The Egyptian people were also feeling the pinch in terms of higher prices and shortages of some imported necessities."¹⁸²

Increasing Willingness to Emigrate

A final indicator reflecting communal resentments dominating the Coptic community during Mursī's tenure could be seen in growing readiness to emigrate. This variable was evaluated employing the following question: "Do you think about emigrating from your country?" The participants were to choose from a list including a wide array of sociopolitical, religious, and economic reasons. Since the main aim here is to differentiate between Copts who thought about emigration regardless of the reason from those who never thought about it, a dummy variable was created. Specifically, those who answered yes irrespective of the reason were given 2, whereas those who reported no were given 1.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Anani, "Upended Path," 79.

¹⁸¹ Hafez Ghanem, "Egypt's Difficult Transition," 24.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

Table 8. Willingness to emigrate among Copts over time

Thinking about emigration	During SCAF's rule		During Mursi's rule	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	14	19.7	29	42
No	57	80.3	40	58
Total	71	100	69	100

The results in Table 8 clearly indicate that willingness rates to emigrate have dramatically increased among the Coptic community during Mursi's transition compared to their counterparts during the SCAF. Specifically, while only 19.7% thought about emigration for diverse socioeconomic and political reasons during SCAF's transition, this percentage was doubled during Mursi's presidency reaching 42%. These results provide additional empirical evidence signifying the general deterioration of Copts' socioeconomic position during the MB's rule. Using another statistical model, a Paired Samples Test shows that levels of willingness to leave the country among Copts ($M=1.4$) were significantly higher during Mursi's era than its counterparts under SCAF's transition ($M=1.2$) [Paired Samples Test ($T= - 3.381$, $P=0.001$)]. Evidently, these significant differences are deemed crucial in understanding the real threats Copts had to encounter under the MB's rule.

Defection from Democracy and its Impacts on Changing Balance of Power

One of the most dangerous moment threatening newly democratic transitions occurs when civilians decide to defect from the democratic system, lining up with the military or

relying on street politics to resolve differences.¹⁸³ In fact, this opens wide doors for military intervention in politics. Two main dimensions addressing the willingness to defect from democracy among Copts are provided. The first dimension addresses the likelihood of siding with the military, defined by changing levels of trust in the military across time. This variable was evaluated using a relevant question asking participants to what extent they trusted the military in the two transitions, with a scale ranging from 1 (I trust it to a great extent) to 4 (I absolutely do not trust it). It is worth mentioning that the main issue here is to make a clear distinction between those who trusted the military during those difficult moments irrespective of degrees of trust, and those who did not trust at all. Thus, a dummy variable measuring varying trust levels in military was constructed. Copts who did not trust military at all were coded 2, whereas Copts granting whatever degrees of trust to military were coded 1. The second explores the extent to which participants believe in democracy as a way of governing as opposed to other systems. This was evaluated utilizing the following phrase: “A democratic system may have problems, yet it is better than other systems.” Answers provided ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Statistically, a Chi-Square test was utilized to investigate the first dimension (i.e., the association between religion and trust in the military), while an Independent-Samples T-Test was performed to measure the second element (i.e., diverse levels of believe in democracy as a way of governing).

¹⁸³ See for example, Terence Lee, “The Armed Forces and Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Explaining the Role of Military in 1986 Philippines and 1998 Indonesia,” *Comparative Political Studies* 42 no. 5 (2009): 640-669; Zoltan Barany, “Exits from Military Rule: Lessons for Burma,” *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 2 (2015): 86-100.

Religious Background and Trust in the Military

Before heading to discuss the association between religion and trust in the military across different regimes, it is worth remembering that Copts and Muslims alike trusted the MB during the SCAF's transition. As illustrated earlier, both wished for a brighter political future for all Egyptians after the military would hand over power to civilians.

Table 9. Crosstabs between religion and trust in the military during SCAF's transition

Trust in the military	Muslims		Copts	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
During SCAF's transition				
Yes	1134	99.1	68	95.8
No	10	0.9	3	4.2
$X^2(1) = 7.093, p=0.008$	1144	100	71	100

The data presented in Table 9 point out that Copts were more skeptical of the military's intentions during the SCAF's transitional period than Muslims. That is, religious background was positively correlated with levels of trust in the military during SCAF's period. Comparatively, Muslims tended to trust the military (99.1%) more than Copts (95.8%), whereas levels of distrust in the military among Copts (4.2%) were higher than that of Muslims (0.9%) [$p=0.008$].¹⁸⁴

These results can be better understood by revisiting the events that occurred on the ground. For example, it was clear during SCAF's transition that an informal pact had been established between the MB and SCAF by which a quick transfer of power to a

¹⁸⁴ The alternative hypothesis was accepted at a significant level of 0.08.

civilian government had been reached.¹⁸⁵ This was definitely against non-Islamists and liberals in general on one side, and it was in favor of the MB's interests on the other given that they were the only organized political group at the time.¹⁸⁶ Relatedly, the road map which was announced by SCAF foresaw elections before the writing of a new constitution. This trajectory, again, was favoring Islamists over other political and religious minorities.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, the committee formed by the SCAF to amend the 1971 constitution antagonized non-Islamists including the Christian community. According to Brownlee et al, this was due to the fact that the committee was headed by an Islamist thinker, Ṭāriq al-Bishrī. More importantly, the MB was the sole political group to have been represented in the committee by one of its members, Ṣubhī Ṣalīh.¹⁸⁸

Another discriminatory policy adopted by the SCAF was evident in that sectarian violence against Copts was being handled by local Islamist leaders through informal committees rather than by enforcement of law through the state apparatus. In her extensive analysis of religiously-inspired violence between February 2011 and June 2012, Mariz Tadros has emphasized the devastating consequences of this strategy on social cohesion. "One of the most dramatic changes occurring after the revolution," Tadros writes, "is in the shift in the management of sectarian incidents on a local level

¹⁸⁵ Mariz Tadros, "Settling after the Revolts? Egypt's Political Settlements and Violent Transition, *Evidence Report* (England: Institution of Development Studies, 2014) 2, <http://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/settling-after-the-revolts-egypt-s-political-settlements-and-violent-transition>; Al-Anani, "Upended Path," 535.

¹⁸⁶ Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds, *The Arab Spring*, 106-107.

¹⁸⁷ Brownlee, "Violence against Copts," 13.

¹⁸⁸ Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds, *The Arab Spring*, 106-107.

from the SSI [State Security Investigations] apparatus to that of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis.”¹⁸⁹ If we add the “Maspero Massacre” to the aforementioned instances, we can better understand why levels of trust in the military differed between Copts and Muslims during SCAF’s transition. The atrocity of Maspero, in which 27 citizens many of which were Christians were killed by army soldiers, substantially undermined Coptic-SCAF relations.¹⁹⁰ Agreeing with Tarek Masoud, during SCAF’s transition “both the Muslim Brotherhood and the army that unseated it brooked no argument and viewed losers in the electoral game not as minorities to be protected but as enemies to be silenced.”¹⁹¹

Table 10. Crosstabs between religion and trust in the military during Mursī’s transition

Trust in the military	Muslims		Copts	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
During Mursī’s transition				
Yes	1151	93.3	68	98.6
No	76	6.7	1	1.4
$X^2(1) = 3.026, p = 0.08$				
	1127	100	69	100

Despite previous grievances shared among Copts, which resulted basically from the “sectarian approaches” followed by the SCAF, policies adopted later by Mursī have radically changed the balance of power between influential groups at the time.

¹⁸⁹ Mariz Tadros, “Devolving the Power to Divide: Sectarian Relations in Egypt (2011-12),” *Institute of Development Studies* 45, no. 5 (2014): 74.

¹⁹⁰ Brownlee, “Master Cleavages,” 18.

¹⁹¹ Tarek Masoud, “Has the Door Closed on Arab Democracy?,” *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 1 (2015): 81

Specifically, the results in Table 10 indicate that religion and trust in the military were positively associated during Mursī's transition. Although Muslims and Copts granted the military high levels of trust during Mursi's tenure as indicated in Table 10, Copts tend to trust the military (98.6%) more than Muslims (93.3%). Relatedly, levels of distrust in the army among Copts were significantly lower (1.4%) than among Muslims (6.7%) [$p=0.08$].¹⁹²

Taken the results in Tables 9 and 10 together, it becomes clear that the MB's ascendance to power has changed the balance of power between competing factions. In other words, the rise of the MB led to a reconstruction of Coptic-Muslims relations on one side, and more importantly to the reshaping of civil-military relations on the other. This eventually has sustained religious cleavages in society, leading to the construction of a more threatened Coptic community as it has been illustrated throughout the current chapter.

Disbelieve in Democracy

In addition to an increasing willingness to side with the military rather than with the elected civilian government, growing disbelieve in democracy provides another manifestation reflecting high levels of willingness to defect from democracy among Christians.

¹⁹² The alternative hypothesis was accepted at a significant level of 0.08.

Table 11. T-Test showing differences in believe in democracy between Copts and Muslims across time

Democratic system is better than other systems	N	Mean	t	df	sig (2-tailed)
During SCAF's transition					
Muslims	1144	1.9	0.010	1213	0.9
Copts	71	1.9			
During Mursi's transition					
Muslims	949	1.8	- 5.126	1003	0.000
Copts	56	2.4			

Note: Higher means refer to greater amounts of disbelieve in democratic system

The findings in Table 11 point out that Muslims and Copts alike believed at first in a democratic system being the most appropriate pattern of governing, despite the potential problems attached. Specifically, the Independent Samples T-Test showed that means of believe in democratic system among Copts (M=1.9) where equal to those of Muslims (M=1.9) during SCAF's transition [$P > 0.05$]. By time, it seemed that the MB left no room for either religious or political minorities except for losing faith in the democratic system as the results in Table 11 demonstrate. To elaborate, levels of disbelieve in democratic system shared among Copts during Mursi's tenure were significantly higher (M=2.4) than their counterparts adopted by Muslims (M=1.8) [T-Test (1003)= -5.126, $P = 0.000$].

Collectively, the three main concerns Copts encountered during Mursi's transition (the construction of a new Islamist dictatorship as perceived by ordinary Copts at the time, growing communal apathy, and oscillation between defection from or commitment to democracy) have ultimately given way to the "men with guns" to intervene in Egypt's politics once again. Furthermore, the policies and tactics adopted by the MB have significantly threatened interests of Copts, motivating them towards leaning more

towards military after they lost hope in the newly elected democratic regime. This was clearly evident when Copts actively participated in the massive protests of June 30th, calling for Egypt's first democratically elected president to leave office. For Copts being ruled by an Islamist regime, democracy was no longer "the only game in town", using the phrase of Linz and Stepan.¹⁹³ Frequent shifts in attitudes and positions taken by Copts across times and regimes explain how they could handle growing religious fears dominating their community in the post-2011 era. Exploring the mechanisms by which perceived religious fears were translated into actual actions during Mursī's transition in particular is the next chapter's main focus.

¹⁹³ Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, "Toward Consolidated Democracies," in *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies*, ed. Larry Diamond et al (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997): 94.

CHAPTER IV

Mechanisms Linking Perceived Religious Threats with Christians' Collective Action

In chapter 3 I argue that while Copts and Muslim were full of hope that Mubarak's overthrow would usher in a more religiously tolerant Egypt, the MB's rise to power and the subsequent hegemony of the Islamists have been perceived by Copts as a threat to their religious identity. Relatedly, it was also assumed that actions and policies adopted by the MB helped enhance levels of political apathy among Copts. On the other hand, the MB's choices increased the likelihood of defection from Egypt's new born democracy among ordinary Copts, calling on the military to intervene in politics in the June 30th revolt.

This chapter traces the mechanisms by which perceived religious threats, dominating the Coptic community during MB rule, were translated into collective action noticed in their active involvement in the June 30th uprisings. That is, it explores how self-perceptions adopted on the individual level are linked with communal behavior emphasizing the roles played by religiously driven factors in provoking a certain political action. Broadly, this chapter hypothesizes that a "return of the sacred" was shaping Coptic sociopolitical behavior during Mursi's tenure. In other words, Christians were mainly motivated by religious factors, such as growing religious identity-related fears and identification more with the in-group to which they belong, while being ruled by Mursi's "Islamist" rule.

Methodologically, the results included in this chapter are primarily based on an analysis of narratives from in-depth interviews with 11 ordinary Christian citizens, aged between 21 and 48 year in Cairo. Agreeing with Reuel Rogers "interviews are an

indispensable source of data on minority populations, especially in light of the fact that these groups are still quite underrepresented in national surveys.”¹⁹⁴ Quantitatively, relevant indicators drawn from the AB dataset (waves II and III) will be utilized as well. Diversity of interviewees was ensured in that varying socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of Egypt’s Christians were represented as much as possible.¹⁹⁵ With regard to the interview process, an open-ended interview guide was designed and utilized to elicit narratives about the topics under investigation. The interviews, which averaged between 45 minutes to one hour, were conducted in Arabic.

Identity Politics and Dynamics of Collective Action

In his attempt to introduce a “fourth generation of revolutionary theory”, Jack Goldstone has drawn attention away from conventional structural factors towards the crucial roles played by “revolutionary ideologies, ethnic and religious bases for revolutionary mobilization, intra-elite conflicts, and the possibility of multiclass coalitions.”¹⁹⁶ In his work, Goldstone has emphasized the roles of “micro processes of revolutionary

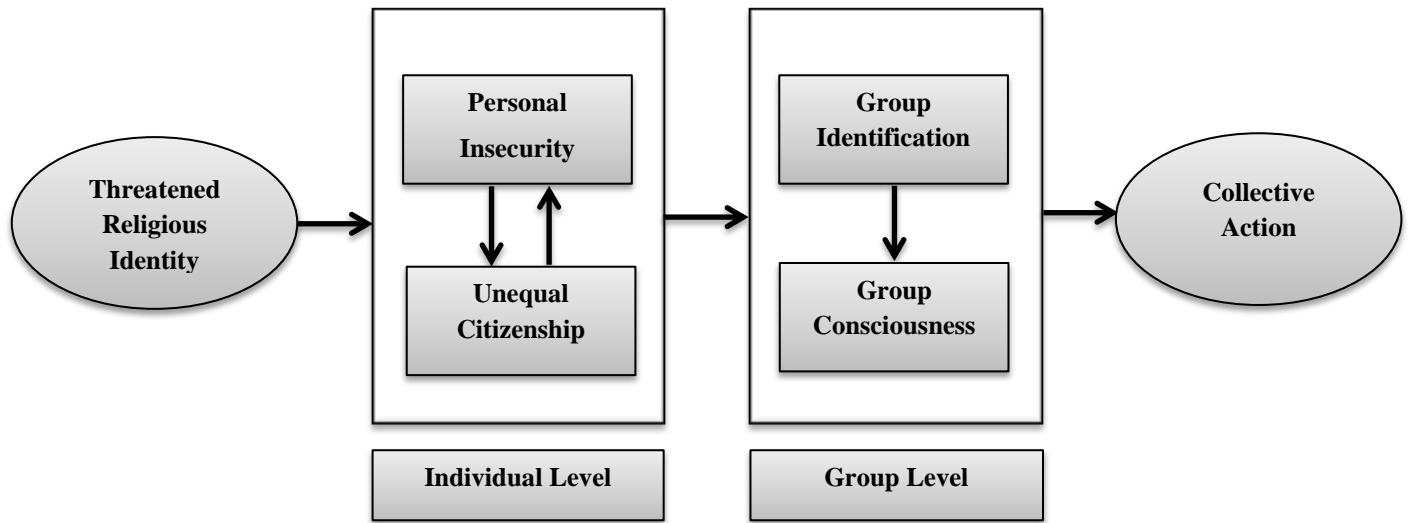
¹⁹⁴ Reuel Rogers, “Using Interviews to Understand Racial Group Identity and Political Behavior,” in *Interview Research in Political Science*, ed. Layna Mosely (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), 226.

¹⁹⁵ Of the interviewees, six are female and five are male. Their ages range from 21 to 48 (ages of five of them range from 20-30, while four participants age between 30 and 40. The other two interviewees are in 40s). Concerning religious denominations, eight of participants are Orthodox and the other three are Protestant. As for self-perceived socioeconomic status, nine of interviewees consider themselves to be middle class and the other two identify themselves as lower middle class.

¹⁹⁶ Jack Glodstone, “Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory,” *Annual Review of Political science* 4 (2001): 140

mobilization and leadership”¹⁹⁷ which had been overlooked in “Third-Generation” traditions of collective mobilization. Building on these insights, this chapter pays more explicit attention to the pivotal role played by religious factors in motivating collective action of Christians during the MB’s transition, culminating in the June 30th demonstrations. Growing religious fears were translated into communal political behavior through an array of mechanisms as illustrated in Figure 1. The rest of this chapter will thoroughly discuss the association between the independent variable (i.e., threatened identity) and the dependent variable (i.e., collective action), elaborating on each of the proposed mediating mechanisms.

Figure 1: A suggested “causal-mechanisms” model linking religious threats with collective action of Copts



Perceptions of Religious Threats

The qualitative analysis has revealed that Christians perceived their religious identity as substantially threatened during Mursī’s tenure. As indicated in chapter 3, Islamists’ electoral hegemony and the MB-SCAF informal pact in addition to growing sectarian

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 139.

violence against Copts have altogether maintained fears among Copts. Increasing worries among Copts were evident once Mursī was officially announced Egypt's president, according to interviewees' narratives. For instance, while describing her feelings after knowing about Mursī's victory, Samya¹⁹⁸ (an Orthodox female, 48-year-old) indicated that *"we Copts were extremely terrified once we heard about Mursī's victory...I remember the first Friday's religious ceremony I attended at the church after Mursī was elected president...I would claim that almost all of attendees were crying, and the priest kept repeating that this is God's will and that all we have is to seek His help in such difficult times... it was a difficult day and I felt that God left us at sea."*

Several reasons were put forward by the participants explaining these religious identity-related concerns. For example, Salwa (a Protestant female, 28-year-old) emphasized the Muslim Brotherhood's terrifying history with non-Muslims in general stating that *"my religious identity was under genuine threat during the Islamist rule... this was due to the fact that the MB does have a black history when it comes to politics ...more importantly, they have been intolerant towards non-Muslims in general...my religious fears were doubled since I was deemed a minority within a minority being Protestant...generally speaking, anyone who disagrees with the MB is considered an enemy, let alone Copts who have been deemed by their top officials as infidels."*

Adding another reason, Ramy (an Orthodox male, 48-year-old) pointed out that *"the MB's ascendance to power meant that religious discrimination against Copts would definitely be increasing...this is simply due to the fact that the MB has always considered*

¹⁹⁸ Following the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) provision, where the confidentiality and data anonymity of participants should be maintained, real names of the interviewees were replaced by fake ones.

us as merely guests staying in an Islamic country, not as genuine citizens sharing equal rights and duties like Muslim citizens.” In her turn, Heba (a Protestant female, 23-year-old) explained how the MB’s enduring grievances have been translated into negative positions adopted towards Christians and their interests. She said that *“it was clear that the Muslim Brothers were hungry for power ... as if they were trying to compensate the long history of oppression they have experienced by suppressing others, especially marginalized groups like us.”* For more elaboration, Heba gave the following revealing example: *“I still remember a TV talk show in which an intellectual Copt was asking one of the MB politicians ‘do you love us?’ ... the latter kept answering ‘I just respect you’ ... this was the case before they seized actual power... we were expecting the worst once they would officially rule Egypt.”*

These frightened narratives can be understood in terms of the Islamization wave dominating Egypt’s public sphere since the eruption of the Arab Spring, culminating during the Islamist rule that followed. Drawing on the AB (waves III), several quantitative indicators signifying this Islamization of society can be introduced.

Table 12. Muslims’ attitudes toward enacting country’s laws in accordance with Islamic law during Mursi’s transition

The government and parliament should enact laws in accordance with Islamic law		
	Frequency	%
I strongly agree	305	28.5
I somewhat agree	525	49
I disagree	171	16
I strongly disagree	70	6.5
Total	1071	100

To begin with, the results (Table 12) indicate that the vast majority of Egypt’s Muslim citizens (77.5%) agreed during Mursi’s presidency (to a great and a medium extent, combined) that the country’s laws should be enacted in accordance with Islamic law

Table13. Muslims' attitudes toward applying *sharī'a* more strictly during Mursī's transition

	Frequency	%
I strongly support	335	33.3
I somewhat support	474	44.4
I do not support	196	18.4
I strongly do not support	42	3.9
Total	1067	100

It was not only the case that Muslim citizens favored enactment of local laws so that it matches with Islamic *sharī'a* laws, but it was also clear that a considerable amount of them called for applying *sharī'a* more strictly. Table 13 indicates that 77.7% of Muslims supported (to a great and a medium extent, combined) a more strict application of *sharī'a* during Mursī's reign in particular,¹⁹⁹ compared to 22.3% who rejected this idea (combining both who do not support and strongly do not support together).

Table14. Preferring a religious political party over a non-religious political party among Muslims during Mursī's tenure

	Frequency	%
I strongly agree with the 1 st sentence	230	22.1
I agree with the 1 st sentence	190	18.2
I agree with the 2 nd sentence	290	27.8
I strongly agree with the 2 nd sentence	124	11.9
I don't agree with either sentence	208	20
Total	1042	100

Another facet reflecting the extent to which Egypt's political sphere was Islamized could also be found in the positions adopted by the participants towards religious political parties, and the role they were expected to play in post-2011 era. Empirically, during the MB transition, 40.3% of Muslims supported (to a great and a medium extent, combined)

¹⁹⁹ This question was not included in wave 2, which was conducted during SCAF's transition.

religious political parties over non-religious ones, compared to 39.7% who preferred (to a great or a medium extent, combined) political parties over religious ones. These results interpret why Islamists captured almost 70% of the parliamentary seats in Egypt's founding election that took place right after the 2011 revolution. Seemingly, benefiting from the Islamization process that swept across Egypt at the time, the Freedom and Justice Party won 41.9% of the seats. Relatedly, the Salafist bloc which was led by al-Nur Party seized 24.2% of the vote and al-Wasat Party captured 2% of the seats.²⁰⁰ Shockingly, the liberal-oriented Wafd Party, which had been a key player in Egypt's political scene even before the 1952 revolution, was defeated by newly formed Islamist parties. Arguably, this defeat can also be deemed another manifestation reflecting the Islamization of society.

Mechanisms Connecting Identity with Collective Action: The Individual Level

The qualitative analysis indicated that two main "micro processes" helped mobilize individual Copts against Mursī and the Brothers: growing perceptions of personal insecurity and increasing feelings of unequal citizenship.

Personal Insecurity

The thematic analysis has clearly showed that Copts were substantially lacking personal as well as family safety during the MB rule. Feelings of insecurity were evident across denomination, age, and gender. For instance, Lydia (an Orthodox female, 24-year-old) pointed out that "*one of the main reasons which made me so scared, personally speaking, was that ordinary citizens were encouraged to attack assets and holy places of Copts*

²⁰⁰ For further details on the results of this election, see Brownlee, Masoud and Reynolds, *The Arab Spring*, 113-117.

empowered by the fact that Egypt was ruled by an Islamist president...I was shocked to find some of my colleagues in university, whom I later discovered that they belong to the MB, starting to treat their opponents very badly.” In her turn, Salwa showed how sectarian violence against Copts was informally resolved through reconciliation meetings rather than by implementing laws. *“You cannot imagine,”* Salwa elaborates, *“how scared I was when knowing about these reconciliation committees in which Copts, whose social and religious fundamental rights were significantly violated, were forced to make certain concessions with culprits or otherwise their personal safety would be further jeopardized.”*

Furthermore, Ramy focused on how the discourse of hatred advocated by the MB and Salafis against Copts was threatening his personal security. He pointed out that *“the Muslim Brothers used to ignore our existence to begin with... look for example at the Islamic discourse they were disseminating and you will find that demands such as the enforcement of jizya on Copts and the exclusive slogan of Islamiyya Islamiyya were prevalent...I felt that my personal as well as family safety were under real threat out of such scary thoughts.”*

Table 15. Perceived personal and family’s insecurity among Copts across transitions

	During SCAF		During Mursī	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Fully ensured	9	12.7	3	4.5
Ensured	20	28.2	8	12.2
Not ensured	28	39.4	36	54.5
Absolutely not ensured	14	19.7	19	28.8
Total	71	100	66	100

These fearful narratives were empirically supported as Table 15 illustrates. Specifically, while 41% of Copts felt that their personal and family’s security were ensured (to a great

or a medium extent, combined) during SCAF’s transition, this percentage has dramatically declined under Mursī’s regime in that only 16.6% whose personal security was ensured (after adding “Fully ensured” and “Ensured” together). Relatedly, Christians who developed a common sense of insecurity (to a great and a medium extent, combined) jumped from 59% under the SCAF to 83.3% under Mursī’s regime. To make sure, a Paired Sample Test demonstrated that Copts’ feelings of unsafety during Mursī’s reign (M=3.08) were significantly higher²⁰¹ than under SCAF’s transition a year earlier (M=2.67) [Paired Samples Test (65)= -2.628, *P*= 0.01].

Table16. Comparing personal and family’s insecurity status across different regimes

Compared to this time last year, do you feel that your own personal and your family’s safety and security are now?	Frequency	%
Better than last year	4	6
Same as last year	25	37.3
Worse than last year	38	56.7
Total	67	100

The findings outlined in Table 16 further confirm the growing insecurity feelings previously mentioned, where 56.7% of the participants stated that their personal and family’s security during Mursī’s tenure were worse than during SCAF’s period. Relatedly, only 6% who indicated that their personal safety was in a better situation during Mursī’s tenure than that had been experienced under the SCAF.

²⁰¹ Higher scores referring to greater perceptions of insecurity, since that “Fully ensured” was coded 1 while “Absolutely not ensured” was coded 4 in the AB’s original survey.

Unequal Citizenship

While explaining the deep-root causes triggering sectarian violence in Egypt, Saif ‘Abd al-Fattāh emphasized the issue of equal citizenship as being a main catalyst in this regard. The author conceived equal citizenship as being an ideological, institutional, and practical framework, which can enhance or undermine sectarian tensions between Muslims and Copts.²⁰² In other words, he shed light on the theoretical and practical dimensions constituting the real meaning of equal citizenship. Empirically, neither of the two aspects was maintained during Mursī’s presidency in particular according to the qualitative results.

For example, Peter (an Orthodox male, 32-year-old) showed how the essence of equality was demolished due to the phenomenon of bearded policemen which grew steadily after Islamists came to power. Commenting on these unprecedented scenes, Peter said that: *“we Copts have always been dealt with as second-rank citizens regardless of the regime... yet, I really was so terrified watching Egyptian police officers with a beard... this matter was further threatening equality... simply because I was completely sure that any problem between me and Muslim would become a supreme state security case, meaning that my rights, if any, would be undermined since a ‘bearded’ policeman would never treat an ‘infidel Copt’ like me equally as he would do with his Muslim brethren.”*

²⁰² Saif ‘Abd al-Fattāh, “al-Sharī‘a al-Islāmiyya wa al-Mwāṭanā: Nahw Ta’sīs al-Jamā‘a al-Waṭaniyya,” in *al-Muwāṭana fī Muwāgahat al-Ṭā’ifiyya* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām lil Drāsāt al-Siyāsiyya wa al-Istrāṭiyya, 2009), 65-69.

Inequality between Muslims and Copts can be seen on both societal and institutional levels as the interviewees indicated. As for the former, Salwa focused on discriminatory policies seen in private businesses stating that *“I would argue that Copts are not treated equally with Muslim citizens...this is clearly evident in the private sector for instance ...where it is so common to find advertisements placed on the clothing stores’ door or even in streets looking for veiled girls only to hire...this phenomenon increased dramatically after the Islamists’ rise to power.”* Providing another manifestation showing society-based inequality, Salwa moved on adding that *“regarding the MB period in particular, take Friday’s ceremonies as another example of social inequality...believe me or not, almost every Friday I used to listen to hateful Islamic discourse describing Copts and Jews as being the descendants of monkeys and pigs, infidels, and apostates and so forth...I cannot imagine what would happen to Copts if any preacher had used such words in describing Muslims?!...how could anyone claim then that Muslims and Copts are equal?...it is just nonsense.*

Concerning institutional inequality, Samya emphasized how Copts have usually been prohibited from occupying high-rank posts in government especially in the military and police establishments. She made this point clear saying that *“inequality can be easily seen in the military and the police where you will never find Copts in higher positions... it would be great if you find one among 1000 accepted students in the police academy, for instance, who is a Copt...while this discriminatory policy has been evident across different regimes, it was further maintained during Mursī’s presidency for sure.”*

Table 17. Perceptions of unequal citizenship among Copts across transitions

	During SCAF		During Mursī	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
To a great extent	16	22.5	4	6.3
To a medium extent	26	36.6	19	29.7
To a limited extent	15	21.2	26	40.6
Not at all	14	19.7	15	23.4
Total	71	100	64	100

Table 17 provides empirical evidence for the unequal citizenship themes previously outlined. In detail, whereas 59% of Christians reported that they were treated equally (to a great or a medium extent, combined) with other citizens during SCAF’s period, this percentage deteriorated considerably during Mursī’s tenure reaching 36% (after adding “to a great extent” and “to a medium extent” together). As for perceived unequal treatment, the results revealed that while 41% of Copts think that they were not receiving equal treatment (to a limited extent and not at all, together) like other citizens during SCAF’s time, the proportion of perceived unequal treatment rose during Mursī’s reign to 64% (to a limited extent and not at all, combined). To make sure whether the change in these figures is statistically significant or not, Paired Sample Tests were performed. The results indicated that Coptic perceptions of lacking social equality during Mursī’s presidency (M=2.8) were significantly higher²⁰³ than their equivalents which had been practiced during SCAF’s transition (M=2.3) [Paired Samples Test (63)= -2.894, $P=0.005$].

²⁰³ Greater scores refer to higher levels of inequality, since that “to a great extent” was given 1 whereas “not at all” was coded 4 in the AB’s survey.

Mechanisms Connecting Identity with Collective Action: The Community Level

Collective Identification

Agreeing with David Zeidan, “Copts are committed to preserving their identity against the assimilative majority... history has taught them to stick together and compete for survival.”²⁰⁴ While this has been the rule during normal times, Copts’ commitment to survive reached a peak during the wave of Islamization following the Arab Spring. As will be elaborated in this section, collective identification tendencies among Christians have significantly increased during Mursī’s tenure. In other words, individual’s grievances indicated above (i.e., lack of both personal insecurity and inequality) were transformed into collective action through a group identification mechanism. Collective identification with the Coptic community, in turn, could be noticed primarily in two main manifestations as the qualitative analysis has revealed: increase of social bonds among Christians and rise of church going.

Growing Social Ties

As for social bonds, interviewees pointed out that mutual interactions and ties among Christians have increased during Mursī’s transition in particular. For instance, Heba highlighted the issue of Copts’ social solidarity stating that: *“I remember that we Christians got closer to each other since the rise of Islamists to power, especially during these days in which Islamists were organizing and leading the demonstrations... at that time, we used to invite our friends and relatives whose homes are located near these*

²⁰⁴ David Zeidan, “The Copts,” 56.

protests to come and stay with us in our home until these demonstrations are over ... this was also happening the other way around... something made us more secure.”

Another facet reflecting this pattern of social cohesion was seen in the growing reliance on Christian media outlets for collecting news and information about Copts. Elaborating more on this point, Peter stated that *“I tend to rely on public TV channels in gaining news more than on Coptic media platforms...however, during the MB rule I was heavily relying on Coptic religious media such as SAT 7, al-Haq wa al-Ḍalāl [the Right and Wrong] and al-Tariq [the Road] since these platforms were providing more profound details about sectarian violence targeting Copts and churches.”*

An additional manifestation signifying growing collective identification processes was witnessed in collective prayers Christians used to conduct, irrespective of their religious diversity. Highlighting these aggregated religious services, Maha (a Protestant girl, 21-year-old) pointed out that *“in general, whenever we face any sort of crises we ask God’s help...what was new after Islamists took power was that diverse Christian denominations used to gather together in the nearest church regardless of religious affiliation for congregational prayers...these unified prayers were for Egypt to overcome that hard time.”*

Increasing Communal Religious Piety

Another agreement was found among participants that religious piety among Christians rose substantially during the Islamists’ reign. Mona (a Protestant girl, 23-year-old), for instance, noted that *“during the MB rule it was unprecedented that prayers were conducted in rotating shifts...I would argue that the only benefit we gained out of the Islamists’ ascendance to power was that we Copts became more attached to our God.”*

Relatedly, church going increased fundamentally at that time as the participants have indicated. “*Before the 25 revolution,*” Peter stated, “*I used to go to church monthly, however, I started to go on a weekly basis during the MB ruls...being in church during those hard times made me feel secure.*”

Quantitatively, the results presented in Table 18 support the narrative outlined above in that the overwhelming majority of Christians used to attend Sunday’s services since the Islamization wave following Mubarak’s overthrow. It should be noted, however, that Egyptians have always been known to be religiously committed persons whether they are Muslims or Copts. As Mohammed Nossier has put it, “[a]helicopter view of our society would certainly show that Egyptians are apparently strongly attached to their religions.”²⁰⁵ “Over the last few decades,” the author elaborates, “both Muslims and Christians tend to pray considerably more often and attend religion classes more frequently.”²⁰⁶

Table 18. Patterns of church going across regimes

Do you attend Sunday services?	During SCAF		During Mursī	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Always	42	59.1	34	51.5
Most of the time	15	21.1	18	27.3
Sometimes	8	11.3	8	12.2
Rarely	6	8.5	6	9
Total	71	100	66	100

²⁰⁵ Mohammed Nossier, “Is Egyptian Society a Truly Religious One,” Daily News (2015), para. 1. <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/09/06/is-egyptian-society-a-truly-religious-one/>.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., para 2.

Nevertheless, it was expected that increasing hostile sectarian attacks targeting Christians and their holy places, which rose drastically since the 2011 uprising (see chapter 2), would help decline levels of church going. The findings in Table 18 challenge this expectation, since that 91.5% and 91% of Christians kept attending Sunday's ceremonies (with varying degrees) either during SCAF's or Mursī's tenure (respectively) despite the high degrees of personal risks associated.

These results can be understood in terms of the recent body of literature which has emphasized the relationship between religion and/or religious establishments and collective action of minority groups.²⁰⁷ Two main premises were introduced in this regard. First, religion can enhance political activism through "institutional effects", in which religious leaders directly encourage attendees to get involved in political events.²⁰⁸ Based on this type of understanding, religious institutions are deemed key "catalyst for mobilization" since they provide essential organizational resources advancing collective mobilization such as social interactions and communication connections.²⁰⁹ The second argument centers around the idea that religion can sustain political engagement through attitudinal/psychological impacts. Such emotional effects touch, for example, on the role

²⁰⁷ See for example, Jangsup Choi, Gamal Gasim, and Dennis Patterson, "Identity, Issues, and Religious Commitment and Participation: Explaining Turnout among Mosque-Attending Muslim Americans," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 11, no. 3, (2011): 343-357; Michael Hoffman and Amaney Jamal, "Religion in the Arab Spring: Between Two Competing Narratives," *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 3, (2014): 593-606; Kenneth Wald, Dennis Owen and Samuel Hill, "Churches as Political Communities," *American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2, (1988): 531-548; Fredrick Harris, "Something within: Religion as a Mobilizer of African-American Political Activism," *The Journal of Politics* 56, no. 1, (1994): 42-68.

²⁰⁸ Choi, Gasim, and Patterson, "Identity," 345.

²⁰⁹ Harris, "Something within," 45-50.

played by religious institutions in preserving a common sense of belonging among the believers. Also, they can enhance interests in politics among attendees on one hand, and empower them with crucial knowledge about political issues on the other.²¹⁰

The qualitative analysis revealed that both organizational and attitudinal effects attached to religion have enhanced collective identification processes among Christians, which eventually were translated to communal action seen in the June 30th revolt. Tapping on the organizational resources provided by the church, Mona clarified that *“we used to go to church in groups...communal prayers made us stronger and more secure... and in case we die, for any reasons, we would die together inside our church.”* Agreeing, Salwa said that *“being in church gave me an unprecedented chance to socialize with other fellow Christians...I used to go to church even during Mondays...being there helped me alleviate increasing fears and tensions of the time.”*

As for the emotional dimension, almost all interviewees confirmed that priests and other religious clergy were strongly motivating them to get involved in the political events and not to miss any opportunity to participate in public affairs. For example, Samya stated that *“while it never happened that we were guided by church leaders to elect a certain presidential or parliamentary candidate, we were often urged to participate actively in all election contests.”* Furthermore, Ramy pointed out that *“church going at that time helped maintain Copts’ religious spirituality which in turn assisted in overcoming growing anxieties dominating the Coptic community back then.”* Along the same lines, Lydia indicated that *“the church was strongly urging us to fast and pray more*

²¹⁰ Choi et al., “Identity,” 346; Harris, “Something within,” 50-51.

than normal not only for the sake of Copts but also for Egyptian society as a whole... this helped me a lot to manage my feelings of insecurity.”

Group Consciousness

Despite the key role it plays in sustaining a sense of belonging among the members of marginalized groups, collective identification cannot incite social mobilization on its own. According to Allison Calhoun-Brown, “group membership or mere group identification, however, is not enough to affect political participation. It is group consciousness that affects political participation.”²¹¹ Thus, a distinction is made between group membership (i.e., collective identification process) and group consciousness as Arthur Miller and his colleagues have pointed out.²¹² The authors elaborated that while the former “connotes a perceived self-location within a particular social stratum”, the latter “involves identification with a group *and* [Italics in original] a political awareness or ideology regarding the group’s relative position in society.”²¹³ Another differential element lies in the fact that group consciousness is conceived as a more politicized concept than group identification. This is because group awareness involves a perception of deprivation, which a certain subordinate group might experience when it is compared

²¹¹ Allison Calhoun-Brown, “African American Churches and Political Mobilization: The Psychological Impact of Organizational Resources,” *The Journal of Politics* 58, no.4, (1996): 936

²¹² Arthur Miller, Patricia Gurin, Gerlad Gurin, and Oksana Malanchuk, “Group Consciousness and Political Participation,” *American Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 3, (1981): 495.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

with dominant groups.²¹⁴ Accordingly, the main hypothesis provided here is that “group identification will translate into group consciousness ... and [then] political action will result.”²¹⁵ In other words, group consciousness is considered an inevitable mechanism which helps transform collective identification into communal political activism.

This type of reasoning was proven correct in the current work. The quantitative findings revealed that interviewees did conceive of the religious group to which they belong (i.e., the Christian community) as being fundamentally deprived of basic religious rights compared to the rights enjoyed by the dominant out-group (i.e., the Muslim community). To be sure, the victimized consciousness adopted by Copts has been evident across times and regimes, yet it increased drastically under the MB’s Islamist rule. For instance, Samy emphasized collective grievances shared by the Coptic community during Mursī’s tenure. He stated that, *“I wanted to get rid of Mursī and the Islamist group backing him even if the military would return to politics...believe me, the main goal of the Muslim Brothers was to humiliate the entire Coptic society, placing them underneath their shoes.”* In her turn, Heba reported that her religious identity was more salient during the Islamist’s reign than her national identity. She went on pointing out that, *“during the Islamist period I felt that my religious identity was more present than my nationality... this could be attributed to that the MB wanted us to leave the country... thus, it was not the case that my national identity which was threatened, rather it was my religious affiliation.”* Following, Gamal (an Orthodox male, 31-year-old) indicated that *“several Copts did not dare even to go out of their home while the MB was in office...we Copts*

²¹⁴ Ibid., 495.

²¹⁵ Calhoun-Brwon, “African American,” 937.

will never forget the horrible scenes in which several churches were being exploded and burnt down in front of our eyes on TV channels.”

It is worth mentioning that Copts’ group consciousness was not occurring in a vacuum. Rather, certain leverages were employed in this regard among which was historical memory. In other words, a present and vibrant memorization of previous sectarian attacks targeting Copts helped Christians’ religious identity to be maintained. According to Baljinder Sahdra and Michael Ross, recalling hostile and tragic incidents committed against in-group members enhances the social identity of the in-group.²¹⁶ Analyzing the main themes expressed by interviewees has demonstrated that almost all participants had a strong memorization of previous hostile incidents in which members of the in-group and/or holy places of worshiping were targeted. Yasser (an Orthodox male, 32-year-old), for instance, provided a detailed list of several sectarian assaults targeting Copts. This list varied to include sectarian instances starting from al-Zawyia al-Hamra in 1981, then recalling al-Kush’h incident of 1999, ending with recent accelerated church burnings witnessed after Mursi’s overthrow in 2013. Other participants (e.g., Samya and Salwa) provided exact numbers and locations of churches that have been attacked during the Islamist’s period. Other interviewees (e.g., Ramy and Peter) gave specific names of the Brothers and Salafis who were advocating hatred discourse against Christians at that time. Taken together, collective identification and group consciousness have helped transform Coptic grievances into real communal action observed in June 30th massive protests.

²¹⁶ Baljinder Sahdra and Michael Ross, “Group Identification and Historical Memory,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 33, no. 3, (2007): 384.

Collective Action

As thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2, the Muslim Brotherhood came to power prepared with a fully developed strategy that would help “transform Egypt into a kind of missionary state”, using Shadi Hamid’s expression.²¹⁷ In response, a counter strategy of “return of the sacred” was primarily constructing attitudes and behavior of Christians throughout the “Islamist” rule. In other words, growing collective political activism observed in June 30 demonstrations (i.e., the main dependent variable in this work) can be explained mainly by the increasing identity threats perceived by Copts (i.e., the main independent variable in study) at the time. This argument has strongly been supported throughout this chapter, utilizing several quantitative as well as qualitative indicators.

The literature on causes and dynamics of protest participation has emphasized the role played by relative deprivation in inciting collective action, especially among minority groups.²¹⁸ A distinction was made in this respect between two different types of deprivation: individual deprivation and group deprivation. While the former occurs when individuals compare their social situations with other individuals’ respective positions, the latter happens when comparisons are made among social groups.²¹⁹ Empirically, the two types of deprivation were evident in this work as the qualitative analysis has revealed.

²¹⁷ Shadi Hamid, “The End of the End of History,” *Foreign Policy*, November 15, 2016, para 8, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/15/the-end-of-the-end-of-history/>

²¹⁸ Bert Klandermans, Jozanneke van der Toorn, and Jacqueliën van Stekelenburg, “Embeddedness and Identity: How Immigrants Turn Grievances into Action,” *American Sociological Review* 73, no. 6 (2008): 994.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

To be sure, participants felt that Copts at both the individual and communal levels were deprived of a secure religious identity and of religious freedom during the Islamists’ reign. These growing feelings of deprivation have resulted in politicizing Copts’ religious identity, inciting a wave of collective “street politics” seen in June 30 protests.

To start with, it can be argued that while ordinary Copts have held certain attitudes towards sociopolitical concerns facing Egyptian society in general, they used not to engage in massive demonstrations advancing these issues. This paradoxical behavior, which can be attributed to a wide array of sociopolitical and religious considerations (see chapter 2) was typically evident throughout the period preceded the 2011 era. This conclusion was supported qualitatively and quantitatively. As for the former, while almost all interviewees (nine out of eleven) expressed hostile narratives about Mubarak and his long established rule, only a few of them (four out of eleven) participated in the 18-day of the 2011 revolution.

Table 19. Copts’ engagement in politics during the 2011 revolution²²⁰

	Frequency	%
During the 2011 revolution was your position closer to (N=58)		
Supporters of Mubarak	15	26
Opposition against Mubarak	43	74
Actual participation in the 2011 revolution (N=71)		
Yes	4	5.6
No	67	94.4

Quantitatively, the findings represented in Table 19 show that while 74% of Copts adopted negative positions towards Mubarak, only 5.6% of them who translated these

²²⁰ These results are drawn from the AB survey (i.e., wave 2).

verbal stances into reality by engaging in the 18-day protests against him. Broadly, these patterns of political inactiveness had been shaping behavior of Copts since at least Nasser's era.²²¹ However, these patterns were changed drastically after the Islamists took power in that ordinary Christian citizens got involved enthusiastically in the protests of June 30. This conclusion was strongly supported through the thematic analysis as well.²²² Empirically, the majority of interviewees²²³ reported that they had taken to the streets and public squares of Egypt protesting against both Mursī and the Brothers. When asked about key factors that were driving them towards collective participation in the massive demonstrations back then, the interviewees introduced a diverse array of reasons. While some participants (e.g., Gamal and Salwa) tapped in the deteriorating socioeconomic situation in Egypt at the time, others (e.g., Samy and Peter) focused on the fact that neither Mursī nor the MB as a whole was deemed politically competent to proceed in office.

In addition to the economic and political factors, the most emphasized reason that was motivating the interviewees towards collective mobilization revolved around insecure religious identity, however. To elaborate, Peter for instance pointed out that “*I*

²²¹ As illustrated in chapter 2, consecutive informal pacts have always been established between leaderships of the Coptic Orthodox Church and Egypt's successive incumbents since Nasser.

²²² As far as I know new nationally representative surveys addressing the June 30 events have yet to be made available.

²²³ Eight of interviewees participated actively in the protests, whereas the other three stated that they had been forced not to participate. This was either due to the shift-type of work to which they were committed (as Gamal, for instance, has explained), or due to the general panic they generate while being among a large crowd regardless of its type (according to Lydia and Maha, for instance). However, the three of them were supportive of the military's intervention decision helped eventually in toppling the MB rule.

participated in the June 30 protests from the first hour...since we Copts in particular had nothing to lose...it was evident that the MB was heading towards recreation of the Islamic caliphate...if this happened we Copts would've witnessed a new Era of Martyrs ...and we would've been forced to choose among the following three options: converting to Islam; paying Jizya; being dismissed out of country.” In her turn, Mona indicated that *“I participated in June 30 demonstration from the first moment...this is due to the fact that throughout Mursī’s year in office Copts’ general position was deteriorating...in addition, the Muslim Brothers do not recognize that we Copts exist in the first place.”* By the same token, Ramy commented that: *“I participated in the June 30 uprisings because I did not want the MB gang to continue to rule the country... really I felt at the time that it was not only the case that Coptic identity was under existential threat but also the wider Egyptian identity...it was so clear that the MB’s prime goal was to reestablish the Islamic caliphate at the expense of Egypt’s interests...let alone the interests of marginalized group such as Copts.”*

Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative indicators outlined throughout this chapter have strongly supported the main premise provided. Specifically, perceived identity threat was deemed the key explanatory factor by which Christians’ collective mobilization witnessed in the June 30 protests can be understood. That is, the results emphasized the crucial role played by identity politics in motivating collective action of Copts. As Bert Klandermans has put it, “identity politics makes collective identities salient, contributes to their politicization and radicalization, and triggers political

protest.”²²⁴ As for the current work, it has been evident that “identity politics” has helped politicize Christians’ communal identities. This was mainly due to the fact they were being ruled for the first time in their modern history by a purely “Islamist” rule (i.e., the Muslim Brotherhood). The association between religious identity and collective action of Copts was mediated by certain mechanisms. While some of these dynamics were occurring at the individual level (i.e., lack of both personal security and social equality), others were happening at the group level (i.e., collective identification and group consciousness) as the current chapter has indicated.

²²⁴ Bert Klandermans, “Identity Politics and Politicized Identities: Identity Processes and the Dynamics of Protest,” *political psychology* 35, no.1, (2014): 1.

CONCLUSION

Religious Identity and Dynamics of Resistance in Times of Transition

Identity as a Form of Resistance

According to Bert Klandermans, “politics is about distribution of goods and bads in society.”²²⁵ A profound examination of the socio-political and religious grievances (i.e., “the bads”) perceived by Egyptians due to the 2011 revolution and the subsequent Muslim Brotherhood’s ascendance to power reveals that they were not distributed equally among Muslims and Copts. To elaborate, it has been evident throughout this thesis that Egypt’s Christian citizens considered the Muslim Brotherhood’s rule as a genuine threat to their collective identity compared to Muslim citizens. Furthermore, Copts felt at that time that they were being “relatively deprived” of fundamental religious as well as sociopolitical rights. Moreover, feelings of insecurity experienced by the Coptic community either at personal or collective level reached a climax due to the rise of sectarian violence targeting Copts and their religious buildings during the Islamist reign.

While processes of social exclusion/inclusion in Egypt are primarily established on religious identities during normal times as Elizabeth Iskander has argued,²²⁶ patterns of exclusion/inclusion were further accelerated since the 2011 revolution culminating during the Brotherhood’s rule. As illustrated earlier in this work (chapter 2), the Muslim Brothers came to Egypt’s power with a full-blown conceptualization regarding the state and the role of the *sharī‘a* in society. Regarding the former, Muslim Brotherhood theorists have advocated for non-nation state models, such as the Islamic

²²⁵ Klandermans, “Identity Politics,” 1.

²²⁶ Iskander, *Sectarian Conflict*, 120.

Caliphate/*Umma*, rather than nation-state entities distinguishing the modern era. In other words, Islamists have revolved around religious faith rather than political borders and geographical boundaries in theorizing the state as a political body. Concerning the *sharī'a*, it has been elaborated that the establishment of an Islamic state and society based entirely on *sharī'at* Allah has been the primary goal not only for the Brothers but for all fellow Islamist movements.

The Islamists' entrenchment with such type of thinking, through which the whole society would be Islamized, has sustained fears and uncertainties among members of the Christian community in particular. This is simply due to the fact that calling for the restoration of the Islamic caliphate on the one side, and the enforcement of *sharī'a* on the other, means nothing but worsening the already deteriorated sociopolitical positions of Copts. Thus, the rise of Islamists to power yielded corresponding patterns of religious attachments among ordinary Copts as previously outlined (chapter 2). Understandably, identity politics was hence deemed the main leverage utilized by ordinary Christians in resisting what was perceived a "hostile" political regime (i.e., the MB rule) back then.

While examining the influence of identity on motivating collective activism, Bert Klandermans emphasized two main aspects constructing identity: a "we" and a "they." The author moved on pointing out that "we" is "a definition of the group or collective treated unjustly,"²²⁷ whereas "they" is "a definition of some institution or authority that is responsible for the injustice."²²⁸ The findings in this work have supported this type of

²²⁷ Bert Klandermans, "How Group Identification Helps to Overcome the Dilemma of Collective Action," *American Behavioral Scientist* 45, no. 5 (2002): 888.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

reasoning. More specifically, conservative theorizations that had been advocated by the Brothers against Christians in addition to the increasing sectarian actions targeting Copts once they assumed power have produced a “we” versus a “they” feeling²²⁹ among Copts (see chapter 4). These “affective” social categorizations generated certain “behavioral” consequences reflected in growing involvements in June 30 uprisings among Christians, which in turn supports the social identity tradition (review Theoretical Framework, chapter 1).

In fact, feelings of injustice was not the sole factor that helped sustain a “we” versus “they” thinking as suggested by Klandermans, when it comes to analyzing general positions of Copts under the MB rule. In other words, perceived injustice and considering the MB rule as being incompetent were complementing each other, accelerating social classification processes among the Coptic community. Jack Goldstone was crucial in pointing out that “[t]he joint need to manage state tasks and cultural standing can be summed up in two words: effectiveness and justice.”²³⁰ Goldstone moved on elaborating that rulers may be forgiven if perceived by citizens as unjust but efficient or as incompetent but just, whereas they will not be tolerated if deemed both unjust and incompetent.²³¹ To be sure, the relationship between Copts and the Brothers provides a clear example in support of Goldstone’s hypothesis. Broadly, ordinary Copts considered

²²⁹ While “we” in Copts’ collective mind refers to Egypt’s Christian community members, “they” generally points out to Islamists and in some cases to Egypt’s Muslims when Copts are attacked by Muslim citizens.

²³⁰ Goldstone, “Towards a Fourth Generation,” 148.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

the MB rule as being both incompetent and unjust. Specifically, the quantitative and qualitative findings have indicated that Copts lacked feelings of equal citizenship and personal security due to these types of policies as well as strategies adopted by the MB. In addition, they perceived Mursī's government as inefficient economically as well as politically (see chapters 3 and 4). As a result, ordinary Copts reorganized themselves around the church's leadership and the religious group to which they belonged in pursuit of justice and efficiency they lacked under the MB reign.

Revolving around one's own group assists in the construction of what Goldstone labeled "protest identities" among the entire group's members, which is basically reinforced through three main resources according to the author:

First, the group helps to justify and validate the individual's grievances and anger against the status quo. Second, the group...gives a sense of empowerment, autonomy and efficacy to its members...Third, the state itself may create or reinforce a sense of oppositional identity by labeling a group as its enemies or by acting against the group, thus demonstrating that the group is now outside the protection and justice of the state.²³²

Applying this type of reasoning was proven correct in the current project. Specifically, the first resource was manifested in that church going empowered Copts with essential institutional context needed to share perceived or real grievances and worries with the in-group members (organizational effects). As for the second resource, the interviewees pointed out that while in church they were strongly encouraged to participate in politics

²³² Ibid., 154.

either by church leaderships or other fellow Copts (attitudinal resources). Concerning the roles played by Mursī's regime itself in sustaining protest identities among Christians, the interviewees emphasized that Islamists in general have always considered Christians as being infidels and/or enemies. Thus, they felt that they were not given equal rights to that of Muslim citizens based on religious claims advocated by the Muslim Brotherhood's theorists even before they seized actual power. Relatedly, the participants felt that they were outside the protection of the Islamist state. This was manifested, for example, in the informal committees in which religious grievances of Copts were resolved by local agents rather than by the enforcement of state laws. This phenomenon was established during the SCAF transition and furthered during the MB rule as the thematic analysis revealed (chapter 4).

Identity and Strategies for Survival

The previous discussion supports the social identity and collective mobilization traditions, which have emphasized the fact that identities are social constructions. That is, they are constructed and reconstructed by several forces, including cultural discourses, social conflicts, and shifts in power relations of key social forces and groups in society.²³³ Accordingly, it should not come as a surprise that a "threatened Coptic identity" was produced because of the growing fears resulting from the rise of Islamists to power as this work has elaborated. In addition, these frightened identities were ultimately reconstructed yielding "protest identities" among Copts as outlined above. Drawing on

²³³ Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Peter Robinson, ed., *Social Groups & Identities* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1996); Goldstone, "Towards a Fourth Generation"; Klandermans, Group Identification; Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*.

the process-based nature of identity, this section emphasizes two main identity-related survival strategies which were utilized by Copts during the Islamist's reign: social mobility and social change.

Social Mobility

According to the social identity tradition, individuals whose own groups are socially deemed in a lower status tend to leave or detach themselves from perceived disadvantage groups, moving upward towards more valued groups.²³⁴ Understandably, this psychological mechanism, which occurs mainly on the individual level, is expected to accelerate during times of social unrest. Based on the results of the current work, Egypt's Christian citizens have historically considered themselves as belonging to a less desirable social group due to their religious affiliation. Relatedly, deep-rooted feelings of inferiority shared among Copts have flourished during the rule of Islamists as the thematic analysis has revealed (chapter 4). Two main plausible dimensions measuring whether or not ordinary Copts embarked on an individual mobility strategy during the MB rule were examined: converting to Islam and migration.

Qualitatively, the findings have shown that converting to Islam was never thought of among interviewees as being an instrument for managing growing religious fears and subordination perceived during the MB rule. However, the results pointed out that most of them thought about fleeing the country back then. As for conversion, Mona for example stated that *"I can accept the idea that someone chooses to convert to Islam as long as he/she is totally convinced...but I can never agree with those who change their*

²³⁴ Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," 43.

religion out of fears whatsoever...although I was extremely frightened during the Islamist rule I never thought of conversion.” Following, Maha was assertive regarding this issue saying that “If I was to choose between being killed by a terrorist for example or converting to Islam, I would favor death over life.” By the same token, Salwa pointed out that “I do not think that a Copt converted to Islam after the Islamists took power out of religious fears...however if this happened, let them enjoy...for myself, I never thought about changing my religion before or after the rise of Islamists to Egypt’s power.”

Regarding emigration, most of the participants either thought of leaving the country or applied already for emigration due to the wave of Islamization following the 2011 revolution. For instance, Lydia said that *“during Mursī’s tenure I was deeply depressed since my family and I were forced to think about emigration leaving everything here in Egypt...by the way, my family and I had already applied for emigration... personally speaking, I was torn at that time between staying and suffering more, or emigrating whenever our application would be accepted.”* Although emigration did not have the potential to resolve historical collective grievances shared among Copts, it was deemed a plausible individual solution. Elaborating on this point, Peter explained that *“in times where you find churches are burned down and several Coptic families are forced to leave their villages due to sectarian violence, one has nothing to do except thinking about emigration... and this what exactly happened to me...although I was aware that emigration would not resolve prolonged Coptic demands and grievances by any means, it was at least considered an appropriate option for individual Copts.”* When asked about Copts who had already emigrated during the MB rule, Samya for instance stated that *“Copts who got the chance and migrated during Mursī’s presidency are so*

lucky...personally speaking I thought of leaving the country at the time since I had nothing to lose...for me, the matter was so clear... we Copts had no longer place in the country while the MB was in office...I wished I had the chance to emigrate like these lucky people who already emigrated.”

Social change

Contrary to social mobility, social change is a collective strategy through which members of a certain group tend to act collectively changing the entire social structure threatening interests of the whole group. The findings revealed that although both social mobility and social change were employed by ordinary Copts as means for survival during the MB era, the latter was considered a more effective means than the former. Social change was noticeably recognized in the June 30 protests where large numbers of Christians participated actively in the demonstrations, calling for eliminating what they perceived a real threat to the Coptic community as a whole (i.e., the MB rule). Mona, for instance, pointed out that *“I think that resisting growing patterns of persecution we experienced during the MB era on the collective level was much better than embarking on individual solutions such as fleeing the country...I know that the former is risky and more difficult than the latter, but it is more effective in sustaining communal interests and social positions of Copts in general.”* Agreeing, Heba stated that *“I don’t blame those who already emigrated or thought about it...I myself kept begging my father to fill the emigration form...but since we had to stay I felt that the last resort for the Coptic community was to sign off the Tamaroud Movement’s petition and participate in the June 30 events to get rid of the MB regime...in fact, I discovered later that the outcome*

resulting from employing such communal behavior was much better than individual solutions.”

It is worth mentioning here that the interviewees were aware that embarking on “street politics”, participating collectively in the protests calling for ousting Mursī’s regime, would ultimately invite the military to Egypt’s public affairs once again. To be sure, all of the interviewees indicated that they had supported the SCAF against Mursī’s regime regardless of the negative consequences of taking such position on the democratization process. Peter made this point clear stating that *“we participated in the protests against the MB and we Copts were convinced at the time that these demonstrations would lead to the return of the SCAF to politics...straightforwardly, I prefer to be ruled by military than by Islamists...I know that military rule meant that everything would be put under the army’s control...and individuals’ basic freedoms would be undermined like what had been the case since the 1950s...however, the Islamist rule is much worse than the military’s ... how could someone dare to ask Christians to live and enjoy in an Islamic caliphate for example?! ...how could we accept to be ruled by a group of people telling their opponents the following: ‘if you guys do not like us or do not accept our thoughts as they are you can leave the country and live abroad?’”* For her turn, Mona explained why she supported the military’s intervention in politics during the MB rule arguing that *“I definitely was so happy that the military decided to intervene in politics toppling Mursī’s government...this does not mean that I’m pro military rule all along...not at all, I’m just comparing between military rule and Islamist one... for me the former is better than the latter...at least the SCAF would not use religious claims while dealing with us like what Islamists have always done.”* Adding another reason, Samy

indicated that *“we Copts wanted to get rid of the MB regime even if the military would rule us again... as a matter of fact, the military would at least protect us from any external threats...in fact, I feel that the main goal of the Islamist rule has been to humiliate us using religious claims.”*

It is crucial before finishing this thesis to reemphasize the fact that sociopolitical and religious grievances of Copts have been present not only under the Islamists’ reign but also across Egypt’s consecutive regimes since the 1950s until the current incumbent. As Jason Brownlee has put it, *“Copts remain one of Egyptian society’s most vulnerable communities.”*²³⁵ This conclusion has been supported through the narratives provided by the interviewees. To give just a few examples, Peter indicated how his life has changed upside down due to his name which prevented him from achieving his dream to become a policeman. He elaborated that *“we Copts have encountered all sorts of discrimination in this country regardless of the regime...may God forgive my father who had given me this name: Peter...I remember that black day during Mubarak’s regime when I stood in front of the committee choosing among nominee students to join the Police Academy...once I told them my name one of the committee members asked me ‘why did you come here Peter in the first place?’, referring to my Coptic identity...a few days later I was informed that my application was refused...believe me or not, I have started to hate my name since then.”*

Elaborating on the growing desires for emigration that have been adopted by Copts across different regimes, Yasser indicated that *“I have been thinking about emigration since Mubarak’s regime until nowadays...I have filled several emigration*

²³⁵ Brownlee, “Violence against Copts,” 4.

forms but the chance has not come yet...I have never felt I'm secured in this country regardless of names of presidents or their backgrounds.” For her turn, Mona highlighted these profound feelings of inferiority Copts have had to experience even under el-Sisi’s regime saying that, *“a couple of months ago it happened that I was sitting in a bus and noticed that a man with a long beard kept starring at the Cross tattoo on my wrist and out of the blue he spat on my arm and went as if he did nothing...I was extremely shocked and did not dare to do anything except crying...although I was the one whose right was violated I was so scared whereas the offender was so relieved and went away confidently...these feelings of inferiority due to the fact that I’m just a Copt was so painful and unforgettable.”* Bearing the previous examples in mind, feelings of religious insecurity shared among the Coptic community reached a peak during the Islamists’ reign as the results have revealed, however.

In conclusion, this thesis has been about the roles played by perceived identity threats in motivating collective action of Copts that was noticeably noticed in June 30 protests. In addition, it has explored the mechanisms by which perceived threats were transformed into real action. Taking other relevant economic and political issues into account, this project has argued that religious threats were considered the main factor triggering Copts’ collective activism against Mursī’s regime. Utilizing the social identity theory and a complementary method constituting of both quantitative and qualitative indicators, findings of this work were in supportive of study’s main argument.

This thesis contributes to literature on political transition in that it analyzes sociopolitical behavior of religious minorities (i.e., Copts) in times of change, emphasizing the influence of psycho-religious factors on inciting collective action among

marginalized religious groups. In the *Logic of Collective Action*, Mancur Olson argued that members of a certain group “will *not* [Italics in original] act to advance their common or group objectives unless there is coercion to force them to do so, or unless some separate incentive, distinct from the achievement of the common or group interest, is offered to the members of the group individually.”²³⁶ The results of this project have supported this logic. As for Olson’s first condition, it can be argued that ordinary Copts were “coerced” to act collectively against MB’s Islamist rule which was posing a fundamental threat either to the religious faith or the religious group to which they attach. Regarding the second constraint, it seemed that regaining the status quo that non-Islamist presidents have usually offered Copts was deemed the main “incentive” motivated individual Copts toward collective mobilization.

In order to understand why religion-inspired factors hold such as direct influence on people’s perceptions and behavior either those taken at the individual or group levels, it is crucial to recognize what distinguishes religious beliefs from other philosophies or dogmas. “The major characteristic of religious beliefs,” Clifford Geertz explains, “as opposed to other sorts of beliefs...is that they are regarded as being not conclusions from experience...but as being prior to it.”²³⁷ That is, “[t]hey are a light cast upon human life from somewhere outside it,”²³⁸ as the author furthered. In fact, the current work has provided empirical evidences supporting Olson’s and Geertz’s arguments, since the

²³⁶ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), 2.

²³⁷ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 98.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

results have emphasized the influential role religious affiliation played in shaping Copts' communal behavior during the Muslim Brotherhood's era.

Although this thesis has achieved its primary goals, there were some unavoidable limitations and shortcomings. First, due to the lack of nationally representative surveys that have been conducted on Egypt's Copt in particular, I had to rely on the AB datasets where the sample size of Copts in the two waves under study was small.²³⁹ Thus, the statistical procedures that have been performed using the Coptic samples only cannot be generalized. However, the results in which varying responses of Muslims and Copts are compared can be generalized. This is due to that percentages of Cops who participated in the two waves (5.8% and 5.7% in wave II and wave III, respectively) arguably represent their distributions in society. According to the latest official census conducted in 1986, Copts constitutes 6.2% of the Egyptian population.²⁴⁰

Second, the qualitative analysis in this work is based on narratives collected only from Orthodox Copts (8 interviewees) and Protestants (3 interviewees).²⁴¹ Other Christian denominations such as the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic were not represented, however. Despite the fact that the Orthodox Coptic Church is deemed the

²³⁹ Copts who participated in wave II (i.e., during SCAF's transition) reached 71 out of 1219 (5.8% of the whole sample). In wave III (i.e., during Mursī's tenure), 69 of the 1196 interviewees were Copts (5.7% of the entire sample).

²⁴⁰ Mark Purcell, "A Place for the Copts: Imagined Territory and Spatial Conflict in Egypt," *Cultural Geographies* 5, no. 4 (1998): 448.

²⁴¹ Bearing in mind the differences exist between the two religious denominations, Copts and Christians have been used interchangeably throughout this study.

oldest among other churches in Egypt²⁴² and that Copts constitute the overwhelming majority of Egypt's Christians,²⁴³ adherents of other Christian sects should have been involved. This would have enlarged the current study's scope addressing all Christian denominations living in Egypt, which in turn would have enhanced the likelihood of study's generalizability.

Finally, this thesis suggests two main topics for further scrutiny in future research. First, this work has primarily addressed the causes and dynamics that incited collective mobilization among *ordinary* Copts during the MB rule. However, it is of crucial importance that upcoming studies examine corresponding causes and mechanisms leading to the formation of Coptic *activists* and Coptic *social movements* at that time. Relatedly, examining when and why these activists and/or social movements are either mobilized or radicalized would definitely add a lot to our understanding of the outcomes resulting from democratization and regime change. Second, the current work examined the association between perceived religious threats and collective action of Copts (i.e., participation in June 30 demonstrations) utilizing thematic analysis as a primary qualitative method, and other relevant quantitative indicators available.

Nonetheless, future research can further elaborate the findings of this thesis by examining this relationship employing primary or secondary surveys that are exclusively designed to collect relevant data on the June 30 uprisings from Egypt's Christian citizens

²⁴² Jill Kamil, *Christianity in the Land of the Pharaohs: The Coptic Orthodox Church* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002), 1.

²⁴³ Iskander, *Sectarian Conflict*, 12.

only. This would generate more robust results on the associations and casual mechanisms proposed between religious identity and collective mobilization, i.e., between religion and politics in times of political transformation especially among religious minorities.

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