Islamic – Secular Hybrid and the Egyptian State

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Abstract: *Using religion as an essential tool of political control is the major trends adopted by governing systems in Muslim states. Both Islamic and secular formal discourses aim at "the nationalization of religion" to dominate societies. The Egyptian state symbolizes a hybrid model in which secular and Islamic tenets coexist in a unique formula, claiming to represent a moderation version of the two, and intending a full control over the society. It will reveal the hybrid nature of the Egyptian state that is shaped by an Islamic – secular nexus, creating a complex blend core for the state identity. It is important to study type and aspects of the relation between state, secularism and religion in Egypt. To accomplish this target, the research will be divided into five main parts: 1) a revealing framework of Islamic – secular hybrid: 2) religion, and secularism in the Muslim World; the game of control; 3) Egyptian state and religion: historical pattern of evolution; 4) Egyptian state as an Islamic - secular actor; 5) Egyptian state and non –state religious actors.*
Key Words: *Islam; Secularism; Egypt; Arab Spring*

Religion is a major determinant variable in shaping: the state

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nature, the state – society relations and the public sphere features in the Muslim World. On the one hand, different types of relation between religion and state persist to reveal the diversity in contexts and perceptions. On the other hand, the forces that promote religious reference are very active and influential political actors located inside states or societies, and perform different roles: in governments or opposition.

Religion is politicized in the comprehensive meaning of politics and the inclusive sense of religion. Religious conviction share politics in affecting all human spheres: public and private in different forms and within various contexts. Crises and tensions arise from using religion as political tools. The same for the politicization of secularism that make the separation between state and religion just a political means to serve the aim of the ruler. Both Islamism and secularism was used by the state as an essential instrument of political control in Islamic world. The paper when dealing with religion and secularism does not tackle the theoretical aspect of the two concepts but their functionally in the political realm. How different political actors -mainly the political authority- are using Islamism and secularism in their approaches and policies, and how Islamic and secular views are affected the relation between the state and the society.

In the globalized era, the rigid and clear dichotomies are fading away. Analytical classification of states in Muslim World to secular or Islamic is reflecting a simplified vision incapable of reading deeply the complex reality of our post modern era, and the accelerated intersection between the profane and the sacred activated by the globalization process. Few systems can be described clearly as religious or secular one, while the majority express special combination from secular and Islamic aspects, our Egyptian case study is one of the main models in this category. The role played by the religion in legitimizing the system in that region, create this

vagueness around the nature of the systems. Comparison among Muslim countries leads to the following statement: the political dominates the religious although the later can influence the former. Using Islamism and secularism as essential tools of political control is the major trends detected in Muslim states in governing their society. Religion turns to be a significant variable to highlight for debating public policies in the Muslim world but through varied means and shapes. The different types of relations between religion and politics is directed and managed by one dominated pattern which is the political functionality of the religious and the secular through different means of direct or indirect control. The research main question is as following: How the Egyptian state is employing secularism and Islamism in a selective complementary strategy to tighten its control over the society and guarantee the survival of the governing system? Answering this question will reveal the hybrid nature of the Egyptian state that is shaped by an Islamic – secular nexus, creating a complex blend core for the state identity.

I. Islamic – Secular Hybrid: A Revealing Framework

The traditional dichotomy that had dominated the classification of governing systems in the Muslim World and divided states to Islamic and secular had to be rethought to fit with evaluated complexity of new realties shaped by modernization and globalization processes. Post Islamic and post secular statements draw a more realistic map of the complex discrepancy of dialectic relation between the religious and the secular in our globalized village.

The cultural aspect of globalization was reflected in a global debate between two groups: the first advocating the secularization of public life and the second claiming that a process of "de-privatization of religion" is happening. Secularism claims universal validity, but

religion has reemerged as significant factor in the articulation of sociopolitical realm even in the west (secularism land of birth). It is when it turns to be a sacred idea and value –like Manzoor said, that "secularism as a doctrine replaced secularism as process". Secularism as a faith in progress was challenged by the reappearance of religion in the political realm as a variable and through actors. Islamic World was majorly influenced by these contested interacted trends. Muslim circles considered this debate as one of the major repercussions of modernization in the first place and of globalization later (Manzoor, S., 1995: 556-557).

On the one hand, the Islamic paradigm does not accept the full separation between religion and politics. In correspondence, Muslim history showed the continuous interaction between the Islamic and the political. Islam is not only a worship religion but a legislative religion that deal with the daily life of Muslim in selling, buying, marriage, divorce, inheritance, crime and punishments. So when stating that Islam is a religion and state, the state here - Al Awa said - is in the sense of *Shari'a* (Islamic law). Only very few categorical texts (nass Qati i) are representing the constant, while the majority of texts are equivocal (nass Zani), the later are opened to diverse interpretations by the jurists. Here, the Islamic jurisprudence enjoys a significant influence in shaping and changing what is political, it is the domain of *Ijtihad* (jurist human reasoning). Only principal values stated in the revelation texts like justice, consulting, freedom, had to be respected as absolute in principle but relative in ways of reaching. Subsequently, "Islam is religion and state" statement means a state with an Islamic frame of reference that accepts diverse and plural opinions in the political realm (al-Ghannushi, R.). Applying *Shari'a* do not mean the foundation of a religious system. No specific political regime is determined in the principal sources of the *Shari'a* (Quran and *Sunah*). Questions like: how to choose the rulers, how to make them

accountable and to force them out, who had to form the judicial authorities, who legislate in case with no categorical text, are open to human reason seeking the public interest of Muslims. Muslim had to form their political mechanisms depending on reason through *Ijtihad*. Islam is encouraging the development of applicable political configurations away from the domination of the sacred (al-Ghannushi, R.).

On the other hand, Secularism does not present a unified theory and is challenged as a "grand theory" (Manzoor, S., 1995: 557) by gaps of implementation and variations of performance. Moreover, in the real world, the transformation of the nature of the state itself in its local and global context is particularly significant for our question here. A distinction between the ideal model and the actual states had to be present. States are not neutral with respect to religions, especially the organized faith. The idea is that treating people justly does not require separation from their religious particularities. Rather, it means taking them into consideration in an impartial manner. Many authors opt for a proposal of 'accommodation' or 'structural pluralism' of religion in the public political space –especially the democratic-. Their argument is based on two propositions: criticism of the traditional separation between the private and the public; and the idea that religious traditions can make a valuable contribution to the public sphere.   All these trends of thought are strongly critical of the liberal 'separationist' vision and offer political theories which better respond to the complex relationship between religion and society (Furseth, I., & Repstad, P., 2006: 92).[1] One of the more serious and far-reaching critiques of liberalism concerns its two main dichotomies: public versus private and secular versus religious. Liberal strategies to separate the public from the private, the political from the moral, and the secular from the religious, are described by Bader as 'unfair,

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[1] Such as Smith Steven, Perry Wolterstorff, Novak Glendon and Bader.

exclusionist, unachievable, counterproductive, or self-defeating'. These distinctions do not function in the real world. Furthermore, the pretence of neutrality and the exclusion of religion from public life ignore the valuable contribution made by religions to public affairs throughout history. In recent articles, Habermas expressed the idea that religion has the right to make it heard not only publicly but also politically. In a post-secular society three distinctive characteristics are acknowledge: 1) the context is increasingly secular, whilst at the same time there is a influential presence of religious communities, 2) the religious communities functionally reproduce desirable motivations and attitudes, and 3) a sense of mutual learning has emerged between 'religious' and 'secular' mentalities, creating a space for the "modernization of the public conscience", assuming that they share an understanding of the secularization of society as a complementary learning process (González, E., & Lozano, J., & Pérez, P., 2009), in which religion presence can be tolerated with varied degrees. Hybrid models of governance and mixed public spheres, in which the secular and the religious coexist and interact turn to be a rule and a common phenomena within the intensive inteconnectiveness in the current globalized era.

A rising trend among Western scholars advocates the compatibility between religious and secular attitudes, but within the Muslim World context, it is more accurate to mention the coexistence between the two in real world affected by globalized powers, a reality that reveal the need of an analytical approach to study this complex dynamics between Islamism and secularism. The post-secular conscience recognizes that 'the public conscience is composed of secular and religious traditions which mutually fertilize and transform one another'. Holders of religious viewpoints make the effort to translate their religious beliefs into a language which is secular, common and accessible to all. Democratic assumption accepted world

wide (even theoretically) maintains a shared human value system called a 'common denominator of values' (González, E., & Lozano, J., & Pérez, P., 2009), which is could be defended by both secular and religious discourses and approaches.

Accordingly, the Governing systems fear the Islamic movements as a possible future alternative. One of the main strategies adopted to face such a threat is to contain the Islamic movement in the course of what is so-called the partial secularism, that excludes in some measure religion from constitutions, laws and political institutions, while leaving a role for the religion in the social and personal life of the individual. In this pattern the national territorial state is protected with no war engagement with religion, like a partition of influence: the secular in politics and the Islamic in the social, the cultural and the individual. The partial secularism accepts the religion as a layer in the identity complex, and do not object the religion as a source of legislation. So religion can be kept as an influential source on the public opinion. The partial secularism can endorse and goes along with the partial Islamism as well. In this context, the Islamic frame of reference turn to be ethical frame of reference in the first place, as a source of values and ethics, in return the partial secularism will be the source of political activity base: mainly the constitution. The Islamic paradigm will be an ethical model aims at expanding the Islamic ethics in the society, in the individual life, and in the political and economic realm. The public domain will be organized ethically by the partial Islamism and legally by the partial secularism. So, the partial secularism can be integrated in Islamic project that will be in this case suitable for the model of the modern territorial national state supported by the West (Habib, R.). In this sense, the partial secularism was placed in an Islamic vision that admit a kind of distinction between the political realm that is profane and deals with reality interest, in which the reason dominates on one side, and the religious

realm that include the worship action, in which revelation dominates on the second side(al-Ghannushi, R.,2). In this context, Al Messeri had stressed before on the difference between the partial secularism which is the separation between the state and the religion and the totalitarian secularism which is the separation of human, ethical and religious values from the total human life (Al-Musayri, A.).

Making distinction between the political on one side and the social on the other side is a common hypothesis elaborated not only in the notion of partial secularism but in post Islamism evolution too, articulated by Assef Bayat. Both visions had focused on new trends of varied degree of depoliticizing Islam embraced not only by states but by militant movements and societies In the Muslim World. This prolonged process of distinction between the political and the social in relation to religion began with the states and continued with some Islamic movements and wider segments of the societies.

Islamism is constituted by political interpretations of Islam, and the now growing so-called piety movement, and it is constituted by a strongly growing tendency in society to focus on personal piety before Islam as a political alternative. Bayat discusses this connected to the developing tendency of piety that he calls a "post-Islamist piety". This active piety is thick in rituals and scriptures and thin in politics. It is marked and framed by the taste and style of the rich, in particular, youth and women (Bayat, A., 2002: 23). He compares Islamism with post-Islamist piety as a shift from a political project to one concerned primarily with "personal salvation, ethical enhancement, and self-actualization." (Bayat, A., 2007: 149). It constitutes a kind of mission or call (*da'wah*), directed to wide segments of the population. Assef Bayat argues that Egypt is showing a sign of a "post-Islamist turn" (Bayat, A., 2007: 8). He defined Post-Islamism as a wider social and political state as well as a conscious project bonding rights, faith and freedom. But rights are focused before duties, pluralism is

promoted. And historical authenticity, instead of fixed scripture is another focus with a direction towards the future. Post-Islamism emphasizes religiosity (Bayat, A., 2007: 11) but in social, cultural and personal domain. At this juncture, common shared view between post Islamic and post secular argument could be pointed. Both visions are revealing state and society orientation towards de-politicization of Islam, in the meaning of distancing Islamism from authority and political power field, whilst, accepting it in the social and cultural domain. This tendency is referring to a narrow definition of what is the political, linking it directly to formal political authority, neglecting the political aspect of other societal and culture sphere.

Secularism and religion in the Muslim world is the game of control. Both secular and Islamic approaches were adopted by states in the Muslim world to tight their control over societies. Secularism and Islamism are mixed in the ideological base of increased number of states, a selective policies of both conjectures components is usually used to secure the stability of political system, the absolute penetration to the society and the exclusion of other alternative actors.

Charles Tilly insists, like others of scholars who accept elements of secularization theory, that although secularism emerged in response to the political problems of Western Christian society, it is applicable to non-Christian societies which become modern. His assumption is that the emergence of secularism is tightly connected to the rise of the modern nation state (Asad, T., 2003: 2). In this perspective, non-Western societies modernize, they too –assumed like the West- will experience the privatization of religion. This line of argument is made by Tibi, who states that, as Muslim societies modernize, they will follow the path of privatization experienced by Western Christianity. This school agrees that modernization brings secularization, but others like Gellner argued that Islam has shown a unique ability to survive this secularist assumption. This Muslim

exceptionalism, Gellner argues, has to do with Islam's ability to take advantage of the mobilization opportunities of the modern nation-state. He argues that Muslim nations have thus been able to promote purified religion as an alternative to the idealized Western version of nationalism. Islam continues to be strongly present in the public sphere and to shape the relation between state and society. But Muslim exceptionalism must not be exaggerated for many reasons: first, religion's fate in the West is rethought and many statements of de-privatization of religion emerged. Second, Muslim exceptionalism statement ignores the continuing ability of Hindus, Buddhists, and other non-Muslims to project religious influences into the public, third Islamic nationalism coexist with strong appeal of ethnic and secular nationalisms in the Muslim world. Fourth, the unitarian view of Islam and politics that allows no differentiation of political and religious authority has been strongly contested by "liberal Muslims" who insist that there is a long precedent for a civil separation of powers in Islam (Hefner, R., 1998: 90).

In the Western enlightenment experience, the secular was perceived as emancipation from the controlling power of religion, but in Islamic World it was thought to be as controlling power over religion. The state was authoritarian in nature, and was established in different circumstance compared to the western context, The distorted establishment of the state in Muslim World, as mentioned by Seif Abdel Fatah goes hand in hand with the notion of Bertrand Badie about the two state in the West and in Islamic countries, the later had articulated the process of importing tools and institutions of the state as process of creating "the imported state". At the same time, the central territorial state is mobilizing all tools of control to nationalize the space of effectiveness in the society. Due to excessive tendency to dominate and control the society, Seif Abdel Fatah had argued the creation of what he called "God state" (*Dawla Motaaleha*) or the

alternative God (oulouheya badela) through the political authority that monopolizes the sovereignty and its use instead of the whole state (al-Fattah, S., 2005: 947).

The common supposition in Western liberal political theory is that secularism creates a neutral or objective arena--the public sphere--that allows for people to agree disagreeing about religion. The government and public sphere are supposed to be neutral toward religions and remain outside the realm of religious activity. In this conception, the secular public sphere operates on a tenet of what Charles Taylor (1988) calls ''overlapping consensus'', where people with different religious viewpoints and motives may subscribe to the same set of political principles and tensions can be treated through dialogue and compromises (Shively, K., 2008). But in the Islamic World secularism when embraced by governments that had one main target to monopolize religion as a primary step to control Muslim societies, the relation between religion and state is based on control seeking not compromised negotiating pattern. The guide here is the authoritarianism or the superficial climate of democratic transition that dominates governmental actions and strategies.

The concept of secularism, therefore, has become highly politicized in the behavior of post-colonial regimes inside the Muslim world. In regards of secular government attitudes, secularism is seen as an ideology that is capable of justifying repression. In addition, the fact that the West both proudly proclaims itself secularist and is often viewed as supporting these regimes only serves to delegitimize secularism even further (Hashemi, N., 2003: 571).

On the other hand, different types of secularization models with diverse institutional mechanisms gathered around two main visions: one aggressive stance towards religion, and second containing policies towards alternative opponents. In secular models of state, secularization is widely used as a tool to destroy the Islamic forces of

opposition internally and to address the external Western pressures as well.

Like secularism, states in Muslim world are taking advantage of Islam. At this point, religion significances are not linked only to legitimacy issue but to the stability of the political system in the first place. Stability system is synonym to the continuous survival of the governing elite that depends mainly on containing or destroying any real threats or alternatives to the current. The state is using the religion and the formal religious institutions as a political tool in justifying its decisions and policies. The religion in the Islamic countries turns to be the essential apparatus of domination in the hand of the governing elite both in the secular or Islamic states. Most of the Islamic state turn to exclude or neutralized or contain or monopolize the religion for an effective run over the political life.

A complicated intersection between the religious and the political had produced new drifts, leading to four concepts that diagnosed four main tendencies. These concepts – articulated by Seif Abdel Fatah-reflect repeated phenomena that represent the religion-politics joint in both Islamic and western worlds. In the Western world, sacratization of secularization and secularization of the religion appears as a norm. Some time secularism had transformed to be a sacred religion, in which other fundamental human right which supposes to be protected by the liberal vision of secularism in the first place, like violating the religious freedom, freedom of convictions could be debased. Additionally, secular states that tend to "sacratize" the secularization, transforming it to a sacred realm in itself, accusing the skeptics of endorsing either backwardness or terrorism or seeking to establish a religious state, can not ignore religion or religious institution. While, in the Islamic world, the politicization of religion and the religionization of politics is two main trends that are expressed through several indicators. Firstly the politicization of religion

indicates the domination of the political over the religious and the state monopolization of the faith. The state tends to nationalize the religion (al-Fattah, S., 2008: 22). The politicization of religion is widely seen process in the Islamic world based on: 1) using religious interpretations in defending its status and policies, and 2) branded accusation to its opponents. It is a pretext to eliminate all the religious trends working in the political field. The centralized state in Islamic world focuses on package of accusations targeting the Islamic movements. For example, Islamists are accused of opportunism, aiming to reach power, attempting to speak on behalf of the religion, controlling the religious activities and politicizing religion. The state organizations refuse all the time using religious slogan in the political life, which is considered a mixing between religion and politics. Next to these widely used charges, the formal discourses of the governments raise a famous argument: "religion is above politics" which is the reason behind the necessity of the separation between the religion and the politics. Politics is governed by "dirty laws", so by emphasizing on the superiority of religion, the religion must be excluded from political life. This logic extract a special concept of religion as a personal issue dealing with the relation between the individual and his god, this concept contradicts with other trends that see the religion a type of living influencing all aspects of human life's. On the other side, we could witness an institutionalize process of politicizing the religion done by the state it self, creating a status of threat Seif Abdel Fatah called:" the state nationalization of the religious sphere". Instead of applying the model of non intervention in the religious issues, the state monopolize religion as an important mean to keep the power in its hand and exercising the same accusations addressed to the Islamic movements. On the other hand, the process of "religionizing" politics represents the other side of the coin, in which the domination of the religious over the political. When

using the religion language of "halal and Haram" the forbidden and the permitted through seeking "*Fatwas*" (religious opinion) on every issues. These issues are not separated from religion but need the expert's opinion to reach the interest and the benefit. Here the religious opinion must be built on the good and the harm more than the halal and haram (al-Fattah, S., 2008: 22-23).

Representing Islam and monopolizing the legitimacy of Islamic discourse employ is done mainly through integrating religious institutions in the state apparatus. Muslim state did not experience the same concept or role of religious institutions in the West, hence were spared from the sacred - profane dichotomy. The Muslim state despite its absolute power, did not possess its autonomy or legitimacy away form the Muslim society (the *Ommah*), in which the *Olama* remained the guardian of the *shari'a* (Manzoor, 1995: 553). The Islamic history produced a duality between: the state as a body for Islam and *Shari'a* as its spirit. The state shared no power with a rival institiution, but was not the ultimate focus of the Muslim loyalty. *Ulama* with no institutions acted as a representative of the Islamic *shari'a*. Secular's attack on the Muslim world in the flame of modernization and latter with the light of globalization disturbed this delicate equilibrium between the state and the *Ulama*, calling for excessive appearance either for the state or the *ulama* (Manzoor, 1995: 555-554). On the other hand, rulers needs to balance their control over the *Ulama* by conceding their autonomy from the state, which is supposed to be the main reason of their ability to legitimize the governing systems. At the same time, the politicians could not afford unlimited freedom of the religious leaders whom might use their uncontrolled independence to challenge the state authority. So, the distinction between the state and the religious institutions must be cautiously calculated (An-Na'mi, A., 2008: 65). Other religious traditional institutions, beside the educative

one- like the endowments (*Awqaf*)[①](An-Na'mi, A., 2008: 92) had been integrated or controlled by the state as well. These institutions play a very active role in the Muslim societies, the role played by civil society organization now. The state was keen to incorporate these entities, which possess enormous renewable economic resources, and could impose challenges.

Meanwhile, the Islamist opposition possesses a considerable social base and enjoying an accepted platform especially within the context of the bad performance of the current political systems and the weakness of other secular opponents due to their fragmentation or state oppression. Next to internal reasons, external pressures coming from the west after 9/11 had played a major role in pushing the state in the Islamic world for a more aggressive role towards religious movements and to defend one formal perspective of the so called "the moderate Islam". Despite the models diversification, states in Muslim world: secular or Islamic or hybrid used religion and fears of religion to tight their controls over the societies. The state here is so strong in front of their societies while too vulnerable in front of the external forces –western powers-. The western states interference had indorsed the domination of the state over religion. Many indicators show the negative role played by the West, like influencing culture, education and religious discourse. The state turn to represent it self as the sole speakers on behalf of the "right moderate Islam", and refuse to be contested by any other actor, except the Western powers mainly US. Thus, Muslim citizens are squized between the internal and external despotic (al-Fattah, S., 2005: 950).

II. Egyptian State and Religion: A Historical Pattern of

[①] *Awquaf* (endowments of real estate holdings or other property to support mosques, colleges, and almost anything that might be of benefit to the community. The religious rational is that this public service provides the person who creates a *Waqf* with rewards and blessings in this life as well as after death.

Evolution

Historically, religion and religious institutions had played an important role in establishing state legitimacy and in affecting ruler popularity. Although religious institutions had enjoyed dominated role in some moments, Egypt did not witnessed religious government. After the establishment of the territorial nation state in Egypt, the relation between religion and state remain vague and unresolved. This vagueness was reflected in the coexistence of secular and Islamic institutions on several levels: economic, social, and political. For example, educative institutions reflected this secular – Islamic dualism. Since mid- nineteen century the Egyptian political elite had developed a secular educational system as a complement to, rather than a replacement of the religious system (Hatina, M., 2000: 36) represented by Al-Azhar, a thousand-year-old institution of Islamic learning. In 1522, the Ottoman sultan Sulyman Al Kanouny had established the post of Al- Azhar chair (Seikh Al Azhar), as a mean to represent the *Ulama* (Islamic jurists) (Eltahawy, A., 2009: November 10). Since that time, the institution of Al-Azhar symbolizes –in the eye of Egyptians majority- the opinion of *Shari'a* and is considered as the defender of the Islamic faith. Despite the state use of this religious institution in its legitimization process during royal and republican phases, no religious government was established. This institution was not allowed to exceed the limit of giving religious support to the government and its policy (Eltahawy, A., 2009: November 10). In exchange, relatively larger freedom was provided to Al – Azhar in social and cultural domains.

Since 1923 constitution, all constitutions had stated that Islam is the formal religion of the state and acknowledged freedom of belief. The constitution of 1923 had articulated full equality and freedom of religion in clauses 3 & 12. Clause 13 stated that freedom of belief for all

religions and creeds is protected "in conformity with the usages established in Egypt". And clause 149 designated Islam as the official religion of the state with no further elaboration. Despite that clause 149 appeared at the end of the text but it reflected a central position of Islam in Egypt parliamentary government before 1952 revolution. This clause was frequently used by Al Azhar in defending religion and its institutions. The Egyptian governmental branches tended to display caution and pragmatism on all issues concerning religious law, especially in 1920s and 1930s out of awareness of huge significance of Islamic roots embedded in the Egyptian society. According to clause 153 the king was invested with the authority to supervise religious institutions and appoint their administrators. In relation to this, Al Azhar had mounted a campaign to elevate the king status to Caliph (Hatina, 2000: 37). The rulers of Mohamed Ali dynasty attempted to use religion to buttress their authorities, the founder himself Mohamed Ali Pasha reach authority with the help of Ulama whom were suppressed later by him.

In relation to *Shari'a* implementation, Islamic rules were pertained in shaping public policies and respected in decision rulers. Until the founding of the civil court (Al-Ahleya) in 1883, the Islamic *Shari'a* was the common law applied in all legal relations of Egyptian Muslims, the extracted verdicts from *Shari'a* was the public source of law. When turning to the western legislations next to the traditional *Shari'a* court no obvious social or political respond was reported. In the last year of Sadat era, and to respond to Islamist challenge and to permit smoothly a constitutional amendment in which the president could be elected for unlimited number of term, the amendment of Article 2 of 1980 constitution declared the *Shari'a* as "the main source of legislation". Stating *Shari'a* in the state legal and constitutional documents could be considered as "political declaration" to the normative and intellectual values that exist in the society as values, norms, tradition and attitudes,

it is like the appreciation of the decision makers to the religion of the majority that was called since the first moment of registration and documentation in the history of the Egyptian state, especially that Islam is an inclusive faith that absorb easily the rights of other religion followers (Eltahawy, A., 2009: November 10).

The Egyptian political elite had succeeded in developing conciliated ideas about the relation between the state and relation in some historical periods, mainly during the national liberation movement during the constitution of 1923. As for the Nasser era, due to the specific political revolutionary momentum, appeasement was imposed by the state. After 1952 and the establishment of the authoritarian regime, the restriction of individual liberties was exaggerated by Nasser regime approach and affected the status of religion in the state. The government confiscated religious authority from the religious establishment by abolishing the *Shari'a* شرعية court in 1956 and transforming Al Azhar into a state university in 1961. Islam was embodied in the political scene but to play a different role, which is to mobilize religion for endorsing government legitimacy and ideology, namely pan-Arabism and Arab socialism, and to suppress its opponents, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition, Al – Azhar continued to preserve its moral authority in society. The organic unity between the state and the religion is symbolized by the appointment of sheikh al Azhar by presidential order and the renewed recognition of Islam as the official religion of the state (clause 5 of the revised constitution of 1964). The change in the Egyptian polity that Nasserism effected was only a partial shift and not comprehensive (Hatina, 2000: 50-51).

The strong Islamic layer in Egyptian identity that was increasingly activated in last three decades imposed on the state a limited Islamization process that affected at the same time the nature and degree of secularism attached to its institutions and policies. The

current religious revival has evolved from three waves of Islamic activism in Egypt, beginning in the nineteenth century. At that time, Jamal Eddin al-Afghani and his disciple, Mohammed Abdu, argued that Islam was a rational religion and should be interpreted in ways that could be applied directly to modern life. Their movement emerged in response to foreign intervention in Egypt, first through the Napoleonic invasion and later through British colonialism. Afghani and Abdu viewed the West as both a rival and a model, and offered a formula for Muslims that would incorporate some aspects of foreign culture and achievements while adjusting Islam to compete with the advances made in the non-Muslim world. A second phase of Islamic revivalism occurred in Egypt in the early part of the twentieth century with the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, it is still the Middle East's most esteemed Islamic group. Unlike the theorists of the first wave (Afghani and Abdu), al Banna aimed to apply religion to politics and popular life. The Brotherhood sought to reform Egyptian values, the economy, and the political system in order to create a Muslim society. The group was eclipsed by the Free Officers' coup in 1952, which brought Gamal Abd al-Nasser to power. Ideologically, Nasser's regime aimed to satisfy the desires and needs of society through a secular, rather than a religious approach, based on socialist principles. Nasser banned the Muslim Brotherhood and imprisoned hundreds of its members in the largest crackdown on this movement. To neutralize public criticism, he also designated members of the Ulama to endorse the policies of his government as ''Islamic Socialism''. Nasser drew a clear separation between religious and social matters, which he largely ignored, and political and economic reform, which he promoted. In 1967, the country began to question the principles upon which its national identity was based as a way to heal its wounds. In reestablishing its national collective identity, Islam surfaced, paving the way for the

third wave of Islamic activism, beginning in the 1970s, this movement had split into those who advocated the creation of an Islamic society by peaceful means, and those who believed force was the only method by which to overthrow the government and establish an Islamic state (Genevie, A., 2002: 6-7). The moderates joined the Muslim Brotherhood, which by that time had renounced violence, and focused their efforts within the universities. The radicals used excessive violent till mid-1990s, the Egyptian state had succeeded in eliminating the terrorist threat coming from radical Islamists. The main characteristic of this wave is, while failing to Islamize the state; it succeeds rather in Islamizing the society. Islam has penetrated deeply into the Egyptian social consciousness. The contemporary Islamic fervor emphasizes family values, traditional sexual mores, and cultural authenticity. This new focus in change relies neither on one man, nor one group, nor one institution. At the center of this new religious milieu, a powerful alliance of sheikhs, informal street preachers, scholars, doctors, lawyers, and women are investigating their way toward a new informal – mainly societal- Islamic order. This broad base in turn supports a potent social movement that represents an alarming challenge to the secular state. In quietist Egypt, social reform is leading toward the Islamization of society at large from bottom up (Genevie, A., 2002: 8), which gives that state no option but to build an image of the Islamic state. Pressures coming from enlarged Islamized society imposed on the state an equivalent relative Islamization, but depending on selective process that help maintaining the authoritarian regime.

If we add the evolution of Political Islam movements and its sophisticated map in Egypt, the Egyptian state faced a different type of challenge from the Islamists in post Nasser epoch. Islamic movements arouse as major opponent to the governing system in Sadat and Mubarak eras. The political Islam had turned from being a

target of persecution under Nasser to be a threat to the regime after his death, nurtured by Islamic revival in the society and prolonged developmental crisis. This confrontation is considered a political more than ideological. In this battle the state entrenched its Islamic image through: Sadat establishing of a legal committee to examine the compatibility of the Egyptian laws with *Shari'a*, the passage of a law in 1986 prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol by Egyptians, media wide coverage of religious activity, and enforcing censorship of books and plays regarded as offensive to Islam (Hatina, M., 2000: 52), Sadat had preferred to be labeled the believer president (Al Rai'se Al Mou'men), and tolerate more freedom to Islamists as a way to counterbalance leftist (mainly communist) opponents. Egyptian rulers tend, historically, to consider religion as a main base of their regime stability, by using the religious institutions and figures to legitimize the state and to contain any opposition: Islamic and secular.

III. Egyptian State as Islamic - Secular Actor

The role played by religion in legitimizing political systems in Muslim world creates vagueness around the nature of the systems as an Islamic or secular. The Egyptian state symbolizes a hybrid model in which secular and Islamic tenets coexist in a unique formula, claiming to represent a moderation version of the two, and intending a full control of the society. Religion and nationalism was mixed in Egypt and that is supported by the State. All of this has caused an Islamization of the State as well. Islamists challenge has pressed the state to appear as more openly religious and to annex itself with an explicitly religious discourse. "It helped create a kind of secularreligious state". Egyptian state, in Bayat's view, has become a model of this state (Bayat, A., 2007: 166). The State was pushed to use religious language to respond to the increased Islamized context and

to address the aims of the West by its secular tendencies. The Islamic – secular nexus is expressed in the interaction between Islamic and secular tendencies. Two faces of the Egyptian state coexist and serve its stability and legitimacy in the local and international contexts.

Securing its survival remains the top priority of the Egyptian governing regime, and it is the main criterion in deciding which face of the two: secular or Islamic will be raised in specific issue and time. Two Egyptian formal discourses are expressed: one for defending the civil state in front of Islamic opponents (like Muslim Brotherhood), and a second for defending Islamic state in front of non- Islamic or secular opponents (like El- Baradei). For example, in the case of criticizing some secular opponents like El Baradei who had criticized the second article and the tensions between Muslim and Copts, and had advocated permitting a political party for Muslim Brotherhood, the state represents itself as the saver of religion and defender of Islam defending this second article of the constitution,. The formal discourse of the state attacks the secularism of El Baradei. Here the state gets close from the claims of its Islamic opponents. At the same time of attacking the secularism of El Baradei, they attack the "religionization of politics" carried out by Muslim Brotherhood. The formal discourse contain both: attacking Muslim Brotherhood and advocating Islamic state in Egypt. Here, raising the idea of separation between the state and religion is used only to counterbalance political opposition.

a- The Egyptian state as an Islamic actor:

The observer could detect numerous aspects of state Islamization, or in a more accurate term; of building the image of the Islamized state, mainly in the form and not necessarily in the content:

- The legal aspect: The Egyptian law is based on Islamic and civil (mainly French) law. The constitution adopted in 1971 affirms that Islam is the religion of the state (Article 2). In 1980, an amendment added that the *shari"ah* is the principle source of legislation, to respond

to Islamists arguments. In 1956, four years after the revolution of the Free Officers, *shari"ah*-courts were integrated into the national court system. Hence, family law applied in national courts is Islamic, that law permits for the Egyptian Christians to apply their religious legislations, represented mainly by the Coptic Church. The Egyptian legal system is hybrid in a sense that Islamic law has kept its position within family law (Olsson, S., 2008: 98). In addition the traditional religious institutions are legally incorporated inside the state apparatus, as explained in the next part.

   - *The Institutional aspect:* The nationalization of religion is an important aspect of state control. In this context the political authority tries to keep its influence on religious institutions (*Al –Azhar*[1], *Al Awqaf and Dar Al Efta`a*[•]) to ensure its hegemony and centrality. These institutions, with different extent, are performing as integral parts of the governing system, providing the state with an important source of Islamized look. Simultaneously, the political realm dominates the religious although the latter can influence the former, paving the way for religious institutions to be among the important actors. Using religion as an essential tool of political control can turn the religious institutions to a mean of domination over society. A mutual endorsement process can be detected, leading to accept that the boundaries that define their legitimate spheres of influence have become more and more vague.   Historically, the religious institutions vary clearly in responding to state pressures. Many reactions were

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[1] In Egypt, the government is effectively required to obey Al Azhar's rulings over what books and films must be banned. It runs a university system with more than 300,000 students and an elementary-through-high school system that serves 1.5 million students. It sends hundreds of religious scholars into Africa and Asia to promote the faith, and there are more than 30,000 foreign students studying in its schools at any one time. See also: Mohamed Tantawi, 81, Top Egyptian Cleric. By: SLACKMAN, MICHAEL, El-Naggar, Mona, New York Times, 03624331, 3/11/2010.

[•] The House of Fatwa the nation's chief arbiter of Shari`a religious law.

adopted that fluctuated from seeking neutrality, or accepting subordination, or aiming independence. Incorporating Al Awqaf formally in the cabinet, as a ministry, leave a limited space only for Al-Azhar and Dar – El Efta to enjoy relative freedom under a firm political seal. Since 1989, the government gives the ministry of endowments (*awqaf)* the right to control public mosques and to take over private one as well. In addition, the government is known to sponsor training programs for preachers and to distribute guidelines for mosques preaching. Preaching is seen as a channel of communication between the State and its citizens, and therefore the State tried to influence the content of preaching and managed to spread a view of Islam that promoted obedience to state authority. Alongside, President Mubarak favors to select the head of Al-Azhar (*Sheikh Al Azhar*)   from religious figures affiliated with the governing party, he appointed Tantawi in 1996; many consider him a political choice, as he was a leading member of the religious faction of the National Democratic Party, The same happened when selecting the new Seikh in 2010 when the president had chosen Al Taeb the member in the policy committee of NDP (Olsson, S., 2008: 99-100), even though he resign shortly after his appointment.

Today, many Muslims in Egypt question the authority of "Establishment Islam", and some argue that its representatives cooperate with the state and they are appointed by it as well, they represent the so called "official Islam". In this context, several groups are struggling to reach interpretative authority; it is an important cause for the fragmentation that we can see today in Egypt and the debated role of Al Azhar for the Egyptian system. The state desires to control the interpretation of Islam and consider these institutions as the main actor in this regard. Normally "official Islam" is largely subordinated to governments by issuing *fatwas* to legitimate what ever policy. Since 1980s, governments had increasingly reliant on Al Azhar

to establish its own Islamic credentials against Islamic opposition, accordingly the Ulama ventured into the political domain with their own platform supported by the state. For example, during election time, when the government needs to guarantee a satisfactory turn out, or to face the call of boycotting, many *fatwas* about the Islamic duty of testimony (do not hide your testimony) float up. On the other hand, the personality factor of Al – Azhar leadership can not be ignored, while Tantawy was more cooperative and presented a subordinated figure to the governmental stance, the current head of the institution Al Tayeb issued more balanced discourse, sometime declaring bold statement, like "I refuse normalization with Israel", and he declared that he will not visit Jerusalem before its liberalization and that he will not meet Israelis officials unless the Palestinians obtain their legitimate rights (Alawiyah, A., 2010: July 23).

On the level of intra-state relations between al-Azhar and other pillars of the state are by no means free from conflict. The charge of censorship is formally the prerogative of the Ministry of Information. Alongside, Al-Azhar competes with the Ministry of Endowments (*Awqaf*) over the control of private mosques and the Salafiya movements. Together with, a hidden conflict about competencies exists between al-Azhar and the Ministry of Culture, over monitoring the art and culture output. The Egyptian judicial system is another arena where al-Azhar exerts substantial influence. By monitoring the application of the *Shari'a* as the source of jurisdiction in the Egyptian constitution, al-Azhar exerts – at least indirectly – considerable influence on specific court rulings (Albrecht, H., 2005: 382).

- Social and cultural aspects: On the other hand, in response to the "Islamizing" broad elements of Egyptian society, the Egyptian regime approves policies and discourses that hold close much of the conservative social agenda of the Islamists. Two important aims are achieved: first depoliticizing their agenda, and second, taking over this

agenda for its own. This move was successful not only because it benefits from the popular religiosity of Egyptian society, but also because religious– political thought in Egypt has been mired in excessive scripturalism and conservative world view (Bayat, A., 2007: 166).

The long struggle with Islamist groups adds political significance to the role of Al- Azhar, and push to an alliance with the state, in which the later accept wider social and cultural role for this religious institution. Since 1980s, al-Azhar has been directly involved in the censorship of the media, and figured as one of the leading forces of the re-Islamization of Egyptian society. Attacks on liberal intellectuals, the apostasy cases of some intellectuals, and the removal of books from shelves and articles from newspapers were either directly initiated or quietly, and sometimes openly, approved by al-Azhar (Albrecht, H., 2005: 382). The state is tolerating a relative Islamization on the social and cultural levels. For example, the ulama at al-Azhar have asserted themselves as the moral and political guardians of Egyptian society. In doing so, they have extended their authority beyond the strictly religious sphere to ban books and films that they deem offensive to Islam and the Muslim community of believers. The judicial system has also fallen under Islamic influence. In recent years, the courts have banned from cinemas films that were considered offensive to Islam, and declaring the apostasy for Nasr Abu Zeid writings about Islam. In both cases, the judges set what secularists regard as dangerous precedents. They exceeded their civil authority by interpreting religious texts, an exercise generally reserved for Islamic scholars (Geneive, 2002: 6).

Subsequently, to look as defender of Islam, the government could tolerate the mobilization of the society for defending religious issues, especially those by external forces, for example the permission of some protests against the Danish authorities in the Danish cartoons crisis,

which is not the case for internal issues or other external problem related to Israeli aggression.

Islamization of the society put pressure on the state to appear Islamized, however in practice; the form was more addressed than the content. For this reason, the state found no contradiction with *Salafism*, on the contrary giving this trend more freedom will help in keeping a passive political society and active mosques society. Especially that, the conservative piety movement is controlled by the state through varied tools: mosques are nationalized and preaching controlled. Some popular preachers are not allowed to preach freely and have been moved to less popular areas or send outside the country (like Amr Khaled), despite their depoliticized discourse. The state fragile legitimacy can not afford any popular figures or groups that could have a wide social base of support, initiated for religious reasons.

b- The Egyptian state as a secular actor:

Secularism as a model of pluralism, freedom, even humanity is presented and linked with modernity and modernization in the Western world. It turns to a sacrosanct value and a faith in progress. Manzoor had declared that secularization is more than a process in the mind, or an acceptation of the scientific view of the world, it is an institutional arrangement (Manzoor, S., 1995: 553). While western countries witnessed a process of rethinking secularization, most of the Islamic states recur to secularism in order to exclude or neutralized or contain or monopolize religion for an effective control over the political life. Next to internal reasons, external pressures coming from the west after 9/11 had played a major role in pushing the state in the Islamic world for a more containing role towards religion. The governments are expected to fight the so called Islamic extremism and to represent the so called the moderate Islam. For all of this, secular orientations was encouraged and embraced directly or indirectly. Egypt is considered a model in this regard.

Nationalism as a first basis to create the territorial nation-state in modern era is an important piece of the secular paradigm, normally the nation state is founded on ethnic and race identity. In this regard, the Egyptian state is the state of the Egyptian nation. But the religion is strongly present in the society, so the state tries to make it a part of the Egyptian identity identification. So, Islamism turns to be a component of Egyptian nationalism. While on the opposite the Islamic movements consider nationalism and patriotism a component of the Islamic belonging. The state is trying to monopolize the Islamic idea as a part of its monopolization of the representation of territorial nationalism. The state tends to encircle the Islamic movement within the territorial national frame (Habib, R., 2009: December 12), aiming to reorder layer of identity as prior step to contain the Islamic within the secular. Egyptian identity, as sharpened in formal discourses, is a national ethnic concept in the first place, in which the Islamic component is present too, but all the time subordinated to the territorial and patriotic layer, the Islamic is called, only occasionally, when needed in special time and to face certain crisis.

In Egypt, the term 'almani' was first used in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century in the sense of worldly and non-ecclesiastical. The Wafd Party in post – World War I was called secular party, meaning that it was based on social, political and national identities, with no reference to religion. Its slogan was "religion belongs to God, the homeland belongs to all". The party was not opposed to religion; it simply rejected any ecclesiastical order in Islam. Usually, the Egyptian political party system is characterized by its secular tenet, which was endorsed later by constitutionally prohibiting religious political parties.   The Egyptian state could not bear any political independent role played by religious entities, Coptic or Islamic, institutions or movements, based on the claim of their undemocratic nature, and the necessity of preserving the separation between the religious and the

civic in the public sphere (Hamzawy, A., 2005: 933).

In warning from the danger of Muslim Brotherhood and the negative repercussions of establishing a religious state, the secular nature of the Egyptian is frequently underlined in politician discourses. On the top, Mubarak had signified the disastrous outcomes of the ascendance of the Muslim Brotherhood to power, as Egypt isolation. He said that: "… We support a secular country in which citizens can enjoy civil rights." (*Egypt Must Remain A Secular Country If It Is To Survive, Says Mubarak*). The civil state is a notion widely advocated by state officials to express the secular feature of Egypt, it is proposed in the sense of rescuing the country from Islamic opponents. Here no distinction is made between radicals and moderates, as long as they are acting outside the system and criticizing the government, thus they are all considered symbols of rigid outdated thinking that could jeopardize the societal peace and national unity.

The Egyptian authority adopts a unique concept of secularism in which the state is the only actor entitled to politicize the religion. In this perspective, the state institutions attack the politicization of religion in an exclusive discourse threatening any actor to do so, and warning against any functionalism or instrumentalization of religion. While adopting the strategy of preventing others, the state continues to politicize religion by two ways: first capturing the "right religion" concept in the concept of advocating interpretations that serve and satisfy the state needs, and second capturing the application concept through monopolization policies. The Egyptian state is following two courses: negative and positive. As negative policies, in the strategy of preventing, the Egyptian authorities applied some significant procedures: prohibiting the religious parties without a clear definition of what is a religious party, manipulated the political party law (already a restrictive one) to disallow an important group like Muslim

Brotherhood from practicing any political activity. Muslim Brotherhood is known as the "Forbidden group", although it enjoys the support of important segments of the society. So politically the movement possesses legitimacy, but legally, it is deprived from legitimate status. Concerning the positive policies, the state follow a systematic politicization of religion through: 1) mobilizing and embracing secularist figures and movements at the institutional and societal levels in their attack on Islamists because they are politicizing religion or religionizing politics, while they – the secularists- ignore the state when following the same pattern. 2) The state tends to select in religion when using it as political tool. The government not only allows to itself what had been forbidden for others but insist on monopolizing the authority of interpretation of the religious text under the claim of bringing order and "preventing the process of religion politicization" (al-Fattah, S., 2005: 953). The civility of the Egyptian state remains undefined umbrella to classify what is secular. The term civil more than secular state is repeatedly utilized in referring to secularism in Egypt, as a language to avoid the sensibilities that sometimes is provoked when stressing on this problematic term, especially in the mind of laymen and some conservatism trends embraced by the state.

IV. The Egyptian State and Non –state Religious Actors

The Egyptian system is carrying out a selective strategy in dealing with religious forces in the society: political opponents, or civil society organizations, or social movements. While the state is seeking to contain or to exclude the MB, it is tending to invest some depoliticized trends in movements like the Salafi and the Sufi, and to distinguish and isolate the Coptic players from their Islamic counterparts by building a close privileged alliance with their representative: the

Coptic Church.

a- Islamic actors and containment policies:

In controlling society, the Egyptian state tends to contain different types of Islamic organizations: the religious one that is focusing on mission of spreading Islamic values and ethics (*Da'waa*) and the others aiming at more general reforms that extend to the political realm. Although the Egyptian state is providing a relatively free space of action for the *Da'waa* social groups because they do not melt with politics, but is keeping them under tight monitoring system run by security agencies. At the same, the state keeps the decision of interference present when it is required. For example, the government had intervened in 2009 to face the face veil (*Nikab*) phenomena within the process of the containment of these groups when it exceeds the limits and expands its presence in the public sphere. The state encourages the appeal of the Islamic movements as different tribes or families reflecting social diversity but not affecting the political identity of the state. Thus, a bargained conciliation process started between the state and the leaders and symbols of these groups –Salafi or Suffi and some times even Muslim Brotherhood- to pass some interests of both sides. As an example, the state encourages the Sufism presence in the religious and social realm, to get more support for the state from these movements and their members. These groups turn to be essential pillars of the social base supporting the state, or at least, to be a major advocate of passivism and political indifference. But, the state still needs to depend on other Islamic figures and the religious formal institutions to possess the Islamic legitimacy. The state can control and contain the Islamic opponents due to its monopolization of physical powers, but can not control the Islamic idea. The Islamic actors, by activating the Islamic notion in the political realm, are imposing a severe challenge to the system legitimacy. So the state had no choice but to try to contain (with different ways) or confront the

Islamic opponents especially those working in the political realm.

Tolerating Salafism could be appraised in the context of proving that the state is Islamic not a full secular entity, in addition to the hidden appreciation of these groups role in depoliticizing Islam by keeping their agenda a socio-cultural one. The government gives a space of freedom to the Salafi movements and benefit from its rigid thoughts to depoliticize the Islamic movements and Islamic principles in general in the mind of Egyptians. On the other hand, it embraces the Suffi movements, which from completely different base, are repeating the same apolitical ideas of the Salafist (despite of their rivalities). One of the major statements of salafi traditional discourse that benefit the system and serve its interests is the obedience to the government despite its oppression or corruption out of fear from Muslim divide (*fitna*). The Sufis accept the former notion but based on the passivity and spirituality of their perception. Ironically, these movements are the closest to the marginalized sectors in the society than Muslim Brotherhood that are closer to middle classes. For the previous reason, Sufi and Salafi discourses are influential and penetrative to wider segments in the society (Azaaatrh, Y.).

While government criticizes the Brotherhood's use of ''Islam is the solution'' as its election slogan, many of the governing party's candidates used their own religious references. ''If God supports you, then nobody can beat you.'' This slogan was used in 2005 parliamentary election by Fathi Sorour, the speaker of Parliament and a leader in the governing National Democratic Party, in a country where religious political parties are illegal. Not only have government leaders, like Mr. Sorour, tried to challenge Muslim Brotherhood on its own turf -- using the language of religion -- but they also have allowed occationally the movement candidates to run for the elections as independents (Slachman, M., 2005: November 9). The state continues to control directly or indirectly the electoral results of Islamists in a

superficial climate of democratic transition, notably following calls from the western rhetoric (a superficial discourse as well). For almost three decades, Mubarak system had reached agreement with Muslim Brotherhood based on opening the arena for the religious (the call) and the social (the charity) in return of not challenging the system politically. Occasionally, the government allows limited engagement in the electoral process, by permitting the run up of some Muslim Brotherhood members in local and national elections. Due to 9/11 repercussions and internal circumstances, the state grants Muslim Brotherhood the opportunity to enter the elections of 2005 as independents. They had won 88 parliamentary seats, despite varied constrains, which was regarded as serious threat to the system stability and exposed the lack of popularity suffered by the latter. In post electoral phase, the state relation with the movement witnessed a serious crisis by the increase tendency to exclude and isolate the "restricted group" (Al Gamaa El Mahzoura)" (Al-Anani, K.). The security agencies are in escalated confrontation with group members, and the seal of its maneuver in the political game is reduced. Government ascends its restrictive actions: daily arrests, confiscated assets and properties of their economic leading companies, preventing their candidates from fair competitions in elections, sometime they were informally prevented from presenting their document for candidacy (local elections in 2009 and Consultative Council – Shoura Council- the second parliamentary council- election in 2010).

The relation between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood had been exposed to significant changes. Following the regime's anti-Islamist bent during the 1990s – primarily aimed at radical groups but also with minimum degree at the Muslim Brothers – the Brotherhood has been extremely careful not to provoke the regime. Ever since its devastating experience under Nasser's rule, the Muslim Brothers have tried to avoid being exposed to harsh repression. They

have not confronted the regime openly but instead followed a more discrete strategy of infiltrating political institutions over which the regime had lost control, at least temporarily. Examples here are the Brothers' successful engagement in student unions and the professional syndicates. The Brothers have also taken control over tens of thousands of private mosques and substituted statist roles in providing social security and welfare, thereby strengthening their public support, particularly among lower social strata (Albrecht, H., 2005: 386). In last decade –the beginning of the twentieth first century-, the state start a rehabilitation process of major radical groups members within a period of truce that make of the Muslim Brotherhood the main Islamic major challenge. The state maintains its containment policy but with referring more than before to security and restrictive policies.

The State tolerates only limited freedom under designed seal for containment and enclose, and as a consequence, it is the state that abandon its reconciliations with Islamic movements and not vice versa. The nation state does not trust these movements. Hence, although sometimes disturbed, the political exclusion of Islamic movements as a systematic prolonged strategy adopted by the state is a normal expected outcome. The period of alliance or truce turned to confrontation in the political realm and containment in the social realm. This could be accepted as a common pattern applied in front of all Islamic groups: the passives and the insurgents (Habib, R., 2009: December 12).

On the side of Islamic movement's performance in Egypt, it is important to note that next to the state suppression they did so little to accommodate with the authority restrictions, stick to the close definition of politics that link it to power and political authority, while they could benefit from the relatively free space of action offered in the social and cultural realm. In this context, Salafi and Sufi group

enlarge their work, but with no political background, at the same time that the Muslim Brotherhood is exhausted from the oscillated but sever confrontation with the state. Bayat argued that the Muslim Brotherhood, while experimenting with some post-Islamist notions of democracy and tolerance, has not discarded its old vocabularies of implementing *Shari'a* and "Islam is the solution."(Bayat, A., 2007: 166). The moderate Islamic groups need to review their strategy and tools of actions moving more towards indirect long term approach that target the society first, to activate peacefully its political effectiveness, not to alienate the streets from its political rights.

  b- Coptic actors and toleration policies:

Islam acknowledges the rights of Christian and Jews, named ''people of the book'' as protected people, or *dhimmis*, building a whole system of values respecting and tolerating their convictions and their legislations. But increased trend among Christians perceived this approach as a historic repression pattern, and their status as 'protected people' is limiting their options and turns them to subordinate religious group. This interpretation of this form of acceptance was institutionalized during the Ottoman period through the *millet system*. This system could be considered as an early corporatist form of government that gave way in later times to a secularist approach –as argued by Rowe, leading to the popular conjoining of religious identity with political organization. The Ottoman rule adopted a new form of integration in which religion, like ethnicity, define identity. In modern republican systems, it has encouraged the development of parallel institutions and regulations for religious minorities and they can retain a measure of internal autonomy. This republican model that deals with minority religious groups on the basis of their identity, he called a neo-millet system. In Middle Eastern states, it tends to admit the ancient and traditional churches as official representatives of Christians. Neo-millet

partnerships with the state are mutually reinforced; Churches provide support to the state while the later grant respect and legitimacy to the first (Rowe, P., 2007: 331).

In Egypt, the Coptic Orthodox Church is dating back to the beginning of Christianity. Through Egyptian history, periods of religious revivalism have had an impact in producing a more active Coptic Church. The historical pattern of Coptic agitation in the ancient and modem periods followed elite accommodation centering upon the patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, known as the pope (Rowe, P., 2007: 333).

The weakness of the Coptic Church was underscored by a decline in the quality of church leadership and clash between the clergy and the *maglis al-milli* (the civil arm of the church). This weakness was accompanied by the growth of a grass-roots movement that reinvigorated the church in the 1940s and 1950s. This led to the ascension of an active leadership in the Coptic Orthodox Church in the person of Patriarch Kyrillos IV and his successor, the current Patriarch Shenouda III. By the 1970s, the Coptic Orthodox Church had regained its prominence among parishioners. It was the defender of Coptic rights and acting against the Islamist direction of the Sadat regime. During Mubarak, period the Coptic patriarch was released from internal exile and moved to resume his duties and marginalize his rivals. The Coptic revival that energized the Coptic Church also renewed the expansion of activity in Christian Groups and the State in Mubarak's Egypt parallel to the church, and among the various non-Orthodox churches (Rowe, P., 2009: 113).

Based on the traditional dominance of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the regime typically followed the pattern laid down since Ottoman rule of engaging with the Christian population through their own communal organizations. The historic pattern of the late Ottoman period, known as the millet system, thus gave way to a neo-millet

system in which the church operated as the main filter and representative for the interests of individual Christians. The church became the official organ dealing directly with the state in matters thought to be of particular importance to the Copts. State bureaucracy or system institutions did not continue to be the significant Coptic political actors, but the church, which has arrogated to itself the exclusive right to represent Coptic claims before the state. Under the rules of family status law, that gives the Coptic the right to apply their own Christian *Shari'a*, the church continued with its role in regulating private life. The church hierarchs invested a close working relationship with the regime even as they occasionally spoke out boldly in favor of Coptic rights. The model of church–state relations all the way through Mubarak's era has thus combined a neo-millet partnership between the church and the state with a pluralist vision represented by independent Coptic initiatives. The relatively tolerant attitude –compared with the formal stance towards Muslim civil society organizations- that was expressed by the regime has enabled the growth of Coptic organizations (Rowe, P., 2009: 116).

As for the representation of Copts inside the political system, historically the religion dissimilarity was not impediment in front of the political recruitment in the Egyptian elite. Under the Khedive Ismail, Copts became an important part of the early nationalist movement and the backbone of the civil service. In the early 1900s, Copts assumed high level offices, like the appointment of Boutros Ghali as prime minister in 1908, and his subsequent assassination (for political reasons) in 1910. Copts have often had an important role in the elite politics of the state (Rowe, P., 2007: 342). Now, Coptic membership in the cabinet and the parliament are the entire time granted by the political leadership, lately Coptic governorates begin to appear as well.

Reforming the legal frame of organizing Church building and

recuperation is a common debated issue between the Copts and the Egyptian state. The *Humayun* Ottoman reforms -followed the official exemption of Copts from taxes of nou-Muslim (*jizya*) in 1855- are still the legal documents influencing this issue. Under Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak, the restrictions on church building and the complex procedures maintained. In addition, there is a wide perception that the authorities tend to favor Protestant and Catholic requests for permits over those of the Coptic Orthodox Church—a perception born out in relative numbers of permits given to the various sects. But, as attempt to ameliorate the situation, the Egyptian government has gradually hand over official powers for church refurbishment and building permits to the governorates. Devolution of control to the governorates goes against the general centralizing tendencies indicated over the last thirty years (Rowe, P., 2007: 342-343). This evolution is a sign of the state facilitator stance in regards of Coptic demands.

The international factor has an increased influence on the state – Coptic relations. The political impact of a diasporic global community of Christians affected the interactions between the church and the state, and makes it more complicated. Foreign role encompass always doubtful value to the Copts, who have often suffered from suspicions that they are using the external and they are empowered by the West. Due to globalization impact and tense religious international context in post 9/11, the Coptic immigrant community in the west has made it more difficult for any Egyptian regime to attack the Coptic Church without repercussions, especially that churches are affected by the worldwide growth of the evangelical and Pentecostal movements (Rowe, P., 2009: 113).

We cannot ignore the international aspect in examining the attitude of the Coptic Church towards the state. For almost a decade an empowered Coptic organizations are believed to surface: their demands are bolder and they seek a privileged treatment, sometime

goes against human rights and freedom of belief. Christians Convert to Islam turns to be a very delicate issue which recently creates many crises. The Church is inclined to adopt a very rigid stance and impose each time on the state to squash any church deserter. The case of the two priests wife's (Wafaa Kostantin and Marry Abdukkah), in 2004, is the most famous significant incident, because despite the declaration of the wife that she had voluntary turn to Islam and had left her home by her own free will, the authority handed her over to the church and no news is provided about her (and Marry) since then. Thus, the Egyptian state had acted against both Islamic and secular principles; only as a fragile state that found itself in need to satisfy the church.

The Egyptian state adopts a softer approach in dealing with the church that decides to put the maximum pressure on the state to achieve highest gain, knowing the delicate international situation and the increased internal problems. The problem rises when Egyptian Copts isolate themselves from wider national call for justice and democracy and focus only on their sectarian demands, hoping to take more advantage from Egyptian state.

V. Conclusion

Globalization process makes of the international part of the local, leading to the rise of hybrid complex examples of governances, in which a pure authentic model of system reflecting a sole cultural paradigm is rarely imagine to exist. Every state embodies a special identity, with a constant core affected by the internal dynamism and variable elements affected by the external interactions. Egypt, like other Muslim countries, is affected by globalization pressures in its multifaceted aspects: political, economic and cultural. Egyptian modern political history is crammed with important junctures that had initiated varied equilibriums between the state and religion. With

the Western rise in modernization and globalization era, secularist paradigm has interfered strongly to reshape this balance. But adding an authoritarian context complicates the relation between the state, religion and secularism, and turns the issue to be a political more than a cultural.

The main dilemma for the Egyptian state is political not ideological, controlling and not representing society in the main target. And to control, state needs to entrench both nationalization and privatization of religion. For the first, the state had to monopolize the representation of Islam in a Muslim society, whilst for the second; the state had to advocate a secular approach. The problem lays in the political survival of the political regime not in the searching for identity core of the state: between Islamism and secularism. Thus, a secular Islamic hybrid appears as the expected outcome to fulfill the regime endurance.

To evaluate the Egyptian state stance form Islamism and secularism, it is important to present the political factor as the independent variable and the cultural factor as the dependent one. In this configuration, both the Islamic and the secular were instrumental to guarantee the system control. Islamic secular hybrid provides governing regime with wide space of maneuver to face all alternative political opponents: Islamic and secular, to contain the Islamized society stress and to respond to the international –mainly Western – pressures.

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