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Islamist and Secularist Women in Egyptian Politics: Convergence or Divergence?

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**Islamist and Secularist Women in Egyptian Politics: Convergence or Divergence?
“Egyptian Women in Politics during *Ikhwan*’s Regime”**

by

Ahmed Bekhet

Under the Direction of Professor Krista Wiegand

ABSTRACT

Islam oppresses women and has many restrictions on women’s participation in politics. Women have fewer rights under the Islamic *Shari’a* (law). Is this true or not? Does Islam really exclude women from political participation? Are Islamists, who have their political agenda, supporting or oppressing women? Are Islamist feminists, who are a contemporary phenomenon especially in the Middle East, politically active or inactive? Are liberal or secular women in Egypt more democratic than Islamist women or the opposite? Such questions will be addressed in the following research with emphasis on examining the role of women in Egyptian politics during *Ikhwan*’s - Muslims Brotherhood (MB) - regime. Consequently, a comparison will be conducted between Islamist and secularist women’s role during that period to explore which group was more likely to adhere to democracy during that short period of rule. In this study, I argue that Islamist women, based on their beliefs that democracy is compatible with Islamic political laws, were more likely to accept democracy and deny any forms of aristocracy. Their political participation in what was considered as a “transition period” after January 25 Revolution until the military coup has proved their fulfillment of democracy.

INDEX WORDS: Islam; Islamism; secularism; feminism; women; political Islam; Egypt; January 25 Revolution, Muslim Brotherhood, *Ikhwan*

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“Egyptian Women in Politics during *Ikhwan*’s Regime”

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the closest lady to my heart, my mam Fatima Mohammad. To the best man I have ever met on this earth, my dad Aly Saad. I also dedicate this work to my great sister Zainab, and my lovely nieces. I dedicate this thesis to my future wife as well, who has not shown up yet. I also dedicate this piece of writing to my half-sister Mariam al-Sherief, whom I am very proud of her courage to call for democracy and freedom, which led her to be detained for a few days by the security forces in Egypt in September 2013. This work is also dedicated to free women, in Egypt and worldwide, who call for justice and freedom and struggle to achieve them. To all women, in Egypt and in the U.S., who inspired me to conduct this research, to all women who pushed me and helped me to continue and complete this work, I am very thankful for you all. Special thanks go to Dr. Krista Wiegand, my thesis advisor, for her great advice, her patience and passion with me during my pursuing of this work. I am also grateful to Dr. Michelle Haberland and Dr. Jacek Lubecki for their fruitful guidance to accomplish my research. Other thanks go to those who assisted me in conducting my research.

Acknowledgements

Many motives pushed me to research this topic about the participation of Islamist women in Egyptian politics. First, when I came to the United States about two years ago, I found many American women asking me about the women's position in my country. I could understand from their questions that they have misconceptions about Muslim and Arab women. Most of the women with whom I conversed about women's positions in Arab or Islamic countries believed that women in these cultures are dominated and oppressed by men. Moreover, they thought that women in Arabic and Islamic cultures have no rights to be represented or to participate in politics in their countries; they always referred to women's status in Saudi Arabia as a general case for all Muslim and Arab women. Thus, in order to clear the ambiguity and reveal the truth about the status of Muslim women in Islam and in the Arab countries, I have found that the role of women in the Egyptian politics is a good example to prove that Muslim women are supporting democracy and advocating women's rights that are guaranteed for them by Islamic law.

Through my observations to roles played by Egyptian women after the January 25 revolution, I have noticed that many women have sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom of the nation. Therefore, I have conducted this research in order to explore and explain the critical roles played by women in Egypt, which effected political decision making in many certain times in contemporary politics.

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1- Introduction

After the January 25th Revolution, which took place in Egypt in 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took over the power of the state for almost a year and a half. During the military rule over the Egypt, the country was moving very slowly towards a new era of democracy. While many Egyptians who hoped for change after toppling Mubarak's government were pushing the military hard to hand power to a civil elected government, Islamists came to power through elections with a majority in the parliament.

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, a U.S.-educated Islamist, was the first elected president in the long history of the nation. Morsi served only one year in the presidential office, from 30 June 2012 until 3 July 2013, when he was coercively ousted by military forces after mass protests that demanded his resignation and called for early presidential elections. During his short period of time in power, Morsi was accused of oppressing women's and Christians' rights in Egypt. On the contrary, Morsi was the first Egyptian president to appoint women and Christians to his presidential team.¹ Pakinam El Sharkawy, a female political science professor at Cairo University, was Morsi's presidential advisor on political affairs. Samir Marcus, a Christian thinker and writer, was also appointed by Morsi as his advisor for the democratic transition.

President Morsi appointed two other women to his 17 member consulting team, which differs from the cabinet, in addition to four other assistants that he had already chosen. El Sharkawy and Marcus were members of the presidential advisory team. Morsi, unlike the dictator Mubarak, appointed advisors and consultants to advise him on political, economic and social affairs. He chose all of them from diverse social, political and religious backgrounds to

¹ CNN Wire Staff "Egypt's New President to Pick Woman, Christian VPs," *CNN*, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/26/world/meast/egypt-politics/index.html>.

assert to the Egyptian people that the participants in the new government represent all sectors of the country.²

The two women that Morsi chose for his consulting team were Sakina Fouad and Omaima Kamel. Fouad, a famous Egyptian novelist and journalist, was one of the co-founding members of the liberal Democratic Front Party. Kamel was a member of the Constituent Assembly, which was responsible for creating the constitution of Egypt in 2012. Although Kamel and Fouad have different ideologies regarding their political views, Kamel supporting Islamism, and Foud supporting liberalism, both women were chosen by president Morsi to be on his consulting team.³

While President Mubarak adopted secular views for his government and restricted Islamists from participation in politics, President Morsi, who came from an Islamist background, appointed secularists, liberals, leftists and Christians in various political positions in the state. Although Islamists came to power with overwhelming majority votes, Morsi did not monopolize the power for himself, and his party; however, he was accused by the secular opposition of being a new dictator to the country, once he appointed some Islamists in political positions. Morsi and his government might have committed some political mistakes, but did not oppress any of their opposition, or take over the power. They have always practiced and adhered to democracy.

Islamist women in Egypt are more likely to be democratic than to be liberal. They also have more potential female leaders than secularists. This study will demonstrate how Islam does not prevent women from participating in social and political life. Islamist women are not oppressed by their men as might be commonly misunderstood, especially in the West. Islamist

² Al Arabiya with AFP, "Egypt's President Appoints Four Aides, 17 Advisers Including Christians, Women," accessed March 16, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/08/27/234564.html>.

³ "Ea'lan Al-Fariq Al-Rea'asi Lmorsi" (Morsi's Presidential Team Declaration), AlJazeera, Arabic, August, 27, 2012, accessed December 13, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/cf9f5842-94f5-46f2-b1ff-0214b4cbd1e0>.

women in Egypt have been found as active as liberal women in social and political life, and in many situations, they have acted more effectively in politics than liberals. Furthermore, Islamists have followed the democratic process through what was considered as a “transition period” in the modern history of the country, particularly after January 25 Revolution.

Islamists, especially Muslims Brotherhood, won the majority of votes in the six rounds of elections which took place after the January 25th Revolution until the Military coup on July 3rd. These elections ran over the parliament and presidency seats, and the constitution referendum. Islamist women have played a pivotal role in voting and recruiting votes for Islamic candidates to come to power. Furthermore, they supported President Morsi, who came from an Islamic background, to win the highest political position in the country. Morsi was the head of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the political wing of the Islamist conservative group Muslims Brotherhood (MB) or *Jamaat el-Ikhwān el-Muslmoon*, as it is called in Arabic, before he became the first democratically elected president of Egypt. Muslim Brotherhood is publically referred to as Ikhwan group.

Islamist women have been found very functional in recruiting votes for Islamic candidates; however, they did not only support the Islamist president, but also supported other Islamist and non- Islamist conservative candidates, both males and females, to win in the parliamentary elections.⁴ Islamist women sought official positions before and during Muslims Brotherhood, *Ikwan's* regime, especially in the parliament. Islamist women were found actively performing in various aspects of life, such as academia, media, social, economic and political organizations. When it comes to election, Islamist women were found very active in recruiting

⁴ Lisa1 Blaydes 2 and Sainaz El3 Tarouty 4, “Women’s Electoral Participation in Egypt: The Implications of Gender for Voter Recruitment and Mobilization,” *Middle East Journal* 63, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 378.

people to vote for conservative candidates. Moreover, they have been recruiting and encouraging people to protest against corruption and injustice, and call the authorities to act democratically.⁵

Islamist women, like Islamist men, were banned from taking any leading position in any of the state's institutions, such as media and other political institutions. However, when the New Islamic media channels were opened during *Ikhwan's* regime, such as “*Misr 25*,” many Islamist women could find a breath to express themselves and to practice some of their favorite work that they have been deprived from for decades by the authoritarian regimes. Islamist women have been found holding positions on these channels as reporters, journalists, and presenters, as well as many other positions.⁶

All pro-Morsi channels were cut off after the military coup by the security forces, and Islamist women were banned again and could no longer appear on any channels any more. Moreover, they were arrested, insulted, abused, tortured, injured, and sometimes killed while they protested peacefully against the military coup.⁷ Through my observation, participation in some events, data collections, photos and videos that I have collected before and after the military coup, many Islamist women were found passively and actively condemning the military coup and calling for democracy and the legitimacy of the elected president and the elected parliaments.

On June 30, 2013, millions of anti-Morsi protestors took to the streets to protest against him and his government, and they called for early presidential elections. This protest was mainly organized by the *Tamarud* movement, which means in Arabic (rebellion). On the other side,

⁵ Julie Pruzan-Jørgensen, “Islamic women’s activism in the Arab world: Potentials and challenges for external actors,” 2012, 34–60.

⁶ Sarah A. Topol, “Egypt’s Brotherhood TV,” *BusinessWeek: Magazine*, January 19, 2012, <http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/egypts-brotherhood-tv-01192012.html>.

⁷ “In Egypt, an Unhappy Medium | Al Jazeera America,” accessed December 16, 2013, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/10/7/in-egypt-an-unhappymedium.html>.

millions of people supported president Morsi, rallied to the streets to declare their support to Morsi. At that time, Egypt was polarized between Islamists who were the main supporters for president Morsi, and his opponents who included people from the former regime, leftists, liberals, and secularists. On July 3 2013, General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, the head of the Armed Forces, announced the deposing of president Morsi, the suspension of the constitution, the dissolving of the parliament, and the appointment of the Chief of Justice, Adly Mansour as the interim president of Egypt, who would oversee a technocratic government until parliamentary and presidential elections were held. As a result of the coup, the country was polarized, Morsi's supporters, including men and women, denounced the military coup, held daily rallies in the streets, and demanded the reinstatement of Morsi and the elected parliament, while the military patrons demanded combating the Islamist regime.⁸

After the military coup, all television channels considered sympathetic to President Morsi were shut down.⁹ Since the ousting of the President by the military, Morsi was kept under arrest at an undisclosed location for four months until the security forces set a trial for him on November 3. Morsi, who appeared in court wearing his suit, which is unusual for prisoners, denied his trial, considered this trial as illegitimate, condemned the military coup, and shouted to the jury declaring that he is the legitimate president. Moreover, since the military coup, thousands of Morsi's supporters were killed, injured, and detained by the security forces, including men, women, and even young children.¹⁰

⁸ Leila Fadel, "Egypt's Polarization Descends Into Personal Relationships," *NPR.org*, accessed March 16, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=201553199>.

⁹ "In Egypt, an Unhappy Medium | Al Jazeera America."

¹⁰ Charlene Gubash, Alastair Jamieson, and N. B. C. News, "Egypt's Ousted President Morsi to Trial Judge: 'Tell Me Who You Are!,'" *NBC News*, accessed March 16, 2014, http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2014/01/28/22477576-egypts-ousted-president-morsi-to-trial-judge-tell-me-who-you-are.

Egyptian women have been found throughout the history of the nation playing very critical roles in the Egyptian politics to support freedom and democracy, especially whenever there is a political crisis. Islamist women were found more active than liberals in political life in Egypt, especially when Islamists came to power. Islamist women were no longer banned from participation in politics after toppling Mubarak from power. They have felt that they could act more freely and without any threat to their lives. However, their happiness about getting their freedom did not continue for more than a year, since they were even more oppressed and abused by the military coup authorities worse than what Mubarak did against them.¹¹

Women in Islamic and Arab countries are not oppressed by their religion, as might be a common misconception in the West. Many Muslim women have been found very supportive and active in all aspects of life since the emergence of Islam until the present day. Muslim women are not only active in Islamic countries, but also in the West. For example, in the U.S., we can find many Muslim female leaders such as Dalia Mogahed and Tayyibah Taylor, both prominent activists in social and political life in the U.S. Mogahed is the President and CEO of Mogahed Consulting firm, specializing in Muslim societies and the Middle East. Mogahed was also the Executive Director of the Gallup Centre for Muslim Studies (2006 – 2012), as well as being selected as an advisor by U.S. President Barack Obama for the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, which forms partnerships between government and non-profit organizations.¹² Taylor is the editor-in-chief of the only lifestyle magazine in America for Muslim women “Azizah.”¹³

¹¹ “Women Against the Coup Condemns Mansoura Clashes,” *Daily News Egypt*, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/07/21/women-against-the-coup-condemns-mansoura-clashes/>.

¹² “Dalia Mogahed,” accessed December 13, 2013, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dalia-mogahed/>.

¹³ “Tayyibah Taylor,” accessed December 13, 2013, <http://www.shesource.org/experts/profile/tayyibah-taylor>.

Women's effective roles in Egyptian politics were marginalized by many researchers and research institutions; however, this research will shed light on examining the prominent role of women in Egyptian politics during the *Ikwan's* regime, and will offer an overview of the history of feminism and the women's movement in the state, to give the reader a full picture of the evolution of women's status and feminism in Egypt. In addition, the study will indicate the convergence and divergence points among Islamist and secularist women through chronological events. Thus, this research begins with the preliminaries, followed by a brief overview of women's status in Egypt from the French occupation in 1798 until the ousting of from authority, and then examines women's role in Egypt during *Ikwan's* regime until they were toppled from power. The study will have more focus on the role played by women during *Ikwan's* period, and will compare the performance of two groups of women, Islamists and seculars, during this period of time, which continued for only one year.

2- Preliminaries

Before examining the previous research on feminism in Egypt and the emergence of Islamic feminism in the country, some terms that are very relevant to the study should be explained. The term Islamism in many previous research studies has referred to Fundamentalism, Extremism, or Jihadism. Islamism, as discussed in this research, has no relation to Fundamentalism, Extremism, or Jihadism; it refers to moderate Islamism. Although there is a controversial debate over prevalent linking of Fundamentalism, Extremism, and Jihadism to Islam or other religions such as Christianity and Judaism, I will not go into a deep discussion over this debate in order to keep my focus on the goal of examining moderate Islamism as compared with Secularism.¹⁴

I assume that using these terms should not be linked to Islam because Islam is not related to any of them. Islam is the religion and the faith that can be taken as a cultural way of life. Thus, using terms such as Fundamentalism, Extremism, and Jihadism and connecting them with Islam is unfair because Islam has no relation to any of these terms. Islam is a moderate religion that can be applied in social and political life. Such terms should apply to the people who are practicing or following such ideologies, not to the religion itself which is much larger¹⁵. Moreover, using such terms with Islam creates an enemy image, especially in the West, where we find such terms are more commonly used in a negative way than in the East. Islamism that will be discussed in

¹⁴ Bassam Tibi, "Political Islam as a Forum of Religious Fundamentalism and the Religionisation of Politics: Islamism and the Quest for a Remaking of the World," *Totalitarian Movements & Political Religions* 10, no. 2 (June 2009): 97–120, doi:10.1080/14690760903141898.

¹⁵ Bassam Tibi, "The Politicization of Islam into Islamism in the Context of Global Religious Fundamentalism," *Journal of the Middle East & Africa* 1, no. 2 (July 2010): 153–70, doi:10.1080/21520844.2010.517512.

this study is very close to what Tibi refers to: “the open-minded interpretation of Islam that is willing to support a civil Islam.”¹⁶

2.1 Islam vs. Islamism

Islam is different from Islamism. Tibi explains the difference between Islam and Islamism by mentioning that, for ordinary Muslims, Islam is the faith that can be taken as a cultural way of life not as a framework for their political system. According to Badran, Islamism is the political mobilization of Islam.¹⁷ However, Tibi debates that Islamists consider Islam as a system for the state based on the *Shari‘a* law.¹⁸ Utvic argues that the historical emergence of Islamism in the Middle East occurs in the early twentieth century. Islamism is concerned with modernizing the Islamic states. Modern Islamism emerged in Egypt with the creation of the Society of Muslim Brotherhood (SMB) which was founded by Hassan al-Banna. Since the creation of the MB group in 1928, Islamism has spread in Middle Eastern societies and has undergone rapid change towards modernizing the Islamic states under the Islamic law.¹⁹ By looking at another view of Islamism, Halverson and Way debate whether Islamism as a political ideology differs from Islam, the religion; however, they prefer to define Islamism as a “modern political movement that promotes individualization, social mobilization, and the centrality of the

¹⁶ Azza M. Karam, *Women, Islamisms and the State: Contemporary Feminisms in Egypt* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 16-17.

¹⁷ Badran, Margot. "Understanding Islam, Islamism, and Islamic Feminism." *Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 1 (2001): 47-52.

¹⁸ Tibi, "The Politicization of Islam into Islamism in the Context of Global Religious Fundamentalism."

¹⁹ John L. Esposito and François Burgat, *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in the Middle East and Europe* (Rutgers University Press, 2003), 43–44.

nation-state.”²⁰ Utvic might have a different view of the state within Islamism; he argues that the state within Islamism is a “major agent in creating the true Islamic society.”²¹

According to Pipes, “Islamism has three main features: A devotion to the sacred law, a rejection of Western influences, and the transformation of faith into Ideology.”²² Pipes claims that Islam is the religion that is embraced by more than one billion people all over the world, but Islamism is a political ideology that is based on the Islamic *Shari‘a*, or the Islamic law. Islamists call for applying *Shari‘a* law which is “the set of traditional laws that define a Muslim’s obligations to God and his fellow human beings.”²³ *Shari‘a* law is not old texts that are only valid for people who lived in the ancient times; on the contrary, *Shari‘a* laws are valid for every place and time, and even relevant to the events in our contemporary world. *Shari‘a* is based on two theological foundations, *Quran* and *Sunna*, the former is the Prophet’s sayings and actions.

There is another definition for Islamism conducted by Badran. She debates that “Islamism” as a term should not be narrowed down to what is called extremist Islam or even be connected to what is claimed as fundamental Islam. Badran argues that Islamism should have an extended definition, which is “a broad project of the political mobilization of Islam.”²⁴ Although there might be some fundamentalist Muslim individuals or groups, in Egypt, I prefer that the reference to such fundamentalist people not be linked only to Islam because fundamentalism or extremism can be found in any other religion, not just only in Islam.

²⁰ Jeffrey R. Halverson and Amy K. Way, “Islamist Feminism: Constructing Gender Identities in Postcolonial Muslim Societies,” *Politics & Religion* 4, no. 3 (December 2011): 503.

²¹ Esposito and Burgat, *Modernizing Islam*.

²² Utvic, Bjorn Olav. 2003. “The Modernizing Force of Islamism” (p.43). In Daniel Pipes. “Islam and Islamism.” *Policy* 18, no. 1 (March 2002): 22.

²³ Jan Michiel Otto, *Sharia Incorporated: A Comparative Overview of the Legal Systems of Twelve Muslim Countries in Past and Present* (Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

²⁴ Margot Badran. “Understanding Islam, Islamism, and Islamic Feminism.” *Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 1 (2001): 47-52.

Islamism is not synonymous with fundamentalism for many reasons; Fundamentalism can be found in all religions including Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Second, Fundamentalism in all religions shares some characteristics, such as rejecting modernism and secularism.²⁵ Islam does not totally reject nor accept modernism or secularism. Islamism sometimes aligns with and sometimes disagrees with secularism. The convergence and the divergence between Islamism and secularism will be discussed in this research with a concentration on examining feminism in both groups.

2.2 Islamist, Muslim, and Secular Feminists

Islamist feminists are part of a political movement in the Islamic world and are actively trying to gain support for themselves and power in their states. Muslim feminists are active women who use Islamic sources such as *Quran* and *Sunna*. The main goal of the Muslim feminists is to show that equality between men and women is valid in Islam. One of the most controversial issues between Muslim feminists and Islamist feminists is the veil. For Muslim feminists, the issue of wearing a veil should be based on self-choice and conviction. On the other hand, the veil for Islamist feminists is a religious obligation, which is unarguable. The veil for Islamist women is very essential for expressing the authenticity of their identity. It is very hard to find an Islamist woman with no veil.²⁶ Although Islamist and Muslim feminists disagree on some issues such as the veil, they agree on many other issues to agree on. Islamist and Muslim feminists agree that women can be involved in social and political leadership tasks in a society in which such tasks were previously thought of as only male dominated tasks. Both groups of

²⁵ Clinton Stockwell, "Fundamentalisms and the Shalom of God: An Analysis of Contemporary Expressions of Fundamentalism in Christianity, Judaism and Islam," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 36, no. 3 (July 2012): 266–79.

²⁶ Karam, *Women, Islamisms and the State*, 9–14.

feminists' views are based on studying and analyzing the traditional Islamic texts in order to validate and justify their arguments.

By contrast, secular feminists in Egypt might be Muslims or non-Muslims, but they prefer to be called secular or liberal feminists, not Muslim or Christian feminists. The ideology of secular feminists rests on grounding themselves outside of any relation to religion. They more likely prefer to be addressed within the international human rights discourse. Secular feminists proclaim that they should have an open channel of dialogue with their counterparts from the Islamist feminist groups, but, in reality, the secular feminists are in total disagreement with the Islamist feminists' points of views, especially in politics. Azza Karam refers to the relationships between secularist and Islamist feminists as "political enemies." Secular feminists' relation with Muslim feminists is much better, although they might have differences on some issues such as the amendment of Personal Status Law (PSL).²⁷

²⁷ Ibid., 13–14.

3- Historical overview: Feminism in Egypt

3.1 From the French Occupation until Colonialism (1798-1882)

Feminism appeared in Egypt as a result of social and economic reforms which occurred in the past. Some scholars debate that Feminism started to emerge in Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Others argue that the changes of women's status in Egypt started to appear during the Napoleonic occupation of Egypt (1798-1801). Al-Jambarti, a historian of Egypt in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in his famous work on the French expedition to Egypt, indicates that the French had influenced the Egyptian social relations, especially the female sector, during the Napoleonic occupation. In 1800, Egyptian women were affected by French women and began to imitate their dressing and adornment. Large numbers of Egyptian women started to unveil themselves; moreover, they associated freely with French men. Al-Jabarti asserted that there was a revolution in the Egyptian society against conservative traditions, especially among Egyptian women.²⁸

The social revolution in terms of unveiling and gender mixing was approved among particular classes, especially those who were close to the French. Egyptian women's rebellion during the French occupation was not only against their men, but also against established Islamic customs and traditions which were commonly practiced, at that time, within the Egyptian society. When the French army had to leave Egypt after three years after their arrival, many Egyptian women were still influenced by the French traditions and wanted to be free. The status of women in the conservative society has witnessed a tremendous change after their first contact with the Western women and men.²⁹ Later on, at the end of the eighteenth century, the theme of

²⁸ Ghada Hashem Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 1-3.

²⁹ Ibid.

women's liberation in Egypt was heard more frequently. Women not only wanted freedom of dress, but they also sought the right of education.

Muhammad Ali, who was an Albanian commander in the Ottoman army, and later became *Wāli*, and self-declared Khedive of Egypt and Sudan, ruled Egypt between 1805-1848. Muhammad Ali's goal in Egypt was to establish a powerful, European-style state. To do that, Ali conducted various reforms in social, economic, and military systems of Egypt.³⁰ Muhammad Ali gave much attention to education and encouraged women's education by appointing a Council for Public Education that was concerned with creating a state system for girls' education, which failed to be implemented. Although Ali could not create the system of education for girls, he encouraged his daughters to learn and was pleased when he heard that his eldest daughter was devoted to reading. At that time, when only elite women could receive a little education, Ali's daughters were educated.³¹

In 1864, Khedive Ismail established the first school for girls.³² Later on, in 1873, during Ismail rule, one of his wives who was concerned with girls' education opened a school for girls, which served the daughters of the elites and their white slaves. The earliest Egyptian feminists' works came into sight between 1860s-1870s in form of published writings such as essays, poetry, and tales. In 1869 and 1875 Riffa al-Tahtawi and Ali Pasha Mubarak published books advocating women's education, and validating the women's rights of education from the *Quran* and *Sunna*.³³

³⁰ Afaf Lutfi Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

³¹ Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2009), 19.

³² Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt*, 4.

³³ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, 19.

3.2 From Colonialism to Nasser era (1882- 1956)

Women's works and activities were more widely expressed and expanded through women's journalism and salon debates in the 1890s. Women's awareness at that time was not based on religion; rather it was based on the constraints that women faced under patriarchal society. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish women were alike, facing the same hardships under patriarchal culture society.³⁴ Through women's education, they could have deeper knowledge and understanding of their religion. Thus, some women from upper and middle classes started to contest their seclusion in the Islamic Shari'a. Zainab al-Fawwaz protested in al-Nil Magazine in 1892. She argued that she never saw any of the Islamic laws prohibiting women from involvement in men's occupation. In the same year, Hind Naufal, a young woman, founded the journal al-Fatah, where women could start to publish in the news, and to spread more publically their budding feminism.³⁵

Since women became more educated, many women started to produce their own feminist writings. Murqus Fhamy, a young Coptic lawyer, criticized the women's oppression by their men in his work *al-Mar'a fi al-sharq* (The Women in the East) in 1894. Qassim Amin, a Muslim judge, published his famous book, *Tahrir al-mar'a* (The Liberation of Women) in 1899. Amin, in his book, attacked the hijab and the practice of women's seclusion. He also debated that Egyptian women were not advanced because they were prevented from getting their legitimate rights accorded by the Islamic *Shari'a*.³⁶

There were many calls for women's liberation and education led by Egyptian reformists and modernists in the nineteenth century. Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801- 1873), the head of the first Egyptian education mission to France, and Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghani (1838-1897), the pan-

³⁴ Ibid., 18.

³⁵ Ibid., 20.

³⁶ Ibid., 20–21.

Islamic reformer, were not just supporting women's education, but also calling for women's participation in public life.³⁷ Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), who was an Islamic Jurist, religious scholar, liberal reformer, and one of the key founders of Islamic Modernism, was well known for his advocacy of women's rights. Moreover, he was also encouraging other men to advocate women's rights. Abdu was constantly attacking those who were abusing women, and arguing that mistreatment of women was against Islamic teaching. Rashid Reda (1865-1935), who was Abduh's disciple and an Islamic reformer and activist, asserted that women's participation in public affairs was an Islamic tradition.

Mostafa Kamel (1874-1908), who was a lawyer, journalist, and national activist, was the first Egyptian to address men and women during his public talks. Kamel endorsed the attendance of veiled women in his gatherings, although some of his thoughts within *al-Watani* party were resisted by many traditionalists. Kamel when he died in February 1908 was publically applauded a month later by Zainab Fawwaz, a poet and writer, on behalf of all of female supporters of his party. Muhammad Farid (1868- 1919), who was Kamel's successor, and a nationalist leader, writer, and lawyer, continued the support of women to enter the ranks of *al-Watani* party. While Farid was in a conference in Brussels in 1910, seeking support for Egypt liberation, he invited ten eminent Egyptian women to attend this event. On January 22, 1914, *al-Watani* organized a demonstration to celebrate the opening of the Legislative Assembly wherever a large number of women lauded the constitution and parliamentary life.³⁸

Although there were many calls for women's education and liberation in Egypt in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the term "feminism" had not appeared yet. The term "feminism" emerged in the early 1920s with broadening opportunities for women's education

³⁷ Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt*, p.4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-6

and consciousness about women's rights that challenged the patriarchal domination of society.³⁹ At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was more appearance and support of feminist ideas more than the use of the term itself, which was reflected in the writings of early Egyptian feminists such as Malak Hifni Nasif, known by her pen name, *Bahithat al-Badiya* (Searcher in the desert). *Bahithat al-Badiya* started to publish essays in al-Jarida, the paper of the progressive national party, al-Umma. In 1910, the party press published her essays and speeches in a book called *al-Nisa'iyyat* (which can be translated as either Women's or Feminist pieces; there is no specific terms for "feminist" or "feminism" in Arabic).⁴⁰

During this period there was another pioneer producer of feminist ideas, Nabawiyya Musa. In 1907, Musa became the first Egyptian woman to sit for the baccalaureate examination and the last until after independence from colonial authorities. Musa wrote many essays that he published in a book entitled *al-Mar'a wa al-'amal* (Woman and Work) in 1920. Nasif and Musa were from the middle class; both of them were graduated from Saniyya Teachers' School, established in 1889, and both became teachers. In 1911, Nasif or "*Bahithat al-Badiya*" her pen name, became more active in feminism when she sent demands to the Egyptian National Congress for women's education and rights to employment and to participation in congregational worship in mosques.⁴¹

Although there were many demands for women's rights and participation in public space, feminists such as *Bahithat al-Badiya* and Huda Sha'rawi opposed the unveiling of the face, in contrast with the pro-feminist men who advocated for unveiling. However, women desired to gain more rights in education and public sphere before they become unveiled as a "tactical move." On the political grounds, the nationalists of the *Umma* Party, headed by Ahmed Lutfy al-

³⁹ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, 18–19.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

Sayyid and other men from the upper class, advocated feminism, while those of the *Watani* Party, especially men from the modest middle-class, led by Mustafa Kamel, were giving less support to women's liberation, and sometimes were against it. Those who were not favoring women's emancipation claimed that women's liberation was a result of western influence that would lead to undermining Egyptian society.⁴²

Although there was compliance on some basic ideas among feminists over women's rights such as women's education, there was disagreement in other issues such as the veil and women's liberation. During the national revolution (1919-1922), feminists, nationalists, and traditionalists, men and women, were united towards one goal, the independence of Egypt. Upper-class women, middle-class and even poor women, "all left the seclusion of their harems" to demonstrate and filled streets to protest against colonial authorities. In 1920, members of the Wafdist Women's Central Committee (WWCC) created this organization as the women's section of the nationalist party, *al-Wafd*. The members of WWCC refused to be marginalized and insisted on being completely involved in decision making within the party. For example, in 1920, the women announced their objection publicly when the male nationalist leadership did not consult the WWCC on the independence ideas and plans.⁴³

Early in the epoch of 1923-1952, Badran argues that the feminist ideas and positions of progressive men and women started to diverge, though had been close during the colonial occupation and in the pre-independence nationalist movement. Meanwhile, more women's rights were gained on the ground. The constitution of 1923 declared that: "All Egyptians are equal before the law. They enjoy equally civil and political rights and equally have public

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

responsibilities without distinction of race, language and religion.” However, women still could not vote in elections since suffrage was restricted to men only according to an electoral law.⁴⁴

Women seemed disappointed by the extent of men’s support of their rights, since they could not achieve one of their basic rights: to vote in elections. At this point, women decided to fight the battle of feminism by themselves. They organized a political movement led by *Ittihad al-Nisa’I al-Masri* the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU), which was created in 1923 and led by Huda Sharawi. The first use of the term “feminism” appeared in the same year when “EFU women employed the word *feminist*, in French, the everyday language of most members. Starting from 1923, Egyptian women’s feminism explicitly announced their demands; they claimed political, economic, social, and legal rights.

However, the priority was given to education first, followed by finding work opportunities, pursued by reforms of the personal status law. In 1923-1924, some demands were granted to women such as the equal secondary school education for girls and raising the minimum age for marriage for both sexes. The first entry of women into the state university could be achieved in 1929 by support from the rector himself at that time, Ahmed Lutfy al-Sayyid. Although women could achieve other gains in the sphere of employment after they won some of their demands for education, they were drawn into employment when there was an expanding textile industry. However, women who encountered gender segregation in public space, worked closer to men in the textile factories. Despite the fact that women could gain many benefits in the education and employment spheres, there were not any reforms made for them in the personal status law or in the formal political rights.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 25.

In the 1930s, feminists and some religious officials shared common ideas related to social concerns. For example, when feminists called for the prohibition of alcohol and ending of prostitution in Egypt, which had been legalized before, they were supported by the highest religious official in the country, Shaikh al-Azhar Muhammad Abu al-Fadl, who wrote to the president of the EFU, saying: “We appreciate the value of your honorable association and its diligent efforts to spread virtue and combat vice. There are now in Egypt distinguished women whose impact on society is no less important than that of honorable men.”⁴⁶ Thus, the preceding situation demonstrates that women were supported by Islamic officials not just when they called for their rights, but also when they called for good manners and values for the society. Moreover, we can understand from this case that Islamic and secularist perspectives can share common perspectives towards reforms, and the entire society can receive the benefits.

Although there was an agreement among Egyptian feminists at the beginning of the twentieth century over the basic women’s rights such as education, work, and equality, some diverted voices, especially over the ideologies of feminism, were heard at the beginning of the 1930s. This can be clearly found in the case of Zainab al-Ghazali, a young woman who joined the EFU in 1935. Al-Gazali had an Islamic education background that she gained from her father who was a thriving cotton merchant with an *al-Azhar* education. Al-Gazali also, in her youth, joined seminars for women at *Kulliyat as-Shar‘iyya* (The Islamic law college) at *al-Azhar* University.

Later on, less than a year after Al-Gazali’s joining to the EFU, she left the organization and formed another one, the Muslim Women’s Society (MWS). When asked about the reason that made her leave the EFU, Al-Gazali said “The Egyptian Feminist Union wanted to establish the civilization of the Western woman in Egypt and the rest of the Arab and Islamic worlds.”

⁴⁶ Ibid.

When Al-Gazali quit the feminist organization, she remarked that Huda Sha‘rawi asked her not to fight the EFU, and al-Ghazali replied, “I never fought it.”

Although there was occasional cooperation between the two organizations, mainly over nationalist cases, their voices were divergent over their beliefs and agenda, and were articulated in “competing discourses.” While the EFU women found their feminist ideologies and programs compatible with Islam, the organization framework was more secular than religious. On the other side, for Al-Gazali and MWS, since Shari‘a regulates all aspects of life, feminism should be based on it. Al-Gazali believed and exalted “the absolute equality” (*musawa mutlaqa*) between men and women in Islam. She also stressed women’s liberation within the framework of Islam. Moreover, according to Badran, “The EFU championed greater access for women to public roles, while the MWS lauded women’s family duties and obligations.”⁴⁷

The EFU, as a secular Egyptian organization, included Muslim and Christian women, while the MWS, rigidly Muslim religious organization, did not involve all Egyptians. Moreover, the issue of secularism has been controversial and contentious among Islamists and secularists. Fundamentalist women called the Egyptian feminism “secular,” referring to it outside of Islamic bounds, whereas the MWS distinguished its feminism according to the Islamic principles. However, according to Badran, “the EFU feminists accepted the notion of a secular state whose legitimacy was grounded in the basic principles of Islam” while “al-Ghazali favored an Islamic state with a theocratic ruler.”⁴⁸

One of the cases that shows us the convergence among the Egyptian feminist groups was their response to the 1937 Arab revolt in Palestine. All Egyptian feminists were ready to support the calls from Palestinian women. Moreover, Arab and religious, Muslims and Christians

⁴⁷ Ibid., 26–27.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 28.

responded to Palestine and moved towards saving it. The EFU hosted the conference for the Defense of Palestine in 1938, which the state and religious authorities applauded at the same time. According to Badran, the feminist collective action in 1938 led to the first pan-Arab Feminist Conference in 1944. Hinting to the Arab unity, the conference won the adoration of the Islamic establishments and the Arab governments. Moreover, the conference resulted in many achievements for Arab feminism such as, publicizing the social agenda of Arab women, recommendations for reforming Shari‘a laws, and calling the Arab governments to employ qualified women in work positions equally as their male’s counterparts. The most prominent achievement in that conference was the creation of al-Itihad al-Nisa’i al-‘Arabi (The Arab Feminist Union) headquartered in Cairo.⁴⁹

Although the MWS was one of the first feminist organizations following the EFU, feminism in Egypt broadened and new organizations proliferated at the end of the 1930s and in the 1940s. In 1937, the EFU began its Arabic-language journal, al-Misriyya, which aimed to address many different classes of society rather than *l’Egyptienne*, which had mainly focused on the high and upper-middle classes. Feminists in Egypt escalated their demands by requesting women’s political rights, especially after the political and economic changes following World War II. In their efforts to accelerate the demands for more women’s rights, former EFU members Fatma Ni‘amat Rashid and Duriyya Shafiq founded the Hizb al-Nisa’I al-Watani (National Feminist Party, NFP) in 1944, and Ittihad Bint al-Nil (Daughter of the Nile Union, DNU) in 1948. In addition to their advocacy of political rights for women, both the NFP and DNU led various campaigns to help the poor. They also defended women’s rights to education and work and called for family law reforms. “The social projects of these two feminist organizations, unlike their political goals, could scarcely have antagonized the Muslim Brothers or the MWS.”

⁴⁹ Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt*, 17; Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, 28.

⁵⁰ DNU viewed women's political rights as the most important objective of the feminist movement in Egypt; thus, they fought for these rights on the pages of the national press.⁵¹

In the 1940s, feminist advancement in Egypt was moving towards new women's rights. Some women from the younger generation moved the issues of nation and gender in a new direction of socialism and communism. Those young feminists viewed the liberation of women as closely linked to the liberty of people; both fought against imperialism and class oppression in Egypt. Inji Aflatun, a young leader of the new leftist feminists discovered Marxism at the French Lycee in Cairo. After her graduation in 1945 from Fuad 1 University (later Cairo University), she helped in founding the Rabitat Fatayat al-Jami'a wa al-Ma'ahid (the league of University and Institutes' Young Women). Aflatun, who linked gender and class oppression and connected them to imperialist exploitation, also argued that women's liberation did not contradict Islam in some of her works.⁵²

It was not only the secular leftist groups who struggled to gain rights; but also, the Muslims Brotherhood experienced heavy challenges when the formal organization was dissolved in 1948. At the same time, Zainab al-Ghazali accepted the invitation from the founder of the Muslims Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna, to include her MWS under the umbrella of his organization, although she had refused his request a decade earlier. Therefore, MWS changed its name to the Muslim Sisters. Although Muslim Sisters have frequently opposed the leftist women, the growing nationalist determination to expel British troops from Egypt led to coalition among secular and fundamentalist feminists. Moreover, in 1952, when violence broke out in Canal Zone, women from left and right were brought together in the Lajna al-Nisa'iyya lil-Muqawama al-Sha'abiyya (Women's Committee for Popular Resistance, WCPR); Aflatun from

⁵⁰ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, 29.

⁵¹ Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt*, 17; Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, 29.

⁵² Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, 30.

the leftists and al-Ghazali from the Islamist wing were involved in this committee. Women joined men in common causes, and gained their welcome and support.⁵³

By the early 1950s, many women could access the employment life; women were found in shops, factories, and many other professions, which annoyed the patriarchal society, especially the fundamentalists, who always claimed that the best place for women was in their homes. Moreover, some fundamentalists insisted that women's entry into public life was "unnatural." They were also afraid of women's access to business could lead to women's refusal to obey their men, which was not acceptable for them according to Shari'a.

By the end of the nationalism era and before the sparking of the 1952 revolution, women could achieve very limited gains such as access to work. In addition, the most significant part was that feminists were allowed by the government to express their views in public, except if their expression was radical. When the period of nationalism ended, women were still considered unequal to men within the family according to the PSL; in addition, they still lack formal political rights.⁵⁴

3.3 From Nasser to Sadat (1956-1970)

In the era of Arabism and Socialism between 1952-1970, Badran argues that voices of both independent and Islamist feminists were almost kept silenced and suppressed. However, feminists pursued their struggle to obtain their political rights of suffrage, especially after the revolution of 1952. One year later, Duruyya Shafiq of the DNU proposed a revision of the Electoral Law and published her work *al-Kitab al-abiyad lil-huquq al-mar'a al-misriya* (The White Paper on the Rights of the Egyptian Woman). Shafiq's work was considered a

⁵³ Ibid., 30–31.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 30–32.

“compendium of pro-suffrage arguments” by seculars, Islamic scholars and Islamists. In 1956, women were granted the right to vote by the revolutionary government after feminists struggled for thirty-three years to gain it.

Paradoxically, the state that granted women the right to vote banned the feminist organization the same year when they granted them that right. Moreover, the government “suppressed the public expression of feminist views.” Meanwhile, when the voting right was granted to women, feminists moved to raise the public awareness about the women’s rights, especially among the poor women, through the formation of *al-Lajnaa al-Nisa’iyya li’l-Wa’I al-Intikhabi* (Women’s Committee for Electoral Awareness, WCEA). Furthermore, around the same time, women from different perspectives came together to establish *al-ittihad al-Nisa’I al’Qawmi* (National Feminist Union). The government blocked this project and totally shut it down in 1959. Aflatun was sent to prison in the same year, and Sahfiq was under house arrest, Nabarawi and Rashid kept silence. Meantime, the suppressing of feminists was not only against the liberals, but also involved the Islamists. Al-Ghazali, the head of the Muslim Sisters was jailed, and her group banned in 1964.

Although feminists’ voices were oppressed, feminism did not disappear; instead, they went underground. Feminist leaders from the older generations, such as Inji Aflatun and Saiza Nabarawi, were still connected behind the scenes. Due to the political situation at that time in Egypt, Nabarawi was less active locally but more active internationally through the leftist Democratic Federation of Women. Amina Sa’id, who was a former schoolgirl of Huda Sha’rawi and a member of the EFU’s youth group, was the only exception to the public suppression of feminists. However, Sa’id advocated women’s rights, consistent with Gamal Abdel-Nasser’s governmental agenda.

Despite the fact that feminists were censored during Nasser's regime, there were some improvements and socio-economic developments in the 1962 charter. For the first time, the charter challenged the patriarchal society. The charter stated: "Woman must be regarded as equal to man and must therefore shed the remaining shackles that impeded her free movement so that she might take a constructive and profound part in shaping life." Two years later, the constitution was reformed and promulgated in article 8: "The State guarantees equality of opportunity to all Egyptians." But this was translated only into free university education and assured jobs for graduates. Therefore, official opportunities for women's education and work were opened. The percentage of women's literacy was increased, and women who graduated from universities could join the workforce.

During Nasser's regime, there was a rare chance for women to enter the domain of scholarly religious discourse. 'Aisha 'Abd al-Rahman, known as *Bint al-Shati'* (daughter of the shore), was a professor of Islamic thought at Cairo University. She also wrote many articles and books, including a series about the lives of the Prophet Muhammad's wives and his female relatives and companions. Abd al-Rahman was characterized as an exemplar of the modern woman. She also was considered as neither extremist nor liberal by both groups. Moreover, the regimes of Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak acknowledged her as useful for their own political purposes. Hassan Hanafi, a founder of the Islamic left in the late 1970s, recognized her as one of the *fuqaha al-sultan* (the Sultan's men of jurisprudence).

For example, while *Bint al-Shati'* was honored by Nasser, the Islamist Zainab al-Ghazali was imprisoned in 1965 for holding the views of social justice and Islamic state. Al-Gahzali was kept in prison until Nasser's death in 1970. She was only permitted to return to the political scene under the Sadat regime beginning in 1971. Later on al-Gazali published her book *Return of*

the Pharaoh: Memoir in Nasser's Prison in which she revealed what happened to her in the prison, and even described the most terrible and inhuman torture which occurred.

Some of the other pioneer feminists in the 1960s who advocated women's rights in Egypt and developed it were Nawal al-Saadawi and Safinaz Kazim. Al-Saadawi, who graduated from medical school, focused on debating issues such as patriarchy, class, religion, and sex. She also broke the traditional customs by introducing the cases of sexual oppression of women that occurred in the daily life of the Egyptian society. Kazim, who studied journalism at Cairo University, and achieved her M.A from New York University, began to move from political left to right while she was in the United States. Kazim devoted herself to study the Islamist perspective after she was inspired by Sayyid Qutb's book, *al- 'Adala al-ijtima 'iyya fi al-islam* (Social Justice in Islam). Moreover, in 1972, she went on a pilgrimage trip; after her return, she took up the Islamic dress and dedicated herself to Islam. In 1970, she met with Zainab al-Ghazali and shared with her the view of Islam as *din wa dawla* (religion and state).⁵⁵

Although women's rights were oppressed during Nasser's regime, some rights such as access to university education, and the availability of work positions were assured to women graduates. Moreover, Talhami argues that Nasser's era witnessed the most prominent social and economic transformation of Egypt since the beginning of the twentieth century. In contrast, women did not achieve many rights, especially regarding the Shari'a reforming, and on the political level as well. Women did not gain much benefit from the social and economic mobilization during Nasser's regime, except limited political participation.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid., 32-39.

⁵⁶ Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt*, 28.

3.4 From Sadat to Mubarak

The era of Nasser was characterized by Socialism and Arabism, followed by strong tendency towards Capitalism imposed by Anwar El-Sadat, the third President of Egypt. Sadat's era was distinguished by "a fundamental shift from socialism and anti-Western imperialist rhetoric to *infitah* (open-door) capitalism and strong pro-Western rhetoric. This was accompanied by a shift from pan-Arabism to an inward focus on Egypt, which was sealed when Sadat made a separate peace with Israel in 1979 and Egypt was expelled from the Arab League."⁵⁷

The Sadat's *infitah* policy was not only at the level of the foreign policies; he also changed some national policies by opening the door for communication with Islamists and supporting feminism movements. Both Islamists and feminists found a new scope to express themselves during Sadat's regime. Moreover, the state started to accomplish new reforms for feminists and Islamists to support some of their objectives, excluding the extremist ones. Women's advocacy during Sadat was augmented; Jihan Sadat defended women's rights and the UN decade of women (1975-1985) supported women's causes which, later on, were encouraged by the state. On another side, the state could not indulge the independent feminists because they sought a kind of compromise with conservative Islamist forces.⁵⁸

For the first time in the history of Egypt, at the beginning of the period of Sadat, the state declared a constitution differentiating between women's public and private rights according to Shari'a. The new constitution of 1975 states in article 40: "Citizens are equal before the law; they are equal in public rights and duties, with no discrimination made on the bases of race, sex, language, ideology, or belief." The constitution also mentioned that: "The state guarantees a

⁵⁷ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, 40.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

balance and accord between a woman's duties towards her family on the one hand and towards her work in society and her equality with man in the political, social, and cultural spheres on the other without violating the laws of the Islamic *Shari'a*."⁵⁹ Thus, the explicit declaration of no discrimination on the basis of sex is considered as a very successful step forward for women's rights in Egypt.

Meanwhile, the role of Islamist women was expanded in the society and gained more women adherents to its side. This was evidenced by the increasing number of Egyptian women wearing the *hijab*. Islamist women were very popular; thus, they could attract many women, especially from lower and middle-class, to their ideologies. Many of the new patrons, who were women studying medicine and sciences, preferred to join the workforce after graduation. Islamist women broadly promoted *hijab* for one of their prominent ideologies. Ni'mat Sidqi, a young Islamist woman, advocated *hijab*, which is covering the head, not the face, as formerly used to be in Egypt, in her book *al-Tabarroj* (Flashy display, 1971). Her book became very popular among young Islamist women in the early 1970s. The new trend of the Islamist women pursued their calls for their ideologies, and they reached some women from the wealthier strata of the society by the mid-1980s.⁶⁰ Keriman Hamza, was the first television announcer to wear Islamic dress. She retold her conversion from liberalism to Islamism in her book *Rihlati min al-sufur hal-hijab* (My journey from unveiling to veiling). Around the same time, Amina Sa'id, from the liberal side, attacked the return of veiling (in any form) in the press, mainly in her magazine *Hawwa*. Sa'id was considered the main opponent for re-veiling till the appearance of Sana al-Masri, who attacked the practice of veiling in her book, *Khalf al-hijab* (Behind the veil, 1989).⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 41-42.

Zainab al-Ghazali, after her release from jail in 1971, returned to judicious activism and wrote her prison memoirs. Safinaz Kazem, who took up Islamic dress in 1972, became a *muslima multazima* (committed female Muslim) as she called herself; she rejected the term fundamentalism. Both women favored the notion of the Islamic state in Egypt. Furthermore, al-Ghazali and Kazem experienced the state surveillance and imprisonment. Kazim was imprisoned three times under Sadat in 1973, 1975, and 1981. Each time she was accused of being a communist, the accusation was considered “a useful way to discredit a fundamentalist leader and demoralize the movement without being seen to challenge to Islam.”⁶²

In parallel with calls for veiling women, the demands for women to join the workforce were expanded. Women wanted more security for their lives by earning their own money, rather than living under the surveillance of a patriarchal society. As a result of the women’s activism, the state accomplished a set of economic and political reforms. In 1979, the government enacted a law guaranteeing thirty seats in parliament for women, which led to an immediate increase in the number of women in the legislature. However, the most fundamental political move was the presidential decree to impose dramatic changes in the personal status laws for the first time in fifty years. Such changes eliminated men’s dominance over women. Women gained the ability to initiate divorce, and obtain protection in case of divorce. Moreover, the new laws placed controls on polygamy. The new law was highly encouraged and supported by the President’s wife; it became known as “Jihan’s law.” The new law outraged fundamentalists, and was welcomed by liberal feminists.⁶³

The year 1979 brought major changes for Egypt, locally and internationally. Egypt ratified the Camp David accord with Israel, isolated itself from the Arab world, and angered both

⁶² Ibid., 42.

⁶³ Ibid.

leftist and conservative wings. Meanwhile, the revolution in Iran, which brought Khomeini to power and declared the Islamic state, fostered fundamentalism in Egypt. After a while, Egypt entered a new period of tension that the state could not control. In the fall of 1981, many activists in the political spectrum were arrested, including feminists and Islamists. Nawal al-Saadawi and Safinaz Kazim were among those arrested. Afterward, Sadat was assassinated by a Muslim Fundamentalist; the two women were released, along with others, by the new president, Hosni Mubarak.⁶⁴

During Sadat's regime, feminism achieved great advancements regarding women's rights and organized feminists. Sadat himself gave considerable prominence to his wife's role to represent the Egyptian woman in public, which reflected many of his intentions to liberate many aspects of the Egyptian life. Sadat's efforts to liberate the country were centralized to portray Egypt as a liberal and modern state. Although Sadat and his wife supported women's rights and women's liberation, this kind of liberation could only be achieved under authoritarian means.

Although feminism, in general, during Sadat's regime, achieved many acquisitions regarding women's rights that could not be achieved before, there were many issues that were controversial between Islamists and liberals. The defenders of *Shari'a* resisted the official efforts to liberate women, which they considered as a large westernizing wave of feminism to the country. Islamists feared any kinds of assaults to the integrity of *Shari'a* by the official state.⁶⁵ Moreover, the idea of liberating women on the Western way, contradicted their view of the ideal Muslim woman. Thus, the battle between liberals and Islamists, on some issues such as the Personal Status Law, was ideological more than political.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 40–44.

⁶⁵ Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt*, 122.

3.5 From Mubarak until the Revolution (1981-2011)

The pursuit of women's rights in Egypt continued after Sadat, during his successor President Mubarak. Mubarak was the fourth President of Egypt who took office from 1981 to 2011. The early 1980s witnessed a new activism of women's movements which renewed the organization of independent feminism. Nawal al-Saadawy, who was popular at the local level and gained reputation at the international level, was active in feminist organizing and politics. A significant number of highly educated women advocated women's practice of law and medicine, teaching in universities, working in business, and engaging in media and journalism. Al-Sasadawi and some of her patrons struggled to establish the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA). In 1986, AWSA held its first conference under the banner of "unveiling the mind." The conference theme was "Challenges Facing the Arab Woman at the End of the Twentieth Century." Starting from this conference, great progress was made in women's rights, not just for Egyptian women specifically, but also for Arab women in general.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, the authors of the book *al-Huquq al-qanuniyya lil-mar'a al-'arabiyya bain al-nadhriyyat wa al-tatbiq* (The legal rights of the Egyptian woman: theory practice) established a new group to advocate Egyptian women's rights in 1988. They used their talents to advance the issue of women's rights and worked hard to remind women about their legal and constitutional rights, as well as, their rights under international treaties and conventions ratified by the Egyptian state. Moreover, the group published an open letter calling for establishing a women's platform that counteracted any violations to women's rights.⁶⁷

Feminists achieved more advancement during Mubarak's regime. The President and his wife Suzan gave more support to women's rights than Sadat and his wife Jihan. But women's

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

rights during Mubarak, as with Sadat, occurred under authoritarian means. In 1993, and in the preparation of NGO forum scheduled to take place in concert with the 1994 UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, the government appointed Aziza Husayn as the head of the National Preparatory Committee (NPC) for NGOs. Husayn seized the opportunity to mobilize active feminists and women's groups to work collectively for women's rights.

During the conference, the marriage contract proposal, which was discussed during Sadat in the PSL, was revived and adopted by the Gender Equality Committee (GEC). A media campaign was launched, and historical, religious, legal, social, and economic studies were commissioned. The committee, which positioned itself within liberal Islamic frame, presented evidence from Islamic history that women's rights, such as *Kul'* (Divorce at the instigation of wife) was proved in the Shari'a as it is mentioned in some cases that happened during the prophet Muhammad's time. Other Islamic cases were hinted in the committee meeting such as the marriage contract Sukayna bint al-Hussayn – great granddaughter of the prophet Muhammad and granddaughter of Ali Ibn Abi Talib – which stated that her husband could not bar her participating in literary gatherings and could not take another wife.⁶⁸

The ICPD program of action, signed by 179 governments, asserted many issues related to women's rights, such as gender equality, empowerment of women, and equal access to education for girls. In addition, it provided universal access to family planning, sexual and reproductive health services and reproductive rights. Moreover, the conference addressed the individual, social and economic impact of urbanization and migration, and environmental issues associated with population changes. The advent of the ICPD and the international focus on Egypt resulted

⁶⁸ Hoda Elsadda, "Women's Rights Activism in Post-Jan25 Egypt: Combating the Shadow of the First Lady Syndrome in the Arab World," *Middle East Law & Governance* 3, no. 1/2 (February 2011): 84–93, doi:10.1163/187633711X591440.

in many other advantages for women's movements such as the activism of the National Council for Women (NCW). It inspired the first lady of Egypt to become more interested in women's issues. Moreover, the NCW adopted the project for procedural changes in PSL, which included the issues of *khul'* and the new marriage contract. El-Sadda debates the controversial issues about law of *khul'*

In 2000, Law No. 1 was passed: it sought to ratify a backlog of cases by reforming procedures; granted women the right to *khul'* provided they forfeit their financial rights; facilitated access to court in the case of *'urfi* marriage customary Islamic marriage contract that is not registered with state authorities; and introduced the new marriage contract, with a list of conditions in an appendix. Further legal modifications followed in 2004 and 2005, introducing a new family court system, establishing a fund to ensure fair and prompt access to alimony and child maintenance, and giving women custody of their children until the age of 15. However, the point to remember here is that Law No. 1 of 2000 passed through parliament amidst resounding opposition, and only because of the ruling National Democratic Party towed the party line as they were instructed to agree. Despite the consciousness-raising campaign enthusiastically embraced by women activists, and despite the work that put into conceptualizing and formulating project for legal reform, the outcome was still determined by the endorsement of the First Lady as she exercised her political leverage and power.⁶⁹

El-Sadda argues that women's rights during Mubarak's regime were kept as a controversial issue which brought up "conflict many times over the representation power struggles involving cultural identity, the role of religion in the modern period, and the image of the modern state." These issues were considered as the main controversial issues among liberals and Islamists. Mubarak also considered himself as the guardian of the state modernization to confront the rising power of Islamists in Egypt and in the Arab region. In addition, Suzan

⁶⁹ Ibid., 92-93.

Mubarak was portrayed by the assistance of the Egyptian media which was controlled by the regime, as the premier champion of women's rights. Many feminist activists feared the establishments of the National Council for Women (NCW), which was created by the government, because of its competing with the existing women in organizations and its role to monopolize speaking on behalf of the Egyptian woman.

Since the emergence of the NCW, the members expanded feminism work and represented feminist issues immensely in regional and international media, forums, and conferences. Moreover, most of the women's rights activism was linked with the projects of the first lady of Egypt. El-Sadda debates that most of the activities and projects of the NCW were mainly the work of the activists, which was neither necessary supporting the government policies nor considered as the interests of the ruling elites. El-Sadda concluded that most of the reforms that were achieved during Mubarak's regime, especially the ones related to the PSL, which caused some social problems in the society, could not satisfy the women's rights of justice and equality. However, all the procedures and policies related to women's rights issues conflated with the corrupted policies of the government.

A new era of women's struggle started on January 25, 2011, when thousands of young Egyptians, men and women, marched towards *Tahrir* Square to protest against Mubarak and his regime. The essential reasons beyond marching of the young protests to the square were to express their anger against poverty, unemployment, the corruption of Mubarak and his government, who stayed in power for three decades. Protestors stayed in *Tahriri* square for 18 days until they toppled President Mubarak from office. The revolution was sparked by the young people of the middle and upper-middle-class, led by them, and supported by upper classes, the poor, workers, women, Muslims, Christians, urban and rural residents. The most significant

factor of this uprising was the unity of the people, the passion that they had with each other during these days until they deposed Mubarak. As a participant in this revolution, I can never forget the experience that I have lived in the square, and the high spirit of love and caring of each other among this diversity of the people and classes in the square.

Men and women, boys and girls, have played very important roles in those days. The gender issue was never discussed in the square; however, men had more responsibility to take care of women's safety in the square. Muslims and Christians were alike in calling for freedom and social justice. One of the best moments that I saw in the square, while Muslims were performing their Friday prayers, Christians were protecting them until they finished. Consequently, Christians performed their prayers in the square, and were protected by Muslims as well. The best chant that I loved to repeat with hundreds of thousands of diverse people in the square was "*eid wahda shabab al-meidan*" (one hand the youth of the square). We all dreamt about change, through which we could achieve our freedom, dignity, equality, and social justice.

As a participant in the early protests that toppled President Mubarak, I was impressed by the role that women played in the square; it was never less important than the one played by men, especially among the young. The role of women in the revolution was one of the main reasons that inspired me to conduct this research. Women in the square took the role of protectors, doctors, donors of food, money, and even jewelry. Women stood side by side with men, spent nights in the square to make sure that revolution will not be hijacked or stopped, they nursed the wounded, lamented the dead, chanted and danced when they achieve victory. Moreover, they cleaned the aftermath of the giant mass of demonstrations.⁷⁰ Personally, sometimes, I was helping them with cleaning the streets of the square, when there was nothing

⁷⁰ Emad El-Din Shahin, "The Egyptian Revolution: The Power of Mass Mobilization and the Spirit of Tahrir Square," *Journal of the Middle East & Africa* 3, no. 1 (January 2012): 46–69, doi:10.1080/21520844.2012.669452.

else for me to do in the protest, such as protecting the entrances of the square or distributing food to the people in need.

One of the female participants in the protest in the square, Salma al-Tarzi, a filmmaker in her early thirties, expressed her experience to Aljazeera news. Salma acknowledged that she and her female counterparts in the square decided that they would never leave the square until the main demands of protests could be achieved. Although demonstrators in the square received threats of killing many times, she asserted that they were not afraid. Salma told some parts of her experience in the square which reflect many other women who participated in the protest in the following lines:

I was one of many women, young and old, there. We were as active as the men. Some acted as nurses and looked after the wounded during the battles; others were simply helping with distributing water. But there were a great number of women that were on the front line hurling stones at the police and pro-Mubarak thugs.

The duties in the square were divided. We were very organized. Something changed in the dynamic between men and women in *Tahrir*. When the men saw that women were fighting in the front line that changed their perception of us and we were all united. We were all Egyptians now.

The fear barrier was broken for all of us. When we took part in the protests, it was just a protest for our basic human rights, but they [the regime] escalated it to a revolution. Their brutality and violence turned it into a revolution. What started as a day of rage turned into a revolution that later toppled the regime that had been in power for 30 years. They [the regime] empowered us through their violence; they made us hold on to the dream of freedom even more. We were all walking around with wounds, but we still kept going. We were even treating injured horses that they had used in their brutal attacks against us.

Before January 25 I didn't have faith that my voice could be heard. I didn't feel like I was

in control of my future. The metaphor used by Mubarak that he was our father and we were his children made us feel as though we lacked any motivation.

The revolution woke us up - a collective consciousness has been awoken.⁷¹

Although the revolution has woken up a lot of Egyptian people and broke their fear barrier of security forces, and united them to call for the basics of democracy such as freedom, dignity and social justice, their dream was not completed since they were divided on their way towards democracy, especially in the transition period. This division among the Egyptians gave a chance to the military powers, accompanied by heads from the former regime, or what is called “the deep state” –this term refers to the state’s institutions controlled by prominent figures from the former regime even after toppling Mubarak of his powers- to take over the power from the first elected president in the history of the country.

The coalition between the deep state and the military leaders used the enthusiastic young Egyptians who were anti-Islamists to protest in June 30, 2013 against the first elected president. The participants of the June 30 protest were mainly a combination of supporters of the former regime, liberals, and anti-Islamists. Moreover, persons from the police and the military joined the protest in civilian clothes, although they are not supposed to participate in any political action according the Egyptian law. The demonstrations against president Morsi on June 30th were considered one of the first steps toward killing democracy in Egypt since it was followed by a military coup on July 3rd, 2013.

The Minister of Defense General Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi led the coup by his declaration that he announced in July 3rd, which led to deposing the first democratically elected President of in

⁷¹ “Women of the Revolution,” accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/02/2011217134411934738.html>.

the history of the nation, Mohammed Morsi, suspending the constitution, and appointing the Head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, Adly Mansour, as the interim president. Moreover, al-Sisi granted Mansour the authority to issue any constitutional declarations, which referred to moving into a new era of dictatorship under a military control. Although the leaning secularists supported the military takeover and celebrated the overthrow of the elected president, many of them could not understand that they killed the freedom and democracy, which were considered by them as an essential demand for the January 25th revolution. Islamist women, along with their male counterparts, started again to struggle for democracy after the military takeover, and paid the price for that by risking their abuse, detention, and killing sometimes.

4- Literature Review:

The emergence of Islamism in the twentieth century brought a renewed ideology to the status and the role of women in Islam. Islamism proposes that Islam should not just be practiced among people, but also should be implemented by the government of the state. The Islamist activists whose main ideologies, based on Shari‘a law, rebuked any Western influence on Muslim Societies.⁷² Although the moderate Islamism movements supported women’s rights, some “fundamentalist” Islamists accused Islamic feminism of having a Western origin and participating in a conspiracy against Islam. Halverson and Way (2011) argue that such accusations can lead to sweeping away any women’s progress in social life under any fanatic Islamist regime. For example, “prior to 1996, women in Kabul, Afghanistan, made up 40 percent of all doctors, 50 percent of government workers, 70 percent of school teachers, and 60 percent of teachers, and 50 percent of students at Kabul University, but the rise of militant Taliban Islamists, who are extreme even within Islamist spectrum, eliminated women from public life and placed them under virtual house arrest.”⁷³

The Islamic religious discourse claims authoritative status by considering its finding as a transcendent source, such as the revelation from *Quran*, or the texts from *Sunna*, or the *Ijtihad* (the independent or original interpretation of problems not precisely covered by the Qurān), or *ijmā‘* (scholarly consensus) or other such sources. Thus, many religious scholars can encode human preferences with transcendent status and isolate these preferences from criticism and modification, whereas these preferences or Islamic laws are interpreted in different ways by many scholars over the history of Islamic realm. In this manner, Lincoln (2003) argues that, “the

⁷² Halverson and Way, “Islamist Feminism,” 504.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 505.

human preferences encoded with transcendent status by religious discourse can cover an entire range of social, economic, and political positions, ideas, and actions, including “proper” gender roles and social parameters.” Therefore, Lincoln (2003) contemplates that religion is a powerful means for gender ideologies, especially when it is linked with Islamism state power.⁷⁴

In accordance with the cultural diversity in the Islamic World, and throughout the Islamic history, the variation of the constructs and Islamic thought, and different interpretations of Shari‘a by early and contemporary Muslim Scholars, played an important role in defining women’s position within Islamic societies.⁷⁵ Egypt, as an Islamic country, which is characterized by moderate Islam and cultural diversity as well, has witnessed this controversial debate among Islamist and liberal feminists from the emergence of Islamism to contemporary time.

It is very important to examine the history of feminism in Egypt in this study to be able to understand the aspects of convergence and divergence between Islamist feminism and secular feminism in chronological events. Feminism and women’s rights were found interwoven with religions and politics in Egyptian history, especially in the twentieth century. Both secularists and Islamists struggled over the issue of feminism. Feminism was relatively associated with secularism; however, when Islamism appeared, the main motive for its followers was to encounter secularism. Hence, the gap over viewing Feminism was expanded between Secularists and Islamists. Secularists believed that women’s rights should be based on international law, while Islamists viewed women’s rights based on the Shari‘a law. Moreover, Islamists criticized any non-Islamic regime in the Arab and Islamic countries and blamed any failed solution in these states on the exclusion of Islam from the government system. Therefore, Islamists, who adopted

⁷⁴ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors [electronic Resource]: Thinking about Religion after September 11 / Bruce Lincoln* (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2003., 2003).

⁷⁵ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, 1992, 1.

the slogan “Islam is the solution” without providing any clear economic, political, and strategic program, desired to apply Islam in all manners of social life.⁷⁶

Regarding the state, Egypt was labeled as a secular country in the 1950s and started to form policies and practices in a secular way; thus, the government marginalized the role of religion in politics. Gamal Abdul Nasser (1952-70), who sought modernizing Egypt, gave women many rights such as the right to vote and to run for public office (1956 constitution), issued the maternity leave and child care law (Law 91, 1959) and the right to work (law, 14, 1964). These laws disturbed the Islamist bloc since it was not couched in religious terms.⁷⁷

On the other hand, secularists’ views of women’s rights issues such as equality, were confined to limited new-liberal rules identified as “gender differences” relevant to nature of the relation power between women and the state. Anwar Sadat (1970-81), during an argument in 1970 over the need for the state to protect women’s rights to political participation as individuals and groups, asserted that there is no any difference between the two genders. Since the 1981, Mubark’s regime adopted a new term close to “equality” which was “sameness,” Although the term defined equality for women as having the same rights as men, the term ignored the advantages and disadvantages of gender differences. Thus, the government, through the National Diplomatic party (NDP), did not support women having a significant role to play in political life in the state.⁷⁸ I believe the last argument was considered as a controversial issue among many scholars in the West who tried to define the difference between “equality” and “equity.”

Actually, the main controversial issues between feminism and secularism in the Arab and Islamic worlds are not just going over the difference in defining some feminist terms such as

⁷⁶ Khaled Hroub, “Islamists and Power: End of Ideology,” *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture* 18, no. 1 (March 2012): 41–44.

⁷⁷ Mervat F. Hatem, “Egyptian Discourses on Gender and Political Liberalization: Do Secularist and Islamist Views Really Differ?,” *Middle East Journal*, no. 4 (1994): 664, doi:10.2307/4328746.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

“equality” and “equity;” the debate goes over defining the term “secularism” itself within the Arab culture. The reasons for the emergence of the term “secularism” in the West are totally different from those in the East. Abd el-Baki Hermassi, who debates this issue, builds his discussion over defining the term on the basis of what he calls “de facto and de jure secularism.” Hermassi says,

Whereas in the West de jure secularism called for the formal separation of church and state, the Arab state recognized Islam as the religion of society and in this way demobilized its political use. In practice, these states marginalized the role of the mosque in politics and practices de facto secularism.⁷⁹

The controversy does not continue only between Islamist and secular feminism; it extends to the relation with Islamic feminism that interferes with and contradicts both groups’ ideologies. Thus, it is not only secular feminism that opposes Islamist feminism; it is also Islamic feminism that disagrees with some ideologies of Islamism, although they have some commonalities. Muslim feminists oppose any “extremist” Islamist project that might oppress women’s rights or women’s equality in Islam by using the coercive power of any Islamic state. Islamic feminism, which is a global movement of activists and scholars, asserts the equality of men and women under the Islamic law, and refutes the traditional and patriarchal readings of the Quran and Hadith. Muslim feminists do not oppose the Islamic Shari‘a; on the contrary, they support it, but they require a renewed interpretation of the texts of Shari‘a that explains the equality of men and women in Islam. Muslim feminists also confirm the roles played by women in the earliest time of Islam during the era of the prophet and his companions.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Abd El Baki Hermassi, “Islam and Politics in North African Contemporary History,” in *19th Annual Symposium on Islamism and Secularism in North Africa*, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, April, 1993, 1–2.

⁸⁰ Halverson and Way, “Islamist Feminism.”

Islamism appeared in the late 1920s and the early 1930s in Egypt as a movement that was defending the Islamic culture identity of the majority of the society against devastating Western traditions. Halverson and Way argue that the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen*), which was founded in 1928 during the colonial period in Egypt, was the first emerged Islamist group to combat the western influences in the country, especially in education. Hasan al-Banna (d.1949), the founder and the first Supreme Guide of the group (*Murshid*), emphasized the traditional Islamic morality, self-discipline, education, sports, and athletics in order to bring a new generation educated in the right Islamic teachings.⁸¹

The Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in the small town of Ismailia near the Suez Canal, first registered as a charity group and carried its message to towns and villages in the country to counter the British missionary activities. MB had a strong mystical orientation at the beginning of their emergence, but then they moved into an active political organization in the 1930s. The pioneer Islamist feminist Zainab al-Ghazaly, leader of the Muslim Sisterhood, joined the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1940s, after earlier refusing to link her MWA group with al-Banna group, to adopt al-Banna's ideologies.⁸²

Islamists have their own ideologies towards women's rights and the status of women in Islam and within the Egyptian society. Abu Lughod argues that Islamists stigmatize women's sexual independence and public freedoms as Western traditions that should be countered. Moreover, they have some restrictions on women's work and education, and embrace "the ideals of bourgeois marriage." Regarding women's work, the popular Muslim scholar Shaykh al-Sha'rawi asserts that the best place for women is their homes. He also insists on the importance of veiling for women. Shar'awi also argues that if women have to go to work, they should avoid

⁸¹ Ibid., 512.

⁸² Ibid.

any kind of physical contact with men. Many other Islamists also argue that the best place for women is to work in their homes.⁸³

The debate over the veil (*hijab*) has been considered a controversial issue among Islamist and secular feminists. Some earlier studies were conducted in the 1980s showing that unveiled women are more feminist than their veiled counterparts regarding some women's issues such as work, education, social and political participation, and rights in marriage. But, the margin of variance between veiled and unveiled women was only slight. For example, 99 percent of the unveiled women sought work outside the house, while 88 percent of the veiled educated women accepted joining the workforce.⁸⁴

Zaynab Radwan, who conducted a study over the veiled university women in 1982, found that 98 percent of the unveiled women supported women's rights to pursue the highest possible level of education while the figure of veiled women was 92 percent. Badran has argued that, in the late 1980s, Islamists moved towards adopting liberal views towards women's rights. As an example, Badran referred to liberal Islamist feminists, who adopted very moderate Islamist views, such as Safinaz Kazim and Heba Ra'uf. Regarding the basic feminist views of Kazim and Ra'uf, they insisted the right of women to work in the public sphere.⁸⁵

Although hijab is considered one of the main controversial issues among Secular and Islamist women, there are many other major ideological differences among both groups. Islamism is based on the key concept that *Shari'a* should be the main source for laws. Thus, according to Riham Bahi, Islamist feminists adhere to religion as the predominant authority on all women's rights. Valentine Moghadam debates that Muslim feminists focus on theological

⁸³ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 243–269.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

arguments rather than socioeconomic and political issues, and their references are Quran and Sunna, rather than the universal standards of feminists. On the other side, secular feminists view religion as a key factor for subordination and oppression of women, which they rejected, and they fought against any religious traditions. Moreover, Secular feminists consider that *Shari'a* is not compatible with the principles of equality between men and women. In this way, Islam cannot address the real problems that face women nowadays.⁸⁶

Despite the fact that *Ikwan* declared, on different occasions, their support to the Islamist female candidates, the quota of women's participation in the latest parliament elections was very small. However, it was not only MB who had low representation of women in the elections, but also the liberal parties had women candidates less than Islamists. Hoda Badran, the chairwoman of the EFU, reported to the Daily News in Egypt in November 2013 that "only 12 women reached parliament in 2012," which is only 2% of the parliament. She criticized the low participation of women in the latest parliamentary elections and claimed the need for more participation of women in the coming parliament elections in 2014 by adding that "Women do not represent only 2% of the society."⁸⁷

Dalia Ziada, who is an Egyptian liberal activist in human rights, debates that, although MB advocates women's rights, their view of these rights and women's status is completely different than the liberals' view. She believes that MB looks only at the biological side of women as mothers and housewives. Ziada criticizes *Ikwan's* view of women's rights as they always consider it as western values that should be avoided. Moreover, Ziada attacks the history of MB regarding women's status in the group by mentioning that the leadership office of the MB has

⁸⁶ Riham Bahi, "Islamic and Secular Feminisms: Two Discourses Mobilized for Gender Justice," *Contemporary Readings in Law & Social Justice* 3, no. 2 (January 2012): 138–58.

⁸⁷ "Egyptian Women Aim for 100 Parliamentary Seats," *Daily News Egypt*, accessed February 2, 2014, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/11/24/egyptian-women-aim-for-100-parliamentary-seats/>.

never allowed Muslim Sisters access until recent time. Once MB established their political party FJP, women were allowed to participate in this party and some of them could be members of the supreme committee, but they were not recognized much in the public and rarely spoke at big gatherings.⁸⁸

Ziada continues her criticism of MB's view of women by mentioning that "Although the Muslim Brotherhood allows women to run for parliamentary elections, they put them at the bottom of the ticket or support them with weak campaigns." She adds more criticism to the skills of the MB women candidates by saying "The women chosen are merely the wives of the leaders, regardless of their skills or qualifications. Thus, their chances to win are limited. This makes the group appear to be respecting women rights; in reality it is doing the opposite." Although Ziada criticizes most of the MP policies towards women's role and status inside and outside their group, she considers that MB is a more moderate group than other Islamist groups regarding supporting women's appearances on the political scene.⁸⁹

Bassam Tibi argues that, although some Western policy makers and opinion leaders, as well as some scholars, might have changed their views about Islamism to move from radical Islam into moderate political Islam that can be compatible with the agenda of democratization in the Islamic World, they should be cautious because the truth is different. Tibi debates that the core political thoughts of Islamism contradict the core values of democracy such as pluralism and power-sharing. Moreover, Tibi considers that Islamist parties cannot be truly democratic. His argument that Islamism contradicts democracy is based on the following analysis:

⁸⁸ "Egypt's Islamists: Much to Prove on Women's Rights," *CNN*, accessed February 3, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/28/opinion/egypt-womens-rights/index.html>.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Islamism is a general movement that is characterized both by unity and diversity. All varieties of the Islamist movement pursue the same religionised political agenda for establishing *al-nizam al-Islami a shari'a* based Islamic order.

Domestically, this *nizam* (system) is the 'Islamic state', and in the world at large it is the 'Islamic world order'. Again, this *nizam* is not to be confused with the traditional caliphate. All Islamists share the same world view of a belief in the *siyadat al-Islam* (supremacy of Islam), based on a universal *Ranbbaniya* (theocentrism) that has been politicized to the point where it has become a religionised modern internationalism. The mindset contradicts the very substance of democratic pluralism.⁹⁰

Tibi recognizes that Islamists might have a common global goal, but they are not always in agreement with each other and we should differentiate between institutional and jihadist Islamism. Institutional Islamism supports seeking power through democratic processes and institutions, while jihadist Islamism continues the engagement of armed jihad.

I believe that Tibi's analysis is very interesting, despite the fact that his views strongly contradict my main argument in this research; however, it is very beneficial for my research since it will help me to examine my theory in depth and respond to Tibi's arguments. Tibi also emphasizes the importance of understanding the meanings of democracy; according to him, the democratic process is not just going to ballot boxes, as it might be a common understanding among the majority of moderate Islamists. Moreover, Tibi asserts that with no doubt, the best choice for a better future in the world of Islam is democracy, but we have to clearly identify the meaning of democracy and political Islam to be able to view the possibility of compatibility between both of them.

The debate over the compatibility of Islam with democracy and modernity, which has continued for decades among traditionalists and reformists, is still a controversial issue, not just

⁹⁰ Bassam Tibi, "Islamism and Democracy: On the Compatibility of Institutional Islamism and the Political Culture of Democracy," *Totalitarian Movements & Political Religions* 10, no. 2 (June 2009): 135–137, doi:10.1080/14690760903192073.

among orientalists and Western scholars, but also among many Muslim Scholars and thinkers. Among Muslim thinkers, there are two main camps of Muslim scholars who have different views in this debate. The camp of Muslim reformists supports the idea that Islam is compatible with every time and place. Muslims can live in harmony with non-Muslims with no regard to race, gender and religion. This idea of compatibility of Islam with others was strongly supported by the Muslim reformists of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abdu, Rashid Reda, and Refa‘t al-Tahtawi.

Al-Tahtawi, the most prominent among the other Islamic reformists regarding Westernizing the Egyptian culture, was considered one of the early adapters of the idea of Islamic Modernism. Al-Tahtawi’s strong support of this idea clearly appeared when he came back to Egypt after spending five years in France in an educational mission. He acknowledged that “What is called freedom in Europe is exactly what is defined in Islam as justice [*adl*], right [*haqq*], consultation, [*shura*], and equality [*musawat*]. This is because the rule of freedom and democracy consists of imparting justice and right to the people, and the nation’s participation in determining its destiny.” Basically, al-Tahtawy and his disciples used Islamic terms to refer to Western democratic concepts that are exist in the Islamic religion.⁹¹

Abul Ala Mawdudi, a journalist, theologian, Muslim revivalist, and political philosopher, who was considered the twentieth century Islamist thinker in India and Pakistan, promoted the idea that there is no essential disagreement between Islam and Western democracy, especially regarding the main goals that both systems advocate for, such as freedom and equality. He argued that, since the Western democracy prevents anyone, whatever his political, economic, or social position, from oppressing other people, there is no doubt that these principles did not

⁹¹ David Garnham and Mark A. Tessler, *Democracy, War, and Peace in the Middle East* (Indiana University Press, 1995), 119.

contradict Islam. Moreover, al-Mawdudi argued that Muslims practiced democracy centuries before the emergence of Western democracy.⁹²

Although al-Mawdudi advocated democracy's compatibility with Islam, he criticized some of the basic notions of democracy such as people's legislation. He considered that, by granting man the right to legislate and produce laws, you put him in the position of God, which is not accepted by him. According to al-Mawdudi, man can achieve all his desires if you put all the government structures and powers in his hand. Thus, this action can lead to corruption; however, in his view, the sovereignty of God and the caliphate of the believers should replace the sovereignty of the people.⁹³ I believe that, if we followed al-Mawdudi's perspective about who should rule, it will lead us to a theologian and dictator regime that totally contradicts democracy.

Al-Mawdudi continued his criticism of democracy which can provide people with unrestricted freedom in order to fulfill only their desires, whether they are good or not, rather than setting values and ideal standards for people to adhere to and live by. He concluded that the nation that legislates its own laws, with absolute freedom in ruling itself, will move to corruption and injustice. In addition, the Islamist thinker warned his disciples not to follow the Secular National Democracy because it opposes the main Islamic beliefs.⁹⁴ Accordingly, al-Mawdudi contradicted himself with the idea of the compatibility of Islam and democracy.

Another view related to the idea of the compatibility of Islam and democracy is adopted by Sa'id Hawwa who became a major New Radical thinker in Syria, was expressed in his book *Jund Allah* (the soldiers of God) which was published in 1977 in Beirut. In his book, Hawwa argued that *shura* is identical to democracy, yet, at the same time, it is the exact opposite. Democracy is the rule of people; in his view, democracy contradicts the *shura*, since the former

⁹² Ibid., 122.

⁹³ Ibid., 122–123.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 122.

depends on the sovereignty of people as the source of ruling and legitimacy, but the latter is based on consultation by the ruler with a person or more with regard to a certain interpretation of *shari'a*. Hawwa debated that, in democracy, people govern themselves by their own made laws, which contradicts Islamic legislation. In Islam, people are ruled by set of laws imposed by God, which people cannot change or modify under any condition.⁹⁵ Hawwa almost agreed with al-Mawdudi on his points of views regarding the relation between Islam and democracy.

Yousuf al-Qaradawi, one of the most influential contemporary Muslim scholars, and intellectual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, relatively agreed with Hawwa and al-Mawdudi in their views regarding who should rule in Islam and democracy. His argument was virtually the same as his ancestors; God is the supreme legislator, except he added that people can legislate to themselves only when God permits them to do so. Al-Qaradawi praised some concepts of democracy that he viewed as compatible with Islam, such as the parliamentary process. In his view, the parliamentary system is the most positive side of the liberal-democracy. He explains why he supports the parliamentary process:

Through this system people can choose the representatives of whom the “legislative branch” is composed. ...Through this elected body, the people rule themselves, and ‘the nation becomes the source of authority.’ This picture as a whole is, theoretically speaking, good and acceptable from an Islamic point of view-provided it is implemented in such a way that the mischief and evils which accompany it can be avoided.⁹⁶

Al-Qaradawi, who backed the parliamentary process in the democratic system asserted many negative aspects of the system. He believes that the elected body should not have an

⁹⁵ Ibid., 123.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 125.

absolute power to legislate in everything; they should be limited to the areas that are not legislated by God.

The idea of complete compromise between Islam and democracy is impossible. Islam is a religion, not a political system, which many Muslims believe in as a comprehensive religion that can organize all their economic, political, and social issues, while many other Muslims believe that religion in their life should be limited to mosques and spiritual activities. Diversity is found in the religion, and different opinions are highlighted among the pioneer Muslim scholars whether they are extremists or modernists, traditionalists, or reformists. Thus, we cannot accept one view and reject the other, but we can see what is moderate, and not contradictory to religion, and we can accept it since Islam is the religion of modernity.

The debate over Islam and democracy is not restricted among Muslim scholars; it has been found among many Western scholars who argued that democracy can be practiced outside the Western sphere. In addition, democracy, as a definition, does not have a consistent meaning that all nations should accept. The debate in the West does not only go over defining the term, but exceeds it to discuss whether democracy can be exported or not. Some scholars debate that democracy is an American, European or Western idea that should not be exported to any other nation, culture or civilization. Other scholars argue the possibility of exporting democracy to other countries, but believe it needs a long period of social, economic, and culture exchange. Armatya sen argued that Democracy is not yet internationally practiced, nor unanimously accepted. Democratic governance moves towards what has been taken to be generally right.⁹⁷

Thus, we should not desire that Islam, the religion, entirely must agree or disagree with democracy, nor should we demand that Western democratic regimes apply Islamic political principles in their systems. As it has been previously discussed, Islam and democracy

⁹⁷ Zoltan D. Barany and Robert G. Moser, *Is Democracy Exportable?* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1–3.

theoretically are not consistent: Islam is a religion, and democracy is a political concept and ideology. However, we can find commonalities between both, especially regarding achieving their goals. Islam and democracy emphasize the basics of human rights such as liberty, equality, justice, and freedom. Therefore, we should take it from here, and see what can be compromised between both and work on achieving that compromise.

While Bahi in her work “Islamic and Secular Feminisms: Two Discourses mobilized for Justice” discusses the dichotomy between two scholarly discourses: secular modernists and Muslim reformists, and Badran in her book “Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences” debates the common relation between Islamic and secular feminists, I am examining the relation between Secular and Islamist feminists since such relation is almost avoided in both works. Moreover, my concentration is on political views and actions taken by both groups after the revolution until the military coup, rather than discussing that difference in ideologies as Bahi and Badran have discussed in their works.⁹⁸

Badran, based on her research, argues that observation, and interactions in diverse parts of the Islamic world, secular feminism and Islamic feminism have been commonly found in constructive conversation and joined forces in activist campaigns. Thus, in her “Feminism in Islam” work, Badran examines the commonalities between Islamic and Secular feminism. Moreover, she warns about the confusion between Islamic and Islamist feminism and declares that “we must be wary of Islamist women’s specious renditions.”⁹⁹

Although Islamic feminists have more commonalities with Islamist feminists than secular feminists, especially regarding their religious ideology since both groups refer to Shari‘a as the main source for their ideology, Badran gives less attention in her work to Islamist feminism and

⁹⁸ Bahi, “Islamic and Secular Feminisms”; Badran, *Feminism in Islam*.

⁹⁹ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, 6.

focuses more the Islamic women's view of feminism. It is understandable why Badran tries to avoid discussing the relation between Islamist and secular feminism since she is focusing on examining the convergence relation between secular and Islamic feminists in her work.¹⁰⁰

However, although Islamic feminists might have various commonalities with secular feminists and Islamist feminists, the last two groups have more divergences than convergences. Thus, since such relation is almost missed in Badran's work, I concentrate my study on discussing the divergence between the two groups and exploring when both groups can achieve compromise.

The convergence between Islamist and Secular feminists is based on their Ideologies and their way to adhere to democracy. Islamists' view of feminism is based on the Islamic law which supports women's rights from moderate and conservative prospective, while secular feminist ideology is based on international law that advocates women's rights based on equality and gender indifference. However, the case in Egypt might be different, since many women in the country did not fear the *Shari'a*. Although many concerns rose after *Ikhwan* came to power over the probability of undermining women's rights under the Islamist government, a recent study showed that many Egyptian women did not worry about implementation of *Shari'a*, nor they feared any dramatic changes under the new Islamist president.

The study found that 44% of women surveyed believe *Shari'a* should be the only source of law; 38% said it should be one of a number of sources. Moreover, Muslim Brotherhood, who reached the top power in the nation, repeatedly assured that women's rights and freedom should be respected. Although moderate Islamists supported women's rights and followed democracy, secularists did not accept the democratic process in the transition period after January revolution

¹⁰⁰ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*.

since their Islamist rivals won the majority of seats in the parliament, and gained the presidency office.¹⁰¹

What Killed Democracy in Egypt?

Although Egypt was crawling towards democracy, there are many reasons for killing the democratic process in the transition period in the nation. Mohammad Fadel argued that there were theoretical matters for liberals and Islamists in Egypt during the *Ikwan* regime that were considered the main causes for demolishing democracy during the transition period. Fadel in his article asked, “Why did the democratic transition fail?” Some claimed that one of the main reasons for the failure of democracy in Egypt during the transition period after deposing President Mubarak was not clear about the transition process, which made the political groups not trust each other. Others blamed MB for a lack of political leadership, which led to the end of the democratic transition period. There is another trend which referred to the economic crisis that faced the country after Mubarak as the main reason to lead to political division in the country.¹⁰²

Fadel argued that, although the above-mentioned reasons might be counted as main reasons for the failure of democracy in Egypt, they are not the predominant ones. Fadel primarily blamed the theories embraced by the most idealistic revolutionaries or the liberals in Egypt who refused to accord any legitimacy to a flawed transition. He debated that any transition period is

¹⁰¹ “Egyptian Women Worry about Rights under New Islamist President,” July 3, 2012, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2012/07/cairo-as-fireworks-lit-the-sky-after-egypt-elected-its-first-islamist-president-last-month-nadeen-gamil-who-had-endured.html.

“Results of Egypt’s People’s Assembly Election – Egypt’s Transition”; David Hearst and Abdel-Rahman Hussein, “Egypt’s Supreme Court Dissolves Parliament and Outrages Islamists,” *The Guardian*, June 14, 2012, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/14/egypt-parliament-dissolved-supreme-court>;

“Parliamentary Elections Law – Egypt’s Transition,” accessed February 24, 2014, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/04/parliamentary-elections-law>.

“Results of Egypt’s People’s Assembly Election – Egypt’s Transition”; “Egypt’s Islamists Win Elections,” *BBC*, January 21, 2012, sec. Middle East, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16665748>.

¹⁰² “What Killed Egyptian Democracy?,” *Boston Review* 39, no. 1 (February 1, 2014): 10.

subjected to a flawed democracy. Fadel rebuked the liberals for not paying attention to the state's political and economic institutions and the social circumstance during the transition period, which essentially resulted in the failure of democracy in Egypt.¹⁰³

Masses in Tahrir square stayed there for 18 days to protest against Mubarak and his regime, ultimately undivided, chanting in one voice, *eid wahda* (one hand), and *elshaab yureed isqaat ennezaam* (people demand the removal of the regime). After the declaration of Mubarak's resignation by his vice president Omar Suleiman, and transferring authority to the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), mainly three groups appeared contesting for power. Apparently, at the beginning, they were united; in fact, they were theoretically and empirically divided.

These dominant groups were the military top leaders, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the young people. The military group favored the revolution, not just for toppling Mubarak from power, but also for assuring that his son Gamal Muarak would not succeed him. The military endeavored to preserve, as much as possible, Mubarak's regime through reconciliation with old-regime elements to keep their economic and political interests.¹⁰⁴

The military claimed their leaning towards the protests at the beginning of the revolution, precisely on January 28, 2011. As a participant in the demonstrations that day, along with thousands of other demonstrators, the military's march to the streets, especially Tahrir Square, was welcomed, they were treated as a legitimate power, until we discovered that they were not. The military's top leaders, or SCAF, promised that they would stay in power for only six months, and then they would transfer the power to an elected government, but they did not.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

SCAF stayed in power for a year and half until the protesters forced them, through their peaceful demonstrations, to hand the power to the elected president.

The second group was the Muslim Brotherhood and their allies. This group claimed that Mubarak controlled all the powers of the state through usurping its institutions to fulfill his and his allies' political and economic desires. Thus, the main ideology for this group was conducting a systematic reform starting with reforming the corrupted institutions. Moreover, the Islamist camp viewed that the best way for reforming the state could only be achieved through the process of democracy. I assume that the moderate Islamist group had a remarkable vision for reforming the institutions, but they did not have a clear and consistent mechanism to achieve this reform, especially among all challenges that they faced. Although MB was the largest organized political group on the ground during and after Mubarak's regime and had a massive popular support, they had a humbling experience in running the state's institutions since they had never participated in senior official positions in the country. Even after Morsi reached the highest political office in the country, Mubarak's men were still controlling the state's institutions and apparatuses.

The third group was mostly composed of the young Egyptians who believed that a fundamental restructuring of the state and society was a necessary requirement after the revolution. The young protesters considered the revolution as an opportunity to build the country on virtues and principles. Their substantial demands always focused on authentic transformation of the state and the society; however, they had no clear agenda, nor a clear program to achieve their demands. Moreover, they had no organized political ground that they could work through except a few new established parties that had no great popularity. This group, who were always calling for achieving the demands of the revolution, considered themselves the "Revolution

Legitimacy.”¹⁰⁵ Liberals collaborated with this group and called for liberating the state from the elected Islamist government.

During the transition period, the second group came to power through elections. Islamist affiliated parties won almost 70 percent of the seats of the parliament in 2012 elections. The post-revolution liberal parties, including the young people or revolutionists, as they liked to call themselves, barely won 10 percent. The other 20 percent of the parliament seats was gained by leftist and independent candidates. Once the first group, the military and their allies from the former regime, feared losing their power, and the third group, the revolutionists and the liberals, could not achieve a great percentage in the democratic contest over power, the last group were recruited insensibly against the second group, using the economic crisis, and the struggle between Ikhwan and the institutions, to topple the MB from power, in an undemocratic way through their protest against President Morsi and his government on June 30, 2013. The mass protests in June 30 encouraged the head of the military General al-Sisi to launch the military coup against the first democratically elected president in the history of the state on July 3, 2013. The military takeover was the most condemned action by Islamists against democracy and legitimacy, which led the country in a dark tunnel, of which no one knows exactly the end.

¹⁰⁵ “What Killed Egyptian Democracy?”.

5- Theory and Hypotheses

Despite the fact that secularism is more likely to tend towards liberalism and democracy, and Islamists are more likely to be accused of being extremists and fundamentalists, I argue in this research that Islamist women are more democratic than secular women in Egypt. My argument is based on factors and hypotheses that are examined in this research. Islamist women condemned the military coup in Egypt from the beginning and called the military leaders to get back to democracy and legitimacy. On the other hand, the majority of secular women supported the military coup. Many Islamist women are, among other women, the ones who suffered most from the military coup. Scores of Islamist women were killed; thousands were injured and detained due to their peaceful protest and their denial of the military coup. Hundreds of other Islamist women suffered in a different way, by losing their husbands or sons who were killed, injured or detained at the hands of the Egyptian security forces while they reacted peacefully to deny the savage military actions against the people who supported democracy and asked to get back to legitimacy.

5.1 Islamic *Shari'a* and Women in Politics

My argument is based on the following hypotheses, first, Islamists' support of democracy stems from their political ideologies that are based on Islamic *Shari'a* which agrees in some ways with democracy and contradicts in others. Some basics of democracy such as consultation are found in Islam, and Islamists are using many factors from democracy that do not interfere with *Shari'a*. In addition, the *Quran* and *Sunna* back women's rights, and moderate open-minded Islamists support these rights that were granted by God to women. On historical bases, early Muslim women understood the real meaning of equality in Islam. In contemporary history of feminism in Egypt, Islamic scholars were the first to advocate women's rights, followed by

nationalists. Moreover, early Egyptian Islamist feminists called for democracy within an Islamic frame.

Thus, I believe that there is a connection between past and present events that is closely relevant to the linked relation between religion and politics regarding women's rights in Islam. Earlier Muslim women practiced politics with no extremism, and they were also supported by men to practice this right which Islam has never prevented. In this way, contemporary Islamist women followed earliest ones. Moderate Islamist women understand the rights that Islam has given to them; thus, they have demanded these rights and struggled for them, whether to attain these rights from an Islamist or liberal government.

Islam supports human rights, as previously discussed, and Muslim scholars claim that human rights have already existed in Islam fourteen hundred years ago, since the emergence of Islam, and before the appearance of the modern UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Islam also advocates women's rights within specific frames that Muslim scholars discussed as granted by God to Eve. Muslim scholars claim that Muslims should follow the Islamic human rights if they want to live a happy life and wish to be rewarded in the hereafter.

Islam does not oppress women as might be misunderstood among a lot of people, especially in the West. Islam promoted women's rights and set women in a very high position, within society and religion. Islam has never undermined women or described them as property of men. In many cases, women are equal to men, and in other cases they are higher, especially regarding religious reward and social matters. For example, the Prophet Muhammad says, "the paradise is underneath the legs of Mothers." Regarding social matters, in Islam, the financial issue is not at all the responsibility of women; men have to take care of the material needs of women, whether they are daughters, sisters, wives, or mothers. If women need to work outside

their homes, it is their own decision; men have no right to prevent them from doing that. The money they gain does not have to be spent on their houses, except if they do not mind to do so.

Funding families is men's responsibility, in the first place, in Islam. Men have to supply financial issues of their women, whenever they have the ability to do. Thus, women's financial support by their men is one of the primary rights for women in Islam, which could be barely found in other religions nowadays. Although most of the Muslim scholars discussed women's rights within the house, some other moderate scholars defended women's participation in the public sphere life as one of their essential rights guaranteed by the religion. Activist Muslim and Islamist women also advocated these rights based on religious texts and historical events. Women who struggled for these rights gained some of them, and could participate in public life were found highly active in social and political life.

As I argue here, Islam that does not contradict democracy in the essential principles such as freedom, equality, and social justice, and also does not prevent women from taking part in the public sphere. Although Islam emphasized the role of women within family and recognized the family as the nucleuses for building strong societies, it has never confined women inside their houses. Islam has never diminished women within society nor reduced their skills or abilities to collaborate with their male counterparts in social or political activities. For example, the prophet praised women and rewarded them for their performance in some battles, since they could fight and perform medical and civil duties as well in the war field.

In another situation, *Solh alhodaybyia* (Al-Hodaybia Truce) the prophet did not consult any of his main leaders in the army or any one of his best friends; instead, he consulted his wife, Om Salama, who was accompanied by the prophet in battles against the disbelievers of *Quraish* which was ended with a truce between the two sides. Om Salama advised the prophet for what

has to be done with his followers after the truce was reached, which is considered one of the most critical decisions for the new born Islamic state. The prophet accepted Om Salama's opinion and informed his soldiers to do what she advised him. This means, if women in Islam are oppressed by their men, the prophet Muhammad, whose traditions must be followed by all Muslims, should be the first one to oppress women, which never happened from his side.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, Shiekh Muhammad al-Ghazali, a prominent cleric and scholar who authored 94 books (d.1996), and discussed the issue of women, sex differences, and the Islamic secular struggle over women's rights, has already supported the issues of women's equality and participation in public life. According to al-Ghazali, although Islam had always regarded women as the nucleus of the family, it did not deny their right of education, work, or participation in the public sphere. Islam honored all human beings and equaled women with men. The Prophet proclaimed that "women are the sisters of men." Moreover, Islam never confined women to their houses nor isolated them from participation in social and political activities. Furthermore, earlier Muslim women could participate in military actions with the Prophet; the prophet himself rewarded women for their willingness to fight with him or those who performed medical and civil duties in the war field.¹⁰⁷

Earlier Muslim women, who could participate in the most dangerous work, which is the battlefield, could also participate in politics, which was much safer for them. However, the issue of women's political rights, unlike women's familial roles, was still hotly disputed, especially among Islamist radical and reformist figures. Radical Islamists, who completely refused the idea of compatibility of Islam with democracy, totally denied women's rights to participate in

¹⁰⁶ Ragheb al-Sirgany, "Awdet Al-Rasul ela Al-Madiana wa Ta'deel Solh Al-Hodaibiya" (The Prophet's Back to Medina and the Modification of Al-Hudaybeya Pact), April 17, 2010, accessed February 22, 2014, <http://islamstory.com/ar/>

¹⁰⁷ Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt*, 128–129.

politics. On the contrary, moderate Islamic thinkers, such as al-Ghazzali and al-Qaradawi, advocated women's participation in politics.¹⁰⁸

Muslim women's participation in politics is not restricted to a specific process or procedure such as voting or recruiting others for voting; the issue exceeds over that to include the right take part in public office. Although most of the Islamic writers denied women's rights to assume judicial posts and great imamate (chief leader of Islamic country), some moderate Islamic thinkers such as Khaled Muhammad Khaled, Muhammad Amarah, and Sadeq al-Mahdi argued that there is no valid reason to deny women's right to serve in judicial roles.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the *Quran* itself did not include any clear text preventing women from taking leading positions over men; on the contrary, the *Quran* praised a woman who was in the head position over her people, the Queen of *Shiba*, in *surat Annaml*, Chapter 27.

Islamist educated women who could read and interpret the main Islamic resources agreed with moderate Islamic thinkers on some views that emphasize Islam as allowing women to take part in political life. Thus, they sought sufficient education and training that qualifies them to political positions. Islamic women are not interested in politics as much as Islamist women; instead, they focus more on women's rights within Islamic frame. Moreover, Islamic women are found to be more involved in charity works that support women and children than politics. As an observer, who grew up among various Islamic groups, relatively surrounded by moderate Islamists, I have noticed that Islamists, both males and females, were active in charity, social and political activities.

Islamist women, like Muslim women, devoted their lives in seeking to understand their Islamic rights and the possibility to gain them. The modern Islamist feminists understand their

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 130–133.

status regarding equality; they completely recognize that they are equal with men, before Allah, and in their struggle for the Islamic *umma*. Thus, Islamist feminists' participation in politics is based on their understanding of their equality with men, and their goal to work for society, more than struggling with gender issues; on the other side, secular women promote gender issues in most of their activities more than social concerns.

Moreover, the contemporary prominent Islamist feminist in Egypt, Heba Ra'uf, a wife and mother of two, and is a political science professor at Cairo university, who also taught at the American University in Cairo (AUC), was affected by the two memorable Islamist activist women, Zayanb al-Ghazali and Safinaz Qazim. Ra'uf, who represents the younger generation of Islamist women activist-leaders in Egypt, who does not just advocate women's rights, but also promotes the idea that qualified women can occupy highest positions in the state such as judiciary or presidency, which differs from many Islamists' views.

However, Islamist women's participation in politics or taking high positions in politics does not challenge the Islamic basic rules; their main concern with them is refuting the western ideologies of emancipation of women within feminism. It is clearly understood how Islamist feminists defend women's rights from an Islamic perspective, since their essential background is Islamic law, not Western laws. By the same token, secular women who advocate women's rights are depending on their Western ideology of feminism which differs from the oriental one. Moreover, Western feminists went through a long journey of struggle to achieve their liberty, which had different social, cultural, and political and historical events. Thus, we should not enforce a set of rights to a nation or culture, declaring that they are universal and should be applied to every country in the world. By the same token, what can be compatible for the Eastern people might not be accepted in the Western communities, and vice versa.

However, Islamist women were blamed for adopting their own political agenda, which is Islamizing Muslim societies and states. Although Islamists in general endorse the notion of political Islam, Islamist women and men in Egypt after the January 25 revolution, especially the young generation, worked more towards achieving the basics of freedom and justice than advocating their own ideologies. Although people who condemned corruption in the nation and called for democracy were united in Tahrir Square against Mubarak and later on, against SCAF, they were divided again over the political ideologies when Islamists came to power through democratic process. Women have participated in all political events since the January 25 revolution until the occurrence of the military coup in July 2013, and even after, until the present-day, and they are part of this division.

6- Findings and Analysis

6.1- Women's role in the Revolution and in the Electoral Process

Women played a very crucial role during the January 25th revolution. This role was praised by all witnesses to this tremendous event. Women's role in the square, or in social media, where the first call for the protest started, by its entire means, cannot be lessened. Asmaa Mahfouz, one of the founders of April 6th Youth movement, was considered one of the main sparklers of the mass uprising by posting her video blog on Facebook and appealing to all the young Egyptians, both males and females, to join her in the protest on January 25 if they were looking for freedom and dignity.¹¹⁰

Many other young people responded to Mahfouz's call, and joined her to the struggle for liberty and dignity. The police attacked the young protesters with tear gas and rubber bullets on the evening of January 25, which resulted in killing many young Egyptians. The protest did not only start in Cairo, but also spread over other governorates such as Alexandria, Suez, and many other cities; and the police, accompanied by thugs, also did not stop attacking peaceful protests. On January 28, the "Anger Friday," more people were killed, injured, and detained by the security forces. Among the dead was Sally Zahran, a 23-year-old from the upper Egyptian governorate of Sohag. Zahran, unlike Mahfouz, had no political affiliation, and she had never been considered as an activist. The only significant reason beyond her participation in the pro-democracy peaceful protest was her critique of tough living conditions in Egypt.¹¹¹

Once people in *Tahrir* Square heard about what happened to their counterparts, they escalated their demands and decided to sit in the square until their demands should be achieved.

¹¹⁰ "Asmaa Mahfouz & the YouTube Video That Helped Spark the Egyptian Uprising," *Democracy Now!*, accessed March 14, 2014, http://www.democracynow.org/2011/2/8/asmaa_mahfouz_the_youtube_video_that.

¹¹¹ "Fallen Faces of the Uprising: Sally Zahran | Egypt Independent," accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/fallen-faces-uprising-sally-zahran>.

One of the main demands of the protests was the removal of Mubarak's regime. They also demanded investigating the killing and the shooting which occurred during the peaceful protests, and called for releasing all the political detainees since January 25. Women stood side by side with men, spent nights in the square to make sure about the success of the revolution; and participated in all the activities in the square that all their male counterparts performed, such as spreading the food, nursing the injuries, protecting the entrances, and fighting against the thugs who attacked the square during the 18 days of the protest.

Men and women were united in the square, and had passion and care for the safety of each other. No political affiliation was announced by anybody. Each participant was proud to announce that he or she is Egyptian. Even the majority denounced their political ideologies. The most beloved chant one could hear there in the square was *eid wahda*, which expressed how people were united, with no regard to their class, education, work position, religion, or political affiliation. After the celebration of toppling Mubarak, not just in *Tahrir*, but also all over the country, people hoped that the country would move toward stability and democracy in the transition period that SCAF announced after Mubarak's leaving power.

Consequently, within less than a year after the revolution, there was an explosion of political parties in Egypt from across the political spectrum. New socialist, Liberal, moderate and extreme Islamist parties were established to contest in the parliamentary and presidential elections. More than 40 parties and 6,000 candidates reportedly registered to participate in the first democratic elections in the contemporary history of the state. Each group had their own political agenda. Socialists wanted to nationalize industry and expand the public sector. Liberal

parties pushed for free trade and women's rights, hardline Islamists demanded applying cutting the hands of the thieves. Moderate Islamist parties insisted that Egypt should be a civil state.¹¹²

The huge number of the parliament candidates was contesting over only 498 seats in Egypt's People's Assembly elections, which run over three stages from November 28, 2011 to January 11, 2012. The old and the new established parties favored to run the elections with coalition with other parties under various blocs. There were three main blocs who were ready to compete in this election. The first bloc, *al-Tahaluf al-Dimocrati* (The Democratic Alliance) was established based on a coalition of liberal, leftist and Islamist parties. The registration for this alliance was closed on October 24, 2011. This Alliance included the Freedom and Justice Party (the MB political wing) which won the majority of seats in People's Assembly elections in 2012. The second bloc was *al-Tahaluf al-Islami* (The Islamist Alliance), formed on September 24, 2011, headed by the *Salafi al-Nour* party, and included two more conservative Islamist parties. The third bloc was *al-Kotla al-Masriyya* (The Egypt Block), which is the main liberal alliance competed in 2011-2012 parliamentary elections. The registration for this block was also closed on October 24, 2011. It consisted only of three parties, the Free Egyptian Party, the Social Democratic Party, and *al-Tagammu*.¹¹³

In the first fair and democratic parliamentary election since the military coup in 1952, the MB's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) won 216 seats, 43.4 percentage of the total seats, which was the largest number achieved by one single party. The hardline *Salafi Nour* party came second with 109 seats, 21.8 percentages of the total seats. The liberal *New Wafd* and the secular

¹¹² Ayman Mohyeldin, "A Year After Egypt's Uprising: One Revolution, Two Perspectives," *Time*, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2105621,00.html>.

¹¹³ "Results of Egypt's People's Assembly Election – Egypt's Transition," accessed February 3, 2014, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2012/01/25/results-of-egypt%E2%80%99s-people%E2%80%99s-assembly-elections>; "Parties and Alliances – Egypt's Transition," accessed February 24, 2014, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/category/political-parties>.

Egyptian bloc coalition are some way behind them. The Islamist parties won around 70 percent of the total seats of the parliament, and the other liberal, leftist and independent candidates won 30 percent with only 5 percent to the independents.¹¹⁴

Women could only win a margin of seats in this election. Women could barely gain 12 seats, only two percent of the total seats of the Egyptian's lower house in 2012. This number is lower than the 12.6 percent guaranteed by the quota in 2010 parliament. Moreover, it reflects a regression to levels of more than a decade ago. In 2000-2005 parliamentary elections, women represented only 1.8 percent of the People's Assembly.¹¹⁵ Although the percentage of winning women in the parliament was very low, FJP won the majority for women with 4 seats; *al-Wafd* had 3 women, Egyptian Social and Democratic Party one woman, reform and Development party only one woman. Moreover, the SCAF appointed 3 more women, in addition to other 7 men. The military leaders had the right to choose 10 members to be appointed in the parliament without any participation in the election, according to the Parliamentary Elections Law that was amended by SCAF on October 24, 2011.¹¹⁶

The military's decree established that 50 percent of the People's Assembly seats would be filled by a proportional representation based on closed lists, and the other 50 by peasants and workers based on Nasser's era provisions. By this law, the military could also eliminate the quota for women, despite their requirement to all parties to include at least one woman in their

¹¹⁴ "Results of Egypt's People's Assembly Election – Egypt's Transition"; "Egypt's Islamists Win Elections," *BBC*, January 21, 2012, sec. Middle East, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16665748>.

¹¹⁵ "The Carter Center - International Election Reports," accessed February 27, 2014, http://www.cartercenter.org/news/publications/election_reports.html#egypt.

¹¹⁶ "Results of Egypt's People's Assembly Election – Egypt's Transition"; "Parliamentary Elections Law – Egypt's Transition," accessed February 24, 2014, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/04/parliamentary-elections-law>; David Hearst and Abdel-Rahman Hussein, "Egypt's Supreme Court Dissolves Parliament and Outrages Islamists," *The Guardian*, June 14, 2012, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/14/egypt-parliament-dissolved-supreme-court>.

lists. As a result, women's nomination represented only 12.1 percent of the total candidates.

According to the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights:

The total numbers of female candidates for the current People's Assembly elections for the year 2011 for the three stages are as follows: 984 female candidates out of 8415 candidates: 351 female candidates out of 4847 candidates running for individual seats and 633 female candidates for parties lists out of 3566 candidates. Table 1 below shows numbers and percentages of women candidates of the three rounds of the 2011/2012 People's Assembly election nationwide:¹¹⁷

Table 1. Numbers And Percentage Of Women Candidates In The Three Stages Nationwide Of The Peoples' Assemble Elections, 2011-2012

Governorate	Total of male Candidates & female candidates	Total Number of female candidates in each round	The percentage of women's nomination	Total of the candidates and female candidates of the Individual system	Total of the female candidates on the individual system	Women's nomination percentage on the individual system	Total of the candidates and female candidates of the Party-List system	Total of the candidates and female candidates of the Party-List system	Women's nomination percentage on the Party-List system
1 st Round	1547	376	%24.3	1055	164	%15.5	492	212	%43
2 nd Round	3813	328	%8.6	2241	107	%4.7	1572	221	%14
3 rd Round	2753	280	%10	1551	80	%5.1	1202	200	%16.6
Total	8113	984	%12.1	4847	351	%7.2	3266	633	%11.2

Source: "What Women Lost and What Egypt Lost," *The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR)*, 2012

¹¹⁷ "What Women Lost and What Egypt Lost," *The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR)*, accessed February 27, 2014, <http://ecwronline.org/blog/2012/01/31/what-women-lost-and-what-egypt-lost/>.

However, the graphs below show the final results for the Egyptian People’s Assembly election in 2012; they also illustrate the winning candidates of each party, followed by indication to the quota of women for each party.¹¹⁸

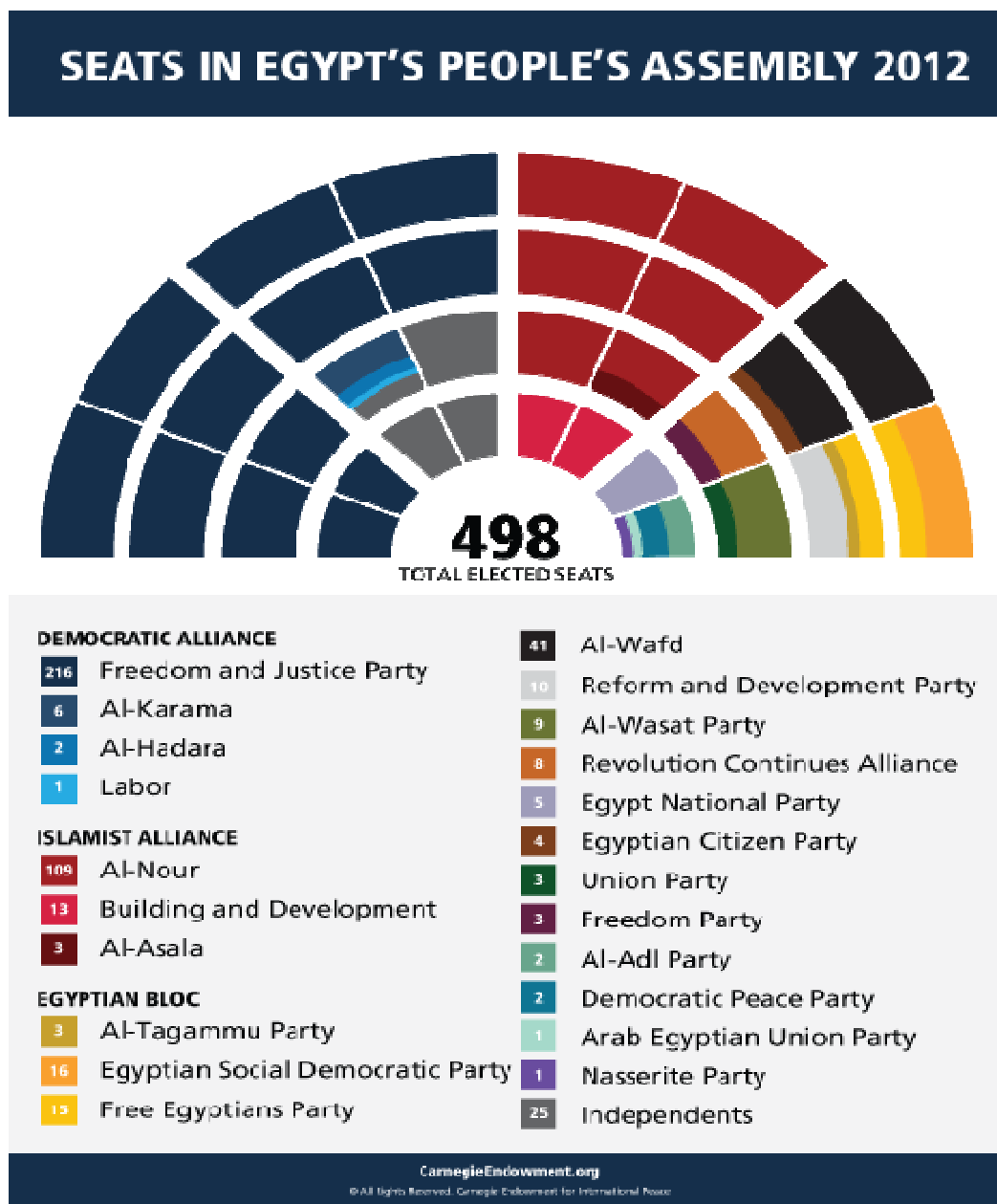


Figure 1. Seats in Egypt’s People’s Assembly 2012

¹¹⁸ “Results of Egypt’s People’s Assembly Election – Egypt’s Transition.”

Table 2. Seat Breakdown of Egypt's People's Assembly

Party/Coalition	Total Seats	% of total seats
Democratic Alliance	225	45.2
▪ Freedom and Justice Party	216	43.4
▪ al-Karama	6	1.2
▪ al-Hadara	2	0.4
▪ Labor Party	1	0.2
Islamist Alliance	125	25
▪ al-Nour	109	21.8
▪ Building and Development Party	13	2.6
▪ al-Asala	3	0.6
al-Wafd	41	8.2
Egyptian Bloc	34	6.8
▪ Al-Tagammu Party	3	0.6
▪ Egyptian Social Democratic Party	16	3.2
▪ Free Egyptians Party	15	3
Reform and Development Party	10	2
al-Wasat Party	9	1.8
Revolution Continues Alliance	8	1.6
Egypt National Party	5	1
Egyptian Citizen Party	4	0.8
Union Party	3	0.6
Freedom Party	3	0.6
al-Adl Party	2	0.4
Democratic Peace Party	2	0.4
Arab Egyptian Union Party	1	0.2
Nasserite Party	1	0.2

Independents	25	5
Total	498	100

Table 3. Women in Egypt's People's Assembly

Party	Seats
Freedom and Justice Party	4
al-Wafd	3
Egyptian Social Democratic Party	1
Reform and Development Party	1
SCAF-appointed	3
Total	12

Source for tables 2 and 3: egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org, accessed February 24, 2014

Although many female activists were pushing to form more women's nominations, women's candidacy was marginalized in this election due to cultural, social, and political discrimination that has never experienced any real intentions or decisions from the government to end this discrimination. In addition, the military's decree eliminated women's political participation. Moreover, women who ran on party lists were placed at the bottom of those lists, which gave them very little chance of getting into office. This is exactly what happened with all

parties, whether they were liberal or Islamists.¹¹⁹ Women's low representation in the parliament of the revolution did not make them to lose hope that the democratic elected parliament will not neglect women's concerns and their equal rights.¹²⁰

Although women contested in the election with 12.1 percent and could only win 2 percent of the total seats of the parliament, they could have more chances to gain more seats if more efficient female candidates became ready to run for parliamentary election. However, Islamist moderate women would have more chances than others to win more seats in the parliament since they gained the largest number of seats for women in this election.¹²¹

The four Islamist women who won seats in the parliament were from the FJP, the political wing of MB, which is considered the largest organized political group in the nation, and the most moderate Islamist party. The FJP, which collaborated with the Democratic Alliance bloc, gained 216 seats in the parliament with four seats reserved for women. It was the largest party to win seats in the parliament with 45.2 of the total seats.¹²² The four seats that Islamist women could achieve in the parliament were considered as the largest ratio that Islamist females could gain in the parliament in the contemporary history of the country.

However, although *Ikhwan* achieved the largest ratio of the parliamentary elections, they could barely support women with more than four seats. Thus, why did not MB increase women's nomination to the parliament since they have frequently alleged their support to women's participation in politics, and why did they have no women in the highly effective political positions? *Ikhwan* might not support any woman before the revolution for chief political roles in

¹¹⁹ "Parliamentary Elections Law – Egypt's Transition"; "In Egypt's New Parliament, Women Will Be Scarce," *NPR.org*, accessed February 27, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/2012/01/19/145468365/in-egypts-new-parliament-women-will-be-scarce>.

¹²⁰ "The Egyptian Parliament after the Revolution, Women Thrown Back 11 Years Half of the Population Represents by 2 %," *The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR)*, accessed February 24, 2014,

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² "Results of Egypt's People's Assembly Election – Egypt's Transition."

the group for their protection from the harsh measures taken by Mubarak's regime against their leaders. But after Mubarak's regime, women participated in high political positions, such as advisers in the presidential team which has never happened during Mubarak's era who alleged that he was following a liberal and democratic regime.

Although the 2012 parliamentary elections were described as the first democratic election, which did not run under Mubarak's regime, Islamists still had a low female representation in the parliament. I assume that many Islamist women, even if they supported democracy, were not ready for official political positions since they could not have the chance for full participation in politics, or because they did not have sufficient training to compete in the election or to act in the parliament. However, the FJP responded to such needs by organizing training for women to improve their social and political skills. According to a BBC report in October 2012, "MB trains women for parliament," about 40 FJP female members attended training for about one year and half to develop their skill in media, politics, human development, and leadership skills. The training that focused on preparing female political figures was under a project called *Mashrou' I'dad Kawader Hezbeya Nessa'eya* (Preparation females' party cadres project). The BBC report also criticized the low participation of FJP women in the parliamentary elections although their party won 43 percent of the total seats.¹²³

On the contrary, the other fundamental *Salafi* parties did not support women to run for election, even more, to participate in politics. They viewed women's entering into the parliament or to reach political position in the country as a negative impact. *Al-Nour* party, the *Salafi*

¹²³ "Egypt Trains Women for Parliament," *BBC*, October 30, 2012, sec. Africa, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20139378>.

fundamental party and the largest second winner of the election, did not favor women's participation in politics and was forced to nominate women on its lists.¹²⁴

Al-Nour was opposing the MBs in the parliament since they were trying to implement their extremist views of Islam in the laws of the parliament, which was not accepted by the FJP members who adopted moderate views of Islamic laws. While there was a controversial struggle over the identity of the nation during establishing the new constitution of the nation, few months after the results of the parliamentary elections, fundamental Islamists were tending to Islamize the nation and liberals were tending to liberalize the country, while moderate Islamist were emphasizing that Egypt as an Islamic country will be a civil state based on citizenship.

Secularists were scared by the overwhelming Islamist majority who came to power, even in the parliament or the Charter-Authoring Panel. Liberals had more to fear from hard line *Salafis* who believe in forcing women to cover themselves from head to toe. Many liberals such as Dalia Ziada, thought that Islamists in power will oppress women's rights and eliminate people's civil rights. Moderate Islamists from FJP, males and females, defended the civil rights of the Egyptian more than engaging in the debate over the identity of the nation. FJP female members were more likely to defend women's rights than men. Omaima Kamel, FJP member and a parliament candidate advocated women's rights in an interview to NPR news. She argued that there are many stereotypes about Islamist groups that should be revealed.

Kamel, who is a professor of public health, asserted that Islam and Islamists are supporting women. Men who vote in the parliament will support women's rights, she added. Regarding defending liberty of the people and civil rights, Kamel said: "You will find voices against hijab [the headscarf] and voices against bikini. All the time we accept the diversity, we accept the difference, but who can decide the path of Egypt? The moderates. They can make

¹²⁴ "What Women Lost and What Egypt Lost."

consensus."¹²⁵ Kamel was also a member of Egypt's Charter-Authoring Panel and a member of the advisory team for President Morsi. Thus, she also advocated more participation for women in public life and encouraged women to take leading positions in public offices. Kamel emphasized that the group of the Islamist female politicians decided to bring women into leadership roles, and the same time, she asserted the conservative Islamic vision that they adopt for women in Egypt.¹²⁶

The newly elected parliament had to establish a new assembly formed of 100 members to write the new constitution for the state. Islamists make up the majority on this assembly as well. One of the most controversial issues within this assembly was the fight over the Islamist clause that they support equality between men and women but only if it did not contradict with the *Shari'a* law. Liberals expressed their fears towards the ultraconservatives who might use this condition to severely restrict women's rights. Kamel, who was considered the most powerful woman among the MB, also defended this clause. This clause was considered one of the main reasons, in addition to other articles concerning women's rights, for Manal el-Tibi, a non-Islamist activist female member of the assembly, to resign.¹²⁷

Moderate Islamists, who were the majority of the parliament and the constitution panel, and the first democratically elected came from the same vessel, have repeatedly asserted that Egypt will be a civil country based on citizenship. This message was more clearly directed to the non-Islamists to assert the MB's political ideology towards modernity and decency, and to assure their support of civil rights and the identity of the country. However, Islamists have to emphasize their support of conservative traditions and the *Shari'a* since many of their supporters elected

¹²⁵ "In Egypt's New Parliament, Women Will Be Scarce."

¹²⁶ Ap, "Egypt Muslim Sisters Rise with Conservative Vision," *The Hindu*, November 10, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/egypt-muslim-sisters-rise-with-conservative-vision/article4084659.ece>.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

them for this reason. Islamists who supported civil and women’s rights and determined to see more women in positions of authority were accused by liberals of being used as a cover for an agenda they consider deeply against women’s rights.¹²⁸

The results of the Shura Council’s (the Upper House) election showed that Islamists won the overwhelming majority of the seats in that House as well. The Freedom and Justice party emerged as the largest party in the Council. They gained 105 of 180 elected seats, which is 58.3 of the total seats. They were followed by *al-Nour* the Salfist party, which won 25 percent of the elected seats; the other leftist and liberal parties won the rest. The table below can show us the results of the Shura Council election by indicating the quantity of seats gained by each political party:¹²⁹

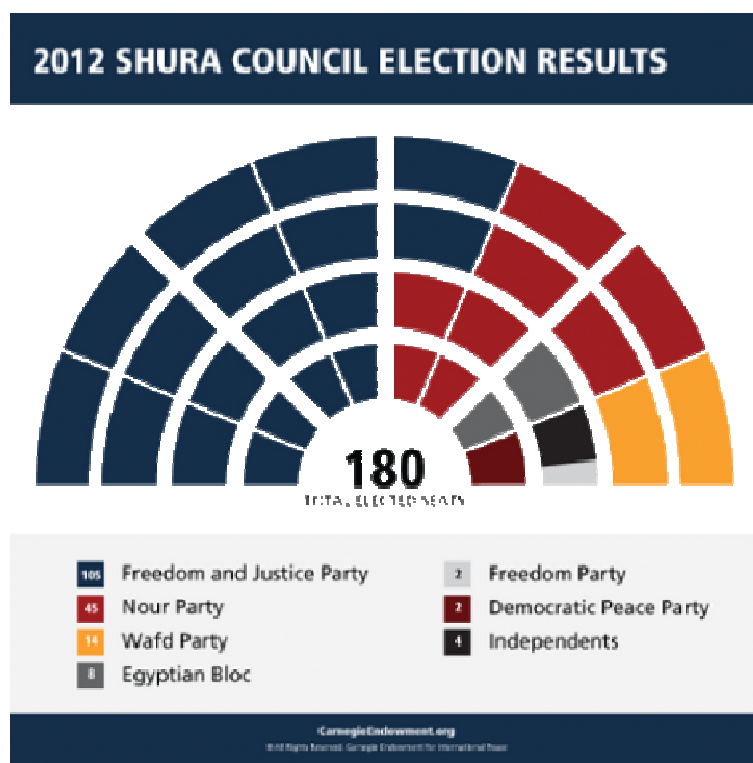


Figure 2. Results of Shura Council Elections 2012

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ “Results of Shura Council Elections – Egypt’s Transition,” accessed March 3, 2014, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2012/02/29/results-of-shura-council-elections>.

Table 4. Results of Shura Council Elections 2010

Party	Total Seats	% of total seats
Freedom and Justice Party	105	58.3
Nour Party	45	25
Wafd Party	14	7.7
Egyptian Bloc	8	4.4
Freedom Party	2	1.1
Democratic Peace Party	2	1.1
Independents	4	2.2

Source: egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2012/02/29/results-of-shura-council-elections

The Shura Council election, which occurred between 29 January and 22 February 2012, was characterized by a lack of interest, in contrast with the preceding elections of the People's Assembly. There was a low level of participation among voters, candidates, political parties, media, and civil society organizations. Less than 10 percent of eligible Egyptians made it to the polls compared to the 52 per cent turnout for the Assembly's polls. Moreover, there was a low representation of women in this election as well, in addition to marginal participation by women in the Constitutional Drafting Committee, which was condemned by active feminists, civil society and international organizations. Some organizations advised that the quota for women should be applied. Such organizations demanded that 30 percent of the committee should be females.¹³⁰

6.2 Egyptian Women in the Electoral Programs of the Contested Parties in the Parliamentary Elections 2011-2012

¹³⁰ "Carter Center Preliminary Statement on Egypt's Shura Council Election," accessed March 3, 2014, <http://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/egypt-022812.html>.

By looking at the electoral programs of the five main parties that gained the highest number of votes in the election and examining the status of women, we will find that the liberal parties slightly discussed women's issues on their political agenda. On the contrary, the Islamist moderate party FJP strongly advocated women's rights on their political agenda. However, the Salfist hardline *al-Nour* party, which won 21.8 percent of the seats of the People's Assembly, did not support women at all in political life. By looking at *al-Nour's* political program, I have found that the word *al-mara'a* (the woman) had never been mentioned in their electoral program.¹³¹ Regarding the liberal parties such as *Al-Masry al-Dimuqrati al-Igtima'i* (Egyptian Social Democratic Party), which is a liberal party emphasizing social-democratic principles in its platform, it had very low support for women's rights. The electoral program that was published by the Egyptian popular newspaper, *al-masry al-youm* mentioned the word women only one time, talking about women's right to participate in politics and economy, emphasized the importance of women's protection from sexual harassment, and asserted the social and legal protection for employed women in non-official sector.¹³²

Al-Masriyeen al-Ahrrar (Free Egyptians Party), launched in April 2011, and founded by the Coptic Egyptian telecommunication Nagib Sawiris; advocated democracy, liberalism and secularism. It was highlighted by its fast growth and emergence as a major player in political life in Egypt. *al-Ahrrar* won only three percent of the seats of the Lower House. Although Sawiris' party asserted the full equality of all citizens regardless of differences in religion, sex, wealth, race, color, region, and culture, the word woman was mentioned only three times on their

¹³¹ Damaitta, Public, "*Al-Barnamag Al-Intikhabi Lehezb Al-Nour Al-Salafi*," (The electoral Program for the Salafi Party), Damatsoft, last modified November 16, 2011 Accessed March 3, 2014, <http://www.damatsoft.com>

¹³² Nour Fakhry, "*Nanshor Al-Barnamag Al-Intikhabi Le 'Al-Democrati Al-Egtmaai'*" (Publishing the electoral program for the Egyptian Social Democratic Party), Youm7, November 3, 2011, accessed March 4, 2014, http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=526475#.UxUhx_m-1ca; "*Al-Masry Al-Dimuqrati Al-Igtima'i* (Egyptian Social Democratic Party) – Egypt's Transition." <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/11/04/al-masry-al-dimuqrati-al-igtima%E2%80%99i-egyptian-social-democratic-party>.

electoral program emphasizing women's participation in all fields of life including the social and business life. Then, the program discussed women's right to marry according to the traditions of their religions, followed by the importance of caring for the disabled women and children. The electoral program of the liberal party did not focus on the women's right to participate in political life.¹³³

The Nationalist liberal party *Al-Wafd*, which won 8.2 percent of the seats of the People's Assembly, mentioned *al-mara'a* only one time in its electoral program when promoting the share of women in the development programs. They also praised women's role in society as an essential partner in developing the nation.¹³⁴

Al-Hurriyya wa al-'Adala (the Freedom and Justice Party) was the largest political party in the nation to support women's issues and women's rights on their electoral program. The word "women" was mentioned 23 times in the FJP electoral program, which consisted of 45 pages. In their introduction to their program, women were emphasized as capable sisters of men who can serve their nation and their religion. They acknowledged the equality of men and women based on a Quranic verse, "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong..." [Quranic Chapter 9 Repentance: 71]. The FJP's electoral program asserted implementing the principles of liberty, equality, and equal opportunities; moreover, it ensured women's access to all rights, consistent with the values of Islamic law, with keeping balance between their duties and rights.¹³⁵

¹³³ "Al-Masriyeen Al-Ahrrar (Free Egyptians Party) – Egypt's Transition," accessed March 4, 2014, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/21/al-masriyeen-al-ahrrar-free-egyptians-party>.

¹³⁴ Alwafd. "*Al-Barnamag Al-Intikhabi Le Hezb Al-Wafd*" (The Electoral Program for al-Wafd Party), al-Wafd. Last modified November 9, 2011, accessed March 4, 2014, <http://www.alwafd.org/>

¹³⁵ "FJP 2011 Program on Social Justice: Freedom & Justice Party FJP," accessed March 4, 2014, <http://www.fjponline.com/article.php?id=192&ref=search.php>.

Regarding the elements of integrated development in the program of FJP, human development was the main priority, and women's rights stayed on the top of the list of these priorities, followed by youth and sports, and other programs for children. The program declared that women should perform their roles in society through active participation in elections and membership in elected legislative and local councils. They confirmed the involvement of women in all aspects of development. MB also asserted supporting women on the social level by adopting program packages helping widows and divorced women to safeguard their living.¹³⁶

To sum up with the status of women in the electoral program of the main 5 competitive political parties in the Egyptian parliamentary elections, you can find the results of using the word *al-mara'a* (the woman) for each party in the following table:

Table 5. Number Of Times Where Women Mentioned In The Electoral Programs Of The Main Five Contested Parties In The Parliamentary Elections 2011-2012

Party	Women's number	Status
Al-Nour Party	0	Totally marginalized
Egyptian Social Democratic Party	1	Women's rights to participate in politics and economy
Free Egyptians Party	3	Women's participation in all fields of life
Al-Wafd	1	The share of women in the development programs
Freedom and Justice Party	23 times	Equality, women's rights on the top priorities, participation in judiciary and politics. Adopting social-development programs for women.

*Source: Created by the author according to his compiled data

¹³⁶ Ibid.

In their article that supports women they announced that “The FJP has the greatest respect, appreciation and support for women's role as wives, mothers and makers of men; and aims to better prepare them for this role. The party aims for society to benefit from women's capabilities and resources, and realize that their giving is more, not less than men's giving – especially after their children grow beyond childhood and adolescence. Hence, the FJP holds that their power must be employed for the betterment of Egypt, our homeland.” Moreover, the FJP who already clarified their views towards reform of deteriorated economic and political issues in their electoral program, announced using *Waqf* (endowment) in vital areas to promote education, and to fight poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. Furthermore, they announced their support to train rural women, help youth to get married, and to support adoptive families, and orphans.¹³⁷

In my personal experience, as an Egyptian who was surrounded by many members of MB, they were almost serving their community on all these social issues. Sometimes, I was a volunteer who participated in many of these activities, especially charity work. The majority of MB members proclaimed that they have been volunteering such social activities for the sake of God, not for a political position. However, those from MB who sought political office, such as all other politicians, have declared that they are seeking the incumbency for the benefit of people, not for themselves.

The first democratically elected parliament for six decades, which opened its inaugural session on January 23, 2012, did not continue its work for more than six months. After the January 25 revolution, there was a struggle over power, mainly between the military leaders who desired to stay in power rather than to keep their promises by transferring power to an elected government, as they have already promised, and the Islamists who came to power through elections and preferred the transition period should go through democracy. The overwhelming

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Islamist majority in the parliament was not welcomed by the military leaders. Moreover, a presidential candidate from FJP party, president Mohammad Morsi, who was the head of Islamist party, was going to compete with the military candidate Ahmed Shafiq, a senior commander in the Egyptian Air Force, and the former Prime minister of Egypt from January 31, 2011 to March 3, 2011, in the second round of the presidential election which was held in the middle of June 2012.¹³⁸

The probability of victory of the Islamist presidential candidate annoyed the military leaders towards the increasing Islamist power that would threaten their leverage and eliminate their political influence. The SCAF members, who maneuvered the parliamentary election law with the political parties, dissolved the first democratically elected parliament by a decision had been taken by the Supreme Constitutional Court in June 14, 2012, only two days before the second round of the presidential elections. The court claimed that the People's Assembly election was illegal and must be dissolved.¹³⁹ Thus, the Egyptians' military ruler Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi ordered the dissolution of parliament, in line with a court ruling, and said that "no member should be allowed to enter the building" of the parliament. The decision to dissolve the People's Assembly had already been taken by the Supreme Constitutional Court, which was a panel of judges appointed by Egypt's ousted president, Hosni Mubarak.

The decision of dissolving the parliament was a conspicuous action by the military towards killing democracy in the country. This decision was condemned by the Islamist majority in the parliament, and considered a coup by many Islamist leaders.¹⁴⁰ Regarding the parliament

¹³⁸ "Guide to Egyptian Presidential Election," *BBC News*, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18115104>.

¹³⁹ "Parliamentary Elections Law – Egypt's Transition"; Hearst and Hussein, "Egypt's Supreme Court Dissolves Parliament and Outrages Islamists."

¹⁴⁰ David D. Kirkpatrick, "Blow to Transition as Court Dissolves Egypt's Parliament," *The New York Times*, June 14, 2012, sec. World / Middle East, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/15/world/middleeast/new-political->

dissolving issue, supporters of liberals, Islamists, and leftwing activists also announced their outrage about that decision and were united against the military rule. Moreover, other politicians went far further and considered the dissolving decision as an “end to the revolution.”¹⁴¹

6.3 Women in the Egyptian Parliament

Many people might wonder about the ability of the parliament that struggled for its constituency with the military and the Judiciary institutions in Egypt, and could not stay in official presence more than six months, to achieve any progress for the Egyptians. Although the few months that the People’s Assembly could strive to stay firm for its four-year phase in power, they could achieve some reforms on the ground which affected many Egyptians’ lives. One of these primary laws that had been issued by the Egyptian parliament was relevant to women’s rights. This law is called *al-mara’a al-ma3ela* (the law of the breadwinner woman). Azza al-Garf, the MB female leader and the member of the parliament, explained more about this law and who is the *al-mara’a al-ma3ela*. Al-Garf clarified that *al-mara’a al-ma3ela* is the woman who is taking care of her orphans, the widows who have kids and are taking care of them, the women who were deserted by their husbands, and the women who have not yet married yet and have nobody to taker of them financially. She asserted that the percentage of such women is more than 36 percent of the Egyptians, and their families are just subsisting.¹⁴²

The first achievement of the *al-mara’a al-ma3ela* law was the Medical Insurance law. This law gave the breadwinner women full coverage medical insurance for only one Egyptian

showdown-in-egypt-as-court-invalidates-parliament.html; “Egypt’s Military Ruler Orders Parliament Dissolved,” *Reuters*, June 16, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/16/us-egypt-election-parliament-idUSBRE85F0L520120616>.

¹⁴¹ Hearst and Hussein, “Egypt’s Supreme Court Dissolves Parliament and Outrages Islamists.”

¹⁴² “Azza al-Garf , “*El-Balaman ma A’amalsh Haga*” (the Member of the Parliament in Bani Swaif, The Parliament has achieved nothing), accessed March 6, 2014, youtube, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOlwrrT6IVU&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

pound per month. *Al-mara'a al-ma3ela* is a primary responsibility for society to take care of, and it gave her the required support, al-Garf added. In response to many allegations, especially those spread by the liberal supporters or anti-Islamists, that the People's Assembly has not accomplished any achievements, al-Garf in a popular conference in Bani Swaif governorate counted the draft laws. She talked about the draft law of building a long-linking bridge between Saudi and Egypt, which will increase the amount of cooperation between the two countries. Another draft law was the law of honoring the families of the martyrs. By this law, the families of the martyrs who have been through protests after the revolution should be compensated. While SCAF were in power, a draft with compensation of 30.000 Egyptian pounds was issued. The members of the parliament could increase this amount to reach 100.000 Egyptian pounds; in addition, an educational sponsorship, and employing one of the sons in the public sector, if she/he needs a job, would be granted to each family had a revolution martyr. Al-Garf asserted that there were 28 more draft laws in the People's Assembly that would be beneficial for a large sector of the Egyptian people.¹⁴³

Although Islamist parties won 70 percent of the seats of the parliament, the moderate FJP won 45 percent of the seats of the Lower House and 58.3 percent of the Upper House. Despite the fact that women, in general, gained only 12 seats in the people's Assembly, four of them were from the FJP party. Women participated very actively in the January 25 revolution, but they could barely win a few seats in the people's assembly election. This low representation of women was not due to Islamist radical policies, as was claimed by many liberals, but it was more related to cultural traditions and women's slight preparation to compete in real democratic elections. Liberal parties had a low representation of women on their lists as well as Islamists due to the same reasons previously mentioned in this research.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

When FJP participated in politics, they neither collaborated with the Islamist bloc nor with liberal-leftist bloc; they were allied with the democratic bloc, which means that they supported democracy and modernity from the very beginning. Islamists did not accept to run elections under an extremist alliance or very liberal alliance; they understood the diversity and the requirement for the majority of the society, which is democracy. Moderate Islamists, most likely, were the only group to claim that the best way to move towards democracy is through ballot boxes and reforming the institutions. Islamists, when they came to power through elections, were critically condemned by liberals because of some extremists' behaviors, which were criticized by MB as well.

Muslim Brotherhood, who believed in diversity and democracy, chose a Coptic Christian intellectual, Dr. Rafik Habib, who crossed the sectarian lines to join the new established Islamist political parties and to become one of the founders for this party and the vice-president as well. This step was encouraged by many Islamists, except the *Salafis*. Although sectarian clashes between Muslims and Christians became a crucial concern in Egypt after throwing out Mubarak from power, Habib had a common view with MB regarding reconciliation and shared identity between Egyptians, he asserted that, "Freedom and Justice Party has an answer for that. Even though there is a distinction, we share an identity." Moreover, Habib believed that MB is considered as one of the most sophisticated groups in Egypt.¹⁴⁴

Habib is interested in examining the Islamic groups. According to one of his studies, he found that "Muslim Brotherhood was able to accept different terms of democracy, to take new ideas and incorporate them into its thinking." Habib clarified that the main reason for his joining the group's political party was that his belief that Egypt is a conservative religious country,

¹⁴⁴ "A Coptic Christian's Reasons for Backing the Muslim Brotherhood | The National," accessed March 3, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/a-coptic-christians-reasons-for-backing-the-muslim-brotherhood>.

which means to him that, “many ideas of modern society, such as human rights, democracy, and balance of power, can be derived from the teachings of Islam. Habib acknowledged that his joining FJP was beneficial for Christians in Egypt. He debated that if we did not overcome the gap between Christians and Islamist movements, especially the moderate ones, there will be a problem. Habib, who defended the MB and had collaborated with them already, had a good relation with Mohammad Mahdi Akef, the MB’s former supreme guide, who allowed him to access the leadership of the organization.¹⁴⁵

Islamist moderate parties adopted an ideology that supported democracy, women’s rights, and human rights, with no contradiction of the principles of Islam, which demonstrates their beliefs that Islam is compatible with democracy. Moderate Islamists like MB came to power through elections; they participated in the election under the democratic alliance, not the Islamist, and acknowledged democracy as the best way for Egypt to pass through the transition period into a modern country. The Islamist president was the first democratic elected president in the history of the country. When the military took over power, FJP members established the *Al-Tahaluf al-Watani Li D◻am al-Shar◻ia* (The National Coalition to Support Legitimacy) (NCSL). Through this coalition, Islamists have denied the coup and revealed the Egyptian’s military crimes against humanity, at the domestic and international levels; moreover, they called for returning back to democracy and legitimacy.¹⁴⁶

Ikhwan were accused of failing to run the country in a good manner; all their policies were failed due to their attempt to Islamize the state. However, *Ikhwan* repeatedly asserted that Egypt would be a civil state based on law and the constitution. They appointed more Islamists than liberals to take leading positions in the government, and they were consequently criticized

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ “National Coalition to Support Legitimacy Calls for Escalation | Cairo Post,” accessed March 23, 2014, <http://thecairopost.com/news/103001/news/national-coalition-to-support-legitimacy-calls-for-escalation>.

by the liberal oppositions that they were trying to overcome all the incumbents in the country. When Islamist politicians responded to this accusation, they asserted that the elected government had the right to appoint members of its parties in official positions in the state, to be able to take the responsibility before the people and the parliament, which is as part of democracy that people commonly understand.

However, the newly formed cabinet under President Morsi seemed designed to avoid domination by MB. It included several members of the outgoing independents and military-picked government and technocrat figures. This cabinet, which was formed on August 2, 2013, included only 4 ministers from MB out of 35 ministries, along with 2 other ministers from al-Wasat and al-Hadara, the Islamist less active moderate political parties. On January 5, 2014, Dr. Hisham Qandil, the Prime minister of Morsi's government, changed 10 ministers, leading to an increase in the number of FJP members to 8 after the reshuffle. Thus, the reasonable number of *Ikwana* ministers in the cabinet demonstrates the false allegations of the liberal opposition that MB were trying to dominate all the powers in the country.¹⁴⁷ I assume that what mostly angered the liberals and the Salafi party *al-Nour* was their absence in the new government. Regarding women's participation in that cabinet, it was very low, similar to the People's Assembly; only two women were involved, one of whom was Christian.¹⁴⁸

In fact, MB during their time in power, faced challenges from SCAF, Liberals, non-Islamists, former regime elements, the state institutions which were still controlled by figures

¹⁴⁷ "Ten New Ministers Take Oath in Cabinet Reshuffle," *Daily News Egypt*, accessed March 9, 2014, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/01/06/ten-new-ministers-take-oath-in-cabinet-reshuffle/>; AP, "New Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Qandil and Cabinet Are Sworn in," *The Independent*, accessed March 9, 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/new-egyptian-prime-minister-hisham-qandil-and-cabinet-are-sworn-in-8002307.html>.

¹⁴⁸ "Egypt's New Cabinet Under Qandil – Egypt's Transition," accessed March 9, 2014, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2012/08/03/egypts-new-cabinet-under-qandil>.

from the former regime, in addition to the extremist Salafist party, *al-Nour*.¹⁴⁹ Although *Ikwan* might have committed some mistakes during their regime, it would be better if their partners of the revolution tried to help them build the country again after more than 6 decades of corruption, rather than only attacking their own policies all the time, which finally led to demolishing democracy, and getting back to an era which is worse than Mubarak's time.

6.4 Women's status During *Ikwan's* Regime

The first democratically elected president in the prolonged history of Egypt who came from an Islamist background, Mohammad Morsi, seemed to be causing fear for Egyptian and international feminists. Many feminists have thought that *Ikwan* are misogynists and women's oppressors. On the contrary, Morsi, the Islamist president, in his presidential candidacy campaign, promised that if he came to power, he would appoint a Coptic Christian and a woman as vice-presidents. However, this announcement was met with cautious optimism.¹⁵⁰ When Morsi came to power, he kept his promise and appointed Samir Marcus, a Christian thinker and writer, and Pakinam El Sharkawy, a female political science professor, in his presidential advisory team.

Morsi's wife Naglaa Ali Mahmoud, who dresses according to Islamic tradition, and does not hold a college degree, had been the focus of the confused media scrutiny for a while. It might come to some people's minds if they see a picture of Morsi's wife and hear about her little education, that she is oppressed by her husband. However, Mahmoud on the contrary, who preferred to keep her maiden name to conform with Islamic tradition, seemed to be quite

¹⁴⁹ "Who's Who in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/whos-who-in-the-muslim-brotherhood>.

¹⁵⁰ "Dr. Morsi and the Women," *OnFaith*, accessed March 9, 2014, <http://www.faithstreet.com/onfaith/2012/07/02/dr-morsi-and-the-women/10056>.

liberated. Moreover, Morsi's wife had refused the title of the first lady; she preferred to be called a "servant of the people."¹⁵¹ Both Morsi and his wife publically expressed their fondness of each other. Morsi has said that marrying her was "the biggest personal achievement in my life," and Mahmoud gushed, "I like everything about him." Moreover, in her appearance to the media, she seemed to be humble and has a sense of humor.¹⁵²

Although women's rights in Egypt were deteriorated during Mubarak's regime, women had witnessed more violations and abuse in the period of time when SCAF hold power. During SCAF's government, women had been repeatedly assaulted and sexually harassed in the public streets or in Tahrir during some protests. Thus, before he reached power, Morsi had to consider women's struggle, the fight to end discriminatory laws against women, and establish a true and gender equal democracy. However, what a lot of people expected from the new president was that he should work through achieving unification and harmony among all classes of society and support the issues of equality and social justice.¹⁵³

Before President Morsi came to power, he did not only declare that he would support women's rights, but also would protect the rights of all. Thus, he resigned from the FJP party to show people that he represents all Egyptians. Khaled Hamza, spokesman responsible for the Muslim Brotherhood's online outreach said, "We would never interfere in personal choices of citizens, unless they are illegal. We are completely against the notion of dealing with women as property, women have their freedoms and they must be respected."¹⁵⁴

Islamist women have always backed democracy during *IkwanIkwan's* regime, as well as before and after it. During what was considered a transition period under SCAF, Islamist women

¹⁵¹ "Egyptian Women Worry about Rights under New Islamist President."

¹⁵² "Dr. Morsi and the Women."

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ "Egyptian Women Worry about Rights under New Islamist President."

had candidates, and the majority of them participated in the electoral process. Islamists were the first group of women to condemn the military coup over the elected president. Islamist women, during *IkwanIkwan's* regime, supported democracy in the transition period through their participation in the parliamentary and presidential elections, and also the referendum over the constitution. Islamist women were very active to recruit for votes to Islamist or conservative candidates in the parliament elections. Even more, some of them participated as candidates in the parliamentary elections such as Aza al-Garf, who strongly advocated women's rights in the parliament. Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist moderate group, claims that female members represent half of the group, a ratio that is unlike any other political force.¹⁵⁵

In addition, Muslim Brotherhood acknowledges that women in their group perform the same social and political activities as their male's counterparts. Furthermore, the newly formed political party for *Ikwan* during their regime, Freedom and Justice, had over 1,000 female co-founders, a ratio that is larger than any other political party. Muslim Brotherhood group were quite often accused by liberals of humiliating women's rights in Egypt. Moreover, Islamists were severely criticized by seculars when an Egyptian delegation who attended the UN's Commission on the Status of Women to discuss the issue of women's rights declined to approve a document titled "the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), issued in March 15, 2013."¹⁵⁶

Muslim Brotherhood declared that they cannot approve the UN document since it contradicts the principles of Islam, destroys the ethics, and also seeks to demolish the institution

¹⁵⁵ Nina Burleigh, "Is Azza Al Garf Egypt's Michele Bachmann?," *Slate*, January 19, 2012, http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/doublex/2012/01/azza_al_garf_is_she_egypt_s_answer_to_michele_bachmann_.html.

¹⁵⁶ Eostre says, "Muftah - Smoke & Mirrors: Attacking the Muslim Brotherhood Using Women's Rights," *Muftah*, accessed March 9, 2014, <http://muftah.org/smoke-mirrors-attacking-the-muslim-brotherhood-using-womens-rights/>.

of the family, which was declared by the Egyptian constitution as the building block of society. Muslim Brotherhood tried to preserve the traditions of the society, but they were condemned by seculars for trying to eliminate women's rights by using religion as a cover for their oppressed policies. However, CEDAW was already rejected under Mubarak's secular government, who declared that some of the Convention's clauses are not compatible with "cultural norms" and "religious values."¹⁵⁷

Since feminists and liberals were scared by the Islamist denial of the UN Convention, President Morsi announced a new initiative on March 24, 2013 to support women's rights. Morsi launched a conference inside the presidential palace, in cooperation with the National Centre for Social and Criminal Research (NCSCR), The National Council for Women (NCW), and the National Council for Motherhood and Children (NCMC), along representatives of syndicates, members of various political parties, and other participants from many governmental and civil society organizations. During the inauguration of the initiative, Morsi asserted that "the project is a response to deliberately negative campaigns that distort the status of women in Egypt."¹⁵⁸

The goal of Morsi's initiative was to expand women's role in society and to resolve their most pressing challenges. Morsi's initiative touches deeply the real needs of a wide sector of Egyptian women. For example, the initiative included exploring methods that help to improve the life of the Egyptian women in rural and urban areas, based on researching their status socially, economically, and politically. The project also aimed at recognizing, reporting, and prioritizing women's challenges all over the country. Morsi added that "The initiative will put an end to any attempts to marginalize women, diminish their rights, or suppress their freedom and

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ "Morsi Announces Initiative to Support Women's Rights," *Daily News Egypt*, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/03/24/morsi-announces-initiative-to-support-womens-rights/>.

dignity.” Moreover, in his support of women’s leadership, he criticized the unfair representation of women in the leading positions in the nation.¹⁵⁹

The Presidential adviser Omayma Kamel said that the initiative “views women’s challenges with new eyes.” Furthermore, Kamel asserted that the sexual harassment issue was on top of the agenda. According to Kamel, the project would hold six major workshops and 45 round table discussions, which will continue for four months. Moreover, the workshops would discuss women’s political participation, and the possibility of creating a network, across the country, concerned with defending women’s rights. The head of the NCSCR Nesreen Baghdady emphasized that importance of the initiative and its credibility since it would be based on scientific research.¹⁶⁰



Figure 3. A handout picture released by the Egyptian presidency shows Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi delivering a speech during the opening ceremony of the “Initiative to support the Rights and Freedoms of the Egyptian Women” in Cairo. (AFP Photo)

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Although Morsi's initiative demonstrates how the Islamist president actively supported women's rights and invited women, who represented various institutions and political parties, to work together for developing the status of the Egyptian women and solving their main problems, his project was still criticized by liberal groups and individuals. Women's rights group *Fouada* Watch rejected the initiative completely. The group declared that the President's initiative regarding women's rights had "timed-out." *Fouada*, moreover, attacked the president by saying that his speech in the conference undermined women's rights.¹⁶¹

Two days after the conference, Presidential Advisor for Foreign Affairs Essam Haddad released a statement regarding the initiative. Al-Hadad's statement mentioned that "the initiative was launched to safeguard the status of women and activate their role in Egyptian society." He added that "the initiative "demonstrates the great attention given by the Egyptian state to the advancement of women as an integral part of the state's plan for the advancement of the Egyptian society as a whole."¹⁶²

Although we can see clearly from the president's initiative that he advocated women's rights, and sought to address Egyptian women in general, not only Islamist women, but also many seculars and liberals have often criticized him, mocked him, and sometimes attacked the President and made fun of him and his policies, without providing any alternate plans that can help in solving any problems or in developing others. We can understand that liberals and Islamists might have different political ideologies, but it was hardly to be understood why liberal women would not support women's rights in general and participate in the development of their society, instead of just criticizing, condemning and attacking their political opponents. I assume that differences between seculars and Islamists was also political; this is why many seculars

¹⁶¹ "Morsi's Women Initiative Criticised," *Daily News Egypt*, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/03/26/morsis-women-initiative-criticised/>.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

refused to work under any project initiated by or belonged to Islamists, although the latter always invited many figures from the opposition to work with them in reforming and developing the state in the transition period.

The controversial issue of women's rights has been viewed from different angles between seculars and Islamists. Islamists have alleged their full support to women's rights that do not contradict *Shari'a*, especially regarding sexual liberties. Moreover, their programs to support women's rights focused on supplying the basic needs of the needy Egyptian women, which is a great percentage of the Egyptian society. *Ihkwan* in their agenda have also emphasized some projects to educate women, support them socially and economically, and increase their participation in political life as well as promoting leading positions in the public life of the society. However, seculars' views for women's rights were relatively different; they were more likely to focus on liberating women from the rule of the patriarchal society than to look at the primary requirements for supporting and developing Egyptian women.

Although FJP supported women's rights and pushed many women to high political positions in many institutions, they did not have a very large number of female representatives in politics in comparison with their male counterparts. I have wondered many times how women, who were main forces of sparking the youth revolution, were not able to participate officially in politics since they played a major role in the change that the majority of people anticipated after throwing out Mubarak and his regime. Although many activists supported women's participation in politics, many Egyptians viewed women as incapable of playing politics since they thought that women are passionate and weak, and politics needs a strong man who can master it. Other Egyptians looked at politics as dirty work, especially among all forms of corruption that spread

all over the state's apparatus. The majority of society, who are conservative people, whether they are Muslims or Christians, preferred women to stay in their homes and take care of their families.

6.5 Who supported democracy and who killed it?

President Morsi, who stayed in power only one year, faced many challenges, mainly at political and economic levels. In addition to the tough challenges, Morsi and his group had to fight, politically and economically, against the Islamist hardliners and the secular opposition. Egypt in its transition period needed a comprehensive effort from all Egyptians, not just the political parties, whether they were in power or not. Morsi resigned the leadership of the FJP party once he won the presidential election and declared that he now became the president of all Egyptians. After he came to power, Morsi scarcely tried many different ways of compromising with all political factions on the ground to work with them for the development of the wrecked country, but it was not easy at all for him to achieve his compromising goals.

Opposition, not consolidation, was a regularly growing challenge against the first elected president. Opposition factions were extremist Islamists, liberals, socialists, the state's critical institutions or what used to be called the "deep state" such as Military, Judiciary, Police, and Media opposed most of the president's decisions and policies since they were almost controlled by figures from Mubarak's regime who opposed the revolution from the beginning. The largest opposition to President Morsi and the *IkwanIkwan's* government marched on streets in the June 30, 2013 enormous protest to express their anger against the Islamist government; anti-Islamist women and men participated in that march. The Egyptian media, which I consider one of the main elements of polarizing Egyptians and toppling the elected president, applauded the demonstrations against the Islamist elected government.

The call for mass protest against the elected president on June 30, which marked the first anniversary of the presidency of Morsi, was dominated by the *Tamrud* “rebellion” movement, a new young secular opposition overshadowed by young men and highly supported by young women. On that day, hundreds of thousands of people massed in Tahrir square and outside the presidential palace in the biggest demonstration since the January 25 revolution. At a moment when the president struggled to control the bureaucracy and just started to work locally and internationally towards economic reforms, the opposition raised new obstacles for him, condemned his ability to lead the country, and attacked Morsi for his lack of ability to achieve stability and security for people. Any rational person who can look at the decadent political and economic situation in Egypt, which has been expanded all over the institutions of the state for more than six decades, will instantly acknowledge that Morsi cannot solve all this accumulated corruption in just one year. However, Morsi and his government were trying very hard to fight solitarily against the epidemic corruption, and they were clean handed, but the opposition claimed that Morsi was a failure leader and he should resign.¹⁶³

In a televised speech by President Morsi, just few days before he was toppled, he defended his performance, admitted some errors, and promised many reforms. The president, who came to power through a democratic process, called on opposition figures to take to the ballot boxes if they wanted to achieve change in the government. Moreover, Morsi criticized the opposition leaders who refuse to take part in the national dialogue. In his speech, the President also blamed his lack of success on the internal and external enemies who hate to see Egypt moves towards real democracy.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Aleem Maqbool BBC News and Cairo, “Mass Political Protests Grip Egypt,” *BBC News*, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-23115821>.

¹⁶⁴ “Is This the End for Morsi? A Breakdown of Egypt’s June 30 Protest,” *Al Bawaba*, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.albawaba.com/news/end-morsi-breakdown-egypts-june-30-protest-502983>.

Following the presidential speech, the main opposition umbrella group, the National Salvation Front (NSF), who rejected Morsi's offer of dialogue, issued a statement asserting their demand for an early presidential election.¹⁶⁵ All secular opposition, during what was supposed to be a transition period towards democracy, refused to take part in the government, which criticized its performance, and did not accept the President's invitation to dialogue. However, the opposition did not also provide any alternative plans that could help in solving the crisis in the nation. Women and men from the secular opposition had a predominant concern, which was to expel Islamists from power, although they understand that Islamists were democratically elected. Ironically, the opposition leaders had claimed that they support democracy.

Meanwhile, on the other side, Muslim Brotherhood and its allies organized a mass protest to voice for the President "democratic legitimacy" and to deny any forms of violence. Many Islamists, in one of their huge Friday rallies, stressed Morsi's legitimacy, rejected the opposition's demands for him to resign, and called the opposition to go back to the democratic process instead of rebellion. Women played very important role in their protests to support the legitimacy of the elected president. However, two weeks before the Military's takeover, Morsi's Prime Minister Dr. Hesham Qandil, in a televised interview, called all the opposition groups to adhere to democracy. Qandil addressed the opposition who managed the June 30 protest to follow the democratic track by saying "those who managed to gather 13 to 14 million signatures [for the Tamarod campaign] can wait 3 to 4 months and usefully employ the masses they gathered [to gain the majority of seats] in the parliamentary elections."¹⁶⁶ Tamrod has claimed

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ "PM: Tamarod Should Redirect Its Energy to Parliamentary Elections," *Daily News Egypt*, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/06/22/pm-tamarod-should-redirect-its-energy-to-parliamentary-elections/>.

that they collected more than 15 million signatures for a petition that calls for President Morsi to step down to allow for fresh presidential elections.¹⁶⁷



Figure 4. An anti-Morsi poster is displayed on a wall in Tahrir Square on July 3, 2013.¹⁶⁸

In the meantime, although the military had announced before that they would stay carefully neutral, the military forces began deploying nationwide and gave the opposition's protesters hope, which made many of the demonstrators from the opposition to chant for the military and ask them to take over. The Defense Minister General Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, in about a week before the military coup, announced statement in public that urged the president and his opponents to compromise. He hinted to a military intervention, in case of non-comprise, just to

¹⁶⁷ Patrick Kingsley, "Tamarod Campaign Gathers Momentum among Egypt's Opposition," *The Guardian*, June 27, 2013, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/27/tamarod-egypt-morsi-campaign-opposition-resignation>.

¹⁶⁸ "Coup Topples Egypt's Morsi; Deposed President under 'House Arrest,'" *CNN*, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/03/world/meast/egypt-protests/index.html>.

prevent the nation from sliding into a “dark tunnel.”¹⁶⁹ Many politicians translated the military’s statement as an indication for a military takeover, but neither Islamists nor liberals were sure about the head of the military’s intentions.

On the evening of July 3rd, 2013, the head of Egypt’s Armed Forces General al-Sisi toppled the country’s first democratically elected president, issued a statement declaring the suspension of the constitution, and appointed the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, Adly Mansour, as interim president for the state. In addition, al-Sisi announced a road map for the country’s future that would be implemented by a national reconciliation committee. Al-Sisi proclaimed that “Morsi did not achieve the goals of the people and failed to meet the general’s demands that he share the power with the opposition.”¹⁷⁰ However, Morsi announced in his last speech that there was an initiative launched for compromise with the opposition, but they totally rejected it and even refused dialogue. Liberal and leftist women welcomed the General’s decision that toppled the elected President from his office and praised it.

Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians, males and females, took to the streets across the country reacting to the military actions, which was celebrated by Morsi’s opponents and described by them as a “correction” for the January 25 track; however, the military actions were described by Morsi’s supporters as a military coup over democracy and legitimacy. President Morsi, consequently, was under “house arrest,” along with some members of his inner circle, at the presidential Republican Guard headquarters in Cairo, as was reported to CNN by Gehad al-Hadad, MB spokesman. Moreover, on the same day when the military took over, two top leaders of FJP had been taken into custody along with other 300 MB members were sought by police.

¹⁶⁹ David D. Kirkpatrick, Kareem Fahim and Ben Hubbard, “By the Millions, Egyptians Seek Morsi’s Ouster,” *The New York Times*, June 30, 2013, sec. World / Middle East, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/01/world/middleeast/egypt.html>.

¹⁷⁰ “Coup Topples Egypt’s Morsi; Deposed President under ‘House Arrest’”; “Egypt Live Blog,” *ScribbleLive Embed*, accessed March 11, 2014, http://live.aljazeera.com/Event/Egypt_Live_Blog_2.

El-Hadad also told CNN that hundreds of names of MB had been put on an “arrest list” by the coup authorities, but nobody outside the group was confirmed on the list. As a result of the military’s declaration, clashes sparked over the country between the supporters and opponents of the coup, which led to killing at least 8 people and wounding 340 as was announced by the Health Minister at that time.¹⁷¹

Many figures of the MB condemned the military coup and criticized the people who supported it. Dr. Abdul Mawgoud Dardery, former member of the parliament from the FJP, called that “ridiculous.” Dardery severely and ironically condemned the supporters of the coup by saying, “I don't know how anyone with common sense can support a military coup in a democracy.” Dr. Dardery added that, Egyptians "will never recognize a coup d'etat." Many opponents of Morsi preferred to call June 30 a revolution and did not favor the military’s takeover on July 3rd as a military coup. Moreover, the military cut off all the pro-president media channels and arrested many of their employees.¹⁷² However, Islamist women who supported the legitimacy of the president, along with other women who had passion for democracy or Islamists, bravely condemned the coup, and stayed nights and days in Rabaa Square, calling women and men from secular opposition to stop support the military takeover, and to get back the track of democracy.

I have been wondering about the real intentions of those people, who called the military to take action against the Islamist elected government. Did they really want democracy, or did they just want to get rid of the elected Islamist government since they disagreed with their political ideologies? The majority of Morsi’s opponents were seculars and liberals, along with the extremists Salafis. However, I believe that liberals when supported the military takeover did

¹⁷¹ “Coup Topples Egypt’s Morsi; Deposed President under ‘House Arrest.’”

¹⁷² Ibid.

not do that for the sake of demolishing democracy in the nation, but for other reasons. I assume that the weak performance and the low representation of non-Islamist candidates in the parliament were the main reasons for liberals' hatred towards Islamists. I also blame Islamists for their lack of wisdom and intelligence to understand the reality of rivalry over powers between prominent figures of Mubarak's regime, the military, and liberals. Although I believe that *Ihkwan* scarcely tried to balance power among all rivals, but the military and the deep state's intelligence were smarter and could topple *Ihkwan* from power.

The most shocking situation for me during the first days of the military coup was the young revolutionaries, who were protesting against the brutal actions of the military when the country was ruled by SCAF, yet returned to support the military against the elected government. I could understand why people from the former regime called for military backing against the government, but what was hard for me to understand is how people who called for democracy, now called for toppling it. How could the young people forget the tremendous acts of brutality committed by security forces under SCAF's rule?

During the military rule after toppling Mubarak, hundreds of civilian protestors were sentenced in military courts and handed lengthy jail terms. Female protestors were subjected to many different forms of assaults by the hand of the military; sexual assaults that were called "virginity tests" were implemented by the military men. Another incident of a girl that was stripped and beaten on the street by security forces was commonly broadcast. There was also Maspero Massacre, when the army opened fire on Coptic protestors, killing 20, and so on.¹⁷³ I could not believe that the same people I saw in Tahrir square before Morsi took his office,

¹⁷³ "The Egyptian People Rise up and Overthrow Morsi – or Was It the Army..? | +972 Magazine," accessed March 12, 2014, <http://972mag.com/the-egyptian-people-rise-up-and-overthrow-morsi-or-was-it-the-army/75056/>.

protesting against SCAF's rule and chanting, "Down, down with the military rule" called the military to takeover and celebrated the military raping to power.

It is extremely depressing to see people who were united together in Tahrir Square against tyranny during the first days of January 25 calling for "bread, freedom, and social justice" are sarcastically divided nowadays into two main camps. Women and men from all sectors, classes, political parties and groups were standing beside each other, supporting each other, for the sake of freedom for all Egyptians. After one year from sparkling the Revolution, the diversity that people used to see in the Square is not found any more. People, who were in the square called for democracy, were split over recognizing the true democracy; at least one side knew the true path towards real democracy. Women as great players in all of these protests belonged to one of the main two camps, Islamist, who called for democracy and legitimacy, or liberal opposition who called the military coup to take over the elected democracy, and they did not prefer to call it a coup once the military too reached power using their force. However, there were a lot of Egyptians who refused to belong to either of the two camps.

While many liberals, Mubarak regime's supporters, and anti-Islamists celebrated the military taking over, on July 3, 2013, in Tahrir Square and many other public places over the country, after General al-Sisi declared his statement, many other protesters who supported president Morsi were disappointed by the military decision, called it a coup, and demanded their opponents and the military to get back to democracy and legitimacy. Morsi's supporters have ever called their political opponents to adhere to democracy, and asked them to remove the government, if they did not like their performance, only through ballot boxes; however, Morsi's opponents did not welcome this opinion, and favored toppling the elected Islamist president.

In the following picture, we can see liberal women were singing and dancing in favor of the head of the military coup, general al-Sisi, who toppled the democratic elected president.



Figure 5. Supporters of Field Marshall al-Sisi carry his photos in an attempt to persuade him to run for the presidency. January 14, 2014.¹⁷⁴

To conclude, Islamists have participated democratically in the transition period of Egypt after the 25 January revolution. Islamists won 70 percent of the seats of the parliament in the first democratic election in the modern history of the nation, and they had the highest number of elected women. However, Islamists were enforced by the military to leave power. Muslim Brotherhood leaders, followers, and supporters, females and males, have scarified for the sake of democracy. Thousands were arrested, injured, and killed when they condemned the military takeover. However, the Islamists' adherence to democracy demonstrates their understanding of the compromise between Islam and democracy, whereas both respect human rights, women's

¹⁷⁴ khaled, "Kerry Dismisses 98% Support for New Egypt Constitution as Just One Election and Not 'Inclusive,'" *WORLD NEWS*, accessed March 24, 2014, <http://pressall.wordpress.com/2014/01/19/kerry-dismisses-98-support-for-new-egypt-constitution-as-just-one-election-and-not-inclusive/>.

rights, equity, consultation, and elections. On the contrary, secularists, who supposed to accept democracy and follow international law, did not respect the results of democracy in Egypt, which came up with their rivals, the Islamists, to power. Seculars favored the military coup over the Islamist elected government, rather than competing in the next round of elections against Islamists. Thus, Islamist women, who participated actively in the political process in the transition period, were more democratic than secular women.

The following pictures show us examples of how Islamist women supported democracy and condemned the military coup, and what happened to them when they denied the military takeover.



Figure 6. Supporters of Egypt's deposed President Mohamed Morsi outside Rabaa al Adawiya mosque in Cairo, on the eve of Eid al Fitr, August 7, 2013. Photograph: Jonathan Rashad.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ "What Killed Egyptian Democracy?".



Figure 7. Habiba Ahmed Abd el-Aziz, 26-year old journalist, based in Dubai with relatives in Egypt, who was killed in Rabaa Massacre on August 13, 2013 while she was doing her job.¹⁷⁶

Many people who welcomed the military just hoped for a new civil president and government, not an Islamist one. Anti-Islamist protestors did not wish for the military to govern again; they believed that the military would help in replacing the Islamist government with a new

¹⁷⁶ "Where Is My Vote? Egypt Coup," *Facebook*, accessed March 24, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/WhereIsMyVoteEgypt>; "Mom's Desperate Text to Daughter Killed in Egypt: 'Habiba, Please Reassure Me,'" *CNN*, accessed March 24, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/14/world/meast/egypt-victim-texts/index.html>.

secular or liberal one. However, when the military plans to come to power through coup d'etat, they would never have any intentions to give up their coercive power, especially in Egypt. This is actually what has happened through Egyptian history, once the military came to power in 1952 through a coup, they did not hand it over to a civil president for almost six decades. However, the Egyptian military could leave the power, only for one year, under a mass popular pressure in 2012, and maneuvered to take over the civil government, only to keep their political powers and economic interests far away from observation and investigation.

People who protested against the Islamist elected president hoped for change, and better security and economic situation, but once they backed the military to take over, did the military hand power to an elected president? Did the military keep the security? Did the military improve the economy of the country? Did the military work towards democracy? Did the military give the people the freedom of expression? Did the military allow anybody to criticize their performance as President Morsi did? Did the military arrest anybody for their political views? Did the military save peoples' lives? Did the military have intentions to nominate any of the army men for the presidential candidacy? Unfortunately, after 9 months of the military coup in Egypt, there is not any positive answer to any of the above questions, and the political, economic, and security status in the country is getting worse day after day. Furthermore, what happened to human rights and women's rights after the military taking over?

Less than 5 months after the military coup, statistics released by the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR) revealed the details of the casualties sustained since the coup. The report showed that 2,665 violent deaths and almost 16,000 people wounded since the ousting of the elected President Mohamed Morsi in July 3, 2013. According the report, the number of deaths by violent means is up to and including November 11, 2013, and the figure for

those wounded is up to 3 December of the same year. The number of detained people during the same period is 13,145 as claimed by ECESR. However, the center announced that not all the data-collection has been finished yet. According to the research, the number of killings peaked during August, when the Rabaa al-Adawiyy and al-Nahda massacres occurred. Almost 8,000 people were injured only in that month. Most of these violations happened against people who condemned the military coup and called for democracy and legitimacy.¹⁷⁷

By looking at the women casualties only until March 2014, a research conducted by one of the active women's movements in Egypt has shown that 1500 women were arrested, 43 of them are minor girls. In addition to 1314 women were injured, and 37 women were killed, 3 of them were minor girls. Moreover, 8 women are still missing, and number of abused women is still growing after the military coup.

While these human violations keep going daily in Egypt, especially against those who oppose the military rule, the majority of people who supported the military takeover have kept silent, and they sometimes supported the military brutality actions against Islamists who usually called for democracy and expressed their opinion peacefully. Moreover, the group that came to power through elections was declared by the Egyptian authorities as a terrorist organization, despite the fact that most of the numbers of the above mentioned casualties are members and supporters of the Islamist-democratic group.

In March 2014, the United Nations expressed its discontent about Egypt's repeated use of excessive force against protesters. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) announced that the military violations in Egypt turned the international spotlight onto Egypt's human rights abuses. The 27 member states of the UN issued a joint declaration on March 7, 2014, that called for Egyptian

¹⁷⁷ "Statistics Reveal Casualties since Military Coup in Egypt," *Middle East Monitor - The Latest from the Middle East*, accessed March 12, 2014, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/africa/9021-statistics-reveal-casualties-since-military-coup-in-egypt>.

authorities to investigate these violations and hold those responsible for abuses to account. Over the past eight months, human rights violations were excessively increased due to the lethal use of coercive power against the peaceful demonstrators. Furthermore, the Egyptian authorities harshly arrested and harassed peaceful protesters, journalists, photographers who took pictures of these violations, along with many others who exercised the right of expression and assembly.¹⁷⁸

There are many forms of violations of human rights, in general, conducted by the Egyptian authorities and approved by concerned local and international organizations; however, we have to get closer attention to women's rights since this is the main focus in our research. In January 2014, the Egyptian authorities called the Egyptians to vote on the new constitution after the ousting of the first elected president. Although the new constitution strengthened the country's military, police, and judiciary and claimed to give women more rights than Morsi's constitution, it was welcomed by the majority of seculars, liberals and anti-Islamists. However, Islamist women and men refused to vote for that constitution, complaining that they voted five times before, and their votes went to trash by the military coup. Even more, they had not trusted the transparency of the voting process for the constitution's referendum, which resulted in 98 percent 'yes' vote.¹⁷⁹

The secular ECWR celebrated the new constitution as a victory for women's rights; however, they criticized the new reshuffle of the cabinet under the military regime, which was established in March 2014, and considered it as violation of the new constitution. Four women only represented in the new government, which is 12 percent. The ECWR regarded this low percentage of women's participation as a danger sign to the democratic transition, and the

¹⁷⁸ "UN Calls on Cairo to End Human Rights Violations," *Middle East Monitor - The Latest from the Middle East*, accessed March 12, 2014, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/americas/10182-un-calls-on-cairo-to-end-human-rights-violations>.

¹⁷⁹ Patrick Kingsley, "Egypt's New Constitution Gets 98% 'Yes' Vote," *The Guardian*, January 18, 2014, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/18/egypt-constitution-yes-vote-mohamed-morsi>.

building of a democratic country based on equality and citizenship. I am wondering how people who supported taking over democracy could expect receiving democracy from those who raped it. However, ECWR indicated that the military constitution is still “mere ink on a page” and does not have any force of law to be implemented. Personally, I do not believe any forms of democracy can be achieved under the military rule in Egypt who raped democracy and committed all forms of violations of basic women’s rights and human rights.

7- Conclusions

Muslim scholars were the first to advocate women's rights in Egypt decades before the appearance of feminism and women's movements in the history of the nation. Islamist and secularist women were converged when there was a critical political or social crisis threatening the stability of the nation. Women from secular and Islamist backgrounds stood firmly side to side, to face any hardships challenged the social, political, and economic systems in the country. The most recent example for their compromise was in Tahrir Square during the first days of the revolution. Women, like men, with no regard to their political belonging, were united, chanted together against Mubarak and his regime, and called for an end to tyranny and corruption of Mubarak and his government.

While the country was moving slowly towards democracy, Islamist women won the majority of the seats attained by women, and were more likely to accept democracy and follow it based on their ideology that Islam urges them to accept the basic rules of democracy that do not contradict with *Shari'a*. However, secularists, on the contrary, did not favor the Islamist escalation to power, and they could not win many seats in the parliament as their rival Islamists did. Thus, secularist women, like their men counterparts, did not prefer democracy under elected Islamist government; however, they supported the military coup, which violated human rights from the first day of their takeover until the present moment.

Women's rights are savagely violated under the military rule, particularly women who supported democracy, whether they are Islamist, or pro-Islamists, or liberals. Unfortunately, the majority of secular women ignored all the violations against Egyptian women after the military coup. However, secular feminists, after the military coup focused more on discussing less important issues than women's rights violations. They were just concerned with discussing

women's quota in the new government, and closed their eyes to all forms of abuses against Egyptian women, Islamists in particular, and all Egyptians in general.

Islamist women have stood strongly against the coup, condemned it and protested against it, calling not just for their freedom, but also for the freedom of the whole nation, although they knew that the price for freedom might cost their lives. However, many Islamist women paid this cost, and others were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of freedom. Islamist women showed many courageous situations in their peaceful demonstrations against the security forces, which forced a lot of people to show great respect to their courage. Islamist women are still participating in most of the protests against the military coup, side by side with men, and sometimes in only women's protests denying the coup, and calling for democracy, hoping that their voices might be heard, and their struggle and sacrifice will bring hope and peace for the new generations.

As a result of their exercising their right of expression and demanding democracy, from the military coup until March 12, 2014, 37 women were killed, 3 of them were minor girls, 1,314 were injured, 1,500 were arrested, 43 of them of the arrested are minor girls, and 8 women are still missing. These casualties are not just only in Cairo or Alexandria, although these two governorates have the largest number, but they occur all over the country.

To date, not only human rights are violated in Egypt, I believe that all aspects of life in Egypt are violated. However, many people are pessimistic about the deteriorated situation in the country; others still hold an optimistic view, hoping for change after defeating the military coup through their peaceful protest. Islamist women in Egypt and worldwide, whose events and activities I have followed on social media and the internet, and I have seen in many protests in which I have participated, against Mubarak's regime or the Military coup in Egypt or in the U.S,

are full of courage and enthusiasm, which shows that they will never give up their call for freedom and democracy, not just for themselves, but also for all Egyptians.

Generally speaking, Egyptian women, who have been calling for democracy, whatever their political ideology or religious background, stand together for supporting social justice and freedom of the nation. Through my observation and all over the way on my research, I have noticed that some active liberal women condemned the coup, and its violations to women's rights and human rights, although they did not favor the Muslim Brotherhood government. For Moreover, there are two prominent women's movements have been created after the coup, where they stand for democracy and legitimacy. In addition, they condemn women's rights and human rights' violations in Egypt. These two groups are Women Anti Coup Movement (WACM) and Stand for Egyptian Women (SEW), which have been found very active, at domestic and international levels, in condemning the military brutal actions against peaceful Egyptian women.¹⁸⁰ Although these two groups are highly overshadowed by Islamist women, they include several liberal women who criticize the abuses of women at the hands of the Egyptian security forces, and support real democracy, not the government's hypocrisy.

Secular feminists could appear on the surface of Egyptian politics during Mubarak's regime because they supported the liberal views of the regime or they were part of that regime, while Islamist feminists, who did not support the policies of the former regime, were oppressed by Mubarak's government. However, these women never gave up, even when they could barely work in social and political activities, and mostly in charity works. Moreover, Islamist women were very active in recruiting votes for Islamist or conservative candidates. Islamist feminists struggled to participate in politics, even the politics of their groups or the state politics. However, Islamist feminists were prevented from sharing the decision making in their political groups, not

¹⁸⁰ "SEW |," *SEW | Stand for Egyptian Women*, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://sewomen.org/>.

as a form of undermining their opinion, but as a way for their protection from the oppressing regime. Thus, if there was a chance for Islamist women to hold a leading position in politics, there were very few of them who were ready for the position. By the same token, secular and liberal feminists faced the same problem in their political parties.

Islamist women have been oppressed again after the military coup, and whenever they try to express themselves, they have been beaten, detained or killed, while liberal and secular women, who supported the coup, are protected and can express their opinions with no fear. For instance, the constitution assembly, which was formed to set up a new constitution to the country after the coup, included no Islamist men or women, except very few number of *al-Nour*, the Salafi extremist party, which supported the coup. On the other side many liberal and secular women were involved in setting up the new constitution.

In the third anniversary of January 25 revolution, men and women who supported the coup were celebrating the day in Tahrir square under full protection from the security forces, carrying pictures for the deposed president, Mubarak, for whom the revolution sparked against him and his corrupted system. Some others were carrying pictures for General al-Sisi, the head of the military coup in Egypt who arguably kidnapped the first democratically elected president Morsi for months then jailed him. Others, who were protesting against the coup were beaten, detained, some were shot and in other ways were killed in that day, including men and women from different ages.¹⁸¹

Islamist women, who are continuing their struggle against injustice in the country, and call for freedom not just for women, but to free the whole country, still have a long journey to be able to express themselves in a peaceful way. I believe that most of the activist Islamist women

¹⁸¹ "At Least 49 Dead in Egypt as Throngs Commemorate Revolution," *CNN*, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/25/world/meast/egypt-blast/index.html>.

have understood the lesson, and they should understand the nature of the current critical stage of politics in Egypt. They should also prepare themselves for political incumbency whenever they find available chances to do. Moreover, Islamist women should look forward to commonalities with other liberal feminists who agree on seeking freedom of the country from the coup, and support women's and human rights.

Islamist women are like other women in the country who found it hard to reach political positions since the patriarchal society is not ready yet to accept women in high political positions in the government. Moreover, women who reached political positions had to support the government's political agenda. However, generally spoken, women in Egypt, without regard to their ideology and background, should be well educated, trained and prepared in a professional way if they are looking for a political position in the government, to be able to compete with their male's counterpart whenever there is an opening position. Throughout history, Egyptian women have proved their ability to participate in changing social traditions and political decisions in the country, not just for their own benefits, or their own families, but for the benefits of the whole society, although they have very limited opportunities to act in politics. Thus, women in Egypt should be encouraged to participate in policy making to be able to achieve more change for country, rather than abused and accused of lack ability to make change in politics.

Although I argue that Islamist feminists are more democratic than secular feminists, based on their political ideology that Islam and democracy are compatible, and their actions towards following democratic process in the transition period in the contemporary history of Egypt, women from both groups have to find a common ground to compromise, not only for achieving more rights for both, but also to achieve stability and progress in the current upheaval situation in the country. However, more research should be conducted on how to achieve

compromises among Islamist and secularist women in order to be able to promote their rights and to work together on finding solutions for the current complicated political and economic situation in Egypt. I believe in women's ability to provide great solutions for the current crisis in the country; however, their voices should be heard first.

Finally, my words cannot express how great respect and appreciation I have for all women who struggle for justice and democracy, in Egypt, in the U.S. and all over the world. May God bless all of them!

Abbreviations

AUC	American University in Cairo
AWSA	Arab Women's Solidarity Association
DNU	Daughter of the Nile Union
ECWR	The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights
EFU	Egyptian Feminist Union
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party
GEC	Gender Equality Committee
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
MB	Muslims Brotherhood
MWS	Muslim Women's Society
NCW	National Council for Women
NDP	National Diplomatic party
NFP	National Feminist Party
NPC	National Preparatory Committee
PSL	Personal Status Law
SCAF	Supreme Council of Armed Forces
SMB	Society of Muslim Brotherhood
WCEA	Women's Committee for Electoral Awareness
WCPR	Women's Committee for Popular Resistance
WWCC	Wafdist Women's Central Committee

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