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The American University in Cairo

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

**Constructing an Islamist Vision: A Discourse Analysis of Egyptian  
Islamist Websites**

A Thesis Submitted to

Journalism and Mass Communication Department

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts

By Youssef Esmat Morshedy

Under the supervision of Dr. Mohamad Elmasry

January/2014

**Abstract:**

After the January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011 revolution in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) formed the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and the Salafis formed several parties, including the popular "Al-Nour Party" (The Light) party. Many Egyptians joined the parties as they increased in popularity. On July 3 2013, however, the military intervened and deposed the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi, the first elected civilian president in Egypt's modern history.

This research is guided by the broad question of how Egyptian Islamic groups present their ideologies and principles to the Egyptian society via their websites. Islamic movements gained popularity after Egypt's Jan. 25 revolution and many of them entered the political scene through forming political parties. This research will shed light on how Islamists use the web to present their philosophies, programs, and visions, and how the groups deal with stereotypes that Islamists are violent and intolerant. This study will focus on two main research questions: the first, how do the FJP and Al-Nour Party parties describe themselves and their agendas and ideologies on their websites? The second analyzes how both groups address long-held stereotypes against them dealing with backwardness, violence, and exclusion of non-Muslims. Many of the discourses that were found on the FJP and Al-Nour website seem to contradict common stereotypes about Islamists that they are violent, anti-Christian, and do not respect rights and freedom of individuals.

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## **I. Chapter One: Introduction**

### **A. Introduction:**

Technology has become a vital aspect in the lives of many people, regardless of background or social class. The great advance of technology has made it easy for people to access information and knowledge and pursue social interaction. With the high speed of technology and communication many parts of daily life have lost their significance due to the effect of time and space (Gotved, 2006). Also, people in different countries have become aware and more informed about events and news happening in other parts of the world owing to electronic technology.

In Egypt, technology has made it necessary for multi-national companies, political parties, local organizations, NGOs, and even individuals to be active online throughout creating their own official websites and other internet pages. According to Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, official statistical agency of Egypt CAPMAS, internet penetration reached 43 % at the end of quarter two in 2013 (Ahram online, 2013). These websites and pages contain information and data that can have an effect on the audience's decisions, opinions and views and can result in affecting their actions and activities.

Strong technology development like social networking has been a key channel for Egyptians to express their anger and protest against the Egyptian government. Egyptians turned to the online environment as a site of political activism because of political repression during the Hosni Mubarak era. Many Egyptians felt disappointed by the unfulfilled promises of the Mubarak era, especially as the conditions in the country continued to deteriorate. Many people saw little improvement in life, especially in the areas of education, the economy and investment, tourism and health. Complaints about the daily vital needs of people kept rising until they reached a

climax in January 2011 when Egyptians revolted against the Mubarak regime, ousting the dictator in an 18-day uprising. Importantly, social media platforms like Facebook, Youtube and Twitter were outlets for opposition groups and organizations to call for and arrange the January 2011 demonstrations (Preston, 2011).

Egypt's post-uprising transition period culminated in the country's first ever-democratic presidential elections in 2012 (Ishani, 2011). The Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi won the June 2012 election, but his time in office was characterized by political tumult and polarization. Many Egyptians, angered by Muslim Brotherhood's policies, took to the streets again on June 30 2013, and Morsi was ultimately removed from power by the military on July 3, 2013.

The transition period that began in February 2011, and which included the one-year Morsi period, featured serious political debates between Egyptian liberals and Islamists about the path the country is taking. Media played a key role in allowing the debates to play out.

In this thesis, I will be examining the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi political parties represented in the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and Al-Nour party, respectively. Specifically, I will analyze how these two Islamist parties have presented their ideologies and agendas to the Egyptian society through their official websites. To examine the websites, a discourse analysis methodology will be used focusing on the meaning of online texts. Much has been published about how Islamists are represented by mainstream media outlets in the West and in the Muslim world (see Poole, 2000, Shaheen, 2001, Blasing, 1996) but comparatively few studies have examined how Islamist movements have presented their visions, agendas, and ideologies. This research attempts to help fill this gap in the literature.

Although the MB party has been removed from office in Egypt, they are still considered to be one of the most organized and popular groups in the Egyptian political scene. This research at such time is significant to help the society understand the philosophy and ideology of the MB and the Salafis in Egypt. It is important to know how popular Islamists use the web to talk about themselves, especially given that these groups have historically lacked legal status in society, have been negatively stereotyped, and their future status as political players remains (at the time of this writing) unclear.

### **B. Background:**

It was noticeable that Egyptians were dissatisfied during the last few years of the Mubarak era due to the high rate of unemployment and economic decline which affected the lives of millions. According to the World Bank, the unemployment rate went from 5.2% in 1980 to 13.2% in 2011 resulting in high rate of poverty, 25% within the society (World Bank, 2013)

On Jan 25<sup>th</sup> 2011, masses of Egyptians protested against Mubarak. Although the police forces were in the habit of preventing large demonstrations and protests against both the President and the government, the Jan 2011 demonstrations all over Egypt overcame the police and made it difficult for them to control (Fahim & El Naggar, 2011). Since the governmental media channels down played the protests, the Internet was a key tool to know and observe what was happening and organize for the next steps (Khamis and Vaughn, 2011). Accordingly, the government cut off the Internet for few a days to distort communication. However, the government's denial and failure to handle the crisis led to Mubarak's stepping down on February 11 2011(Ishani, 2011). Hence, Egyptian political life experienced great change.

In June 2012, Mohamed Morsi, the MB candidate, won the first post revolution democratic presidential elections (Shabi, 2013). There were many reasons that led to the winning of Morsi and his political party. First of all, Egyptians had doubts about the liberal candidates as some of them were linked with the previous regime (Shabi, 2013). This made them open to try the Islamists' system and see how it will affect the country. Second, the Islamic movements were gaining more popularity since they were close to the lower classes, better positioned than the new parties, and well organized in the society (Tadros, 2012). The Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), had won 77 out of 156 seats and the Nour, Salafi party, 33 seats in the parliament and were getting more attention (Brown, 2011). Western governments and political leaders had concerns that Islamists were dominating the political scene in Egypt, and were also concerned that Islamic political ideology would challenge the west's interests in Egypt and the Middle East (Hassan, 2012). Historically, the west has tried to exert its political will in the Middle East and "westernize" Arab countries and societies (Said, 1997).

Although the MB had a very good chance to keep Egyptians' trust and improve the country, they failed in the eyes of many. Various people believed that Egyptians' basic demands were not being considered and their daily lives were not getting better (Stern, 2013). This pushed many Egyptians to stand up again for their rights and call for Morsi's removal. In June 2013, many Egyptians took the streets marking the one year anniversary of Morsi's inauguration. On the other hand, supporters of the president demonstrated and held sit-ins next to Rab'a Al Adawya Mosque and Al-Nahda Square in Giza (Collard, 2013). After four days, the Egyptian army interfered and the president was ousted and kept in Military custody and General Abdel Fattah Elsisy announced a transitional road map (Collard, 2013).



Globally, many countries like Russia, the Netherlands, Germany, Turkey and Iran didn't approve of the military intervention and asked officials to return the civilian president to office. Also, some EU countries threatened to cut financial aid (Alexander, 2013). However, many countries also offered either explicit or tacit support for the military intervention, which was described by some as a democratic response to the will of millions of Egyptians.

## **II. Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **A. Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi:**

The Middle East as a region is the cradle of three of the world's great religions, Islam, Christianity & Judaism and plays a major role in all countries (Ayubi, 1980). In the last decade, there was a revival for Islam in many countries and movements started to demand using it as a political guidance in their societies. Due to this rise of Islamic movements in Egypt and Tunisia, it grabbed the west's attention and curiosity. The world leading countries and the west were concerned towards the increase of Islamic movements and participation in political events like strikes, protests, and resulting in social instability (Walsh, 2003). The fear of US and western countries is that Islamic political parties will try to hinder and fight the western expansion in Arab societies and this will affect their policies and interest (Esposito, 1994).

After eight decades of being illegal and neglected as political opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood, MB, survived the harsh political scene and started to seek power and authority (Daragahi, 2013).

The MB were founded, 1928, by Hassan El Banna and was very active during the 1930's and 1940's as a religious group and started to create awareness of core Islamic values, and participated in political activities (Ayubi, 1980). Also, in 1933, El Banna opened, Al Akhawat Al Muslimat, the Muslim Sisterhood and this is due to their strong presence and to develop their role within social, political and cultural aspects (Hamed, 2013).

The Brotherhood attracted and targeted their followers to be well educated and professional and the group included many doctors and engineers. They wanted to

appear to the west as a modern Islamic group. Yet, many of the followers were from traditional social class as farmers and laborers (Lia, 1998).

In the book, the Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought, the authors state that the ideology of the MB movement is based on Islamic principles and values and it is “one of the most significant movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and produced offshoots elsewhere in the Middle East like in Jordan, Syria and Palestine”. This implies that the organization was very powerful, organized and had great influence on other Muslim groups across the region. Furthermore, El Banna’s, founder of MB, main objective is to use the Qur’an and Sunna as a guide and way of life (Gul, 2010).

Beside their main ideology, the MB members and El Banna criticized the separation of religion and politics because their vision is to use Islam as comprehensiveness vision and a philosophy in life (Böwering, Crone, Mirza, 2013). In addition to that, one of the ideologies of the organization is to fight and prevent western influence “Islamic socialism” and imperialism in spreading through out society as the MB viewed the western influence deterioration of morals and Islamic values (Fuller, 2003).

During the 1930s the political environment was close to the elite upper class families and society’s nobles were responsible for setting policies. Furthermore, any Islamic associations were prohibited to practice politics or express their political concern. However, they used issues like the Palestine revolution and the Al Aqsa Mosque as a platform to express and criticize the foreign Egyptian policy (Lia, 1998).

The MB lacked its legal status for almost six decades, yet they are considered the most successful political and social movement and organization due to their solid and powerful hierarchy within the organization (Hamzawy & Brown, 2010). They

were faced firmly under Nasser Regime and were not allowed to participate or be active. Unlike the Sadat 1970's, he started to give them more privilege and politically manipulate them against the leftists (Kepel, 2005). They strongly believed building a stable and strong infrastructure in a society comes first from principles that are stated in the Holy Quran and can be applied universally (Moussali, 1992)

Therefore, they were the first to step up and control the political scene after Mubarak has stepped down. Their objective was to have Sharia the main core source of laws and would be fully implemented in the society as to face corruption, western influence, ethical and moral carelessness. The second is to face the influence of western countries inside our society like western banks, shops, nightclubs, clothes and even policies (Roy, 1994).

Most of their members are from the middle class with very rare exposure to the west that perceives Islam as an ideology more than a way of life or a guide. Most of the Islamic movement members have been exposed to their political education and concept in the university and getting information from different political concepts like Marx. Furthermore, interpreting the Quran and merging it with politics made their beliefs and concerns stronger and wanting to take over society (Roy, 1994).

After Mubarak took over power in 1981, the MB tried to be a prominent organization and politically acknowledged. As Mubarak came to power, he adapted his political views to the existence of the MB and other Islamic groups giving more freedom and political participation. The MB wanted to gain large representation in the parliament and they achieved so by political alliance with small parties at the time like "Al-Wafd" & "Al-Omal" in 1984 and the Socialist Labour party in 1987 (Al Awadi, 2005).

During the 1980s, the MB started to face harsh restrictions and harassments from the government as an opposition group therefore they diverted their focus on syndicates (Fahmy, 1998). In 1984 to 1987 they wanted to control syndicates like doctors, lawyers and engineers' syndicate to strengthen their position in the political scene and they achieved so by winning the majority of seats. Not only did the MB members were controlling the doctors syndicate general assembly but also Engineers Syndicate by winning 54 from 61 seats (Fahmy, 1998).

To gain the support and spread their objectives, the MB started to take over spaces university campuses and social volunteer work that surpassed the work done by the government. They had the ability to provide the needs of the society; consequently, they gained an informal legitimacy and presences in backed from society and started to move up (Al-Awadi, 2005). Moreover, personal interaction between students on university campuses, during the mid 1980s, boosted the MB to gain more popularity and strength as they are always trying to improve their student services at a time the government failed to do such work (Al-Awadi, 2005). For instance, MB members dominated the student union in Cairo and Alexandria Universities; hence they started to give out revision sheets, papers, and selling used textbooks. By the early 1990's they controlled and had large representatives in most associations as they used syndicates and student unions as alternative platforms to express and reach people (Walsh, 2003).

The final approach was to show their good will and intention towards the society through civil work in villages. For instance, they sent medical caravans, built mosques in villages and places that the government didn't reach. Therefore, they tried to fill the gap between the government and people which gave them high popularity and credibility (Walsh, 2003). Opposition groups stated that Islam would not cure

societies, it is about the issues and problems like population growth, unemployment of the educated, and shrinking of the middle class; as a result a group of factors creates social crisis (Roy, 1994).

With such actions made towards society the organization framed itself domestically as one that calls for true Islamic values. MB gained their legitimacy from the society and the people, as the government didn't officially approve their presence in society (Al-Awadi, 2005). On the other hand, from outside countries and international organizations would consider these "filling in the gap" as a way to develop the Egyptian countryside (Walsh, 2003). Furthermore, many of the social classes are trying to create an identity for itself by escaping from secularism and adopting to Islamic principles. Islamic political movements, represented in parties, think that by having an Islamic identity the needs of the society would be fulfilled through Islam; however, what is needed is to make the right use of the sources available in the society and not by changing the identity (Ayubi, 1980).

The MB took advantage of social events that affected the people and would reach them with help and turn it to a political agenda for them. The 1992 earthquake was a turning point for the MB as they were seen as a savior for the society since they provided food, shelter and blankets to many homeless people who were affected from the earthquake in Cairo. They appeared very efficient and organized and responded faster than the government and as a result, the government seemed insufficient (Zahid, 2012). Not only did their quick reaction towards the crisis gave them social recognition in Egypt but also global acknowledge. As a result of their total goodwill intentions and work in the society, their social base expanded and Mubarak's government started to see them as threaten to the society (Walsh, 2003; Fahmy 1998).

Their ultimate goal is to establish Muslim societies within Islamic states and for him this starts by having a revolution on the tyrant authority (Moussali, 1992). Its importance as Muslims started to lack knowledge, progress and the true essence of Islam.

With the win of Islamic political parties, they have minor changes in the social laws and customs. Their main concern would be reestablishing the Muslim law, the Sharia, as the main primary source in society (Roy, 1994). These intentions made the Egyptian government to always perceive them a threat to the internal and external relations of the country.

During the 1990s, the Islamic parties won the elections in 1991, in Algeria and transformed the country to a more conservative and Islamic country. The Egyptian government feared the increasing growth of the MB. In 2000, the MB won 17 seats in the People's Assembly and five years later they won 20% of the seats in the parliament as independent candidates (BBC, 2013). Consequently, the Egyptian government started to limit their participation and movements within the society by putting more security measures, arresting members, issuing legal laws and policies that would obstacle and control their political participation (Kepel, 2005). In addition to that, the government feared that they would control the social middle class, which represents a large percentage form the society. Therefore, they were always faced by harsh security measures and many of them were sent to jail for years without even having a formal investigation or accusation. Furthermore, many Islamic militant were considered as offspring from the MB as groups started to appear and establish themselves and threaten the society through very violent actions (Ayubi, 1980).

Many extremists and radical Islamic groups went to Sinai to settle there by early eighties and most of these groups and members are jihadist or Salafi and not

linked with the MB (Mamdouh, 2012). Furthermore, most of jihadist groups, in North Sinai, settled there as to be near to the Israeli borders and be able to launch attacks against them and also to establish an Islamic state in the peninsula (Shaaban, 2011). For instance, “Al Tawhed and Jihad” group were responsible for bombings and terrorist attacks on touristic attractions and compounds in Sinai from 2004 to 2006. Moreover, the level of violence differs from each group depending on how they want to achieve their goals and objective. This is due to their background, education, and socio economic class (Ayubi, 1980). The political system in Egypt bans any political party to be based on religion or ethnicity. Yet the Brotherhood was always trying to establish their political party. However, in parliamentary elections they were allowed to enter as individuals or some used to merge with other political groups (Fuller, 2004). In the last two years, the MB, was surprised with the political performance of the Salafi who just entered the real life of politics, and yet managed to win many seats in the parliamentary elections, 25%, and expand their social base (Hassan, 2012).

### **B. Salafi Groups:**

Salafism refers to “an interpretation of Islam that seeks to restore Islamic faith and practice to the way they existed at the time of Muhammad” (Brown, 2011). Thus Salafis, nowadays, believe that such a great time should be a Sharia example and guide to live with and apply it in our societies. Islamic scholars traced roots of the Salafism ideology to Ibn Taymiyya who wanted to focus on the time of the prophet till the death of scholar Ibn Hanbil & the prophets companions as he thinks this was the real and pure Islamic era and that we as people need to follow the rules, practices and beliefs of this time (Gauvain, 2010). Moreover, Salafi theology is created from such ideology to the Quran and Sunna as their core guide in life and in establishing societies and that the individual should always depend on God. Importantly, salafi



ideology is governed by a more strict, and often literal, interpretation of the Islamic textual sources. Some more extreme strands of salafism harshly denounce some who are perceived by Salafis as not following properly the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The concept of Salafism entered through The Ansar al-Sunna (Helpers of the Prophetic Way), started to establish itself in Egypt as the leading Salafi organization, founded by Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqqi, 1924 (Gauvain, 2010). The organization aimed for a religious reform in the Egyptian society through using meaning from the Quran and the Prophet's actions and life. Moreover, gaining help and support from Saudi Arabia by sending scholars (Brown, 2011). Targeting lower and middle class people in delta cities where it was easy for them to control their minds and many of them were coming back from Saudi Arabia as workers were already exposed so such religious views. For instance, sermons, lectures, and books were given to the public. Where as in Upper Egypt "Al Gamaa Al Islamia" is more covered with Sunni beliefs and is against the secular system in the country. Yet, both parties were always out of politics and just focusing on a religious reform.

The MB and the Salafis share the same objectives and ideology but each group achieves it in a different way (Rubin, 2011). Salafism deeply focuses on the way of life and practices of prophet Mohamed and his companions and view this era as "pure Islam" and therefore, they follow it (Durie, 2013). Both groups tend to use religious terminologies and languages yet it is reflected in the Salafis dress wear that they do not want to adapt to the western clothes. Generally speaking, the salafis are more strict and literal in their interpretation of the Islamic texts and Islamic shari'ah, while the Brotherhood are viewed as more moderate and flexible in their interpretations.

Their ideology is against any western political, economic, or social ideology or principles to be applied or influenced in Islamic societies since they are not based

on Islamic roots or not derived from the timing of Prophet Mohammed (Durie, 2013). On the other hand, the MB tends to be more flexible in adapting ideologies from the west that might fit the Islamic societies. The MB tend to challenge western ideologies in many aspects like politics, economy, culture and social and try to use and adapt them to the Egyptian society. In an interview (2011) with Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, on the MB English website, mentioned that the MB is more “comprehensive and inclusive” as it includes all religious concepts like Sufi and Salafi. He also, mentioned that the MB tries to be flexible and balanced in challenging issues, unlike the Salafis, who tend to be aggressive and violent to some extent when they face western concepts. Furthermore, al-Qaradawi stated that the Salafis view that the MB got drifted from their main objective and core Islamic value. As a result, the US views MB as a moderate Islamic organization and the Salafi as a radical group (Rubin, 2011).

Socially, Salafi concepts would use Islam in any mean to stop and fight imperialism and western influence return to the Quran the Sunna and the sharia and reject the 4 major Islamic schools, the Madhahib (Roy, 1994)

Although their main objective is to establish the Islamic Shari’aa as the country guide, they started to participate and involve themselves in politics, especially during the January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011 revolution (Brown, 2011). Many of the Salafis were divided whether they should join the people’s protests against the ruler or not. This division created a distraction to their followers and each person started to think individually regarding their religious background. As they started to participate in political events and appear more on TV channels and press Salafi leaders began to be careful about their image and the messages they deliver via the media. For instance, the Salfi channels such as Al Hafez, Al Rahma and Al Nas are all promoting for

Salafi. Nowadays, 70% of mosques in Egypt are under the Salafism ideology (Gauvain, 2010). As for women, they are not allowed to appear on the screens as some consider it a sin to appear, talk, or interview a man she is not married to and this reflects how they have a rigid mentality towards women and gender relationships (Field and Hamam, 2009).

Having explained the ideas of MB and Salafis idea and provided an overview on their ideologies and history, I will look now on how Muslims are being pictured in western media. Western countries and media are a part of the MB and Salafi audience because they are being framed and portrayed in the west as anti democratic and Muslim extremists; therefore, both groups appear to be trying to address them in their websites content as a response to the stereotypes and labeling in western media.

### **C. Muslims in Western Media:**

In this section I will present how are Muslims in western media portrayed. Although this study is concerned with how Islamists portray themselves on their websites, it is also important to examine, in the review of literature, studies that analyze how Muslims and Islamists are portrayed in western media. The reason this is relevant to the present research is because western media portrayals have, at least in part, helped shape how many people inside Egypt perceive Islamists, and also because Egyptian Islamist discourses can be seen partly as a response to common stereotypes of Islamists, many of which are spread through western media representations.

In the West, Islam has been closely related with the word terrorism and terror (Said, 1997). The labeling started by the Iranian hostage crisis to change the picture of Islam in the west. Western media started to portray Muslims as terrorists and related Islam to violence and aggressiveness (Mishra, 2008). Since then, Arabs & Muslim been portrayed in a negative image in the West through media and films. This is due

to some individuals been hijacking or bombing places in name of Islam (Nurullah, 2010). The media portrayed and related the word Muslims with global terror, jihad, fundamentalism and radical groups (El-Aswad, 2013); consequently, western societies started to create Islamophobia and distant themselves from Muslim societies and viewed them as “the other” (Said, 1997). Furthermore, western media represents the Muslims society as a dominant male environment and that women do not have a role or a significant status in society and as a result, these ideologies “ hinder the acceptance” of Muslim societies and make it more difficult to communicate (Navarro, 2010).

As a global media event, September 11 marked the beginning of an era of unprecedented media focus and attention, both internationally and locally, on the issue of Islam and relating it to terrorism (Aly, 2007). Not only scholars and academics wanted to deeply understand Islam and Muslims but also individuals. Western and European governments view groups with Islamic roots, in Middle East, as a threat to the political stability in societies and countries (Said, 1997). Furthermore, it is been debated whether Islam is compatible with democracy and supports the notion of freedom of expression in Arab societies (Mishra, 2008).

Muslim youths are taking many paths and it remains to be seen how they will be trained, how they will interpret and practice their religion (Leonard, 2003). Using the websites created they try to identify their values, ideology and have a correct image for them. Currently, they are reconstructing their identity in ways that reinforce religion as the primary marker of identity yet not labeling them as terrorists. Scholars observed that the internet is a potential virtual world for Muslims as they discuss political issues like freedom, democracy and human rights (El Masry, 2013).

The public viral space afforded Muslims, everywhere, opportunities to engage in alternative communicative and spaces that did not perpetuate negative stereotypes of Muslims (Aly, 2007). El Aswad, 2013, states that due to the ignorance of media about Islam and Muslims there is a conflict of ideology and vision. Although the Internet remove boundaries between Muslims in the world there are still some ethical and moral limits to them like online gambling and watching pornography sites (Bunt, 2009). Furthermore, contributions and efforts from Muslims can make better understanding towards American society. Like, demonstrating the proper ways of bringing up children and caring for the elderly, influences that involve conceptions of gender, the individual's morals and ethics (Leonard, 2003). All these actions are a true reflection on the essence of Islam and helps in understanding the core values of Muslims.

#### **D. Islamists Portraying Themselves:**

The Internet, as a transformative medium, has bridged geographical barriers among many Muslims. The Internet technology has contributed to what can be described as a “virtual online Islamic community” (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2010). In Middle East countries, due to the presence of authoritarian regimes, people are not always given a chance to express their opinions or thoughts without fear (Khamis and Vaughn, 2011). Yet, the internet provided a chance for expression to express views and opinions (Tajbakhsh, 2003).

Websites have enabled Muslims to interact in online discussions and deliberations, which can help in expressing and shaping Muslim personality (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2010). Many websites like Islam-online, and Ask Imam began having sections to address Islamic topics such as marriage, fasting, pilgrimage and Shari'aa (Islamic values) all these topics are written by Muslim scholars and

academics. However, not all websites provided the author of the topic. Moreover, The audiences are enthusiastic about such online fatwas, as they don't get satisfactory answers in real life and thus, they turn to the virtual Islamic world (Bunt, 2003). Due to the poor quality of technological education in the Middle East, there is no focus on online religious education or training, to create an online public space for discourse about Islam (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2010).

Getting exposed to such Islamic websites creates a certain framing and perception in one's mind. Since, many inquiries and expressions are prohibited and censorship, these Islamic websites are turning to online Islamic society. In their article *Collective Identity In The Virtual Islamic Sphere*, El-Nawawy and Khamis mention that political issues like democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression are discussed in many forums.

Not only Muslims but also non-Muslims can promote and share their own point views and get exposed to many different perspectives (Bunt, 2009). Using tools like chat rooms, forums, multimedia videos and images, social networks that are all based on the user generate may help Muslims to discover new knowledge and details about Islam. Thus, this virtual world created a new platform for Islam that is growing globally with different perceptions and looks.

The role of websites is to unite people with same ideas and beliefs. Islamic websites are a possible bridge between 'tradition' and 'modernity', acting as alternate voices online and simplifying the spread of democratization. In addition to that, they are now serving as window for Islamic countries (Bunt, 2003). It helped in the creation of "collectivism and communalism" as people with the same religious identity and faith started to form their own online communities (El-Nawawy & Khamis 2010). The virtual Islamic community discusses political, social and gender

issues. One of most topics talked about is the Palestinian – Israeli conflict (Bunt, 2003). Due to its relation with Islam, this issue is debated on Muslim websites. Bunt states that Islamic Militant groups in countries like Afghanistan, and Chechnya started to use the word “e-jihad” on online groups and websites to foster their cause and weakens their opponent’s ideology and supporters.

On the other hand, the Salafists are not wide spread on websites due to their conservative and traditional philosophy. However, currently there are 12 stations that provide Salafi content on Niles Sat, Egypt’s main satellite (Field & Hamam, 2009). They focus on reading the Quran solely as their guidance in life but before following it a Muslim must have proper beliefs; therefore, they try to correct other Muslims beliefs. For example, Al Nass (The people) was one of these channels started to broadcast in 2006. The channel started with non-religious programs or content but the viewership wasn’t very high. Thus, the owner, Saudi investors, gave the chance for some Salafi clerics to give talk shows to viewers and therefore, the viewership hugely increased (Field and Hamam, 2009). After 9/11, a global shift happened to focus and understand the whole Islamic community with its different types. Muslim websites were highlighted and more websites tackling international relations were established (Bunt, 2003).

To sum up, the political Islamic parties websites and Salafi stations create a certain frame and image in the society’s mind. This reflects the content, ideologies and visions on how the political Islamic parties members and Salafi perceive women, violence and freedoms in society.

### **III. Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework**

#### **A. Social Construction of Reality:**

In this section, I will discuss the theoretical framework that will be used to analyze the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi discourses. The theoretical perspective that underlies this research is social construction of reality. Social realities are created from individuals' points of view and can be used to explain how the MB and Salafis view and construct reality.

The theory is a subset of the sociology of knowledge – which is concerned with how human thought is produced out of specific and contextualized social circumstances (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Specifically, the social construction of reality addresses how acquired knowledge about the world can help create a perception of reality that can be taken to be “the environment itself” (Lippmann, 1922). Importantly, reality construction is based largely on discourses and language (Turbbull, 2002). That is, people perceive reality through language, and end up developing their concrete understandings about the world through the discursive constructions they come across and interact with. Berger and Luckmann as cited in "Using religious discourse to construct reality" mentioned that human beings are not stable and need to create a meaning to the world they live in. People interact and communicate in order to establish social values and norms (Lisa, 2007). In sum, then, the social construction of reality deals with how individuals construct various views of the world and reality (Waks, 1990).

Some scholars have written specifically about how people construct reality – the very process of individual-level reality construction. Searle (1995) argues that people construct social reality by assigning functions and names to objects according to their purposes. Here, according to Searle (1995), words and symbols are important



because they are partly constitutive in the reality of society. What is key, also, is that the meanings that people have assigned to objects and events are often passed down, taken for granted, and unquestioned. Schutz mentions that when an individual believes in something as true or real, unconsciously he gives it status of reality and cannot be turned into fantasy. However, reality should be considered unstable insofar as people can alter their perceptions about objects and events (Pable, 2010).

In relation to the above, the study deals with Islamic groups establish political parties, FJP & Al-Nour, that were formed based on sharing and intentionally believing the same principles, values and attitudes. As these groups are formed, their members develop collective behavior actions that create their social identity, and constructing a reality form their view.

Den Bulck (1999) states that Le and Burger mention two types of reality: objective and subjective reality. The objective reality is the world without individuals but with governments, rules and regulations. The subjective social reality is the individual living in the objective reality and trying to internalize it due to his living conditions, perceptions and attitudes. Furthermore, subjective reality has to do with attitudes and perspectives towards objects in the environment. These manners and views are gained through everyday experience (Waks, 1990). Berger and Luckmann (1966), however, state that there is no objective reality and that people living in societies tend to internalize what they see in order to adapt to the environment. Individuals are shaped by their own experiences. At the same time media pushes its' own subjective reality (Den Bulck, 1999). The connection and the point of conflict between the self and media is informative on how people create their views.

In their book, Berger & Luckmann (1966) say that experience and knowledge that an individual gains from the society, helps and directs the human to view the

world in a particular way. Therefore, a "relative-natural world view" is created within the individual and people accept that reality exists and don't question or doubt its presence because it is taken for granted and real.

As social reality is being established within individuals they also develop their own identities and relations with one another. Individual identities are created and can be reshaped or modified depending on the social relations of the person. People who have the same identity qualities tend to socialize together and get closer in groups together, forming a certain structure or category in the society. Moreover, identities are social products that established by time and history depending on elements that one is exposed to. As people who live in the same society or social group and context share the same common sense, as there is similarity between their actions. Thus, common sense knowledge is created by our daily routine in the everyday (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Similarly the MB members create their own social identity, community. From their origin, they base their structure on shared values and beliefs, and turn it to their identity which is having a state governed and headed by Islamic values. The social identity of the MB is the most significant and plays a crucial role in the development of its' group identity. It is the core of the MB as potential and new members joining them had to not only share and belief but also help in wide spreading the principles of Islamic values in society. As a result, the members and followers create their own views on reality.

Gotved, 2006, states that Boudreau and Newman highlight the importance and role of social interaction in constructing reality and structuring the society. For them, social reality includes values, meanings and cultural practices that are determined by social communication. Moreover, Knowledge that an individual gains is through

social interactions in communities as the theory evolves on how social relations are created and its experience is gained (Turbbull, 2002).

As individuals live in the same community and socially interact and communicate with each other, their behavior and attitude begins to be affected by one another. Collective behavior is where people share the same desire, beliefs and intentions and cooperate together to achieve something (Kind, 2001). Like the Furthermore, in doing collective intentionality actions the person is part of something and his actions and intentions must engage with the rest of the group.

The MB formed their environment within the Egyptian society. Their projects should be in partnership with other MB members as they built malls, clothes shops to buy from, and food and beverage chains (Daragahi, 2013). Furthermore, kids are sent to Islamic schools in order to focus on their religious and Islamic teachings like Quran and Shariaa. Most of these business venues are open for the whole society but owned and managed by MB businessmen that serve its members.

As social identity is being created and reality is constructed, this results in the appearance of social structure. When patterns of social reality are combined they form social structure depending on groups, organizations and communities deal with each other (Gotved, 2006). On the other hand, online communication gives a chance to reality to be shaped due to many factors like design, organization, networks and subliminal ideologies one exposed too. As MB members interact and communicate with other individuals in society through work and socialization both sides try to influence, intentionally or unintentionally, each other by their attitude and behavior. Yet, it is difficult to extract them from such structured organization and letdown their identity.

Not only does the MB members create their reality but also the Salafis with their individual experience, perceptions about the society. An individual pictures reality in his own way and creates a certain image inside his mind, that's similar to the real world. Yet, this image is true or correct according to the environment and groups that the individual is living in (Bulck, 1999). The Salafis picture the current society as sinful environment and lacks Islamic values and rules and due to this there is unemployment, crime and bribes in society are wide spreading. This perceived reality inside their minds due to their belief that people should live and abide by Islamic values and rules similar to the time of the prophet. Consequently, followers of the Salafis share and have the same intention to spread the principles of Salafism. This action of members within its' party can be labeled as collective behavior.

An important aspect in forming the social reality is language. Language contains symbols, words that represent, or symbolize or mean a thought. We name animals, objects according to a systematic and linguistic system that is socially accepted. Language, knowledge and reality are contingent depending on a persons experience and views (Pable, 2010).

Language fills our lives with meaningful objects as meanings are assigned to them. Moreover, systems are established through collective agreement and constituted by thoughts by individuals living in the same place (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In addition to that, constructing this reality language plays an important role as it helps in describing, defying and explaining objectives around us in the society. Moreover, interacting with social members in the same language and meaning creates social identity that builds reality (Lisa, 2007).

## **B. Research Questions:**

To sum up, there are two main research questions, stated below, that I will analyze.

1. What discourses do the FJP and Al-Nour parties use to describe themselves and their agendas on their websites?
  - a. How they are similar and different from one another?
  - b. What do the groups claim to offer Egyptian society?
2. What discourses do the groups employ to address long-held stereotypes against them dealing with backwardness, violence, and particularly exclusion of non-Muslims?

Finally, this study should bring to society a better understanding on their philosophy and highlight the difference between the MB & Salafi and not to be biased to any of them.

## **IV. Chapter Four: Methodology**

### **A. Discourse Analysis:**

As mentioned earlier, this thesis deals with Islamic parties' websites and how they present their ideologies and philosophy to the Egyptian society. This research will employ discourse analysis. In choosing the sample of the websites, I chose the most powerful Islamic groups and parties in Egypt. The FJP was ruling Egypt for a year, before the military intervention, and was gaining popularity and political acquisition. Al-Nour party, which emerged as the second most popular Islamist party, took 25% of parliamentary seats (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

After the Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> revolution, the Supreme Military Council, that was ruling the country at the time, issued a several decree with adjustments and provisions on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011 easing the process of establishing political parties. The adjustments made it easy to both Islamic groups to establish the parties by just informing the committee and 5000 founding member to establish a party. For the MB and Salafi group such step was achievable due to their wide spread of social base; consequently, 44 new political party were established including the FJP and Al-Nour (Mohamed, 2013).

The MB established their political party in 2011, and rapidly opened offices supported and funded by the MB members all over Egypt. At the time of this writing, they have one electronic website in English (<http://www.fjponline.com>). In a personal interview with Moataz Abdel Hady, Journalist at Al Masry Al youm, said that as the Arabic FJP website is closed down by the Ministry of Interior as the website was criticizing the government (Personal interview, 2013). It was my original intention to analyze the Arabic sections of the FJP website because it communicates to the Egyptian people and society in their local language. But I was forced to rely the on

English website as the Arabic is shutdown. On the other hand, the Salafis also established their political arm, Al-Nour party, in 2011, and have an Arabic language website, (<http://www.alnourparty.org>). This is their official platform to reach people. I decided to focus on the FJP and Al-Nour websites because these are most two significant Islamic groups who established political parties. Also, they won the majority of seats in the last parliamentary elections, 2011, and their social base is expanding.

Accordingly, in this study I will analyze the section “About us” on both websites as it shows and explains to the reader the identity and how the parties introduce themselves. In addition to that, I will analyze the FJP “Program on Freedoms and Political Reform” under the Party Platform 2011 section and the “Political Program” on Al-Nour Website. Also, sections on “ Programs on Religious Leadership” on the FJP and “ Culture & Identity” on Al-Nour website will be examined to explore the party’s ideologies and perspectives regarding social, political and cultural issues.

The researcher will be using discourse analysis, a qualitative method, in understanding and analyzing the websites. As Fair (1996) states, discourse analysis is “ an approach that allows for the interpretation of texts in relation to the cultural contexts in which they operate”.

The usage of discourse analysis is very suitable for such a research and timing, as it will help in analyzing vision, ideologies on their websites and relating it with their action in the society. I will focus on the content of the sections and how they are written in regards to word choice, structure and look. Also, analyzing the meaning of the texts, headlines and relating them to the social context. The importance of using such a methodology is to help in getting a wider understanding as the analysis will be

linked to real life. Therefore, such a methodology develops our understanding for social actions and structure and helps in understanding meaning and patterns of relationships with society (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000). The media messages are not a single-minded message but rather a carrier of many messages that is targeted to different audiences and segments and depending on the reader interaction with the text, the meaning is formed. Not only discourse analysis focuses on linguistics elements but also on ideological and political aspects inside the message (Jensen & Jankowski, 1991).

Discourse analysis does not only focus on language or words but also the knowledge of the people of the language and how they use it with their backgrounds, feelings, memories and anything they have written, hear or said it; therefore, it's named discourse analysis, not language analysis (Johnstone 2002). Yet, language is a very crucial form of social practice as it helps in supporting and building social relations, social identities and creating beliefs and knowledge. Therefore, discourse analysis emphasis on the analysis between the relationship of language and wider scale of social and cultural construction (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000).

Discourse analysis helps in “examining aspects of the structure and function of language in use” (Phillips & Jorgensen, Pg. 65, 2002). Usually analysts tend to breakdown long discourses and start to examine each discourse thoroughly on its' own. This division can be made when new topic is introduced, the subject is changed or a new paragraph will start as it shed the light on how meanings can be reflected through the arrangement of sentences after each other (Johnstone, 2002).

Moreover, discourse analysis is very multifaceted method, as it doesn't only analyze text, structure and message, but it relates it to social, political and cultural aspects happening within the context (Jensen & Jankowski – 1991). Therefore, the



analysis will always be linking both the message and what's happening in real life. The analysis "implies a systematic relationship between the text and social conditions, ideologies and power-relations" (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000). In other words, discourses are formed due to social events, incident and principles and consequently the society is structured. Discourses are wider than texts, therefore researchers focus on them to analyze and not the language of the text.

### **B. Importance of Language:**

With language we construct a reality that didn't exist. Language is not just a mean to describe, explain, talk or transfer information and knowledge it's a system that constructs social reality and people relate their feeling, emotions and memories, discourses, with the language (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). It can be used to know the role of human in social life. Also, helps to understand why a writer used such word choice or sentence arrangement. Furthermore, it illustrates why people tend to have conversations or have an argument. Also, it explains social relationships and individual identity as it explores the background, memories and experience of human individuals (Johnstone, 2002).

People tend to use language to make sense of their action and explain them to others. Yet, each individual has his own surroundings, with its' different views and importance (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). People all over the world connect meanings to sounds they hear depending on each social identity and relation with society. Therefore, the construction of social discourses differs in meanings and communication from one place to another.

### **C. Protocols:**

This research is guided by the broad question of how Islamic groups present their ideologies and principles to the Egyptian society through political websites. As

mentioned earlier, I will focus on the about us sections, political and religious leadership, identity and culture section on both websites. I will focus specifically on how the sections discuss three important aspects of political Islamic identity: the religious other, freedom of expression and terrorism. Ways of categorizing, images, sources, supporting evidence and headlines will be analyzed and noted. The research will examine how, website's content, in the context of thinking of social groups or individuals. For instance, how both parties state they will face terrorism and return of safety in the city.

Sections on freedom and political reform programs on the FJP website are selected in order to discover the freedom of expression and how Islamists view it as there are many stereotypes challenging both parties. A textual discourse analysis is done to understand and show the ideological beliefs of their party's perspectives. In addition to that, the religious leadership and culture and identity section is studied to determine how both parties position Al-Azhar, Copts and the Egyptian Church as these are the most significant issues present on the political scene. Also, the Islamic political parties are faced with stereotypes and accusations as being against Copts and the church; therefore, the examining and highlighting of these points will allow the reader to understand the FJP and Al-Nour ideology towards Al-Azhar the church relationship. Furthermore, this section would identify their religious vision and how they use religion in society. Analysis, also on how Copts are described, explained and positioned in text will provide an understanding and illustrate their views in order to face any claims targeted to any of the parties. The analysis does not show the literal meaning but rather tries to place it in an informative social framework that would help in understanding the parties' stand and vision.

This research is not to solely conduct language and textual analysis but rather to relate the context with the social and cultural life. Also, it is not intended to show or expose any lies and misleading information from both websites. The aim of the research is “through assimilation” of broad social, political, cultural and language stated on selected sections is to understand and how the Islamic parties introduce themselves.

#### **IV. Chapter Five: Analysis**

As mentioned earlier, I will focus on “About us” on both websites as it shows and explains to the reader the identity and how the parties introduce themselves. In addition to that, I will analyze the FJP “Program on Freedoms and Political Reform” under the Party Platform 2011 section and the “ Political Program” on Al-Nour Website. Also, sections on “ Programs on Religious Leadership” on the FJP and “ Culture & Identity” on Al-Nour website will be analyzed.

##### **A. Freedom and Justice Party “About Us”:**

The section “About us” appears on the upper left of the homepage. The webpage opens with the logo of the party at the top center of the page and beneath it a large headline in red and underlined saying “ *The Founding Statement of the Freedom and Justice Party*”. This section consists of ten paragraphs with no visuals, media or external links.

The first paragraph starts with “*in the spirit of the January 25 Revolution made by the great Egyptian people and guarded by the courageous Egyptian army*” showing and highlighting the importance of the revolution, Egyptian society as a whole and the role of army. The significance of starting with such statement is to show their support to the revolution and paying respect to the Egyptian people who participated in the revolution. Also, the party is trying to identify themselves as revolutionaries and to try and change the stereotypes in people’s mind as some political parties accused them of not participating in the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution from day one, or of hijacking the revolution. For example, some liberal revolutionaries accused the MB of participating in the revolution only when the protests and demonstrations reached their peak, and also of making deals with the Mubarak regime and the military afterwards (Hassan, 2012). Therefore, by drawing attention to the

revolution with a type of revolution discourse, the MB are seeking to combat these claims. Also, stating their main principles in building Egypt and defining the Egyptian citizen reflecting the party's vision on citizenship.

In the second paragraph the MB mentions how they plan to be build and form the country, integrating all governmental and non-governmental institutions like “*civil society, trade unions, public groups, associations and human rights*”. It can be understood here that the FJP is trying to show their willingness to cooperate with all institutions in society as to face claims mentioned after the revolution that they will manipulate the social, political, and economic scenes if and when they come to power. Furthermore, the party is attempting to focus more on non-political groups and institutions, as they didn't mention religious, educational institutions like Al-Azhar, the Coptic Church, or student unions.

After the revolution and the MB winning the majority of parliament seats, some opinion leaders, and political figures were claiming the FJP would work on a constitution that would fit their objective of establishing an Islamic, and conservative state. Therefore, in the third paragraph, the party appears to be trying to respond to these claims by stating how the constitution should be and the individual's rights to have in order to achieve equality, social justice and freedom in society. They state, “*through this Constitution - freedom and dignity for the nation, affirming the sovereignty of the people and national unity. It should be a constitution that supports the equality of all people in all rights and duties, adhering to respect for pluralism and diversity, emphasizing the devolution of power and freedom of political parties, ensuring freedom of information and expression, freedom of belief*”.

The fourth paragraph highlights the constitution should be based on Islam and state “*as a response to the demands of the majority of the Egyptian people who*

*believe that the Sharia is the best method to ensure the reformation*". Its significance is that the party is trying to showing that they are demanding the people's demand and not the FJP objective as to defy allegations in the media of trying to work on a constitution to fit their purposes. Moreover, they mentioned Sharia would be the source of rights, freedoms, beliefs and worship of Christians. In this statement the party appears to be trying to give themselves more credibility in the eye of others and also assure Christians to feel safe within the society.

After the MB emerged on the political scene and established the FJP, there were claims by some countries that they wouldn't consider any political agreements or peace treaties with other countries especially with the claim of entering a state of war with Israel to free Palestine (Glain, 2012; Pfeiffer, 2012); therefore, in the fifth paragraph, they mention that the party respects the external relations with foreign and Arab countries. Also, respects international and peace treaties with other countries. Its importance is to clarify to the west and European countries that the party is trying to show their willingness and keen to have peaceful relations with the world and not to enter in a state of war.

The sixth paragraph discusses political stability and economic growth and justice among society will help in maintaining the national security in Egypt. Also, the need to develop, invest and reconstruct in Sinai. Furthermore, building new relations with Nile basin countries and maintaining Egypt's relation with them. The party appears to be trying to clarify the importance of such reconstruction and investment and might lead to more independent economy from the west, more employment for youth, new cities would be built, decrease the imports, and building industrial areas.

The following paragraph focuses on two points: the first is the support of the Egyptians to the military and army and having industries to provide them with their needs. It is very crucial that they mention *“Party also believes in acting for the development of the basic strategic industries as a base for our military industries”*. This implies that the MB are trying to create a new and fresh relation with the army and showing them that they will back and help them. The party’s choice in the words “basic strategic industries” appears to that the party is trying to financially fund the army industries of weapons, and vehicles. The second point is, FJP, to focus on education and scientific research, as it’s the nation’s way to develop. The party was plagued by claims (by its opposition) that they would not focus on education or research, and that many MB members are illiterate and ignorant and others didn’t continue their university degrees. Therefore, there is a stereotype that the MB and FJP might not focus on the educational elements; however, here, they seem to respond directly to these allegations with such statements *“ We believe that education and scientific research are the tools of progress, development and promotion”* and that *“nation must put the issue of education and scientific research at the forefront of its national priorities”*. With the mention of these details, it appears that the party is trying to change the stereotypes by showing their support to education and scientific research and highlighting it is the nation’s way to develop.

The Eighth paragraph emphasizes enhancing and improving the police force and police academy curriculum and to study human rights and respect for law. Moreover, the FJP mention they would raise police officer salaries as to provide them with a dignified life. The MB was thought to have hatred towards police, as they have been illegal for more than 30 years and faced police brutality, violence and oppression. It was thought by some that the FJP would want retribution; however, the

party appears to be trying to enhance and develop the police forces performance and create a new relation with them. The importance of introducing human rights curriculum specifically deals with an ongoing issue of police brutality and violence towards the society; as a result, the FJP wants to develop the police philosophy and way of dealing with civilians to be peaceful and civilized. This approach – mentioning police benefits and dignity, and also discussing police brutality – seems to represent a balanced attempt to try and appease diverse segments. The MB is trying to appease the police, on the one hand, but also Egypt’s revolutionaries, on the other. This can be seen as a questionable strategy, since it is likely, or at least possible, that both the police and many liberal revolutionaries would find this section problematic (albeit for different reasons).

The ninth paragraph is divided almost equally. The first couple of sentences are about the importance of Al-Azhar and its crucial role in Egypt and Muslim world. The second is the respect of the party towards Orthodox Church as it teaches Christians in African countries. It is very essential that the party mentioned Al-Azhar and its role as the FJP is trying to appear that they do not to take over the role of Al-Azhar as an Islamic institution and its’ position in the society. It is significant that they stated so as there were claims that the MB wants to replace or position itself with Al-Azhar and promote Sharia and Islamic principles. Furthermore, mentioning the Orthodox Church and Christians in African countries implies that the party is trying to gain support from different audiences and even try to communicate with new sects that were neglected before. Its’ significance is showing that the FJP is trying to reach to diverse sects of religion not only in Egypt but also Africa.

Finally, the last paragraph the party addresses all political parties and forces to join them and agree on their basic principles in order to develop and enrich the



country. The party is trying to promote unity, built relations and frame itself to a diverse audience like non-Islamists, Salafi, Christians, Copts, West and EU countries that are dealing with for the first time.

To sum up, not only the FJP is trying to introduce their political vision and philosophy to the Egyptian society but also to the western governments and countries. Statements are written in different formats and structure in order to reach to all different audiences reading the section. Since the MB have been working as an underground organization for over 80 years so they had to introduce themselves for the whole world especially with the raising fears of Islamists ruling Egypt.

#### **B. FJP 2011 Program on Freedoms and Political Reform:**

This webpage is linked from the homepage, under the Party Platform 2011 section. The analysis in this section will be on “ Program on Freedoms and Political Reform”. The page starts with six lines summarizing the whole program mainly saying that people should be granted their rights and freedoms in order to have a democratic life and political system. Next to this abstract there is an image of people marching in Tahrir Square holding paper signs saying, “go away Mubarak” during the Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> revolution. The image indicates that the party was against Mubarak regime dictatorship and with the revolution. Also, there is a button to share the page on many social media networks, emails, adding it to favorites, or print it. Under the share button, written “ Sunday, December 4, 2011 17:01” showing the date and time of the post.

Then the program starts by having a bold headline “FJP 2011 Program on Freedoms and Political Reform”. A brief introduction that Egyptians should be granted freedoms and rights and a democratic environment would lead to the circulation of power and stability of the society. Also, the party states that a new

constitution is needed based on Sharia principles to achieve an Islamic state. The introduction is ended by a quote from Omar “When did you enslave people who were born free?” to appear that the party is supporting freedoms of expression and that individuals should have their rights.

The next part is stating the principles and concepts to reform the political life in the country. They start with a bold black headline “Our political reform program is based on the following principles and concepts”. They mention three main concepts: characteristics of the state, the nature of the political system and the fundamental political principles espoused in the program.

The paragraph on the characteristics of the state highlights the FJP demand to achieve and state “*national constitutional Islamic modern democratic state based on sharia as it regulates aspects of individuals life in worship, mortality and also guarantees the rights and protection of non-Muslims*”. The word choice of the first sentence is very crucial as the party is introducing their vision and idea on building the new Egypt. This challenges the stereotypes facing them as people were anxious that the MB would have an Islamic conservative closed society on individuals and oblige women to wear niqab, separate women and men in public areas and close public beaches. Thus, the party used the word “modern” as to defy these claims.

They move on to mention four main characteristics for the state they seek. The first characteristic is the state based on equality in opportunities, duties and rights between all citizens without discrimination because of religion or race. This statement reflects the party’s attempt to balance equality and fairness between Muslims, Christians and other sects in society. Though it can be related that during the 1990s Islamic groups targeted Copts and churches in rural villages and many were killed (Brownlee, 2013). Also, the FJP mentions that citizens will be hired in governmental

positions based on their eligibility and competence. The party is trying to appear as objective and equal in job opportunities and that everyone in society has a chance to be hired in governmental posts. The second is the state based on a constitution as it protects and supports the laws in society. The party is attempting to declare that they do not want to gain power but rather enhance the value and morals of individuals within the society through respecting the constitution and laws. Furthermore, highlighting the Supreme Constitutional Court role in overseeing the legislation process. Such concept appears to proclaim the party's respect and objectivity in establishing process and they would not interfere. Thirdly, the state is democratic and based on Shura principles that the party believes is an essential foundation for all state institutions. This point is crucial as it identifies the party's method and way in taking decisions. Forming Shura council with different people and political backgrounds appears to explain that the FJP will not monopolize the political scene and take decisions for their own good. This point encounters claims towards the MB of dominating the political scene, as they are the biggest political party. The FJP states in the fourth and final point to have a civilian state and an Islamic state is civilian by its' nature. Moreover, it is not a military, police state, ruled by a dictatorship or armed forced that get in power by military groups. Also, it's the nation's right to question, dismiss and replace rulers. The party clearly states it is against any military coup and a civilian in a democratic state should rule the state.

In their second concept to reform the political system, the FJP states the parliamentary system on the long term while for this transitional phase is the Parliamentary Presidential system.

The third and final principle is stating the fundamental political principles in the programs. The FJP state seven principles: The principles of liberty, equality and

equal opportunities, written in black bold headline, deals mainly with Sharia as a source of freedom to all Egyptians and that it guarantees their rights. The party in this statement the party is trying to reveal that all Sharia will be the only source of freedoms to individuals and society and that none of the political parties or governments will be involved in determining in order to avoid monopolizing and subjectivity. Furthermore, they focus in this paragraph on *“freedom of opinion and expression, the formation of political parties and NGOs, meeting and demonstration”*. Also, highlight the banning of favoritism and creating equal opportunities for the people. Furthermore, guaranteeing that women have their full rights and consistent with Islamic values. The significance of this part is defying all stereotypes against the MB as media and many opinion leaders mentioned that they do not support freedom of expression, or opinion, demonstrations and that many sects of the society were worried that the MB era would be similar as before. However, the party is appears to be trying and remove these claims by clearly stating that they do not back any form oppression and demand for transparent elections from all sects of society like students, labors and professionals.

In the following part, the party clearly states their methods on how to achieve a social justice within society for all sects. The independence of the judiciary highlights the importance of jury and how it’s *“the safety valve of society and the way to achieve justice, safeguard rights, and attain security and stability”*. The party mentions that the Supreme Judicial Council should be tasked by with all jurisdiction affairs. Also, have their own budget separated from the Ministry of affairs and most notably remove the president as the head of the council. It is very significant that they want the president not to hold power in the council as to appear objective as much as possible. Furthermore, they did not mention that the FJP, or any governmental, non-

governmental organization, political parties, figures or even the president will appoint the head of the council and he will be selected by seniority. Such statement appears to give the society an idea on how the party will rule and they are trying not to interfere in judicial issues in order have a transparent, fair and well balanced juries and society. Also, judges would not be sent on assignments to other ministries or any executive branches in the government. Moreover, increasing the number of judges and cases would be taken chronologically and finally, the judge's club is the official entity for them and no one has power over it except the general assembly and should have a budget within the Supreme Council budget. With the mention of these points, the FJP appears to be recognizing their respect towards the jury and judges and their role in the society.

One of the most important aspects mentioned in the political reform, by FJP, is the safeguarding citizenship rights, and revitalizing the role of individuals. This part explains the party's vision in defining citizenship and the state's relation with Christians. This paragraph is written in bulleted format of six points. It starts with highlighting that Christians are part of the society and have equal rights and duties towards the country and remove any injustice imposed on them and that Sharia assures the Christians rights in living. They also mention their right to built churches and pledge to quickly solve the problems of unauthorized churches. Furthermore, this section emphasizes the relation between Muslims and Christians and how both are one hand in building and developing society and the country's civilization. The significance of this part is the FJP appears to be trying to frame itself as a centrist party and not a hardline Islamic party that is disputing and challenging "the other". It also, shows respect to the existence of the Christians within the Egyptian society and living with Muslims and their presence is much needed to develop the country.

Although these statements attempt to reveal how the MB view Christians and Copts and challenges media stereotypes that the FJP are burning churches and will not allow building of new churches, 100,000 Copts left Egypt to migrate to the US after the MB came to power according to Dennis Ross of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (Adel, 2013). Thus, the party appears as wanting to create a secured society to Christians to live and worship in. Also, FJP are trying to prevent themselves from being criticized in dealing with Copts and Christians.

Finally the last concept in reforming process is revitalizing the role of civil society by forming new unions for disadvantaged groups like the imams and preachers. Creating a new law for trade between unions to have separate and own entity without the interference of any political or ruling parties. Furthermore, regulating the external funding for NGOs and supporting the union's representatives in giving their advice. The party in this section is trying to show their support for the unions in building the society. Although the party only mentioned the imams and preachers as the disadvantaged groups, it appears to be trying to reach and support all different work forces through their unions.

### **C. FJP 2011 Program on Religious Leadership**

Similar to the above, this page is linked to the Party Platform 2011 section on the homepage. The "Program on Religious Leadership" page opens with medium sized image focusing on two hands each holding the Quran and the cross. It's very significant to use such an image on the opening page as the party is appears to be trying to transfer the message of unity and harmony between Muslims and Christians. Next to it is the title "FJP 2011 Program on Religious Leadership" and beneath it few lines describing the program. As the previous page, this page has links to many social networking sites, email, print or post on a blog. Before starting the program they

mention date and time, Sunday, December 4,2011 15:49, in order to document their program.

They start the program by stating the headline again in bold font and beneath it a paragraph focusing about how Egypt is a religious country and “Islam is the supreme authority and fundamental framework” for Egyptians. However, they didn’t mention any ways in dealing with Christians or any other sect, or the church. The program is divided to three sections: the venerable Al-Azhar University and Mosque, endowments and Egyptian Church.

In the first part the party offers means to help Al-Azhar to restore its local and Global reputation and position. They start with the restructure the Islamic Research Academy, and members would be elected and the Grand Imam would be elected from its’ members. Also, getting the mosque and university to be independent financially and administratively. This idea appears to reflect the transparency that the party is trying to achieve and that no interference political or ruling party would appoint this position. Furthermore, the FJP states *“revitalize Al-Azhar’s role in Dawah outreach abroad, clarify the image of Islam as the religion of mercy, peace, cooperation and human dignity abroad.”* Its crucial to notice the word of choice used in addressing the international audience, as there have been many stereotypes and framing for Islam and Muslims as being aggressive, violent and intolerant. Therefore, the party appears to be trying such messages oriented towards the West and Europe in order to change their views and perspectives on Islam. Finally, they state in order to revive Al-Azhar role there should be a syndicate for imams and preachers like doctors and engineers. In this statement the party is trying to highlight the importance of imams and preachers to the society as they teach, promote and aware the essence of Islam to Egyptians; consequently they need to get medical, social and cultural benefits in order

to be well positioned in society. Also, establishing a union for them will restrict the freelance work and will require getting permission from the union; as a result, it can be understood that the degree of sermons and lectures will be more credible, informative and educative.

In the second section the party believes in Waqf (endowment) as a way in developing and reforming society. Therefore, they urge the independence of the Waqf Authority and separate it from executive authority. They also, try to encourage private sectors for Waqf projects that would be tax-free. The party proposes “vital areas, including education, fighting poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, helping youths get married, training of rural women” to have Waqf as a way to develop and enhance their social status. The significance of mentioning such concept is that the FJP appears to create unity and cohesion between sects of society. Also, Waqf will help in creating job opportunities, economic stability, and social justice. The final section is the Egyptian church and its’ importance in society. Furthermore, the party states that it’s important to the church to have relations with all governmental and Islamic institutions and Al-Azhar. Also, the party will support the church in leading the Christian of the east. As an Islamist party, it appears that they are trying to affirm the readers they will have close relations with the church and create unity among Muslims and Christians. The party also attempts to remove any concerns from the Christians towards the MB community and how they will deal with them in order to make them feel secure.

To sum up, the previous overview on sections allowed us to understand the FJP ideology and religious vision and how they want to frame their party to the Egyptian society and West. Furthermore, they proclaim to appear as anti bigotry party that seeks reconciliation and understanding between different religions and sects of



society. Yet, it might be understood or believed by some people that the FJP focus on sharia as a way to suggest that they want to build an Islamic Caliphate in the region. Also, political differences in real life showed more flexibility in the MB than the Salafi groups as the MB accepted the idea of have women and Christian in serving state high-official positions (Hassan, 2012).

#### **D. Al-Nour Party “About Us”:**

In the following part, I will be analyzing Al-Nour sections: About Us, Political Program and Culture and Identity Program.

The tab for this section is located in the middle front of the homepage. The section introduces the party to the readers and targeted audience. Unlike the FJP section, this part is very small in terms of paragraphs and content. The web page only consists of two paragraphs and a title “who we are” in blue font on the upper right of the page. Beneath it there are three buttons: to like on Facebook, post on twitter or to share on any other social network.

They start to introduce themselves as “Men and women, youth and girls vowed to renew and reform the society gradually” the word choice is the influence of word choice in the beginning describes the responsibility and the hard work they are willing to do for the society. They mention their development and work progress will work under the slogan “Will only reform what I can”. The slogan is written in red as standout and eye catch the reader’s attention. They all also mention their willingness to build a modern Egyptian society to become a beacon to the world. It’s crucial that they stated so to show the society they won’t only use Islamic principles but also modern means in order to challenge the stereotypes facing them as Islamist fundamentalists. However, they didn’t mention any points regarding Jan 25<sup>th</sup> revolution, students, Christians, Coptic Church, Al Azhar, constitution, freedoms of

expression, or the army. Although they are considered from the main political parties, they provide a very brief introduction on their vision and ideology, unlike the FJP where they provide the reader with a detailed and oriented issues.

The second paragraph states that the party includes members from all segments and layers of society to rise with the society. The party will also use Islamic Sharia in achieving justice and takes full responsibility in taking care of all individuals living. Similarly to the FJP website, Al-Nour also stated that Sharia will be their main source in guiding the country but the MB political party illustrated and clarified much more as the reader can understand.

#### **E. Al-Nour Political Program:**

This section is linked to the Party's program tab on the homepage. It starts by a brief paragraph about the party's vision to reform the political life in Egypt. They state that political reform became a demand of the people from all segments and they want to establish a modern state where people can live in peace. Also, they believe that the state should be based on several institutions and decentralized. They highlight the separation of legislative, judiciary, and executive authority to work in balanced life. It's significant that the party stated their vision in decentralizing and separation governmental institutions as it reflects modern way of thinking and distribute authority and not to handle it one institution. Below this paragraph are three main headlines all written in blue font: importance of saving rights and freedoms, independence of the judiciary from the executive authority and respecting the people's choice.

In the importance of saving rights and freedoms they mention, *“One of the main reasons of the Jan revolution is deprivation of rights and freedoms”*. It's important that Al-Nour state the January revolution as their first point as they are

showing the society its importance to them and how they view it and that they are not an extremist Islamist party. Similarly to the FJP, they back freedoms and rights should be within the framework of Sharia. Its' importance Al-Nour party are explaining to the people that they wont be establishing and forcing laws to society as it was claimed by media; however, they will use Sharia as their source which creates credibility and confidence for the society. Moreover, they mention freedom of expression, freedom of media, publication, establishing NGOs, publishing newspapers and not to be administratively suspended. Such statements appear to clarify the party's perspective on freedoms and challenge the stereotypes appearing in society.

They move on to mention society has the right to choose his ruler and represent him and to choose and participate politically, economically, culturally, and social through representative institutions that are hold liability and transparency. The party is trying to acknowledge the importance the representatives and their role in developing the community and not only using Islamists as it was claimed.

The party also, state the society has the right to express its diverse choices, protect itself against oppression and tyranny, protect human dignity for individuals, free education for all basic stages of education, affordable housing. In addition to that, there should be economic competition in the market that is free, transparent and doesn't harm the society. Al-Nour appears to be trying to reveal the importance of building better economy, work opportunities and a market that not monopolized by businessmen or companies working for their own sake.

In the above part, Al-Nour did not define society and always mention statements in plural and being vague without specifying a certain segment or group in society. Thus, the party appears to be trying to target all rights and freedoms to all segments, Muslims, Copts men and women. Moreover, they distinct themselves from

the FJP by giving more focus and attention on education and addressing the youth as it can be understood they are the future and want to invest in them by involving them in the political system.

The second headline is independence of the judiciary from the executive authority. It mainly highlights the judiciary authority represented in Supreme Judicial Council, ministry of justice, Supreme Court, Court of Cassation, Judges Club and the Office of the Attorney General should all be independent and separate from any inference or supervision from the president or any other institution and only the Judicial Inspection Authority has the right to inspect on them. Its' implication that the party is proclaiming transparent, free judiciary system were no political parties or ruling party would interfere. This encounters the stereotype facing the Salafis in society as against the independence of judiciary.

Their final mean to reform the political system is to respect the people's choice in choosing the legislative, judiciary, and executive authorities. Written in blue headline and consist of six paragraphs, this is the longest part they have on their program.

Unlike the FJP, Al-Nour mentions that elections should be done in choosing representatives for university and school deans, student union, trade unions and local councils, governors and elections to be transparent and free. This usage also reflects the attempt to prioritize the student unions, and universities in as it appears to the party's perspective on youth and education and how they weight it in society. Furthermore, they seek achieving democracy within the framework of Islamic Sharia; the people have the freedom to form political parties, parties to participate and abide by the constitution peaceful handover of authority. Also, the freedom in choosing their representatives, monitor the government performance and its removal. The party

appears to be trying to promote political freedom and that none of the political parties will monopolize the scene and this will be accomplished by abiding by Sharia.

They specify launching media and cultural campaigns for raising political awareness between all social segments especially the youth in educational institutions and universities, and encouraging them in the decision making process. This usage also reflects the party's attempt to balance declining status of political awareness in society and their interest in investing effort and time in youth as to raise the awareness and understanding about parties, elections and constitution. Furthermore, Alnour seek to eliminate the phenomenon of falsifying the peoples will, politically manipulate them, and orienting all mediums for the sake of a certain political party. They suggest civil rights groups in order to prevent forging and "buying votes" in elections, unlike the FJP, who didn't address such crucial and essential point in the political system in Egypt.

The party's last suggestion is to eliminate the passive habits that the society used to do in previous regimes like exclusion, arrogance, and tyranny that some political parties used to practice and resulted in the rejection and neglecting of oppositionist from the scene. The party appears to be trying to show their vision on respecting opposition and other parties that may disagree with and that all arguments should be respected.

#### **F. Al-Nour Culture and Identity:**

This part is linked from the homepage under the party's program. The party focuses on identity as a pivotal issue that should be considered and given attention. They seek the establishment of a modern state of advanced civilization that combines tradition and modernity with a civilized message that raise the value of morality and virtue. Mentioning the word "modern and civilized" addresses the stereotypes Salafis

faces in society as Muslim extremists that won't believe in modern era and use old-fashion ways in ruling.

They also state the Egyptian identity as an Islamic, Arab identity due to the Islamic religion, which is a large percentage, and that the Arabic language is the main language of the people. Furthermore, they suggest that Ministry of Culture, Media, Education and universities and other governmental and non-governmental institutions to promote cultural and national identity in all life aspects and that individual should be proud of their identity. Such points was not targeted by the FJP, and its' importance is due to the globalization that the society lives in and how the West is influencing Egyptians; therefore, Al-Nour tries to highlight the protection of the Egyptian identity as it will support and help in raising our pride.

They also mention, "The nation showed consensus on using Islam, Arabic and Sharia as means in building a new state." The party's usage of the word nation implies that the people and not the party took the decision on using Sharia. In addition to that, they acknowledge that Sharia is the main legislative source will help in protecting the freedoms and rights for not only Copts but also all Egyptians. Finally, they address the Copts and mention them in their program as to appear to be trying as modest Islamist group who wants to secure a safe society for Christians and Copts. Differences in language and structure about the Copts and Coptic Church are found between both websites. The FJP website concentrates heavily on Christians and Christian rights, while the Nour website only discusses Christian rights in passing and relatively superficially.

They move on to suggest the combining of cultural and moral characteristics in reforming society, as they are involved in the political, economic and social life.

This usage also reflects the party's vision on the importance morality and how it should be used in order to remove all negative habits in society.

Similar to the FJP, Al-Nour mention Al-Azahr as an important and cornerstone factor in the formation of the public awareness and views and its' influence reaches not only Egypt but also globally. Both parties agree its' role has been declining lately on internal and external issues and in order to restore its position. There is an agreement in the language and word of choice on both parties, FJP and Al-Nour, on Al-Azahr as to be independent financially and administration institution in the state and Sheikh Al-Azhar should be elected and not appointed. Therefore, there should be a separation between the Sheikh of Al-Azhar and the university from politics as it should not be a tool used for the ruling party to brainwash the society. This defines that Al-Nour views separation between religion and politics and both should not be mixed together.

## **V. Chapter Six: Discussion and Limitations**

### **A. Discussion:**

The above analysis explains and analyzes the FJP and Al-Nour websites and how the groups introduced and described themselves. The identified discourses shed light on the parties' philosophies and visions on crucial issues related to society. Themes supporting Christians' rights were consistent throughout the FJP website. This is very different from Al-Nour's website, which rarely discussed Christian issues or mentioned Christianity. When the FJP was formed and won the majority in the parliamentary elections, many Christians were worried that the MB would deny their rights of worship and building churches. It was also the concern of many Western countries; therefore, the FJP is attempting to show to the Egyptian society their good will by mentioning:

*“Sharia is the best method to ensure the reformation of the conditions of our society that will lead it to happiness and progress, as well as guaranteeing the rights of our fellow Christians and their freedom of belief and worship according to their laws and rules”. In the Political reform program, they state that “freedom of belief and worship are rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the law, and by Sharia (Islam law) even before them, and our fellow Christians must not be deprived of the right to build churches; and that it is essential to find a quick and just solution to the problems of unauthorized and unlicensed churches”.*

The significance to address Christian issues and problems is to show that the MB is showing care and attention especially with the ever-present threat of anti-Christian and anti-Church violence in Egypt. Thus, the FJP appears to be trying to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere for Christians and to face the stereotypes that were addressed towards the MB. Arguably, this can also be seen as an attempt to try



and gain votes from Christians, an important minority group in Egypt. The FJP seem to be both othering and de-othering Christians. They are othering them in the sense that they create a distinction based on religion. Specifically, they create a distinction between Muslims and Christians, and, in their conception, Islam is the dominant religion. However, they de-other Christians to at least some extent by using a more-or-less universal model of citizenship in which both Muslims and Christians are Egyptian citizens with equal rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, it is notable that they said the word “sharia” as to indicate to Christians and the people that none of the MB members, leaders or government official would intervene in ensure the Christians rights and freedoms. Also, the MB trying to appear as a modest or centralist Islamic party as to keep the relation close with the US.

However, it is possible that what is written on the FJP website contradicts other Muslim Brotherhood discourses. For example, Mohammed Badie, the Muslim Brotherhood's General Guide, mentioned in a 2005 interview with Al-Hayah newspaper that Copts are “Ahl El Zemina” – meaning Non-Muslims enjoying Muslim protection (Al Khamisi, 2013). This reflects the ideology and mentality of the MB as they arguable distinguish Egyptians, at least at some level, based on religion. Furthermore, some analysts suggest that the Muslim Brotherhood’s actions do not reflect their inclusive writings about Christians and Christianity (Rossomando, 2013). More research is needed to determine whether the Freedom & Justice party’s website discourses about Christians significantly contradicts other official Muslim Brotherhood discourses about Christians and other non-Muslims, and also about the Muslim Brotherhood’s policies and actions towards non-Muslims.

Moreover, the FJP’s discussions of Christians and Christianity come in the context of the Islamic Sharia. Although analysts and Muslims have argued that sharia

can encompass diverse peoples and respect rights and freedoms, others have argued that sharia could be dangerous for non-Muslims and even Muslims, particularly if extremists are allowed to impose narrow interpretations on society.

One of the issues discussed on the FJP is women's right. Long held stereotypes that MB are against women rights and participation in the revolution by going down the streets and demonstrating. Yet, the party states on their website

*Ensure women's access to all their rights, consistent with the values of Islamic law, maintaining the balance between their duties and rights.*

This was the only part addressing them in the three selected sections. However, contradictions were found with the content of the website and real life. The organization is still conservative and close-minded and prefers women to stay at home and raise children (Hamed, 2013). In an interview, Ibrahim al-Hudaybi, an Islamist researcher, mentioned that women are not involved in any "decision making within the MB organization" (Hamed, 2013).

On the other hand, Al-Nour party rarely mentioned or discussed any rights or problems that are facing women in Egyptian society. This can be understood, as mentioned earlier in literature review, that the Salafi groups prefer to have their women stay at home and not to be exposed to men (Field and Hamam, 2009).

When the Salafis formed the political wing many media channels and political figures in society accused them of being against freedom of expression, religion and belief. Even western countries had fears and threats that their relations with Egypt would be at risk if Salafis were the ruling party.

Therefore, throughout their website Al-Nour appears to be trying to frame their ideologies in a positive way as to give the influence of being a modest, modern and democratic Islamic party and challenge the stereotypes, specifically the relation of

Copts and Muslims in the society. Thus, Al-Nour stated that Copts should be given the freedom and rights to practice their religious rituals in churches as stated in Sharia. It is crucial that the party is attempting to appear for Christians as open-minded and try and show the Christians the party's good will and care.

Al-Nour tends to exclude Christians and Christianity. Within the context of an Islamist ideology, this exclusion can be seen as a type of ideological marginalization of Egypt's Coptic Christian community. Relating the party's program to reality, Sheikh Yassir al-Burhami, a prominent figure in Egypt's Salafi movement said on an interview on Al-Rahma ("Mercy") Channel:

*"Christians are disbelievers by Allah as shown by the Quran: shall we apologize for the Quran, and distort its contents, to please them?"*

Not only negatively affect the relation between Salafi and Christians but also Muslims within the society. Furthermore, the party seems to be contradicting itself, as they appear to be trying to promote freedom for Copts to worship, yet their leaders do not agree. Such statements reflect that party's conservative mentality and also a type of internal contradiction.

### **B. Limitations:**

This study aimed to analyze the websites of the MB and Salafis that are considered to be two of the most organized, influential political parties in Egypt. Specifically, the analysis was on sections of the websites that would help the reader to comprehend the party's philosophy and vision. Furthermore, the study was aiming to examine how both parties, MB and Salafi, are addressing and tackling long-held stereotypes like violence, women's role and rights in society and human rights.

The study demonstrated similarities and differences between the FJP and Al-Nour websites on introducing themselves to the Egyptian people and their political, religious and cultural programs to develop the country

Due to the fast pace of events happening in the political scene during the last six months it was difficult to relate the website content with the real world. Also, I was supposed to analyze the Arabic sections of the FJP website but due to the political and security instability in the country the Arabic was shut down and I was forced to analyze the English version. Furthermore, court verdicts were issued to ban all activities and organization of MB created to more eruption of violence and demonstrations in the streets so it was difficult to mention all incidents and relating the website context to real life.

#### **Future Recommendations:**

Many of the discourses that were found on the FJP and Al-Nour website seem to contradict common stereotypes about Islamists that they are extremely violent, anti Christian or other religion and do not respect rights and freedom of individuals.

Future research should take an interdisciplinary approach to examine how closely FJP and Al-Nour official policies reflect the discourses on their websites and political programs in real life. It is crucial to analyze and examine their agendas, vision and ideologies on their media. Therefore, I recommend further analysis on women's role in society has become very significant after the Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> revolution. Thus, examine on how Muslim women are portrayed on Islamist parties websites and relating the context to real life. Also, examine social networks after June 30<sup>th</sup> 2013 and how do the Islamist parties introduce themselves to the society. Finally, exploring and analyzing the framing of Islamists political party on private owned channel and Islamic channels on televisions.

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