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THE AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة

Islamic NGOs under Different Authoritarian Regimes

By

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Political Science

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

The American University in Cairo

In Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Art (CMEPS)

Supervised by Professor Amr Adly

Spring 2021

Abstract

The state-civil society relationship has always been a highly controversial sphere specially when it comes to the Middle East. The exceptional complexities of the region make the dynamics of this relationship more questionable. The case of Egypt is a salient manifestation of these complexities where NGOs used to function under some variants of authoritarianism. Precisely, Islamic charities used to be one of the main social services providers for many decades in Egypt and which were tolerated to a great extent by the previous regimes in order to compensate for the lack of the services provided by the regime. Having these Islamic organizations as a parallel services provider for long time led to the emergence of a hyper-rational approach which assumed that these organizations will be permanently tolerated by the regime as long as it is economically unable to satisfy the needs of the public. However, post-2013 empirics showed that this approach is no longer valid due to the crackdown on many Islamic NGOs in addition to other drastic measures that aimed at containing their potential threat. In order to test the validity of this approach, a comparison between Mubarak's regime and Sisi's regime was conducted to measure the impact of economic hardships and the threat to the regime on one hand on the autonomy of Islamic NGOs on the other. The result showed that the higher the threat to authoritarian rule, the lower the autonomy of these organizations irrespective of the deteriorating economic conditions. On this basis, I provide throughout this study a detailed process of revisiting the aforementioned approach in addition to offering a new approach that is more capable of explaining the recent variations/circumstances.

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Chapter One: Introduction, Research Puzzle and Research Plan

Introduction

How do NGOs function in the authoritarian regimes? Historically, these organizations, in the authoritarian states in general and in Egypt in particular, were operating in a space of restricted or punctuated pluralism. This space has been tailored and inherited by the authoritarian regimes in order to sustain their rule while preventing these organizations from increasing their power (Bayat, 2002, p.2). In fact, the case of Egypt is a good representation of the broader question of a country with active NGOs in areas of social services provision that have been always under some variants of authoritarianism. As mentioned above, the non governmental activities that has been permitted to a great extent by the Egyptian regimes are the ones which have charitable imprint. The scale of non-governmental association in Egypt can not be depicted as diverse since the Islamic associations were mostly in charge of providing social services in many regions. Having said that, there are some other Christian and secular associations that contributed to services provision sector. Those non-Islamic associations were the minority compared to the huge numbers of the Islamic associations that occupied services sector and whose religious imprint was appealing to many people. On a deeper level of analysis, those Islamic associations were diverse in the sense of their political affiliation. For instance, some of them were politicized such as the associations that belong to the MB, while some other were depoliticized or even supporting the regime. These Islamic charities were part of Islamic revival wave that started at the early 1990s (Carvalho, 2009, p. 2). Noteworthy, not all of these Islamic charities belonged to political Islam or Islamic movements, but they were a manifestation of the calls for reviving Islamic principles and whose main aim was not political change (Carvalho, 2009, p. 2).

Many of the endeavors that aimed at analyzing the context through which Islamic NGOs were functioning reached a quite similar conclusion. The aforementioned idea of “restricted pluralism” was the description proposed by most of these arguments. By this description they meant that in order for the government to compensate for the decrease in social services due to austerity measures and fiscal crises, it intentionally tolerates the existence of some groups whose main function was to provide social services, while imposing tight censorship practices upon them to prevent deviating from this tailored space (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 99). In fact, these arguments are hyper-rational¹ in assuming that the regime will never change this rational strategy. Having said this, this conclusion was describing the empirical reality to a great extent, because the number of Islamic NGOs started to increase rapidly in the early 21st century especially after the neoliberal arrangement in the 1990s (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 107). The scale of these Islamist NGOs was diverse and the MB was only part of it, but many others were pro-regime and some were not even politicized such as the Salafists organizations, Al Jamyia Al Sharyia and many others (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 122). However, the result of the MB being socially empowered for many decades is having their member as an elected president after the 25th of Jan revolution. Irrespective of the previous regimes’ concerns about the increasing popularity of these organization, these charitable activities have been tolerated until the take over in 2013. In 2013, president Morsi has been ousted by the military forces and during president Sisi’s era an intensive crackdown wave on Islamic NGOs took place and many of them have been closed (Brooke, 2015, p. 2). Although these organizations were widespread prior to 2013, the numerical estimates about their distribution and intensity were highly restricted. Most of these organizations have been suspended and closed including the politicized and the depoliticized ones (Brooke, 2015, p. 2). Thus, the mainstream

¹ Assuming that the regime is always acting with an overly rational strategy

theory of punctuated pluralism seemed to be void. This study aims at analyzing the puzzle of how Islamic NGOs are greatly restricted post-2013 compared to the case of restricted pluralism they used to function through during Mubarak's era, giving the fact that the regime is still unable to provide social services and which is similar to the case of Mubarak specially after the application of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in the 1990s. Additionally, it aims at figuring out what are the new avenues for these NGOs and whether they are operating directly or indirectly and what are the alternatives for the closed ones.

Puzzle and Research Question

The development of the literature on Islamic NGOs under the authoritarian context resulted from the empirical reality of the state of “established authoritarianism” along with “punctuated pluralism” which encouraged the previous authoritarian regimes to tolerate the existence of Islamic NGOs. Since most of these approaches were hyper-rational in assuming that this equation/balance will be always the case, the puzzle of the project is derived from the variations in both the authoritarian dynamics pre- and post-2013, the similar economic context of both Mubarak's and Sisi's eras and the crackdown on most of Islamic NGOs. As such, the research question is; *To what extent did the change in authoritarian dynamics affect the autonomy of Islamic NGOs post 2013?*

The project aims at detecting the reasons behind the changes in the strategy employed by the current regime in dealing with these Islamic associations, giving the fact that the current regime is unable to provide social service due to the neoliberal arrangement that took place after the revolution and which have been adopted before during Mubarak's era. Hence, the puzzle lies in the similar economic circumstances and performances of both regimes with extremely two different strategies in dealing with Islamic NGOs. Additionally, the crackdown wave that took place post-2013 did not only target the politicized groups or the associations that had an opposing

political affiliation, such as the MB; however, the NGOs that were depoliticized and the others which were even supporting the regime have been suspended and closed as well. In order to answer this research question, a comparative analysis will be conducted on the state of established authoritarianism² and punctuated/restricted pluralism during Mubarak's era, especially in the 1990s, at one hand versus the current state of authoritarian restitution³ and diminished autonomy post-2013 at the other.

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses are derived from the inconsistency between the literature at hand and the empirical reality post-2013 that seems to be indicating a gap in the literature and they are contributing to comparative authoritarianism literature;

H1: The more pressing security and political stabilization requirements for the authoritarian regime, the less tolerant it will be towards Islamic NGOs regardless of the lack of social services.

H2: The more present the state of authoritarian restitution the less the autonomy of Islamic NGOs

² The different typologies of authoritarianism used in the project aim at analyzing the impact of the variants of authoritarianism of both regimes on Islamic NGOs. The term “established authoritarianism” is used to refer to the nature of Mubarak's rule. Nevertheless, this term does not refer to the durability nor the continuity of Mubarak's regime, but at one hand it refers to the prevailed political culture of public de-politicization and the aggressive security apparatus at the other (Gause, 2011, p. 83).

³ It refers to the attempts of rebuilding stable authoritarianism

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Before introducing the theoretical framework of this project, first the key concepts need to be addressed. As mentioned above, the two main variables under examination are authoritarian rule and Islamic NGOs.

- *Authoritarian rule* is defined according to Linz (2000) as; The systems with restricted or absent pluralism and which is not functioning with a clear ideology. Additionally, political mobilization is highly controlled unless it is used as a tool for authoritarian resilience and for a specific period of time (p. 159).

In fact, this definition is accurate to a great extent in describing the dynamics of authoritarian rule in the Middle East in general and in Egypt in particular since this rule is allowing political and social activities in a space of punctuated pluralism to sustain their rule. So this definition is applicable on both Mubarak and El-Sisi dynamics of interactions with Islamic charities.

Moving to the other variable of the equation, where there is a huge conceptual vagueness in determining the nature of these functioning bodies. Some arguments mistakenly tend to associate any non-governmental body with the term “civil society”. Civil society is defined by Kopecky and Muddy (2003) as the independent set of organizations that are rallied around common goals and which are not aiming at seizing the state, but influencing it (p. 5). Initially, civil society is the product of the broader social capital and which is defined by Putnam as the norms and the network of relationships among people in a particular society and which reflect how effective this society is (Kopecky and Muddy, 2003, p. 3). Based on abovementioned definition of civil society, which lay the conceptual foundation for that contested body to a great extent, I argue that Islamic charities

in Egypt can not be dragged under the concept of civil society since they scattered along either the goal or the method or both. Hence, these charities can be placed under the concept of Ahli society.

The Ahli society refers to the groups who are functioning through the following tracks;

Challenging the government that obtained the monopoly of using physical force and then producing alternative/parallel rules to govern social interactions instead of being directed by the central government. Additionally, these groups tend to exclude those who do not belong to their sect or race; consequently, they can not be characterized as a civil society since their roles contradict the preliminary component of such society and which is connecting the whole society with the state. Based on this distinction, I argue that the nature of many Islamic NGOs can be best described as Ahli society not civil society since they are connected together along religious lines and they do challenge the power of the central government by taking over the responsibilities of the government in some regions.

On a deeper level of analysis, the purpose behind using the Ahli society term is to describe these Islamic organizations specifically not every non governmental organization. However, using civil society to describe the entire situation is not accurate. This overlapping has been clarified by Abd El Rahman (2002) since she drew clear demarcation lines for conceptualizing these groups including the Islamic and the secular ones. Theoretically and through using the criteria of democratic civil society discourse, the multiplicity of non governmental organizations guarantee the existence of vibrant civil society (Abd El Rahman, 2002, p. 33). The empirical reality of the Egyptian associations negates this observation since the huge number of the voluntary associations did not push for a democratic state. Most importantly, some organizations have been engaged with the state in harassing the other groups who did not share the same interest/ideology with them. This competition and polarization between the Islamic and secular camps is the main

characteristics of the so called Egyptian “civil society”. Consequently, Abdel Rahman accurately defined these voluntary association, including their camps and their mechanisms of interactions, as the “uncivil society” (Abd El Rahman, 2002, p. 33).

The abovementioned distinctions aimed at defining the nature of Islamic organizations and to avoid the trap of labeling any non governmental organization as civil society. For the purpose of this thesis, I abide by the term non-governmental organizations to describe the nature of these Islamic organizations. In regards to the authoritarian context in general and the case of Egypt in particular, there is a clear cut distinction between civil society and Ahli society in terms of the nature of their activities. Basically, Ahli society describes any non-governmental organization whose members are belonging to the same religion, sect or race. I argue that the shape and nature of the non- governmental organizations in Egypt can be placed underneath Ahli society term since they are not independent from the state and they are not working as channels for civic engagement (Browsers, 2004, p. 66). Indeed, this term is a huge umbrella that includes many kinds of groups underneath. However, I abide by the Islamic social services providers including the politicized and the depoliticized groups. Having said this, this term is broad and it can be defined according to the different environment of each case. However, the basic understanding of the term has been introduced by Martens (2002) when she argued that;

- *NGOs* are the organizations that are financially and morally independent from the government. The only exception for this rule is when cooperation with the government is the result of these private organizations taking over the responsibilities that were done by the state (p. 280).

This explanation might seem naïve or unrealistic; however, it points to the aforementioned idea of punctuated pluralism that governed the relation between Islamic NGOs and the regime and how they were permitted to take over the responsibilities that were previously held by the regime.

Furthermore, the reason why the main focus is NGOs and not charities is that NGOs refer to the social services⁴ providers not only basic needs providers.

In order to address the research question at hand, the theory of bounded rationality will be used in order to provide foundational explanation for the variation between Mubarak's and El-Sisi's strategies in dealing with Islamic NGOs. According to Simon (1972);

The behavior of decision makers is the outcome of a group of incentives motivating them. Decision makers are rational actors; however, their rationality is bounded by two factors which are “their bounded cognitive ability and the complexity of the environment around them” (p. 163). Additionally, the actors tend to choose the behaviors that seem to be achieving instant satisfaction rather than long-term ideal behaviors (p. 163). Most importantly, the theory supposes that problems are not prior to solutions and usually the actors anticipate the problems that might occur and determine set of solutions to them (p. 163). Bounded rationality theory describes the calculations held by actors to achieve their interests, it lays the foundation for understanding how the authoritarian regime shifted its orthodox strategy in dealing with Islamic NGOs post-2013, although it is still unable to deliver social services.

Brief Historical Background on the Variables under Study

The aim of this section is to introduce a brief literature review on the main concepts/variables used in this research and which will be tackled in details in chapter two.

- **NGOs in Authoritarian Context**

⁴ Such as schools and hospitals

In order to trace back the transformation process of civil society from civic engagement channels to charities, the context through which civil society has been performing in authoritarian regimes should be clarified. To begin with, Safa (2007) introduced the traditional pattern of the state-civil society relationship as he argued that the developmental and the humanitarian role of these organizations has been tolerated easily by authoritarian regimes (p. 2). Initially, the wave of globalization along with the external pressure pushed these regimes to allow for more developmental and charitable activities (p. 2). Eventually, the NGOs became an integral part of social services sector with an arbitrary supervision on any political activity that might be initiated by these organizations. So the purpose of legitimizing the existence of NGOs was more of pushing forward the wheel of development rather than strengthening civic engagement and community empowerment (p. 2). A similar yet differentiated conclusion has been reached by Jari (2010) in the sense that he argued that the emergence of civil society organizations, especially the NGOs, on the surface is attributed to a top-bottom approach or international pressure (p. 11). Hence, the developmental role outweighed any potential political or civic engagement activity. However, he assumes that the regime's censorship was not as tight as it appeared, but the lack of political awareness and authentic alliance to be dependent on is the main reason for the absence of political role (p.11).

A similar argument has been proposed by Bayat (2002) when he analyzed the mechanisms of the rise of civil society charitable activities. This argument along with Safa's and Jari's are mainly focusing on liberalization and globalization waves that started in the late twentieth century, mainly in the Middle Eastern states, and they overlooked the early history of initiating these activities and they did not tackle a specific case. According to Bayat (2002), states have been gradually withdrawing from social responsibilities which is considered as the main trait of their populist

systems (p. 2). For instance, in Egypt, Syria and Iran food and fuel subsidies had been eliminated and which was parallel to the growing demands of liberating civil society institutions (p. 2). According to this observation, he concluded that “when states are unable to meet the needs of the middle and lower classes, they resort to civil associations to fulfill them” (p. 2). Social activism, irrespective of its theoretical understanding, is extremely different in application in most of the Middle Eastern states. The deliberate absence of social activism can be attributed to the nature of social contract in these states. Populist regimes established a social contract between the public and the state whereby any form of political activism is strictly undermined and in exchange the state will maintain security and provide basic services (p. 9). Consequently, social activism took the shape of community service activities, mainly charitable, with the elimination of any political activities (p. 9). Nevertheless, he highlighted a significant plot twist when he observed the deviant patterns of public services provision. The competitive political atmosphere subjected the poor to an intense competition between the ruling elite and the opposition. Hence, social services became the manipulative tool employed by most of oppositional groups to mobilize the masses (p. 10). Obviously, Islamists movements, especially in the Middle East, are the main counter forces which have long history in services provision (p. 12). According to Bayat (2002), “social Islam” became a significant mean through which the impoverished groups can satisfy their needs (p. 12). The Islamists welfare is based on filling the vacuum caused by the state, especially in the remote areas, through delivering the basic services such as food and water (p. 12). Noteworthy, their activities were not only limited to the materialistic needs but they worked on providing channel for community development. Consequently, in many countries, the government tried to outmaneuver the mobilizing techniques adopted by the Islamists. However, they tolerated their existence in order to satisfy the needy people and to avoid the outbreak of any uprisings (p. 12).

Brown (2012) drew clear demarcation lines for state-civil society relations in authoritarian contexts. He focused his analysis on Arab regimes and argued that since those regimes are “semi-authoritarian” they do not abolish the existence of civil society while at the same time they were crippled by the entrenched authoritarian practices (p. 1). Some Islamists associations, which were modeled on Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, were used to fill the gap caused by the government (p. 1). Moreover, these Islamic movements expanded their charitable activities along with enhancing their organizational capabilities to mobilize public support (p. 2). In fact, Algeria is one of the cases that provide an empirical overview on the aforementioned observations. Liverani (2008) argued that from 1980s till 2006 Algeria went through a failed attempt for democratization and quick reversal to autocracy (p. 1). The persistent economic stagnation eventually led to deteriorating living standards and which was also parallel to the fierce conflicts between the army and Islamic militias (p. 1). Consequently, the number of voluntary associations skyrocketed and Algeria became the most “association dense” country in the Middle East (p. 1). Adding to this analysis, Lorch and Bunk (2017) argued that a huge number of civil society association has been officially registered, but as the case in many authoritarian regimes, the more politically active organizations were co-opted and controlled by the regime. Indeed, they do not constitute a democratic façade and they play two major roles (p. 6). The first one as provider of social services, as it has been the case in many states in MENA. While the second role is that the regime consults with them to be informed about any pressing social or political issues in order to deal with them before they escalate (p. 6). Unlike the case of Algeria, Tunisia is not fragmented along ethnic nor religious lines. Bellin (1995) argued that there were several endeavors by the regime to liberalize civil society; however, these intentions collided with the concerns about giving up the authority and power of the regime (p. 134). During Bourguiba’s era, co-optation strategies were adopted in

order to contain the activities of major associations. On the other hand, co-optation and even abolishment were two strategies implemented to deter the danger of Islamic organizations, as the regime wanted to avoid the rise of Islamic groups as analogous to the case of Egypt (p. 134).

• **Civil Society in Egypt**

Al Sayyid (1993) gave a thorough overview of the formation of civil society organizations in Egypt as he argued that the increasing social disparities in the early nineteenth century marked the beginning of establishing these organizations. Social inequality was the inevitable outcome of modernization endeavors launched by Mohamed Ali as the sudden integration into the international economy created the bourgeoisie, who are the main beneficiaries, and the working class (p. 230). In order to cope with the rapid social and economic changes, the working class started to form professional organization through which they can demand and acquire their rights (p. 232). Eventually, all the professions did not hesitate to follow this approach in order to facilitate their interactions and bargaining with the government (p. 232). During these early stages, the authority supported the formation of such organized professional groups and considered them as an effective method for controlling the masses. “State corporatism” marked the era of the beginning and mid twentieth century and which was especially accompanied with intellectual and social activism groups (p. 234). The statistics published by Ministry of Social Affairs showed that the number of registered associations increased considerably throughout the twentieth century. Noteworthy, almost all of these organizations were dragged under services provision category (p. 234). According to Al Sayyid argument, a deeper look into these organizations should include “neo-traditional” institutions that are the core of social and political activity (p. 234). Most importantly, these institutions are usually attached to mosques and churches so their religious imprint was attractive and appealing to many people. Additionally, what locked them under the

category of services provision is that they have been abandoned the right to establish parties so their political and social views took the shape of charitable organizations (p. 234).

Adding to this explanation, Zubaida (1992) provided a deeper look on the permitted scale through which civil society organizations were operating. In 1956, a republican decree announced the dissolution of most of political parties and charities; additionally, they were forced to reapply for a license (p. 5). This marked the beginning of the absolute power granted to the ministry of social affairs to issue license, monitor and dissolve organizations (p. 5). Nevertheless, the religious voluntary associations operated in a less-controlled space. The reasons for this disparity is that Islamic voluntary association operated under the ministry of endowments (Awqaf), consequently, they are not subjected the tight control practiced by ministry of Social Affairs. Most importantly, corporatism was not practiced by state officials only; however, the founders of the Islamic associations adopted this methodology to achieve their aims (p. 5). The rising Islamic sympathies among government officials encouraged them to support the establishment of these associations and even to volunteer in the management (p. 7). In fact, this explanation offers a distinctive insight because it points to “the informal arrangements with government officials” as the main reason for empowering these organizations (p. 7). Apart from religious associations, trade unions and syndicates have been merged into the “Nasserist state”. As such, they have been incorporated into patronage network were they lost their initial roles (p. 8).

Benin (2014) tested the result of the era of state corporatism on the outbreak of 2011 revolution. He argued that tolerating the existence of many civil society organizations during Mubarak era, and his precedents, did not mean that they were politically nor socially active (p. 398). Additionally, the patterns through which civil society, including NGOs, contributed to “reproducing an unequal status quo” instead of creating a healthy and balanced state-society

relations. This is due to using civil society as a tool for authoritarian resilience, even charities were permitted to help the needy people out in order to avoid the outbreak of the uprisings (p. 398). Adding up to the previous arguments, Benin (2014) stated that these associations did not initiate the calls for 2011 revolution, but they participated in the final phases. Notably, in 2008 the number of NGOs reached thirty thousand “about 43% of them were Islamic associations, 9% were Coptic associations and 25% were quasi-governmental community development associations” (p. 399).

State-Islamic NGOs Mechanisms of Interactions

Irrespective of the controversial ongoing debate on the distinction between civil society and Al-Ahli society and under which category should Islamic NGOs be placed underneath, there is a consensus on the distinctive nature of these organizations in Egypt. For instance, Bayat argued that the nature of these organizations can be best described as “non- movement” due to the restriction placed upon them (Meijer, 2014, p. 136). On the other hand, Abdel Rahman (2002), introduced the term “uncivil society” to describe the conflicting interactions between the different NGOs (p. 32). Additionally, the distinction between Al-Ahli society and civil society and which of both terms better describes the nature of Islamic NGOs is tackled in the conceptual framework section.

The propositions introduced to explain the status of Islamic NGOs during Mubarak’s era did not add a lot to the argument explaining the previous eras. The mechanism of the restricted or punctuated pluralism has been inherited by the successive regimes in Egypt. The main difference between Mubarak’s era and his precedents and the reason why this era is a core of the comparative analysis at hand is the implementation of the structural adjustment programs in the 1990s and how did it contribute to the deterioration of living standards. The argument introduced by Hassan (2011)

confirmed this observation as he asserted that the number of Islamic NGOs skyrocketed starting from the 1990s due to the increasing economic hardships (p. 7). Another important observation has been provided by Nedoroscik (2002) when he argued that the terrorist attacks that took place in Egypt in the 1990s did not abolish the existence of Islamic NGOs. In fact, this observation constitutes part of the puzzle at hand because the similar security concerns in both cases did not lead to the similar outcome. Irrespective of the different explanations for the same phenomenon, these arguments assumed that Islamic charities will continue being the main provider of social services because they are a tool for authoritarian resilience that is adopted by the previous and current regimes.

Research Design

• Case selection

For the purpose of the research, a comparative analysis will be conducted between the status of Islamic NGOs during Mubarak's era, starting from 1990s and which was parallel to the implementation of the SAPs and the deterioration of living standards, and their status post 2013. In this regard;

- The *Dependent variable* is the autonomy of Islamic NGOs⁵
- The *Independent variable* is the dynamics of authoritarian rule

⁵ The state of restricted pluralism pre-2013 compared to the diminished autonomy post- 2013 and which is evident through freezing their assets and closing most of their organizations (Brooke, 2015, p. 1)

Hence, the Most Similar System Design (MSSD) will be followed since the two cases have different dependent variables and similar independent variables and having the inability of the government to provide social services as a control variable.

Moreover, the project will adopt a deductive and inductive approaches in answering the research question at hand. The deductive approach is used to test the validity of the theory- driven hypothesis of the perpetual pluralism granted to Islamic NGOs compared to the contradicting reality that took place after the revolution. On the other hand, the inductive approach is used in observing the changes in empirical reality, testing the tentative hypotheses of the project and building a new theory.

Research Plan

This research aims at exploring the link between the variation in authoritarian rules and the space granted to the Islamic NGOs to provide social services. The consistency of that correlation for many decades led to the emergence of a hyper-rational approach which assumed that whenever the government is unable to provide social services, it will intentionally leave a space of punctuated pluralism for Islamic charities to provide those services. However, this approach seemed to be invalid in explaining the correlation at hand under different authoritarian conditions. Hence, this research aims at negating this approach and building a new comprehensive approach that can explain the post-revolutionary changes.

As such, this research will be organized as follows;

- ***Chapter two:*** In-depth review of the literature on authoritarian dynamics, the autonomy of Islamic NGOs and economic conditions

- **Chapter three:** Analyzing the empirics of the pre-revolutionary decades, especially Mubarak's era (period 1), and which led to the emergence of the above-mentioned conventional or hyper-rational approach
- **Chapter four:** Analyzing the text of decrees issued in the cases on the Islamic NGOs intensity, their nature of work during Sisi's era (period 2) and their financial status in addition to news papers articles
- **Chapter five:** Aggregating the results, theory building and concluding remarks

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Authoritarian Rule/Authoritarian Dynamics

To begin with, authoritarian rule has been defined by Linz (2000) as the systems with restricted or absent pluralism and which is not functioning with a clear ideology. Additionally, political mobilization is highly controlled unless it is used as a tool for authoritarian resilience and for a specific period of time (p. 159). As a matter of fact, the definition introduced by Linz is accurate to a great extent in describing the nature of rule in the authoritarian states in general and in the case of Egypt in particular since it shed the light on the paradox of social and political activism, when is it totally prohibited and when is it tailored by the regime to sustain its power (p. 159). Another explanation of the dynamics of authoritarianism and its robustness, especially in the Middle East, has been introduced by Bellin (2004) when she argued that this kind of rule has been created by the absence of vibrant civil society, market-driven economy and political awareness (p. 143). According to her argument, civil society has been either repressed or corporatized by the state and liberalizing the economy was imposed by international forces and it lacked the internal free competition (Bellin, 2004, p. 143). In order to draw a demarcation line between the authoritarian regime and civil society, Bellin (2004) provided a complementary approach to Linz's (2000) argument by exposing the shaky ground that most of the civil society organizations in the Middle East stand on and through which they are either abolished or moved by the regime as a puppet. As such, the combination of both definitions will be used throughout the research since it is highly applicable to the case of Egypt.

Apart from the conceptual interpretation of authoritarianism, its sources and its robustness, the aim of this section is to review the literature on the dynamics of authoritarian rule in Egypt.

Albrecht (2005) introduced a general, yet noteworthy, overview about authoritarianism in Egypt as a path dependent approach that is followed by whoever comes to power, irrespective of his own strategic plans. In this context, the emergence of dissents is not due to weakness of the regime but it is part of the above-mentioned inherited authoritarian approach (p. 379). This approach suggests that the regime tolerates the emergence of dissenters while it controls them by co-optation and clientism (p. 379). This punctuated opposition is used as a method for authoritarian resilience through creating dissents among the elites following the approach of divide and rule while co-optation is used to control the social activism (p. 379). More importantly, the regime restricted the activities of NGOs which advocate human rights, taking the advantage of not being so much supported by the Egyptian public, while it allowed other avenues of societal participation and which is only focused on providing social services (p. 385).

Albrecht's (2005) argument is accurate to a great extent in describing the mechanisms of interactions between the regime and the NGOs and the usage of such organizations, specially the ones with charitable imprint, as a tool of authoritarian resilience. Having said this, he seems to fall in the trap of hyper-rationality when he assumed that authoritarianism in general, and how authoritarian regimes deal with NGOs in particular, is a static approach that is not affected by any external factor. This observation contradicts the empirical reality of many NGOs post-2013; however, Albrecht (2005) introduced an overarching description of authoritarianism that was appealing before the uprising.

On a deeper level of analysis, Brownlee (2002) compared between authoritarian dynamics during Mubarak and Sadat's eras and he concluded that despotism and the ever increasing oppressive measures during Mubarak's era was due to the threat of political reform that was previously initiated by Sadat (p. 6). Through out Mubarak's rule, the dispersal of power has been

limited gradually due to the concern of the potential rise of parallel power, especially the Islamists. Hence, the avenues of societal and political engagement have declined markedly to the charitable activities (p. 6). In fact, the argument introduced by Brownlee (2002) shed the light on the turning point/plot twist that pushed Mubarak's regime to change the "inherited and rigid" authoritarian measures as it has been described by many literatures. In other words, the assassination of Sadat, that has been assumed by the majority of the Egyptian public, was the result of the political opening he implemented earlier, pushed Mubarak's regime to suspend the earlier attempts for political pluralism and to increase the oppressive measures. This observation negates the hyper-rational assumption of the "inherited and rigid authoritarianism" since the authoritarian measures increased dramatically during Mubarak's and Al Sisi's eras compared to their precedents.

Another overarching and important argument has been introduced by Rutherford (2018) through which he used the approach of comparative authoritarianism to shed the light on the difference between authoritarian dynamics in Mubarak and Sisi eras. The most influential comparative methodology Rutherford (2018) based his argument on is the idea of the "two pacts". The first pact is a "provision pact" through which the regime mobilizes the support of the elite by providing them with material benefits (p. 186). While the second pact is a protection pact; "This type of governing coalition is not based on shared ideology, patronage or material interests; rather, it is founded on a single consideration and a shared sense of threat" (Rutherford, 2018, p. 186). According to Rutherford's (2018) argument, the difference between Mubarak's and Sisi's rule is a transition from provision pact, which was based on clientism and material benefits, to protection pact through which the regime gains the support of the elites by protecting them from threats. In order to measure this transition, Rutherford (2018) identifies three indicators of having a protection pact. The first is an increase of the economic role of the military and enlarged access to resources,

the second is “the patronage role of the ruling party will have declined”, while the third is the increasing levels of oppression (p. 187). Hence, when an internal or external threat exists, the regime claims the right of the excessive use of physical force through the full utilization of the coercive apparatus, especially the military (p. 187). I argue that the above-mentioned comparative approach utilized by Rutherford (2018) is of a significant importance in answering the research question; since it stresses on the factor of threat as a main reason for the shift in authoritarian dynamics. The research’s main hypothesis is the more the threats to the regime, the more the authoritarian measures will be and the less the autonomy of Islamic NGOs, which are perceived as a threat to the regime’s power. This paradox has been explained by Rutherford (2018) except for digging into the details of the crackdown on the NGOs.

The Autonomy of Islamic NGOs

The aim of this section is to review the impact of change in authoritarian dynamics, from Mubarak’s to Sisi’s eras, on the autonomy of Islamic NGOs. Having the Islamic NGOs as a parallel body for providing public services for many decades pushed many scholars to understand the logic behind tolerating the existence of those organizations irrespective of the highly authoritarian context they perform in. To begin with, this parallel body started in the 21st century as a large scale which included several and diverse Islamic organizations including opposition, the politically inactive, and the pro-regime groups. The number of these organizations increased gradually until they skyrocketed during Mubarak’s era due to the neoliberal arrangement and the resulted austerity measures as it was interpreted by many of the literature. As stated by Hassan (2011), the numbers of civil society organizations reached “30.000 organizations or approximately one for every 2.800

Egyptian residents” (p. 10). Religious and developmental organizations counted for almost half of this total number (Hassan, 2011, p. 10).

This observation had been clarified by Clark (2004) as he provided a detailed map for the sequence and density of the spread of such associations. In late 1980s, the percentage of Islamic association placed under the private voluntary organizations category counted for 50% most of which were concentrated in Upper Egypt (p. 51). The social welfare activities organized wide range of necessary, though unreachable, services such as schooling, adult literacy, clothing shops and medical services (p. 51). Apart from the detailed distribution of these organizations, the general and overarching functionalist explanation had been provided by Abdel Rahman (2004). To begin with, she made a distinction between the atmosphere through which NGOs were functioning pre- and post-1952 coup. According to her observation, NGOs prior to 1952 were not subjected to state manipulation and corporatism as it became the case after the coup (p. 128). Many counterarguments referred to these manipulative practices as being inherited from earlier ages and that they have been restructured under the provision of the newly issued laws (p. 128). These laws have been designed during Nasser’s rule in order to help expanding NGOs while at the same control them through interfering in funding and members’ selection processes. “The state succeeded in transforming NGOs into appendages of its bureaucracy and the implementing bodies for its projects” (p. 128). This observation, according to her argument, are attributed to two tactics of authoritarian resilience. Firstly, the inability of the government to provide services in the upper, rural and remote areas pushed them to encourage Islamic charities to fill this gap so they will avoid uprisings and chaos in a space that is described as restricted pluralism (p. 129). However, the intensity of such organizations started during Sadat era. Secondly, they used the rise of Islamists groups as a tool to deter communists (p. 129). Many other arguments who focused on Islamic

charities in Egypt seemed to have the same view. Mittermaier (2014) argued that expanding the activities of charitable associations was not a result of alleged attempts to liberalize civil society but it was a strategy to fill the vacuum left by the state (p. 520). A counterargument to these was proposed by Zubaida (1992) when he analyzed the reasons for the expanding activities of Islamic charities against all odds, and he concluded that government officials were sympathetic towards these activities so they encouraged their existence (p. 5). In fact, these different arguments might have different explanation for the phenomenon of Islamic NGOs but they all seem to agree that tolerating the existence of such organizations is a core strategy of the “inherited” authoritarian context. Having said that, they were accurate in explaining the reasons behind having Islamic NGOs as a parallel body.

Based on the above, I argue that the low stability and endurance of authoritarian rule, along with the deterioration of the economic conditions, due to the structural adjustment programs, led to an increase of the autonomy of Islamic NGOs during Al Sadat’s and Mubarak’s eras.

The sudden structural changes that altered the inherited authoritarian dynamics, as described by most of the literature, increased the risk to the authoritarian rule. The rise of the Muslim Brothers to power, and the fierce conflicts that took place afterwards, alerted the current regime of the possibilities of repeating such conflicts and thus shaking their solid ground. Since the need to re-establishing authoritarian rule became pressing recently, the oppressive measures increased and the space of punctuated pluralism, where the Islamic NGOs used to function, became highly restricted. Nevertheless, the threat to the current rule is not analogous to the threat imposed by such organizations to the previous regimes. The current regime is initiating a process of authoritarian-restitution where the existence of these NGOs might jeopardize the process. Irrespective of the newly applied structural adjustment program and the deterioration of the

economic conditions, the activities of Islamic NGOs, who were compensating for the lack of the public services, became restricted and even abolished in some cases. More importantly, this crackdown wave did not only target the opposing groups, such as the ones affiliated to the MB, but it targeted most of the Islamic NGOs even the depoliticized ones. This empirical reality has been described briefly by Brooke (2016) when he focused on the extreme measures/attempts carried out by the current regime to corporatize and cripple any form of social activism (p. 2).

He focused on the Muslim Brothers as a case study for this phenomenon, which is undeniable, yet self-evident. The literature that argued this crackdown wave, including Brook's (2016) argument, did not tackle the threat that alerted the regime in addition to the scope of this wave. I argue the post-revolutionary literature did not shed the light on the paradox of intensifying austerity measures and the crackdown on Islamic NGOs. Since the empirical reality negates the hyper-rational approaches introduced by most of the literature before and after 2011, the contribution of this research is about testing the impact of the current state of authoritarian restitution on the autonomy of Islamic NGOs.

The Economic Conditions: The Ability of the Government to Provide Social Services

The general overview and the broader picture of the impact of the neoliberal measures adopted in the 1980s and the 1990s on the state-society relations has been provided by many scholars. One of these overarching explanations has been introduced by Almeida (2008) as he drew a map of the impact of the neoliberal measures on the global south and which is, according to his argument, quite the same to a great extent. The neoliberal economic policies led to huge waves of mass unrest against the conditionality which directly affected their lives. Starting from the first round of reforms in the 1980s, most of these countries witnessed massive uprisings due to

the removal of subsidies, privatization and currency devaluation (p. 165). However, the second generation of reforms caused more aggressive social unrest (p. 165). This popular dissent was quite common in the global south; however, the way it has been tackled by the government differs from one country to the other, especially when it comes to the Middle East (p. 165). Based on Almeida's (2008) observation, I argue that these neoliberal reform and the following popular discontent were the reason behind the rise of the social services providers in Egypt starting from Sadat's era till they reached their peak during Mubarak's era. As mentioned above, tolerating the existence of such providers was kind of a deliberate move or method of authoritarian resilience done by the regime to satisfy people's needs and thus avoid the threat to its authority.

Clarke (1998) drew an illustrative hierarchy/map for the ideological basis of NGOs in the developing world. He divided these ideologies into three different generations; the orientation of the first generation is the "relief and welfare activities" while the second is "small scale local development projects" and the third is community organization and mobilization (p. 42). Based on this categorization, Clarke (1998) assumes that the first generation has been enlarged and strengthened deliberately by most of the authoritarian regimes in order to outweigh/outmaneuver the role and the existence of the third generation whose activity threaten the power of the regime (p. 42). Having said this, these ideological contestations among the different generations do not negate the fact that the third generation had a considerable role in the political life in many developing countries (p. 43). These two arguments provided by Almeida (2008) and Clarke (1998) clarify the relationship between the independent variable (the mechanisms of the authoritarian rule) and the dependent variable (the autonomy of Islamic NGOs) with the financial aspect as a control variable. An overarching observation has been introduced by Banks and Hulme (2012) and which combines Almeida's (2008) and Clarke's (1998) arguments and adds to them another

significant contribution. Building on Almeida's (2008) argument, the structural adjustment programs that have been implemented in the 1980s was one of the main reasons for enlarging the role of social services providers after the implementation of the economic reforms/conditionality. However, the combination of the economic and the political reforms is the main driving force. The incredible amount of donations received by different NGOs in different developing countries exceeded the amount received by their government counterparts (Banks and Hulme, 2012, p. 5). The amount of donations received by NGOs increased by 34% in the mid nineties (Banks and Hulme, 2012, p. 5). These donations were part of the political reforms conditioned by the SAPs and which aimed at liberating and empowering them and increasing their developmental role (Banks and Hulme, 2012, p. 4). This trend applies to the case of Egypt to a great extent; however, this developmental role was greatly limited to charitable activities. This enlarged role started to shrink after the emergence of the good-governance agenda that brought back the role of the state (Banks and Hulme, 2012, p. 6). This comprehensive argument introduced by Banks and Hulme (2012) accurately applies to the case of Egypt during el Sadat and Mubarak's eras, since tolerating the existence of Islamic NGOs was also a part of the economic and the political reforms caused by the SAPs. Nevertheless, the good governance agenda has not been applied in Egypt and the Islamic NGOs continued to be the main services providers until 2013. Apart from the SAPs, another important reason for tolerating Islamic NGOs was the attempt of containing the MB through incorporating them in the formal political structure (Banks and Hulme, 2012, p. 6)

As mentioned above, the puzzle of this research is restricting the autonomy of Islamic NGOs during Sisi's era and which used to operate freely to a great extent during Mubarak's era. The common variable between the two eras, and which complicated the puzzle at hand, is the consistency of poor economic conditions and the structural adjustment programs that have been

initiated by Mubarak. As clarified by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), the poverty rate jumped from 27% in 2016, after the implementation of the SAPs, to 32% in the last three years (CAPMAS, 2019). Empirically, the current regime is still unable, just as the previous regime, to provide social services; however, it restricted the Islamic parallel institution which used to compensate for these services for long time. Here comes the question of why did the regime restrict this vital body irrespective of its inability to satisfy people's needs?

Gormus (2017) introduced a detailed study of the SAPs during Mubarak's era as a critical juncture for the rise of Islamic NGOs as parallel social services provider, especially the Muslim Brothers. The implementation of this neo-liberal program re-oriented the economic structure as it pushed the small and medium businesses to the margin while the main partnership remained between the state bureaucracy and the huge businesses (p. 3). Therefore, a huge sector of the society, which was struggling economically for many decades, has been totally deprived of any potential economic benefit of the liberalization project. In order to compensate for these economic hardships, the regime allowed these NGOs to function as a method for authoritarian resilience (p. 3). Although Gormus (2017) came up with this argument post 2013, after the crackdown wave, she almost agreed with the mainstream literature reviewed above. She analyzed the circumstances that led to the emergence of this phenomenon without taking into consideration the changes that happened after 2013. On a broader level of analysis, Springborg (2015) analyzed the mechanisms of Sisi's rule in comparison to those of Mubarak's. He does not specifically focus on the NGOs-State relation; nevertheless, the observations he brings up provide broader understanding about the path the regime is taking. Springborg (2015) argues that the substantial difference between Mubarak's and Sisi's eras is that Sisi's rule is quit analogous to the "delegative democracy" of Latin America (p. 1). The fundamental feature of this prototype is that the president "perceives

himself as the embodiment of the nation and the main custodian and definer of its interests” (Springborg, 2015, p. 1). Hence, the president is not crippled by any kind of institutional balance or monitoring and which leads to inefficient decision making processes and dangerous repercussions. The massive legitimacy and popularity that Sisi gained started when he was serving as the minister of defense during Morsi’s era, because many citizens were pretty concerned from having a new MB regime (p. 2). This popularity skyrocketed after the overthrow of Morsi’s regime and which was clear in his approval rates that ranged from 75%-90% which was not the case/context when Mubarak came to power (p. 2). This popularity is not the only apparent discrepancy between Mubarak and Sisi; however, the context and the processes of building both rules is different to a great extent (p. 2). Unlike Mubarak who took over the National Democratic Party (NDP), Sisi refused to create a new ruling party nor to attach his name to any newly founded parties (p. 2). This deliberate detachment was not only limited to political parties, but it also included the governmental and non governmental institutions (p. 2). Furthermore, Mubarak replaced the already existent limited political liberalization strategy with another one where political activity is highly restricted. This inherited limited space for societal and political activity started to vanish completely since 2013 (p. 2). On another note, Springborg (2015) analyzed some of mostly-used discourse after 2014 to anticipate the trajectory of the new regime and the impact of the huge popularity the regime gained on state-society relations. He found out that the mostly repeated discourse revolved around two main ideas; the first one is that there will be no space for the citizens to act/decide on their own and the new agenda will be mandatory, while the second idea is that the regime-citizen’s relationship should be analogous to “father and son” mechanisms of interactions (p. 5). This metaphor portrays the citizens as a weak body who needs guidance and protection (p. 5). To sum up Springborg’s (2015) observations, using social and political activities as indicator,

he classified Mubarak's regime as a hybrid regime due to loosening the spaces for such activities to take place, while he classifies Sisi regime as authoritarian due to the absence of thereof. In fact, Springborg's (2015) proposition shed the light on an intrinsic difference between the two regimes under examination which is the father and son trajectory followed by Sisi's regime.

This observation constitutes an integral part of the research puzzle since it reveals the incentive behind the sudden and strong measures taken against any kind of social and political activities especially those implemented by Islamic NGOs and which can be explained by the threat the MB posed during their rule. Having said this, Springborg (2015) did not specifically focus on the impact of these new strategies on social activism, he only focused on the sudden implementation of huge national projects.

On a similar note, the idea of father and son mechanisms of interactions has been raised by Sobhi (2015), since he pointed as well to the rhetoric of "protection and direction" that is repeated in the post-revolutionary discourse. Sobhi (2015) did not only absorb this conclusion from the presidential and governmental discourse, but also through analyzing the curricula in different educational levels (p. 1). The main theme of his argument is how the nationalist rhetoric changed/developed starting from Nasser's till Sisi's eras. Based on the sequence he presented, during Nasser's era the nationalist spirit was deliberately emphasized through the presidential speeches, media and the different educational processes, this spirit gained massive popular support from the newly independent/decolonized nation. The articulation of the Egyptian identity shifted from an Arab socialist during Nasser to a neoliberal Islamic during Al Sadat and which was also clear in the presidential speeches (p. 4). For example, Al Sadat used to be known by the "believer president" to emphasize the role of religion in managing the state (p. 5). Consequently, the repressed Islamic forces during Al Sadat had a greater access to various social and political

avenues (p. 5). As mentioned before, these Islamic forces gradually mobilized huge public support throughout Al Sadat and Mubarak's eras, whose rhetoric was quite similar, until they reached power in 2012. Sobhi (2015) provided a brief, yet accurate, overview about the process of integrating the various Islamic forces into social services provision (p. 5). This phenomenon started by cutting social expenditure to almost the half and by directly stating that the absolute dependence on the state as the main provider of these services led to the deterioration of their quality, hence, most of the major social services started to be provided by private investments (p. 5). The threat the MB posed to the restored authoritarian rule brought back the post-independence nationalist rhetoric in order to embed the patriotic spirit through portraying the Islamists, especially the MB, as a threat to the national security. To sum up, the idea of "nation under threat" is a method that has been used by the current regime to justify the war on the Islamists. This main argument proposed by Sobhi (2015) is one of the main angles of the research puzzle; however, he seems to be laying in the same trap of the conventional approach, since he assumes that although the current regime might attack the Islamists, it will never abolish the "magic wand" of the Islamic NGOs (p. 10). The inaccuracy of this argument is manifested in the systemic crackdown on these organizations post-2013 and which happened for the first time since Nasser's rule.

On a similar note, Khalil and Dill (2018) presented an argument that builds upon the analogy between Nasser's and Sisi's strategies which has been clarified by Sobhi (2015). They argued that Sisi is following a statist approach that has been adopted before by Nasser in order to appease the public (p. 584). However, the regime is not following a pure statist strategy rather it is a contradictory mix of neoliberal and statist approaches (p. 586). They defined statism as the excessive intervention and control of the regime over economic activities (Khalil and Dill, 2018, p. 576). On the other hand, neoliberalism is not a static project that completely overcomes the role

of the state; conversely, the state should intervene in order to sustain the secure climate (Khalil and Dill, 2018, p. 578). Khalil and Dill (2018) brought up an important comparison between the status of the regime during Mubarak's era and in the present time. Before 2011, although the military enjoyed numerous economic and political privileges, the greatest access to policy making and investment was granted to the business class; however, the revolution transformed the power from this business class to the military (Khalil and Dill, 2018, p. 583). Nevertheless, the current regime could not detach itself from the international neoliberal order and which resulted in implementing the structural adjustment program (Khalil and Dill, 2018, p. 583). In order not to lose the support of the public, some housing projects have been initiated for the inhabitants of the slums in addition to creating "Tahya Masr" donation institution to compensate for the previous funding of the business class (Khalil and Dill, 2018, p. 584).

The nationalist inclination of the current regime has been tackled as well by Stacher (2015) as he pointed to the usage of violence as a tool employed by the military to protect the contested vacuum left by Mubarak's regime (p. 264). Stacher (2015) provides another explanation than the one proposed by Khalil and Dill (2018) about attacking the Muslim Brothers. He argues that the MB has been restricted in order to demobilize the public (p. 267). Additionally, the rhetoric of war on terrorism was another method for paving the way for the new presidential program (p. 268).

Another comprehensive observation has been introduced by Adly (2020) where he adds on the previous argument another significant angle. He traced back the incentives behind current process of authoritarian restitution and he argues that this state is the outcome of national, regional and international factors (Adly, 2020, p. 3). By national factors Adly (2020) referred to the combination of multiple economic and political factors. On the political level, he pointed to the idea of the nationalist rhetoric and the war on terrorism that legitimized the excessive usage of

force against political repression and civil society groups (p. 3). On the economic level, the implementation of the neoliberal measures, including the devaluation of the currency and increasing austerity measures, in addition to the implementation of megaprojects, led to expanding military economic activity (Adly, 2020, p. 3). By regional factors Adly (2020) referred to the political and economic support received from Saudi Arabia and the UAE who are in need of strong ally to undermine the power of the Muslim Brothers (p. 4). Last but not least, the international factor is evident in the deterioration of political liberalism on the global scale and which normalized and legitimized political repression (Adly, 2020, p. 4). Additionally, the rhetoric of support used by the IMF about the economic performance of the current regime encouraged it to proceed with increasing austerity measures (p. 4). These factors changed the economic and political performance/status of the military from strong presence during Mubarak's era to dominant one during the current regime (Adly, 2020, p. 6).

I tend to agree with Adly's (2020) argument since he combined all the possible reasons behind the current state of authoritarian restitution and which is one of the core aspects of the research at hand. The factors he brought up in his argument support the proposition of the research namely the causality between the crackdown on the Islamic NGOs and the process of authoritarian restitution and the prioritization of regime stabilization over longer term concerns such as satisfying the needs of the public.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that many of the literature that tackled the relationship between authoritarian dynamics and the autonomy of Islamic NGOs assumed the persistence and consistency of the relationship between the risk to the authoritarian regime and the economic conditions at one hand and the autonomy of Islamic NGOs at the other. However, post-2013 empirics revealed a gap in the literature where a new pattern of this relationship emerged.

This pattern can be summarized as follows; the higher the risk to authoritarian regime the lower the autonomy of Islamic NGOs. Hence, in the following chapter I will start the process of testing the validity of the aforementioned literature. The first step of this process will be an analysis of the impact of Mubarak's authoritarianism on Islamic NGOs and to what extent this relationship was a reflection of this existent literature.

Chapter Three: The Relationship Between Authoritarian Dynamics and the Autonomy of Islamic NGOs during Mubarak's Era (period 1)

As stated in the introductory chapter, the research question aims at figuring out the interconnectedness between the different authoritarian dynamics in Mubarak's and Sisi's eras at one hand, and the autonomy of Islamic NGOs at the other. Hence, in this chapter I will trace back the impact of Mubarak's authoritarian dynamic on the space granted to Islamic NGOs.

The Rise of Islamic NGOs: Brief Historical Overview

The aforementioned arguments concluded two important points. Firstly, that religious movements were allowed some space to operate, irrespective of the authoritarian context and which had been exploited by both the governments and the movements to enhance their power. Secondly, religious movements across the Arab world were modeled on the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as they marked the beginning of merging religion, politics and charitable activities. Indeed, Islamic charities are not only limited to the Muslim Brothers. Mostafa (2005) provided a detailed overview of the Muslim Brother's charitable activities as an integral part of services provision sector in Egypt (p. 105). The Muslim Brothers was established in 1927 in Ismailia governorate as an Islamic association that seeks to enhance Islamic principles in the society and to work as a counter force to the Christian missionaries (Baron, 2014, p. 2). Before initiating their political wing in the 1930s, they thought of boosting their foothold through organizing charitable activities, so they will be supported socially and politically. They used to help poor Muslim youth by providing books, shelters and even monthly salaries (Mostafa, 2005, p. 105). This narrow range of activity has amplified and the group established their own hospital and charities in order to help the needy people out. Eventually, they moved from the rural areas to the center through attaching their associations to the mosques (p. 108). These endeavors facilitated acquiring their aims and it became one of the most popular groups in Egypt (p. 108). Having said this, their members were not only the poor and illiterate ones who have been recruited by the assistances, but many middle class intellectuals found a shelter in the group through which they can express their opinion (p. 108). Indeed, the widespread Islamic charities in Egypt were not established by the Muslim Brothers only and many other Islamic groups followed the same methodology. This had been clarified by Clark (2004) as he provided a detailed map for the sequence and density of the spread

of such associations. The numbers of these NGOs skyrocketed in late 1980s, the percentage of Islamic association placed under the PVO category counted for 50% most of which were concentrated in Upper Egypt (p. 51). These social welfare activities included wide range of necessary, though unreachable, services such as schooling, adult literacy, clothing shops and medical services (p. 51). The main examples of these chains are Ansar al Sunnah, Al Jamiya Al Sharyia and Al Sunnah Al Mohamadya (p. 51). As mentioned above, the provision of social services was not exclusive to the politicized or the opposing Islamic groups; however, many other depoliticized and pro-regime were involved in the process, but they have not been tackled by many arguments.

The Rise of Islamic NGOs during Mubarak's Era

- ***Economic Factors***

To begin with, the economic hardships of post-1967 defeat led to altering the economic policies that have been adopted since 1952 coup. Starting from the 1970s, more global sources of income were introduced into the Egyptian economy (Menza, 2012, p. 323). The open door policy initiated by president Sadat expanded the sources of income to include the external sources such as tourism, labor remittances, revenues from Suez Canal, and foreign loans (Menza, 2012, p. 323). These newly added sources led to increasing wealth accumulation by some segments of the society who were lately attracted by Sadat to be part of political power circle (Menza, 2012, p. 323). Having said that, these new economic policies and the increasing numbers of the political and economic actors did not manage to satisfy the needs of the public especially in the rural and peripheral areas since the efficient political and economic control were concentrated in the core

and which led to the emergence of various intermediaries in the remote areas in order to compensate for this gap (Menza, 2012, p. 324).

Another explanation of the neoliberal wave that started during Al Sadat era has been provided by Nagarajan (2013) as he pointed to the impact of Infitah on the Egyptian economy during the following decades. To begin with, the share of the industrial activity in the economy decreased gradually (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 27). Additionally, the discrepancy between the import to export ratio increased rapidly since the share of the imports significantly exceeded that of the exports (p. 27). Consequently, this gap has to be compensated for through increasing external borrowing. This same pattern goes for consumption to production ratio and which was managed by the exact same method (p. 27). This huge shift of the economic nature massively altered the financial accounts of the state (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 27). This change was reflected in the intensification of debt and thus deficit. The solution for this deficit was to print money hence leading to a vicious circle of economic crises (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 27). By the mid 1970s, the state of financial emergency was self-evident and which led to the formation of the Gulf Organization for Development in Egypt (GODE) that devoted billions of dollars for funding development initiatives in Egypt and to compensate for the financial hardships (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 27). With regards to income distribution, the gap between the upper and lower classed widened rapidly thanks to reducing taxes and increasing investment opportunities accompanied by the neo-liberal policies (p. 27). Accordingly, the middle class started to vanish and the poor experienced an unprecedented economic hardship wave (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 27). Furthermore, the GODE has been dissolved in the late 1970s; hence it did not achieve the desired results. This resulted in increasing the nation's dependency on Western aids (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 27). On another note, the

peace treaty with Israel in 1978 even worsened the situation to some extent since Egypt has been boycotted by many neighboring countries (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 27).

Apart from the economic impact of the new trajectory followed by Al Sadat, he initiated a plan of political liberalization that mainly resulted from two different factors. Firstly, is a method of authoritarian resilience (Tucker, 1978, p. 5). In another word, Al Sadat aimed at tolerating a limited space for political activity in order to compensate for the economic hardships (Tucker, 1978, p. 5). Secondly, this political liberalization was also conditioned by the IMF and which was manifested in releasing the prisoners of conscience and tolerating the activity of civil society organizations (Ates, 2005, p. 137). One of the prominent examples of this democratization attempt was that the members of the MB who fled outside Egypt during Nasser's era returned to Egypt and established their economic institutions (Ates, 2005, p. 137). As a matter of fact, some of the members of the MB, especially those who have not been directly affected by Infitah, benefited from it since they became wealthier by foreign trade and establishing their own enterprises (Ates, 2005, p. 137). One of these major benefits were the investment companies they established in the 1980s (Zubaida, 1990, p. 152). These investment companies were established during the Infitah period to offer financial deals to the Egyptians working in the Gulf (Zubaida, 1990, p. 152). Apart from the huge economic project they initiated, the MB established thousands of clinics and schools in order to provide services for those who have been denied the economic privileges of Infitah (Ates, 2005, p. 138).

Unlike Nasser and Sadat, Mubarak did not have a clear economic strategy. At the beginning of his rule, there was an inclination towards closed-door policies, since the economy was left devastated after Al Sadat's rule, he aimed at detaching himself from the controversial atmosphere of his predecessors (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 28). Although many economists pointed to the

shortcomings of the neoliberal reforms and irrespective of the several attempts of directing the economy towards mixed policies, at the mid 1980s, the regime had to apply the same neoliberal trajectory with more aggressive measures attached (Amin, 1995, p. 1). This trajectory has not been enforced suddenly and quickly, but rather it came into existence gradually. This wave started first by privatization and more importantly, reducing subsidies on public goods (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 30). Hence, the regime started to face the risk of revolts as similar as to the revolts that took place during Al Sadat era (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 30). The only solution left was to start negotiating the possible solutions for such deficit on the international scale. Thus, the negotiations with the IMF about the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and the actual implementation took place in 1987 (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 30). However, one of the substantial condition of the SAPs was to reduce public expenditure and which has not been totally done by the regime. Consequently, the program and the aids have been suspended (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 30). On the other hand, this aforementioned and the following attempts were highly opposed by most of the public and which pushed the regime to initiate the emergency laws to contain the anger (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 30). The long series of negotiations was concluded by signing the agreement with the World Bank and the IMF in 1991 (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 30). The conditions of this agreement have been mostly applied by the regime including cutting public expenditures, privatization, and devaluing the currency (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 30). An interesting categorization of public expenditure after the application of the SAPs has been introduced by Soliman (2011) as he argued that expenditures are usually allocated to two main categories. The first category is “political control expenditure” which include all empowerment methods such as “security apparatus and ideological control such as media and culture” (p. 55). The second category is economic development such as education and infrastructure (Soliman, 2011, p. 55). The expenditure on security apparatus had the lion share of

the national budget amid the application of the SAPs as a tool for the war on Islamic extremism initiated by Mubarak (Soliman, 2011, p. 56). The main observation drawn from this category is that Mubarak resorted to using the police/army as a tool of deterring the Islamists instead of the closing down their charities.

Spending on education, as an indicator of public expenditures, increased in the late 1990s but have been beneficial for the educational process itself (Soliman, 2011, p. 69). The regime focused on the physical re-building of the schools that have been affected by 1992 earthquake without giving an adequate attention to developing the quality of education nor increasing the salaries of the teachers (Soliman, 2011, p. 69). Hence, the increase in the share of educational sector did not really benefit many people empirically (Soliman, 2011, p. 69). Having said this, this superficial increase in educational spending dropped from 19% to 11% in less than ten years (Mumtaz, 2011, p. 13).

These measures contributed to reducing inflation to a great extent; nevertheless, this agreement targeted solving the economic crises merely on the short term. There was no long term strategic plan aims at flourishing the national economy. More importantly, poverty rates skyrocketed since the implementation of the SAPs. As per the reports issued by the World Bank, “20 to 25 percent of the Egyptian population was poor and out of that 10 to 13 percent was considered ultra poor. It also noted that the level of poverty was higher in rural areas which were also poorly served in terms of health and educational facilities, even the benefits of food subsidies did not reach many of the rural poor, while unemployment rates jumped to 22% in less than 5 years” (Nagarajan, 2013, p. 31). The report pointed to the following observations as the main reasons for increasing rural poverty; the first one is that a very low percentage of the elite land owners controlled almost three quarters of the agricultural lands. While the second reason is the

unprecedented increase in food prices (Soliman, 2011, p. 69). “The World Bank report noted that the cost of the minimum cost diet increased by 216 percent in urban and 242 percent in rural areas” (Nagarajan, 2013, p.31). As highlighted by the report, the main side effects of the SAPs are the following; “labor displacement due to privatization, price increases, decrease in the delivery of social services” (Nagarajan, 2013, p.32). To sum these observations up, the SAPs solved the problem on the Macro level; however, it exacerbated the situation on the micro level.

Lesch (2011) shed the light on how the farmers, who have been secured by the land reform initiated by Nasser, have been affected greatly by the SAPs (p. 37). The government stopped supplying the farmers with fertilizers and pesticides in addition to rising the prices for water and electricity (p. 37). Thus, the agricultural sector started to deteriorate and the farmers as the main beneficiaries from that sector faced huge waves of impoverishment (Lesch, 2011, p. 38). In order to survive this wave, the whole families, including the children, in the agricultural regions started to work for the land owners; hence, the school enrolment rates decreased at the late 1990s (Lesch, 2011, p. 38). The overall government expenditure in different essential sectors dropped markedly after the implementation of the SAPs; for example, the share of health expenditure in the GDP fell to the half at the mid 1990s (Görmüs, 2016, p. 63). The decline was part of the overall decline in government expenditure and which led to cutting of the wages and increasing unemployment rates (Görmüs, 2016, p. 63). On a similar note “household expenditure surveys indicated that real per capita consumption declined between 1990/1991 and 1995/1996. The percentage of those living below the poverty line increased in this period, from 40% both in rural and urban areas to 45% in urban areas and 50% in rural areas” (Kawamura, 2016, p. 141).

According to the gradual withdrawal of the state from the public services provision sector, some of the Islamic based NGOs, especially the MB, worked on substituting the government and

challenging the neoliberal plan followed by the regime. The economic and charitable activities established by the MB started to fill the gaps left by the government; additionally, they were opposing the government on behalf of the impoverished public and who have been greatly affected by the SAPs (Görmüs, 2016, p. 63). As mentioned by Kandil (2011) the percentage of Islamic charities by 2010 reached 80% of all civil society organizations and which were mostly MB affiliated charities (p. 126).

The increasing political influence of the MB mainly sourced from their integration in social services provision sector such as education, health and poverty reduction (Görmüs, 2016, p. 65). One of the main examples is the infiltration of professional syndicates by the MB. The MB took over 5 out of 22 professional syndicates and which were also the most vital ones; the lawyers, engineers, pharmacists, doctors and scientists; in addition to gaining foothold in the liberal syndicates (Fahmy, 1999, p. 552). The following table shows the numbers of the MB seats in the syndicates;

Year	Syndicates	No. of seats
1989	Engineers	41 (out of 43)
1990	Pharmacists	10 (out of 12)
1991	Physicians	11 (out of 12)

Source: (Abdel Rahman, 2004, p. 115)

On a similar note, Abdelrahman (2004) highlighted the main characteristics of the implementation of the SAPs. The first and the second attributes are greatly similar to what has been introduced before by Nagarajan (2013) as she argued that this program has been perceived as a substantial solution for the nation's fiscal crisis; however, they did not achieve the desired

results (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 106). The last and most important feature is the delay of implementing the program. The delay is due to the fear of the potential social unrest that would outbreak if the regime increased austerity measures in addition to the elite class who depends economically and politically on the public sector (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 106). The regime knew that this sudden wave of privatization would threaten its rule since the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, who are greatly benefiting from the public sector, will both unite and protest against the regime (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 107). Consequently, the regime resorted to other authoritarian resilience tactics, mainly increasing the autonomy for Islamic NGOs, in order to compensate for the aforementioned sudden economic hardships. This risky tool will be described in details in the following section.

- ***Political Factors***

To begin with, Abdelrahman (2004) provided a detailed explanation for the Islamic revival/resurgence phenomenon. By these terms, she referred to the groups/moves that demand the making the principles of Islam the main source for political ideologies instead of the westernized ideas (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 109). The reasons for this contemporary Islamic revival was the defection from Islamic principles that took place earlier and the deterioration of economic conditions (Carvalho, 2009, p. 2). Hence, we can argue that Islamic revival was the bigger umbrella that included the emergence of a new Islamic discourse, Societal activities, charitable work and worked as a guidance for political life (Carvalho, 2009, p. 3). Basically, this revival was initiated through two major waves; one that took place at the early 21st century and the second was in the 1970s and the 1980s (Carvalho, 2009, p. 3). Although this broader Islamic revival was not necessary against the regime nor it was limited to political Islam, it led to the Islamization of the

Egyptian society and which in turn paved the way for the MB and other Islamist groups. This observation can also explain the backlash against all Islamic NGOs post-2013 even the non MB organizations (Masoud, 2018, p. 125).

In the 1990s, there were three major Islamist movements in Egypt which are the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Jihad, and Al Jama'a Al-Islamiyyah (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 110). The aim of these groups was basically the implementation of the Islamic principles in the political and economic life. The MB has the same goal, but was different strategies; "they believed in the gradual, reformist approach to realizing this objective" (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 110). The other groups followed a contradictory strategy that was based on violence to a great extent in imposing their will (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 111). Despite the economic and political techniques deployed by these groups, the regimes as their counterforce were greatly successful in containing the situation. Both Al Sadat and Mubarak deployed force and political exclusion to contain this potential threat to their rule, meanwhile they tried to take advantage of their popularity by supporting their charitable activities. Additionally, these Islamic groups have been used as a counterforce to outweigh the other oppositional groups (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 111).

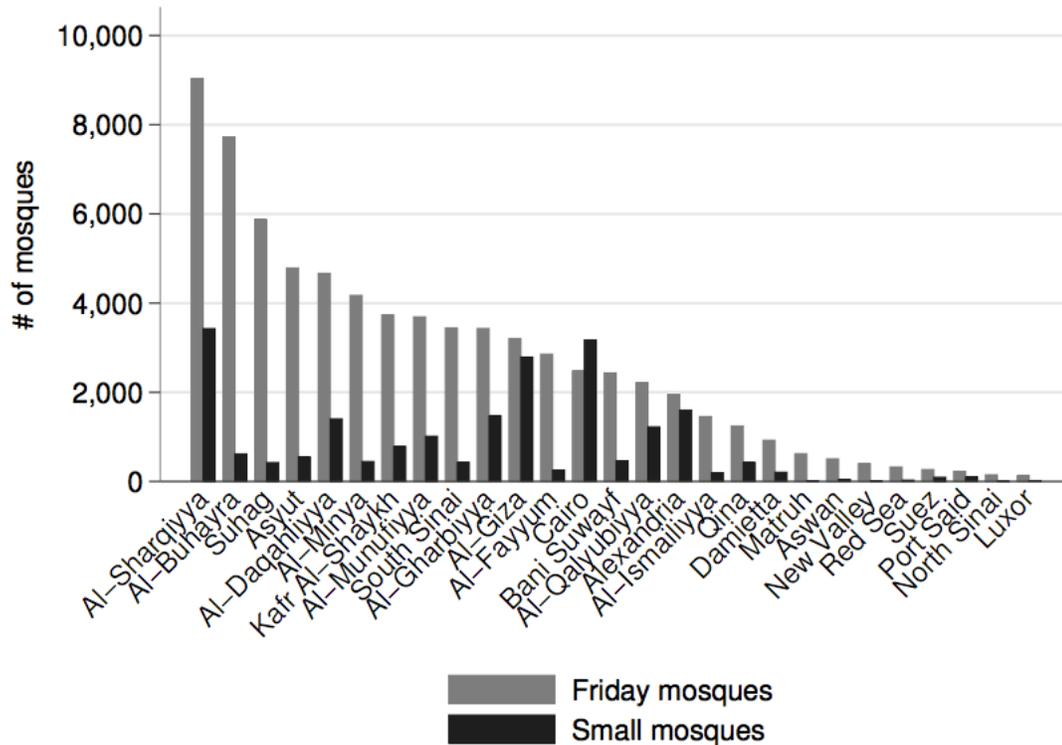
This space of punctuated pluralism has been initiated by Al Sadat as a part of the political reform campaign conditioned by the IMF (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 113). Nevertheless, they were not organized into official political groups/parties, but their existence was limited to informal charitable channels, banks, schools and labor unions (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 113). Additionally, a significant number of Islamic banks and investment companies have been established (Zubaida, 1990, p. 152). Their growing popularity, that was accompanied by mobilizing the public against the regime, pushed Al Sadat to use force against them and which was the reason for his assassination (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 114). The maneuvering techniques did not entirely change

during Mubarak's era, but the most important addition that should be taken into consideration is that Mubarak was highly threatened by the assassination of his predecessor. Hence, in order to outweigh the power of the Islamic groups, he created another sphere of punctuated pluralism for the secular opposition to act as a counterforce of the Islamists (Owen, 2013, p. 166).

Although this observation has been significantly emphasized, I argue that it is a critical plot in the patterns of the Regime-Islamists relation that might explain the puzzling current status of this relation. In other words, the strategy each regime follows in dealing with the Islamists springs from the threats that took place in the precedent period; hence, I argue that the conventional approach can not explain the pattern of Regime-Islamic NGOs relationship since it is not a static relation and it is highly depends on the authoritarian dynamics and how each regime perceives and deals with the threat of these organizations.

On another note, Ranko (2014) argued that the cooptation of Islamic groups was a method of overcoming their potential threat. Ranko (2014) referred to the Mubarak's strategy as analogous to the "Inclusion-Moderation" hypothesis that has been used in the post-revolutionary Europe (p. 3). This method was used by some regimes in order to contain the radical groups through including them cautiously in political life and which will result in moderating these groups (Ranko, 2014, p. 3). This is what has been exactly implemented by Mubarak through integrating the Islamists, especially the MB, into the structural institutional mechanism determined by the regime and by setting red lines for them (Ranko, 2014, p. 3). This was manifested in allowing the MB to participate in the parliamentary elections and to have a significant role in civil society organizations (Ranko, 2014, p. 5). Apart from the MB, Mubarak co-opted the moderate Islamists in order to eliminate the power of the radical Islamists (Owen, 2013, p. 167). Although almost all the Islamic groups were not allowed to form parties, they have been granted the right to register

as NGO in the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) and to follow the rules determined by the ministry. Albeit the space granted to Islamic NGOs, the forms of control practiced by MOSA included both economic and political restrictions (Owen, 2013, p. 167). The control over financial resources was one of the main methods used by the ministry and which was operationalized through three mechanisms; “(a) direct supervision of the NGOs’ budget and expenditure, (b) allocation of government grants and (c) control over foreign funding” (Abdel Rahman, 2004, p. 132). Nevertheless, these strict rules managed to control the external or official funding, but the societal sympathy toward Islamic organizations has never been contained. The only exception allowed by MOSA with regards to funding was the donations to the religious houses (Habibi, 2012, p. 4). Since most of the Islamic charities were attached to the mosques, they ended up having huge annual amounts of donations that did not lay under the supervision of MOSA (Habibi, 2012, p. 4). Some of the statistics showed that by 2006 the number of main/big mosques exceeded the 71,000 while the number of small mosques (Zawya) exceeded the 21,000 mosques (Masoud, 2013, p. 21). The following figure shows the distribution of mosques along the governorates;



Source: (Masoud, 2013, p. 21)

Apart from having funds as one of the main reason for strengthening and spreading these NGOs, the sympathy towards them did not only spring from the religious beliefs. More importantly, the social, economic and political status of the Egyptian public, such as economic deprivation and political suppression, pushed a great segment of the society to sympathize with them (Habibi, 2012, p. 4). The advocates of Islamic groups in general came from four societal fractions; a) the opponents of the elite businessmen b) intellectual opposition c) the well-educated unemployed youth and d) the proletariat (Habibi, 2012, p. 4). On the other hand, the recruitment mechanisms deployed by the Islamic groups played a huge role in flourishing their organizations. Some of these organizations, especially the MB, had a great ability to recruit intellectual and committed youth who were frustrated from the economic hardships and the skyrocketing rates of

unemployment especially after the implementation of the SAPs and which reached 20% (Zahid, 2010, p. 60). The following table shows the percentages of religious NGOs in some different governorates;

Governorate	Islamic NGOs	Coptic NGOs
Cairo	21.43	6.43
Giza	22.92	2.69
Alexandria	31.32	5.39
Fayoum	25	7.87
Sohag	30.68	12.87
Menya	53.56	9.90
Assiout	43.19	8.37

Source: (Abdel Rahman, 2004, p. 139)

Mubarak's Threat Perception/Threat to the Authoritarian Rule

Albeit the political and economic gains the regime attained with the rise of Islamic NGOs, their threat to Mubarak's rule was undeniable. At the beginning of the 1990s, both political and economic spheres witnessed the emergence of some Islamic groups as a potential counterpart to the regime. This threat was not exclusive to and exceptional by the MB and it has been posed by some other groups. Below is a ranking of risky Islamic groups as perceived by Mubarak's regime;

1. The first and most alerting threat is *Al Jama'a Al Islamiya and Al Jihad* (Gerges, 2000, p. 529). The outbreak of this kind of Islamic resurgence in the 1990s threatened the regime and the society as a whole due to;
 - The random mass killing they claimed responsibility for (Gerges, 2000, p. 529).
 - They claimed responsibility for 1997 Luxor massacre and both of which resulted in damaging tourism sector and the public accusing the regime of not taking the necessary measures (Gerges, 2000, p. 530).
 - The assassination of president Al Sadat in 1981 (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 76).
 - The outbreak of the terrorist attacks and the Islamic paramilitary activities in Egypt and the neighboring countries. One of the prominent example of this phenomenon was when the Islamic militia in Addis Ababa tried to assassinate Mubarak in 1995. Another example in the same year was the attack on the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan and which resulted in assassinating a considerable number of the embassy staff (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 77).

2. The second alerting threat is the *Muslim Brothers*. Firstly, as a path dependent mechanism, Mubarak thought that blocking their access to political life will be effective in containing the MB but empirically this did not happen since they gained public support through their charitable work (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 75). Secondly, gaining the support and the sympathy of many people, especially those who were benefiting from their services, greatly affected the popularity of the regime (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 75). Thirdly, the growing influence and popularity of the MB was perceived as destabilizing the power of the regime due to the following factors;

- The triumph of the Algerian “Islamic Salvation Front” in 1992 alerted the regime of the possibility of having the same scenario in Egypt (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 76).
 - The lawyers syndicate was mostly taken over by the MB in 1992 and which reflected their growing political power (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 76). Taking over the syndicates had many direct and indirect implications such as most of the staff belonged to the MB, the meetings of the group were organized inside the syndicates, and more importantly the syndicates were used as channels for opposing the regime (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 79).
 - The explicit opposition and criticism held by the MB towards the regime and which was an eye-opening for those who have been deprived of the fruit of the neoliberal economic policies (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 77).
3. The third and least threat to the regime was the *Salafists*. Although the regime and the Egyptian society were not really at ease with the Salafists due to their controversial fatwas⁶ and political orientations, they did not pose a direct strong threat to Mubarak’s regime. For example, they used to criticize the opposing mechanisms adopted by the MB (Shalata, 2016, p. 165). Having said this, many of the Salafists sympathized with the MB and many others had political goals; consequently, the regime was cautious from them (Brown, 2011, p. 5). So all the Salafists were not united on opposing the regime and they had stronger inclination to charitable work; hence, they were more tolerated by the regime (Brown, 2011, p. 6).

⁶ The official statement/orders of Islamic Leaders

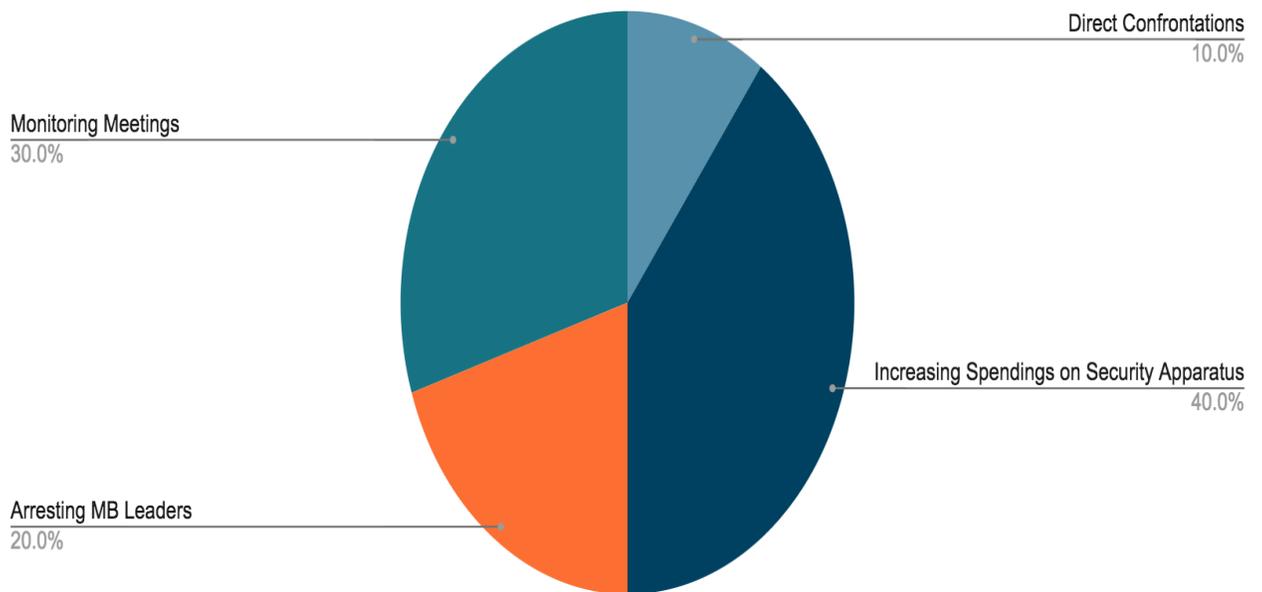
Mubarak's Punctuated Pluralism: The Paradox of Autonomy vs. Threat

Although some of the previous evidence indicated that Mubarak tolerated the existence of Islamic organizations to benefit from them economically and politically, he resorted to some techniques in order to contain the Islamists' potential threat. The measures adopted in dealing with Al Jama'a and Al Jihad were the most intense methods that ranged from mass arresting and direct military and police confrontations (Gerges, 2000, p. 596).

As argued by Soliman (2011) rising the expenditures on security apparatus in the 1990s was one of the techniques employed by the regime (p. 55). Mubarak's regime considered the MB as the major threat to its power; having said this, it was not absolutely tolerant to the rest of Islamic groups, but undermining the power of the MB was the main counterbalancing mechanism. By the middle of 1990s, Mubarak started his war against the MB by issuing laws to limit their presence in syndicates and universities. Furthermore, thousands of Muslim Brothers were arrested and charged in military courts (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 74). This backlash against the MB and their existence in the syndicates negatively affected public services provided by them and in order to compensate for this lack, some of the members donated huge amounts of money to refund those services (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 74). We can argue that Mubarak's methods in deterring the MB ranged from arresting and charging the members and it did not really include closing their charities (Al-Awadi, 2005, p. 74).

With regards to containing the Salafists, Mubarak resorted to monitoring their major meetings without preventing them from practicing any societal activities, especially their charitable activity (Brwon, 2011, p. 6). Additionally, their educational and religious centers were tolerated as long as they are not discussing political topics (Brwon, 2011, p. 6). Having said this, the regime was not really at ease with Al Jamyia Al Sharia since it has been argued that it was

infiltrated by Al Jama'a Al Islamiya which put them under the regime's scrutiny but they have not been prohibited from practicing their charitable work (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 104). The following chart summarizes the main methods adopted by Mubarak's regime in containing the threat of the Islamists;



The Hyper-Rational approach

The massive rise of Islamic NGOs at the early 21st century, as part of the Islamic revival, led to the emergence of the following hyper-rational approach and perceiving it as the only valid doctrine for explaining the regime-NGOs mechanisms of interaction. This approach assumed the persistence of the punctuated autonomy of Islamic NGOs. Many examples for this approach have been mentioned in the previous chapter such as Abdelrahman (2004), Hassan (2011), Clark (2004)

and many others who have been influenced by the inherited authoritarian dynamic that started from Nasser and Sadat till it reached its final phase in Mubarak's era.

To sum up the previous evidence, the abovementioned economic factors such as the hardship resulted from the application of the SAPs in addition to the political factors such as taking advantage of the popularity of the Islamic NGOs as a method of authoritarian resilience increased the autonomy of Islamic NGOs. Although there was a threat to the rule of Mubarak during the 1990s, based on what has been presented by Soliman (2011), this threat did not affect the autonomy of Islamic NGOs but it was reflected in increasing security apparatus expenditures and fighting Al Jama'a Al Islamiya (p. 55). More importantly, the arguments and evidence presented in this chapter justify the prominence of the aforementioned hyper-rational approach since the less the risk to Mubarak's regime in addition to its inability to provide social services, the more the autonomy of the Islamic NGOs were allowed. Additionally, Mubarak's mechanisms of containing the Islamic organizations was strategically planned and it targeted specific groups who posed a direct threat to the regime without attacking the other neutral organizations. In the following chapter an investigation will be conducted on the relation between the increased threat to the current regime and the autonomy of Islamic NGOs and whether Sisi's regime is following a different strategy in deterring the threat of Islamists.

Chapter Four: The Shift in Authoritarian Dynamics: The Crackdown on Islamic NGOs Post-2013 (Period 2)

Based on theoretical assumptions and hypothesis mentioned in the previous chapters and which were greatly hyper rational in assuming that the regime will always tolerate the existence of Islamic NGOs in order to compensate for economic hardships. In this chapter I will base the analysis on some empirical evidence for the change that took place in the State-Islamic NGOs relation and how did the change in authoritarian dynamics affect the autonomy of Islamic NGOs.

The Neoliberal Reforms and the Economic Circumstances during Sisi's Era

To begin with, part of the puzzle of this research is why the regime unleashed this backlash against the Islamic-based NGOs irrespective of the deteriorating economic conditions? One of the estimates showed that 22% of Egyptians lived under poverty line in 2008-2009 (Verme, 2014, p. 105); however, this percentage reached 32.7% in 2017-2018 (CAPMAS, 2019). This jump in poverty rates did not prevent the regime from carrying out this crackdown campaign and it adopted many methods to deter the threat posed to them by these NGOs. This serious economic hardships and poverty rates are not a new phenomenon for the Egyptian society; however, a more aggressive episode for hardships started after the implementation of the neoliberal reforms in 2014. In order to reduce the deficit, which accounted for 2.5% of GDP, two major IMF approaches had to be followed which are “inclusive growth and deficit reduction” (Joya, 2017, p. 8). The inclusive growth approach entailed encouraging investment and financial growth while deficit reduction entailed cutting public expenditures in addition to the huge increase in taxes (Joya, 2017, p. 8). Another huge side effect of the IMF agreement was the rise in the prices of consumer goods; “The Sisi government announced food and fuel price increases by up to 78% in July 2014 at the same

time it announced cuts to fuel and food subsidies” (Joya, 2017, p. 15). The cut in public expenditure was manifested in decreasing the investment in housing, health services and education (Joya, 2017, p. 16). For instance, the investment in public housing dropped to the half in less than two years till it reached the lowest percentage in 2016 (Joya, 2017, p. 16). These neoliberal reforms did not remedy the economic hardships left by Mubarak’s regime; nevertheless, the above-mentioned observations show the deterioration of economic circumstances.

The Details of the Crackdown on Islamic NGOs Post-2013 According to the Local

News:

Before digging into the details of the crackdown on Islamic NGOs, a critical question should be taken into consideration; Why did Sisi’s regime decide to attack these Islamic-based NGOs although being in a great need of these NGOs to satisfy the needs of the public? The straightforward answer and the short version one would be the ability of the MB to reach power in 2013 through the massive popularity they gained. The longer version for this answer would be the unprecedented presence of the MB in the political life and which was clear during the uprising weeks (Rutherford, 2013, p. 5). More importantly, their presence in the lower and upper houses in 2012-2013 was an accurate reflection of how popular they became. The following table shows these percentages as clarified by (Rutherford, 2013, p. 5);

Party	Lower House	Upper House
The MB Freedom and Justice Party	42%	58%
Al Nur Salafist Party	21%	25%
Al Wafd Party	10%	

This scene has been concluded by the victory of the MB member Mohamed Morsi in the presidential elections in 2012. However, the MB rule did not last for more than one year and they have been overthrown by the military in 2013 (Rutherford, 2013, p. 6).

As per the explanation provided in the previous chapters, the crackdown wave that started in 2013 did not only target the Muslim Brothers organizations, but it included many other Islamic NGOs who were not opposing the regime. This comprehensive wave lies at the core of the research puzzle since it manifests the utter shift in the authoritarian dynamics from Mubarak's to Sisi's eras. Having said this, the attack on the MB was one of the first and prominent moves initiated by the regime on the Islamic groups. Based on law 84 of 2002, all non-governmental organizations are totally forbidden from engaging in any paramilitary activity (Gamalelddin, 2013). The decree included the following;

- Prohibiting “all the activities” of the MB
- Shutting down all the NGOs and charities that belong to them
- The leaders of the MB and their supreme guide Mohamed Badie have been accused and charged for using violence against the public
- Last but not least, the assets of the leaders have been frozen (Gamalelddin, 2013).

These decisions were part of the war on terrorism plan adopted by the regime and the rhetoric used for this plan greatly legitimized the crackdown wave. As mentioned above, the wave started by dissolving the group itself in mid 2013 and then a gradual banning of many Islamic NGOs mainly the ones affiliated to the MB and many other which were politically neutral. In late 2013, the number of the closed MB organizations reached 1,300 most of which were serving the poorest areas in Egypt (Al Malky, 2015). For example, “the MB’s Islamic Medical Association (IMA)

served 2 million sick patients and thousands of who were in need of kidney dialysis, all unable to pay for medical treatment” (Al Malky, 2015). Apart from this specific example, all the MB charities substituted the government in providing the social services and they outperformed the government in sense of the quality of the services and their ability to satisfy the needy people (Al Malky, 2015).

Al Malky (2015) shed the light on a significant observation with regards to the techniques of the crackdown. The announced technique for this wave was to ban all organizations that have any connection to the MB, have any paramilitary activity, and not registered in the ministry of social affairs. These vague conditions gave all the right for the regime to shut down all the organizations they suspect defending the cause of “fighting terrorism” (Al Malky, 2015).

A more detailed map of the closed organizations in 2013 has been provided by Fadel (2013) as she provided the names of the main Islamic charities, including the ones affiliated to the MB, and whose shut down was catastrophic to many poor families since they have been totally economically dependent on them. Below is a brief list of the first wave of crackdown on some of the main charities as stated by Fadel (2013);

1. Al Mwasah Al Islamiya
2. Al bey'a w Hymaytaha
3. Al Basmah Al Khayrya for special needs,
4. Al Mar'a Al Asrya
5. Al mawada
6. Ana Al Masry
7. Al Gamyia Al Sharyia
8. Al Mostakbl

9. Al Gamiya Al Sharia in Shebin el Kom city
10. Jamyet Al Mohafaza Al Quran Al Kareem in Berket El Sab'
11. Jamyet Tahfez Al Quran Al Kareem in Berket El Sab'
12. Al Jamiya el Sharia in Sars Al Lyan
13. Al Amal Charity
14. Al Takwa Charity
15. Al Nahda
16. Tanmyet Al Mogtama'
17. A'mal Al Ber
18. Al Mostakbal Charity in Ashmon
19. Manabe' Al Kheir Charity
20. Gamiya el Sharia in Kwesna
21. Al Safwa Charity
22. Shabab Al Kheir Charity
23. Jamyet Al Ahsan w Al Re'aya (Fadel, 2013)

These charities were the ones who have been closed immediately after the ouster of the MB. However, a second and equally aggressive wave took place in 2015 and which closed more MB affiliated charities and other non MB Islamic charities (Mada Masr, 2015). In 2015, the minister of social solidarity Ghada Wali made an official statement for the logic behind the anti-Islamic NGOs backlash as she said that all the closed organizations did not follow the initial plans and goals they agreed on with ministry and they deviated from these goals by having political agenda (Mada Masr, 2015). More importantly, she stated that the case of the Muslim Brothers, who did they mobilized the public, and how did they threatened the national security should not take place

again (Mada Masr, 2015). This statement, as part of the broader war on terrorism, gave the right to the regime to shut down many Islamic charities including those who did not have any connection to the MB nor had any political activity. The second wave has been implemented by the following two strategies; the first one is the complete shut down of many Islamic NGOs. In 2015, the Ministry of Social Social Solidarity closed 169 charities connected to the MB and other 112 Islamic non MB charities and which were scattered along different governorates (Mada Masr, 2015).

The Case of Al Jamyia Al Sharyia

One of the prominent examples of this crackdown wave and its impact is the case of Al Jamyia Al Sharyia. Al Jamyia Al sharyia used to work as a main social services provider for more than 100 years in many rural and remote areas and it used to work in cooperation with two other organizations; Resala and Sonah Hayat (Linn and Linn, 2015). “It had over 1000 branch and operated 30 medical centers and provided for 450,000 fatherless children” (Linn and Linn, 2015). Al Jamyia Al Sharyia has been established in 1912 for the purpose of (Fahmy, 2020, p. 141);

- Reviving Sunnah
- Providing Quran and religious lessons
- Publishing religious books
- Helping impoverished people without any further intervention in politics (Fahmy, 2020, p. 142)

Having more than 5000 mosques under their authority, Al Jamyia Al Sharyia attached to them many religious and medical centers (Fahmy, 2020, p. 154). The JS was one of Mubarak’s regime supporters; hence, they were allowed to function freely especially in service provision

sector (Fahmy, 2020, p. 154). More importantly, the neoliberal reforms implemented by Mubarak in the 1990s increased the intensity of their charitable activities to compensate for the gap left by the regime (Fahmy, 2020, p. 154). The JS used to offer broad range of services that were supplied through their hospitals, schools and mosques; even distributing the basic needs such as water and bread became part of their responsibility in some regions (Fahmy, 2020, p. 155). Allowing the JS to operate freely during Mubarak's era was not only due to the inability of the regime to satisfy the public economically, but the regime thought of counterbalancing the radical Islamic groups and the MB with another Islamic force that is supporting the regime and which is devoting its resources for charitable work without further intervention in politics (Fahmy, 2020, p. 155). In another word, both the Mubarak's regime and the JS had leverage over each other since the JS was trying to sustain good relations with the regime and the regime was using the JS to deter other potential threats (Fahmy, 2020, p. 155).

Having said this, the relation between Mubarak and JS went through series of threats in 1985, 1991, and 1995. In 1985, Al Jama'a Al Islamiya was trying to gain a foothold in the society through a well-established organization. Consequently, Al Jama'a thought of rallying people around them through the JS mosques. As a result, the JS mosques in Assiut has been infiltrated by Al Jama'a (Fahmy, 2020, p. 156). Mubarak's regime resorted to replacing the administrative body of the mosque with a council from the Ministry of Social Affairs (Fahmy, 2020, p. 156). The JS aimed at solving the problem without engaging in further clashes with the regime; hence, they denied their connection with Al Jama'a (Fahmy, 2020, p. 156). Since it was difficult for the regime to contain the existence of the JS, due to their broad range of welfare service, the regime decided to reassign the JS on their previous mosques (Fahmy, 2020, p. 156).

The second episode of threats was in 1991 when the administrative council of the JS has been infiltrated by some members of the MB (Fahmy, 2020, p. 156). The expansion of the MB within the JS was a great potential threat to the regime; consequently, some calls were initiated to oppose the politicization of the JS (Fahmy, 2020, p. 156). The third episode of confrontations took place from 1995-1997 when the JS had a new MB affiliated leader (Fahmy, 2020, p. 157). This huge change pushed the regime to intervene directly in the internal mechanisms to filter the members and to contain the expansion of the MB within the organization (Fahmy, 2020, p. 157). Having said this, the numbers of the JS branches reached more than 1,000 in 2012 after being supported by the MB under the condition of not using the JS as a political platform for them (Fahmy, 2020, p. 157).

After the ouster of the MB president Mohamed Morsi in 2013, all the branches of Al Jamyia Al Sharyia have been closed and the assets were completely taken over by the central bank although the organization denied any connection to the MB. This denial did not protect them from being attacked by the government as the minister of social solidarity Ghada Waly announced explicitly that “some political organizations have made use of poverty for political gains and we are trying to make sure that this does not happen in the future” (Linn and Linn, 2015).

The image of this organization has been damaged although it challenged this decision in the court and they regained access to their assets, because the public believed that they have connection to the MB. Hence, the donations they received and their functional capacity dropped to the half (Linn and Linn, 2015). Additionally, Resala charity faced the same issue in raising funds and proceeding with providing services since their reputation has been greatly affected (Linn and Linn, 2015).

The case of Abu Rawash has been investigated on a narrow scale to understand the impact of the shut down on the people in Imbabah. Abu Rawash is a poorly constructed city that is 20 miles away from Cairo and which lacks the appropriate infrastructure and the appropriate access to the services provided by the government (Linn and Linn, 2015). One of the city residents stated that most of the people were totally dependent on the services provided by Al Jamyia Al Sharyia and “they gave us food every Friday and money to make it through the week. They used to give money to orphan girls and help them furnish a house so they could be married. None of us would have made it without them” (Linn and Linn, 2015). Another interview in Abu Rawash showed that health expenditures is one of the biggest fears the people in this city face due to two reasons. First, the rapid increase in medical services prices. Second, the huge decrease in the operational capacity of Al Jamyia Al sharyia medical center due to the cut in donations and the staff. This cut in budget was due to freezing the financial resources of this Islamic medical center “which operates 32 hospitals with over 5,000 employees” (Linn and Linn, 2015). Abu Rawash is not the only case where the shut down of these organizations left a catastrophic impact on the public, but the case of Sharnob constitutes another clear manifestation of these changes. Many interviewees from Sharnob stated that their dependency on the MB and other non MB organizations left them in disaster since all of them have been closed and those who resumed working are only dedicating their budget for the process of rebuilding (Linn and Linn, 2015).

Freezing the Assets of the MB and other Islamic NGOs

As a matter of fact, Al Jamyia Al Sharia is not the only organization, though one of the prominent cases due to its importance in the rural areas, whose assets have been frozen by the government. After the overthrow of the MB, the minister of justice announced freezing the assets

of 1055 charity in different governorates under the justification of belonging to the MB or having ties with them (Al Sadany, 2013). The most famous and important organizations among these were Egyptian Food Bank, although they denied any connection with the MB, Al Jamya Al Sharyia, Jamyet Al Shoban Al Muslmen (The Muslim Youth Charity) and all its branches and Jamyet Ansar Al Sonah Al Mohamadya (Al Sadany, 2013). Jamyet Ansar Al Sonah Al Mohamadya is one of the oldest Salafists organizations in Egypt that has been established in 1926 and which was not engaged in any political or radical activity (Kamel, 2015). Ansar Al Sonah has 300 branch all over Egypt that work for the purpose of spreading the teachings of Islam and which used to be supported by many Al Azhar's scientists (Kamel, 2015). The leaders of Ansar Al Sonah denied adopting Wahhabism and their connection with Saudi Arabia does not exceed organizing scientific debates and receiving funds. Additionally, they stated that during Al Sadat and Mubarak's rules Ansar Al Sonah has been accused of accomplishing political aims and it was support but both presidents (Kamel, 2015). Jamyet Al Shoban Al Muslmen constitutes a similar case to Ansar al Sonah. It was established in 1927 and it was more active in organizing civil engagement activities such as camps and talks (Maher, 2019). It has branches in almost all governorates and it does not have any history for political activities. On the contrary, it was one of the main supporters for 2013 revolution (Maher, 2019). In order to deny any connection with the MB, the name of the organization has been changed from Al Shoban Al Muslmen to Al Shoban Al Alamyia in 2019 (Maher, 2019).

The analysis of the list published by the ministry of justice showed that the highest numbers of the frozen and closed organizations was in Al Sharkia city and which counted for 130 organizations (Al Sadany, 2013). It has been argued that this was an intentional move by the government because it assumed that Al Sharkia is the one of the main centers for the MB since Mohamed Morsi was born and raised there. Additionally, Al Dakahlia city counted for 128

organizations, Al Kalyobya city counted for 74, Al Behyra city counted for 70, and Damietta city counted for 63 organizations (Al Sadany, 2013). The common factor for these cities was the noticeable MB activity that was manifested in the votes in both general and syndicates elections (Al Sadany, 2013). For the major cities, Alexandria counted for 35 organizations while Cairo counted for 28 organizations (Al Sadany, 2013). On another note, this wave included “118 companies, 104 schools and 69 hospitals” all of which were providing the public with basic needs in the remote and rural areas (Al Arabya, 2018).

After this crackdown campaign that resulted in shutting down many MB affiliated and other non MB affiliated Islamic NGOs, the leaders of these NGOs and the prominent members have been accused of and charged for having political agenda, destabilizing national security and harming national economy (Case File, 2015). Hence, they were prohibited from providing their charitable services and their financial assets have been frozen. Below are some of the investigations that took place in 2015 with the leaders and the members and which clarifies the list of the indictments directed to them; First of all, the main question/indictment is whether the accused belongs to the MB or not. Based on the answer for this question the rest of the accusations and questions will be determined. Below is an example of one investigations that aimed at understanding the nature of the MB work, their charities, their political activity and their sources of funding (Case File, 2015).

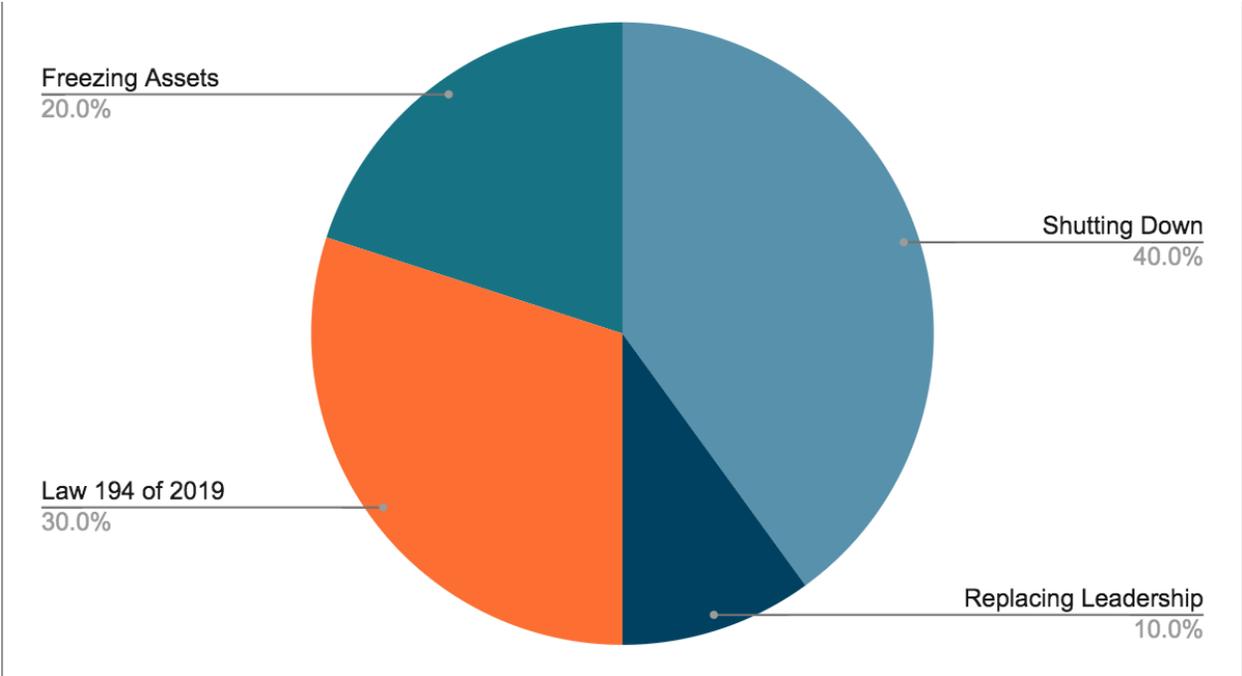
The prosecutor started by asking the main question of whether the accused belongs to the MB or not and the answer was that he ideologically belongs to them. This was the release point for asking more detailed questions about the MB such as when exactly it has been established, who established it and what was the purpose of establishing it (Case File, 2015). The answers were just referring to the religious and charitable goals of the group and that it did not have any political

purposes. This takes us to an important question of did the purposes of the group changed over time? By this question the prosecutor aimed at linking the first answer the accused gave to the post revolution empirics (Case File, 2015). The accused answered by negating any changes to the initial goal of the group and he explained that all the charitable and civic engagement activities targeted helping the impoverished people and raising the awareness about the Islamic principles which both help in reviving Islam (Case File, 2015). Moving to the critical questions of decision making mechanisms within the group and their funding sources and which answers I argue were the main factors for reaching the final decisions. The answers were that membership fees were the main source of funding and that the group devoted all possible resources for the purpose of reviving Islamic through helping the poor, organizing religious lessons and raising the awareness of the youth (Case File, 2015). This aforementioned investigation seems general, yet very important, because it was a reflection of the changes of the risk assessment of the authorities. Another investigation that was more focused on the economic aspect of the group pointed to a more detailed mechanism of freezing the assets of the leaders (Case File, 2015). According to this case, all the assets of the MB have been frozen in July 2014 due to a presidential decree in addition to forming a governmental committee to manage those assets (Case File, 2015). One of the main examples for this step was the business group of Hassan Malek, the prominent MB member, and which included shutting down many companies and shops that were owned by him (Case File, 2015). The freezing of Malek's group was done by committees from both ministries of interior and justice and who used force to close the shops, stores, offices and the headquarter and which indeed has been followed by long days of inventory of the documents and money in these places. However, it was not a complete shut down of the group but rather more of substituting the MB management with a governmental one (Case File, 2015). Additionally, this substitution included changing all

signature of the MB owners in the central bank to the officials appointed by the government as a way of guaranteeing the complete control over the group and avoiding any potential involvement of the previous owners. Taking over the financial assets was not only limited to the huge business groups such as Malek's, but the individual assets were included in this wave as well (Case File, 2015).

Threat Perception and Risk Assessment Through Media Statements and Investigations

The aforementioned empirical evidence along with the following justification provided by the investigations support the initial hypothesis of this research and which suppose that the threat to the current regime is the reason for diminishing the autonomy of Islamic charities that used to function for many years. As per the evidence presented throughout this chapter, the diminishing autonomy of the Islamic charities due to the threat to the rule is manifested in;



The shift in the methods of containing the Islamists can be summarized as follows;

Period 1	Methods	Approximate percentage	Period 2	Methods	Approximate percentage
Mubarak	Increasing spending on security apparatus	40%	Sisi	Shutting down	40%
	Direct confrontations	10%		Freezing assets	20%
	Arresting MB leaders	20%		Law 194	30%
	Monitoring meetings	30%		Replacing leadership	10%

Following is the conclusion and the justifications for freezing the money of the Islamic charities and charging their leaders and which I argue are the indicators of the risk to the regime;

- The Islamists leaders were accused of creating an atmosphere of pessimism about the economic and political future through spreading rumours about bankruptcy and the rise of prices. They were accused of spreading these rumours in social media, mosques and charities (Case File, 2015).
- Increasing the intensity of economic recession (Case File, 2015).
- Discouraging the investors and damaging the atmosphere of investments and this was done through convincing the national and international investors that investing

in Egypt is no longer beneficial to them. They achieved this plan through the deliberate spread of protests and faking news about the occurrence of terrorists attacks (Case File, 2015).

- Destroying tourism sector since it is the main source of foreign currency. Damaging this sector is a way of reducing the value of the Egyptian pound and will increase the unrest of those who work in tourism. They achieved this goal through spreading protests in the vital touristic places, attacking tourists and threatening tourism companies of attacking tourists (Case File, 2015).
- Increasing the problems of energy (petroleum and electricity) hence social unrest will be stimulated due to the rise of these products prices. They encouraged storing these products in the black market and destroying petroleum fields and main electricity stations (Case File, 2015).
- Decreasing the value of the Egyptian pound through increasing the demand on dollar (Case File, 2015).

I argue that these accusations are indicators for the changes in the authoritarian dynamics. These changes are manifested in perceiving the Islamic charities as a threat to the rule and which used to function for many years, bearing in mind the fact that the current regime is unable to satisfy people's needs.

Threat Perception through Media Statements: Analysing the Discourse by the Regime

In 2014, the minister of endowments announced in a press conference their support to president Sisi and the military in the war on terrorism. Furthermore, the minister announced that he is responsible for monitoring and “banning the small unlicensed mosques whose imams has

incited violence” (Minister of endowments, 2014). More importantly, the large mosques whose Imams are proven to be MB members/supports will be replaced by others who are chosen by the ministry. These announcements are due to the long history of using mosques and the charities attached to them as a political platform and a recruitment method for achieving some political gains. Not only the MB affiliated mosques that will be closed but also the Salafists mosques and schools in order to prevent radical ideologies from spreading (Minister of endowments, 2014). This was the summary of the minister’s official statement and which clarifies the new trajectory of banning any Islamic platform that is not approved by the ministry. In declaring this plan, the minister repeated the word radicalism for 5 times and terrorism for 2 times in the first two minutes. This repetition indicates that according to the authorities the threat posed by mosques and charities is has been magnified after the MB rule. On a similar note, president Sisi in 2019 youth conference gave a speech on how effective was the war on terrorism from 2013 till present. He started by giving the example Al Qaeda as analogy of how did terrorist groups start and recruit people. He mentioned that the schools they build and the services they provide are the reasons fro generating public support so in order to have an effective and successful war on terrorism the reasons for having it should be detected and fought against (President Sisi, 2019). These services are just a tool used by these groups to accomplish their goals. They convince the children in their schools that the way to build a healthy society and the way to heaven is through following them (President Sisi, 2019). Then the president stated that this is the case for all radical groups and if these groups have not been contained in Egypt then we would have faced the destiny of Iraq an Afghanistan. Rhetorically, the president stated that spreading radicalism through these social institutions is like cancer. Treating cancer is not an easy process, it is painful and it costs a lot (President Sisi, 2019). This statement is not a mere announcement for the war on terrorism, but it shows how schools and

charities which used to take over civil society are now considered as the main source of terrorism and the root that should be destroyed in order to preserve the stability of the state. Additionally, giving this analogy of cancer is an evidence of the change in perceiving threat and the necessity of fighting it through monitoring schools and charities is an application of rational choice theory that has been explained thoroughly in the first chapter.

Variations in the Autonomy of Islamic NGOs

As mentioned before, neither the crackdown nor freezing the assets were limited to the MB charities and they hit many non-MB as well. I argue that this observation specifically constitutes a main part of this research puzzle. This is due to the impact of the regime's threat perception on the autonomy of all Islamic NGOs including those who were even supporting the regime. The abovementioned case of Al Jamyia Al Sharia is prominent example for this paradox since it used to be a Salafist charity and it denied any connection to the MB. Although the Salafists' religious views do not really differ from those of the MB, there is a huge difference between them with regards to political orientation. Starting from late 2012, the Salafists implicitly opposed Mohamed Morsi's rule until they totally and explicitly announced their support for 2013 coup through several talk shows and news papers (Badrawy, 2016). Their support to the current regime took many forms such as protesting with the people, voting in the elections and organizing lessons and talks around the importance of electing Al Sisi as a president (Badrawy, 2016). Al Noor party, the main Salafists party in Egypt, stated that one of the reasons behind supporting the current regime was the concerns about targeting them, their institutions and the entire Salafist ideology (Badrawy, 2016). In order to prove explicitly prove that they have no connections to the MB and that they are advocates of 2013, Al Noor party published a book in 2016 called "the political orientations of the Salafists

throughout the revolution” where they heavily criticized the MB and declared their advocacy for Sisi’s regime (Badrawy, 2016).

Being a strong advocate for Sisi’s regime did not really protect them from the new restrictions enforced upon all Islamic NGOs. Unlike the MB charities, some of the Salafists charities have been closed but they started functioning again after appealing to courts; however, their charities are functioning under a newly issued set of rules that totally control the activities of all organizations especially the Islamic-based ones with no exception for the Salafists (Hegazy, 2016). At the beginning of the crackdown wave, it has been announced by the government that “12,000 Salafists organization use charitable work as a method for fulfilling their political agenda especially Al Jamya Al Sharyia and Ansar Al Sonah” (Hegazy, 2016). Furthermore, they have been accused for threatening national security since they receive funds from Qatar and Turkey. Hence, a strict censorship has been placed on the organizations which are allowed to function and they were totally prohibited from receiving funds from foreign countries (Hegazy, 2016). Due to the fact that some organizations were closed and some were allowed to function under strict censorship, law number 149 for 2019 came out, which will be tackled in details in the following section, to set the rules for the new phase with no exception for politically neutral charities as long as they lay under the category of Islamic-based organizations. In fact, the Salafists-regime mechanisms of interactions post-2013 support the hypothesis of this research because there is no variation in the autonomy of Islamic NGOs and they are treated equally to a great extent by the regime. This absence of variation is due to the regime’s risk assessment and perceiving any Islamic organization as a potential threat.

Law 84 for 2002 and Law 149 for 2019: The Two Laws' Implications on Society

Organizations

Law 84 for 2002

Apart from the security apparatus, the main method utilized by Mubarak's regime was the law of associations that has been issued in 2002 (Gruyter, 2016, p. 195). Through this law, the regime had the right to control the recruitment mechanisms and registration, power structure within the organization, the services they provide and fundraising (Gruyter, 2016, p. 196). The role of security apparatus at this time was to punish any organization which violate this law; however, the security apparatus was not really engaged in supervising such organizations and it was mainly the role of the ministry of social affairs (Gruyter, 2016, p. 196). I will start by reviewing some of the main texts of 2002 law with regards to activities, fundraising and collaboration and then a comparison will be conducted between this law and 2019 law with regards to these three main aspects. The first aspect is activities. A set of main activities has been specified by the government for the newly registered organizations to choose from. These activities ranged from health, social, cultural, economic to educational services with very limited options for human rights activities (Gruyter, 2016, p. 196). The major conclusion drawn from this list of activities is that charitable work was greatly allowed as long as these services do not serve implicit political agendas. More importantly, this law forbidden the activities that might pose a threat to national security (Gruyter, 2016, p. 196). The second aspect is fund raising. The funds received locally were not subjected to detailed examination; however, the funds received from international donors have to approved by MOSA (Gruyter, 2016, p. 197). The final and third aspect is collaboration. Law 2002 did not prohibit collaboration between NGOs; nevertheless, tight censorship was practiced over this

collaboration to guarantee that they are not threatening the power of the regime (Gruyter, 2016, p. 197).

Law 194 of 2019

The aforementioned cases of shutting down and freezing the assets were the release point for starting a new era where the previous state of punctuated pluralism is totally restricted. In 2019, law number 149 has been issued in order to regulate the work of charities especially the Islamic-based ones. The main aim of this law as stated by the members of the parliament is to ensure the complete subordination of all NGOs and to start a new phase where these organizations respect the law, the constitution and the international agreements with regards to their funds, activities and their members. Hence, abandoning these laws will end up in shutting down the organization (Court of Cassation, 2019). More importantly, the second article of this law prohibits any organization from cooperating with the MB, having indirect connection with it or with any other group who has been suspended and charged for terrorism (Court of Cassation, 2019). The third article commands creating committees in all governorates that are responsible for monitoring the work of the NGOs and to what extent they are respecting the aforementioned laws (Court of Cassation, 2019). The fourth articles states that all the activities and the services provided by the NGO should be approved by the official committee assigned by the government in this governorate (Court of Cassation, 2019). The fifth article states that if the assigned committee tolerates practicing any unapproved then the committee will be charged for collaborating with this NGO (Court of Cassation, 2019). Moving to the seventh article, which argue is one of the most important articles since it requires the submission of a detailed report by the founders to the committee and which in turn clarifies the shrinkage of the space of the NGOs in general and the Islamic-based ones in particular. This report should contain;

- A detailed address of the organization
- The name of the organization should be clear and should not be similar to other organizations so the authorities will not be misled by assuming cooperation with other organizations
- The geographical area it serves
- A detailed description of the services it provides
- A detailed information about the members (names, nationalities, profession, etc)
- Funding sources and how they are obtained
- The rules for membership
- Their methods of recruiting members (Court of Cassation, 2019)

Comparing the Two Laws

The MB rule and the violent events that took place during and after this year led to a backlash against any Islamic-based organization. Consequently, 2019 has been issued in order to limit the threat posed by all NGOs especially the Islamic ones. The previous two sup-sections briefly tackled the main texts of both laws; hence, in this sup-section I will try to highlight the major differences between the two laws. To begin with, although law 2002 restricted political activity, law 2019 limited the activities for only three areas which are “social care, development, and communal awareness” (Gruyter, 2016, p. 206). This means that all organizations that work in the fields of human rights and political awareness are not allowed to proceed with their work (Gruyter, 2016, p. 206). Any organization that proved to be working directly or indirectly in these controversial fields will be closed immediately and charged for destabilizing the state (Gruyter, 2016, p. 207). With regards to fundraising, law 2019 established a committee that is responsible

for examining both local and international funds whereas previously only international funds were subjected to examination. Additionally, an official governmental statement announced that any international funds that proved to be used to harming the state will end in “a life prison” for its leaders (Gruyter, 2016, p. 208). Finally, collaboration and which is has been tackled in details under law 2019. This law totally prohibited any cooperation or having any connection to the MB or any other organization that perceived as threat to the security of the state (Gruyter, 2016, p. 208). To sum the changes up, the new law gave both the ministry of social affairs and ministry of interior the right to observe the activities of all NGOs, to change the elected leaders, freeze the assets, request reports for the funds and recordings of the members’ meetings (Naji, 2014).

The New Avenues for Charitable Work Post-2013

In fact, these previous observations trigger for a significant question of *What are the possible alternatives for these closed charities?* In the case of Abu Rawash, the public found out that they will be deprived of the support they used to receive from Al Jamyia Al Sharyia. Consequently, some youth from the city decided to establish a charity of their own. The charity works as an intermediate between the impoverished public and those who are capable of helping. Following the example of Abu Rawash many other cities which suffered after the crackdown wave established independent charities and which are not supported by any religious leaders (Linn and Linn, 2015).

This was one of the avenues/alternatives of compensating for the lack of services (Linn and Linn, 2015). However, there are some other alternatives that outweighed those independent charities. One of the major examples is Karama and Takaful. Both are cash transfer projects that have been established by the government in 2014 (Sholkamy, 2015). Karama is responsible for providing

elderly and special needs with monthly stipends while Takaful is responsible for helping poor families with children through a monthly salary based on how many children they have (Sholkamy, 2015). The processes of registration and distributing funds are carried out by the ministry of social solidarity only with no involvement of third party (Sholkamy, 2015). Takaful and Karama are similar to the old system of El Damman El Igtima'I which used to provide pensions for impoverished families; nevertheless, the two new projects are covering a broader range of special needs, orphans, "female heads of households, divorced and widowed" (Sholkamy, 2015). Unlike Karama, Takaful is a conditional cash transfer project that aims at encouraging families to send their children to schools by giving them (Sholkamy, 2015). Another governmental alternative is the direct distribution of the service in the poor areas. After 2013, the military started distributing food and medicines in rural areas and upper Egypt. For example, in 2016 the military distributed 8 million boxes of food in upper Egypt and Sinai (Ahram Online, 2016). More importantly, in 2014 Tahya Masr fund has been established to promote economic development, eradicate poverty, develop national and international partnership for development and to encourage the investment of the private sector (Tahya Masr Fund, 2014). In addition to encouraging businessmen to donate in support of the governmental initiatives in different developmental areas (Tahya Masr Fund, 2014).

Chapter Five: Findings, Theory Building and Conclusion

The question/puzzle proposed by this study is the following; *To what extent did the change in authoritarian dynamics affect the autonomy of Islamic NGOs post 2013?* The tentative or the initial hypothesis given to this question was as such; the higher the risk to authoritarian regime, the less the autonomy of Islamic NGOs irrespective of how tight or hard the economic conditions are. This hypothesis is basically driven from the changes in the authoritarian dynamics from Mubarak's era to Sisi's era. I tend to label this change in authoritarian dynamics as *authoritarian restitution* where the current regime aimed at re-building a solid rule without facing any potential risk.

Main Findings

The Most Similar System Design (MSSD) has been adopted in this study since Mubarak's and Sisi's regimes have the same independent variable with different dependent variables. One of the main threats to the regime is the Islamists groups in general and the MB in particular since they managed to reach power in 2012. Although Islamic charities were tightly monitored by Mubarak's regime, they were allowed to fill the gap left by the regime in order to compensate for the lack of social services provision in the remote and poor areas. This space of punctuated pluralism is not exclusive to Mubarak and it was an inherited method for authoritarian resilience to protect the regime from the eruption of hunger revolution and to counterbalance the radical Islamic groups with the moderate ones. The consistency of the state of punctuated pluralism throughout three regimes led to the emergence of a hyper-rational theory that aimed at explaining the Regime-Islamic NGOs relationship. This main proposition of this theory is that the regime is a rational actor who will always tolerate the existence of Islamic NGOs as long as it is unable to satisfy the

needs of the public. This theory seemed to be valid until the strong backlash initiated by Sisi's regime against these organizations in 2013. Based on the evidence presented in chapter three, Mubarak did not close these organizations due to the aforementioned reason while he used the following methods instead;

- Increasing spending on security apparatus
- Monitoring the meetings of the MB and the other major Islamic groups
- Direct confrontations with the radical groups mainly Al Jama'a Al Islamya
- Arresting MB leaders

Having these Islamic NGOs as a parallel body for social services provision was less threatening to Mubarak than continuous deterioration of economic conditions especially after the implementation of the SAPs and the cut in public expenditure. This pattern of relationship was accurately analyzed by the aforementioned theory; having said this, this theory assumed that the regime will always determine the destiny of Islamic NGOs based on long-term strategic planning.

Based on the propositions introduced in chapter 4, the deteriorating economic conditions during Al Sisi's era did not automatically result in tolerating Islamic NGOs. As opposed to Mubarak's perception; having these Islamic NGOs as parallel social services providers is more threatening than economic hardships. Giving the fact that a set of neoliberal reforms has been implemented and which resulted in unprecedented increase in poverty and unemployment rates in addition to the cut in public expenditures. Hence, having economic hardships as a control variable in the comparison constitute the main part of the research puzzle since it did not prevent the regime from closing these NGOs unlike Mubarak's case. The rise of the MB to power in 2012 was alarming for the current of the threat of having a rising counterpart camouflaged by charitable

work. The previous case of Mubarak's rational choice changed to a case of bounded rationality, where actors choose behaviors that achieve instant satisfaction rather than long-term ideal behaviors, during Al Sisi due to the threat posed by the Islamists. The change in authoritarian dynamics that is evident in the state of authoritarian restitution led to a change in the methods of containing the Islamists. These methods as opposed to the ones adopted by Mubarak are the following;

- Shutting down many Islamic NGOs
- Freezing their assets and the individual assets of their leaders
- Replacing the leadership with a governmental staff
- Issuing law 194 of 2019

Another important detail should be taken into consideration here. These methods were not only practiced upon the MB, which pose a direct threat to the regime, but they also included other Salafists organizations which was supporting Al Sisi's regime. The change from mild methods during Mubarak to the more aggressive ones during Al Sisi proves the *validity* of the research hypothesis.

Theory Building and Contribution

Before moving to the proposed contribution of this study, a brief overview of the study's variables will be first clarified in order to provide clear differences between the old and the new theory this study is contributing with;

- The *authoritarian dynamics* is the *independent variable*
- The *autonomy of Islamic NGOs* is the *dependent variable*
- The *economic condition/hardship* is the *control variable*

The hyper-rational theory can be explained by the following diagram;

During Mubarak's era (Period 1):

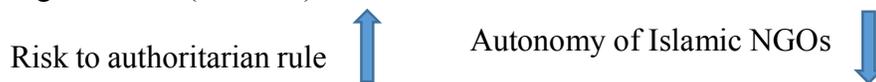


The result of using the deductive approach in testing the aforementioned hyper-rational theory detected an inaccuracy in explaining the current situation.

On the other hand, the inductive approach adopted through analyzing the empirics proves the accuracy of the *new argument* proposed by this study. The main proposition of this theory is;

The immediate power requirements for authoritarian rule determine the tolerance to Islamic NGOs rather than long-term strategic plans and which can be corresponds with bounded rationality theory. Additionally, the current state of authoritarian restitution outweighed and diminished the autonomy of these organizations. Finally, the higher the threat to authoritarian rule the less the autonomy for Islamic NGOs. This proposed theory is clarified by the following diagram;

During Sisi's era (Period 2):



Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of this study was the inability to conduct field research for some administrative reasons. The aim of this field research was to examine to what extent the NGOs that are still functioning till present are affected by the crackdown wave and the new laws. This field research would have clarified the new possible avenue for charitable work. The second limitation is the lack of president Sisi's speeches that would have been helpful in analyzing more discourse and hence provide a detailed explanation of the regime's threat perception. Thirdly, the lack of access to the details of freezing the assets of the NGOs post-2013. The numbers mentioned in these study were mainly provided by some archives from 2013-2014 and 2015. Fourthly, the lack of the literature that tackled the shift in authoritarian dynamics from Mubarak to Sisi. However, the main propose of this study is to fill this gap in the literature.

Future Research Agenda

Since conducting a field research would have supported the hypothesis of this study through operationalizing it, the suggested scope for further research is to conduct these interviews in order to know what are the possible alternatives for the closed charities. Additionally, having more speeches for president Sisi would help in having more thorough idea about threat perception through analyzing the discourse. Finally, the case of Egypt as a main example of the variation in the state-civil society relationship in addition to many other authoritarian states could help in building a broader theory that can further explain the dynamics on a larger scale.

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