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**Egypt's Ideological Polarization:
A Challenge to Liberal Democracy**

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Moataz A. Fattah¹

A critical void exists in the research regarding the reluctant transition towards democracy in Egypt and the systematic analysis of the value-orientations of opinion leaders and their subsequent impact on the belief systems of the masses. This article goes beyond the formal institutional analysis of the reasons behind the stalled democratic transition in Egypt by examining ideological debates shaped by opinion leaders and cultural beliefs of literate Egyptians.

Furthermore, this article argues that the lack of democracy in Egypt is not only a function of the semi-authoritarian elite, but also reflects the tension and lack of consensus among Egyptian opinion leaders on how to respond to the political challenges that face Egypt. A survey of 1,617 literate Egyptians¹ suggests that they mirror the same tension found among the opinion leaders. What these opinion leaders believe in and propagate is important in understanding the problems of transition to democracy in Egypt. The paper posits that the ideological polarization between different sects of opinion leaders exacerbates the illiberal context which is an impediment to democracy.

The responses of literate Egyptians in the survey determine a list of public figures whom I deem the most influential opinion leaders in Egypt.² These opinion leaders were asked for interviews. Based on interviews with Egyptian opinion leaders and analysis of the attitudes of the respondents to the survey, one finds that the ideological positions of the opinion leaders fall into three categories: traditionalist Islamists, modernist Islamists and secularists. The traditionalists are in turn split into those who advocate violence and those whose methods are non-violent. Similarly, secularists are internally diverse. They may be pluralists or autocratic statist. The article maintains that there is an ideological tension and distrust among the opinion leaders from each camp. Furthermore, this tension creates uncompromising ideological divisions among the masses. Although the majority of literate Egyptians give lip service to democracy, many of them do not adopt a liberal attitude toward their opponents. This lack of liberal attitudes makes it difficult to build the mutual trust necessary for a stable democracy.

It is noteworthy that the paper avoided using inflammatory titles such as fundamentalists or radicals. Instead, it translated the Arabic words of salafi into

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² Question 37 reads: Please, mention the names of three ulama, intellectuals, or politicians who have the most influence on your political knowledge and positions.

traditionalist, Mo'asser into modernist and 'almani into secular as they are usually used by the adherents to each school of opinion leaders.

Opinion Leaders' Ideological War

Severe tensions among Egyptian *ulama* (religious scholars), intellectuals and activists have been noted by several Egyptian and non-Egyptian commentators.² These tensions are so intense that the eminent Egyptian counselor Tareq el-Bishri called it an "ideological civil war." To verify this depiction, twenty-one intellectuals, *ulama* and activists whom I interviewed in March and April 2002 were asked to discuss el-Bishri's characterization. Eighteen interviewees (81.93%) agreed substantially with it. Dr. Saif Abdel Fattah of Cairo University commented: "The 'ideological civil war' between Islamists and secularists is becoming less and less civil." The late Ma'moun al-Hudabi of the Muslim Brotherhood concurred and added that there is a conflict of paradigms. This conflict "produces a mutual contempt and fear among Islamists and secularists." Dr. Refat al-Sa'eed, the leader of the secular Tagammu Party argues that there is a "propaganda war" initiated by *muta'aslemeen*" (sensationalism for Islamists). Al-Sa'eed contends that *muta'aslemeen* attempt to annihilate secular intellectuals because they do not want them to act as "super-Muslims who claim to speak in the name of Allah".

Kamel Behari of Al-Azhar University contends that there is an intra-paradigm clash among the Islamists as well. In his words, "there is uncompromising agitation between *al-Tayar al-Salafi* (traditionalists) and *al-Tayar al-Tajdidi* (the modernists)." Even inside the secularist camp, advocates of U.S. pressure to democratize Egypt are being called "Egyptian marines" by their secularist opponents.³

These inter- and intra- ideological tensions among Egyptian opinion leaders are a part of a "common and inherent flaw in the Arab culture that admires violence and lacks the ability to conduct peaceful dialogue. ... These Arab rulers did not parachute into our countries. There is a genuine defect in our societies and cultures." ⁴ Another Egyptian commentator suggests that "our societies lack the culture of compromise... our recent history is made up of losses which could have been avoided if we had not persistently rejected the notion of compromise" ⁵

In short, a majority of Egyptian opinion leaders support the characterization of an "ideological civil war." To understand this ideological tension and how it is related to the prospects of a stable democracy in Egypt, this article is divided into four sections. The first section proposes a tri-partite typology (later subdivided) of Egyptian opinion leaders into "traditionalist," "modernist" and "secularist" ideologies.

The second section addresses the question of whether or not ordinary literate Egyptians reflect the same division, based upon data from a survey conducted during the period from March 3rd through May 11th 2002. In this section in particular, and before

going any further, the respondents were asked to identify the names of the most important intellectuals.

Traditionalist Islamist respondents identified some *ulama* and Islamist activists as their most influential sources of political knowledge and ideas. The most common and emblematic names that influenced the traditionalists include Shaikh Abdul Hamid Kishk, Sayyid Qutb Shaikh Abudl-Rahman Abdul-Khaleq, and Shaikh Yusuf Al-Badri of Egypt, Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi of Pakistan, and Ibn Baaz of Saudi Arabia. Traditionalists named these people as the most influential opinion leaders in shaping their political attitudes.

Egyptian modernist Islamists who responded to the survey and participated in the focus-group discussions identified Yusuf al-Qaradawi as the most influential modernist Islamist opinion leader. Some of the other names that appeared on the list of opinion leaders who have been influential in shaping the attitudes of modernist Islamists are Mohamed Omara, Mohamed al-Ghazali of Egypt, Mohamed Salim Al-Awa, Tareq Al-Bishri, President Moahmed Khatami of Iran Mohamed Iqbal of India, and Rachid al-Ghannoushi of Tunisia.

Secular Muslims mentioned the names of some opinion leaders whom they perceive as having influenced their political positions. Some of the most well-known names are Said al-Ashmawi of Egypt, Farag Fouda, Salah Essa, Refat al-Sa'eed, Mostafa al-Faki, Mohamed Hassanian Haikal, Ussama al-Baaz, Mahathir Mohamed of Malaysia, Mohamed Arkoun of Algeria It is noteworthy that the previous names were not the only names mentioned by the studied respondents but rather the most frequent names.

The third section highlights the dynamics of the ideological conflicts among opinion leaders. Lastly, the fourth section investigates the possibility that this ideological civil war has become cultural by creating sharp divisions among the literate masses. In conclusion, the article argues that these ideological and cultural civil wars stand as obstacles toward democratization.

Traditionalists, Modernists and Secularists

Ideologically, it is reasonable to argue that Egyptian intellectuals and scholars adopt three different readings of Islam's response to modern political challenges. These three ideological readings can be given the following labels: traditionalist, modernist and secularist.

Traditionalists seek a type of *Islamic* government that is contradictory to what most contemporary students of democracy label *democracy*. Modernists, conversely, search for a modern, democratic government *compatible with Islam* that they usually call Islamic democracy. This state is different from the ancient state established by the

Prophet Mohamed and his companions in terms of its format and procedures, yet identical in its goals and functions. Secularists do not worry about how compatible their ideal system is with Islamic labels since Islam, and any religion for that matter, can be used to justify all forms of government if necessary.

The attitudes of different schools of thought toward democracy are a function of their attitudes toward the relationship between Islam and human intellect in general. Thus, it is important to note that traditionalists and modernists are Islamists who share similar assumptions and doctrines regarding the role of Islam in politics. For both schools of thought Islam is both a "religion and state." When encountering the term "political Islam," Islamists respond by saying that Islam necessarily has to be political.⁶

Secularists, who are not necessarily atheists or disbelievers, perceive Islam as a relationship between God and His servants. That is why they utterly disagree with Islamists.⁷ Sociologically, they are highly influenced by the non-religious education they received outside Egypt or from translated materials. They act as ideological competitors to the semi-closed religious stratum of *ulama* who for generations monopolized learning and intellectual activity.⁸ Not surprisingly, typical traditionalists think that secularists are not genuine Muslims.

Traditionalists' Reading of Democracy

Typical traditionalists gain their credibility among Muslims through strict deduction from holy texts and *their* ancient interpretations:

[A]nything not established in Islam should not be followed, as this will lead to castigation... Islam is complete and perfect, and we derive our total lifestyle from Islam that Allah has completed for us, we cannot add nor eliminate any teachings from this completed religion as the Prophet said: "nothing of what would bring you closer to jannah (paradise) and further away from hellfire but I have clarified for you".⁹

This quote captures the epistemological underpinnings of the typical traditionalist attitudes. To them Islam is complete regarding the issues of religion, spirituality and world affairs. The more Muslims derive sound deductions from their Islamic sources, the closer they are to the right path of Islam. The fear of innovation is clear. If something is not clearly stated in the Qur'an, Sunna and *ijma'* (consensus) of the early companions and *ulama*, then contemporary *ulama* alone can deduce its meaning through *qiyas* (analogical reasoning).

To traditionalists, there is no need for cultural exchange or cross-civilizational discourse. Consequently, traditionalists are inherently anti-modern in many respects. When Muslims diverge from their *aqeeda* (creed) and follow the paths of wrongdoers,

they move into a state of *jahilliyya* (the state of ignorance before Islam).¹⁰ Thus, democracy, liberalism, socialism, and nationalism cannot be justified in Islam either as a means or as a system of values since it is forbidden for Muslims to imitate disbelievers.¹¹

Traditionalists often quote a *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Mohamed) in which he clearly warns Muslims against imitating non-believers: "He is not one of us, he who imitates others. Do not imitate either the Jews or the Christians" (Reported by Imams Termithy & Abu-Dawd). This particular *hadith* and others have been taken by traditionalists to be part of *al-wala' wa al-bara'a* creed (allegiance to Muslims and rejection of non-Muslims).¹²

Ayman al-Zawahri argues that "whoever labels himself as a Muslim democrat or a Muslim who calls for democracy is like saying he is a Jewish Muslim or a Christian Muslim".¹³ By enticing ordinary Muslims to legislate for themselves, they challenge Islam's essence: "No God but Allah" that means no legislator other than Allah.¹⁴

Secularists think of *salafism* (the Arabic word for traditionalism as used in this article) as the worst example of Islamic traditionalism since traditionalists do not consider themselves as one "school of thought within Islam, but [as] Islam".¹⁵

Modernists' Reading of Democracy

Typical modernist Islamists, by definition, do not *a priori* extend their definition of the "un-Islamic" to include non-Islamic sources and civilizations. Rather, a Muslim can learn whatever is good for him/herself and society regardless of its origins. Modernists believe that whatever achieves justice and fairness among humans, even if it is not explicitly mentioned in *sharia* (Islamic legislation), is part of it.¹⁶ That is because *sharia*, in its origin and purpose, is based upon the interest of people in this life and hereafter. Modernists usually quote a famous saying by the medieval scholar al-Jawziyah:

Everything that may divert people from justice to injustice, from mercy to its opposite, from what is good to what is evil, from wisdom to foolishness is not part of *sharia* even if [somebody has] associated it with *sharia* through [false] interpretation.¹⁷

Following the same logic, modernists often quote the early *praxis* of the Prophet and his companions who learned of many worldly innovations from the Persians, Romans and Egyptians given the condition that these innovations did not contradict clear-cut "do" and "do not" provisions of the holy texts. This group of Islamist scholars, intellectuals and activists usually quote an inauthentic *hadith* that reads: "Wisdom is the wandering goal of the believer. Wherever he finds it, he will be the first to follow it." According to modernist Islamists, Muslims should be selective in refuting Darwinism, Marxism or the contributions of Freud and Kant because some of what they said might be useful and deserves further study.¹⁸

Sheikh Mohamed al-Ghazali best exemplified modernist thinking in his rejection of a nominal Islamic constitution prepared by al-Nabhani, the founder of the al-Tahrir Party. He claimed that it did not have enough legal guarantees to ensure *shura* (mutual consultation), political freedoms and public interests. Al-Ghazali praised the Western-style 1923 Egyptian constitution as more Islamic than most of the so-called Islamic constitutions.¹⁹

Thus, a mature Muslim can read un- and non-Islamic philosophies, and decided what is compatible with his/her ethics and creed. Muslims should not refute the wisdom that may exist in the books of the "people of falsehood"²⁰. Most of what Muslims learn from others is taken mainly what others previously had learned from Muslims.²¹ However, this learning cannot violate or contradict what they perceive to be the fundamentals of Islam. That is why they may accept Western technologies and institutions but not such creeds as separation of mosque and state.²² This creed contradicts the oneness of religion and state in Islam and assumes conflict between them. Unlike secularists, the modernists aim to advocate "modernization without encouraging servility to the West and discouraging confidence in one's own cultural resources".²³

Secularists' Reading of Democracy

Secularists assume that Muslims' should follow in the paths of successful civilizations in order to surpass them, just as the West did by learning from ancient Muslims and others. The Islamists' slogans about the peculiar and idiosyncratic nature of Muslims are obstacles rather than catalysts of development and modernization. The defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the fall of almost all Muslim territories under European colonial powers were neither coincidence nor isolated events but rather reflected a general course of degradation on the part of the Muslim civilization. Rather, Muslims stopped developing new ideas in response to new challenges. They clung to old ways until they found Napoleon occupying Egypt in 1798. Since then it has been clear that the gap between Muslims' power and that of the flourishing Western democracies has widened.²⁴ Secularists blame the failed attempts that were made to catch up with the West, at least in part, in the absence of a worldview that respects other civilizations and learns from them.²⁵ Some secularists even believe that it is impossible to import Western material products and outcomes without understanding and adopting the system of beliefs and ideologies behind them. In a clear criticism of modernists, secularists do not see how it is possible to "import from the West what is compatible with our values and leave the rest".²⁶

Interaction and learning from other civilizations cannot succeed without emancipation from the power of the "holy" interpretations and traditions that come as a package with the holy texts.²⁷ Secularists believe that Muslims imprison themselves in the old books of the past while the world around them advances. They maintain that their ability to learn from other civilizations is an important sign of the perseverance of

Muslims and their capacity to evolve. One secularist notes that Arabs have translated some 10,000 books into Arabic since Caliph al-Ma'moun (1000 years ago) while Spain translates into Spanish the same number in one year.²⁸ Furthermore, secularists claim that Marx, Kant, Locke, Machiavelli, Voltaire, Madison and Rousseau are more acceptable sources of knowledge and virtue than most of the ancient scholars of Islam due to the capacity of Western thinkers to emancipate the human mind from the chains of the church and mosque.²⁹

Secularists argue that the contemporary intellectual and political dilemmas faced by Muslims are similar to those of the Middle Ages in the West with all its implications. There is little difference between the Pope and his priests trying to preserve power and the Islamists' attempts to gain and preserve theirs. That is why they attack any attempt to liberate women, build modern education systems, or create modern civil society. Furthermore, they refuse to lift their custody over the public mind and call any criticism to their authority an "intellectual invasion" coming from the West.³⁰

Sub-Categorization

It is important to note that traditionalists differ regarding the issue of violence. Some infer from the holy texts and their interpretations, good reasons to wage violence against their fellow Muslims; others refrain from pursuing this path. On the hand, secularists are not identical when it comes to the issue of pluralism. Some are organic statist; while others are liberal pluralists.

Traditionalists: Violent and Non-Violent

All violent Islamists, popularly known as fundamentalists or jihadists, are traditionalists but not all traditionalists are violent. The difference between violent and pacifist traditionalists rests on which verses they choose in order to articulate the concept of jihad. At issue is the so-called verse of the sword:

But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (The Qur'an, Chapter 9, verse 5).³¹

Violent traditionalists believe that this verse, among others, propels sincere believers to wage violent jihad against all infidels, by virtue of being infidels. This includes their rulers who replaced the *sharia* of Allah with Western laws and corrupted *hakemeyat* Allah (the sovereignty of Allah).³² Non-violent traditionalists (and modernist Islamists) think of this verse as an exception to general principles mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'an that equate jihad with defense and required justice and kindness as a path for co-

existence (The Qur'an, Chapter 49/13).³³ They employ very strict criteria to justify the use of violence against their rulers such as the prohibition of prayers, denial of the authenticity of a verse or hadith and/or public renunciation of Allah's verdicts and replacement of them with others.³⁴

Secularists: Pluralists and Statists

In the history of the region, most rulers were autocratic statists (who possessed personal political domination) and not necessarily unjust dictators. This distinction should be understood within Roy's observation that in the Muslim world the opposite of tyranny is not liberty but justice.³⁵ A just benevolent autocrat was the catchword of an ideal system of governance. Thus, judged by the history of the Muslim world, autocratic governance should not necessarily be equated with malicious dictatorship. However, at the ideological level some secularists are more pluralistic than others are.

Pluralist secularists identify most with the Western concept of liberal democratic values and institutions. They maintain that all citizens, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, should enjoy basic human and political rights.³⁶ Statist secularists in return oppose and fear the liberal freedoms, parties and electoral competition that are seen as anathema to the organic state, producing conflict and destabilizing society. They fear Islamists (traditionalists and modernists) more than they appreciate democratic principles and procedures. To justify their autocratic tendencies, they poison the well of Islamists by equating all Islamists to the image of the long-bearded fascist fanatics who want to establish totalitarian theocracies once in power. If there are differences among Islamists, statist secularists argue, then they are differences of degree rather than kind.³⁷

The statist discourse is associated with most intellectuals who earn their living through glorifying and defending the status quo in Egypt.³⁸ Statist opinion leaders learned how to play the game of autocratic tactical liberalization through measures of "state-monitored political openness to promote reforms that appear pluralist but function to preserve autocracy".³⁹

According to statists, Egypt is not ready for democracy; illiteracy, tribalism in rural Egypt, apathy, emotionalism, and nostalgia are not conducive preconditions.⁴⁰ According to Dr. Ahmad Nazif, the Egyptian Prime Minister, "having decent jobs, improving the standards of living and fixing up the governmental services are the real concerns of Egyptians. Egyptians are not preoccupied with democracy."⁴¹ Rushing into full democracy is too risky according to statists. Several examples cited by Egyptian statist intellectuals focus on the failed experiences of other countries. The Lebanese democratic experience resulted in civil war.⁴² The democratic political opening in Egypt in the eighties ended in massive violent fundamentalism.⁴³ The rebellion against Siyad Berri in Somalia led to chaotic state breakdown.⁴⁴ Free elections in Algeria led the country into civil war with tens of thousands of deaths and casualties. Hafez al-Assad's

autocratic policies managed to break the vicious cycle of coups d'état by systematic removal of his opponents in "the interest of Syrians and all the Arab umma".⁴⁵ The statist discourse argues that democratic freedoms are acceptable if and when they do not threaten national integrity, stability and security. "If you open the door for genuine democracy, you have the chance that fundamentalists will come to power. What will the Americans do with them?" the head of the Foreign Relations Committee in Egypt's parliament contended.⁴⁶

In democratic countries, the majority forms the government, whereas in Egypt, the schism among intellectuals and political activists is severe and the majority is apathetic and irrational, statist argue. That is why the ruler should be strong enough to create and shape the majority around his persona. Egyptian rulers, at least since independence, attempt to accomplish this task by mobilizing people around symbols, pictures, and slogans and the annihilation of possible opponents.⁴⁷

Egyptian pluralist secularists disagree. They oppose any limits on rights of participation. That is why their main target of criticism is not Islamists in opposition but autocratic rulers, whether Islamists or secularists. A famous pluralist secularist said:

For decades after independence, most populist autocrats had suspended democracy until national liberation; until Palestine had been liberated; until we have economic development; until we have true social justice, and so on... Now we know better than to fall for the despots' delaying tactics.⁴⁸

Pluralist secularists perceive a ruling non-democratic regime as a more dangerous and immediate challenge than Islamists.⁴⁹ From their perspective, the appeal of Islamists comes from the fact that they do not have current failures in most societies.⁵⁰ The more they reach power and fail to convert their demagogic slogans into practical solutions, the more Muslims will refrain from electing them. Failures of Islamists in Sudan, Iran, and Indonesia among other places will prove that politics is not about slogans and symbols but about running trains, building bridges, delivering public services, fighting diseases and eliminating illiteracy.⁵¹ With those kinds of problems, how many times a day Islamists pray will not be the main factor in determining their re-election.

Cultural Divisions

How far does this ideological division impact the attitudes of the literate Egyptians? In an attempt to answer this question a survey⁵² of 1,617 literate Egyptians³

³ The survey was funded by the Middle East Research Council in Beirut and conducted by the researcher with the generous logistic help of the Center of Political Research and Studies and the Center for the Study of Developing Countries, Cairo University.

was conducted from March through May of 2002. The subjects were asked to respond to 49 questions, five of which provided insights into the relative influence of each group of opinion leaders on how literate Egyptians perceive politics.

Table 1: Classification of Respondents' Attitudes toward Democracy

	Islam as "religion and state" (Q. 26)	Is Islam and democracy compatible? (Q. 25)	Associating democracy with negatives? (Q. 22)	Definition of Democracy (open-ended) (Q. 47)
1. Traditionalist Islamists	(Strongly) Agree	(Strongly) Disagree	(Strongly) Agree	(Very) Negative
2. Statist Secularists	(Strongly) Disagree	Not Applicable	(Strongly) Agree	(Very) Negative
3. Modernist Islamists	(Strongly) Agree	(Strongly) Agree	(Strongly) Disagree	(Very) Positive
4. Pluralist secularists	(Strongly) Disagree	Not Applicable	(Strongly) Disagree	(Very) Positive

Table 1 identifies four operational criteria to distinguish among the respondents who fall into the four ideological categories.⁵³ The first question (question 26 in the survey⁴) exhibits straightforward and reliable criteria for the secularist or Islamist position since it directly asks respondents to (strongly) agree or (strongly) disagree with the famous Muslim Brotherhood statement that Islam is *deen wa dawla* (religion and state). Those who chose "Not sure" are excluded from the classification. However, since the attitude toward democracy specifically is much more delicate, the three other questions⁵ (22, 25, and 47) were used to differentiate between four groups of literate Egyptians. There are modernist Islamists (who argue for the compatibility of Islam and democracy), traditionalist Islamists (who argue the opposite), pluralist secularists (who

⁴ Question 26 reads: One popular saying is that "Islam is both religion and state" (*deen wa dawla*), Do you agree? [five-point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"]

⁵ Question 22 reads: By allowing people to make their own laws, democracy replaces the will of Allah with the will of the people; that is why it is some type of disbelief (kofr). Do you agree? [five-point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"]

Question 25 reads: If we let Muslims elect their rulers, these elections will lead to homosexuality (shozoz), drinking wine (shorb al-khamr) and secularism ('almania).

Question 47 reads: In your opinion, what is democracy?

advocate democracy) and statist secularists (who advocate strong state at the expense of democratic freedoms).

Traditionalist Islamists have been identified in the survey as those who consistently reject the values and institutions of democracy as un-Islamic. Traditionalists have been identified based on their views of (1) Islam as state and religion (a slogan raised by Islamic groups throughout the Muslim world); (2) their negative definition of democracy (an open-ended question); and (3) their belief that Islam and a publicly elected and accountable government are incompatible. Modernist Islamists, unlike traditionalists, have been identified as those who consistently accept both the values and institutions of democracy (since they are Islamic or Islamizable—i.e. condoned by Islam) in both their definition of democracy and their response to the above-mentioned questions. Modernist Islamists in general argue that democracy is a priority over *sharia* – in other words not a priority of supremacy, but rather of order. Thus, they argue that democracy should precede the application of *sharia*. Statists are those who consistently (strongly) disagree with the linkage between Islam as a religion and the state as a political institution, and oppose democracy. Not only do they see it as unsuitable for the Egyptian polity, but also as a low priority. Therefore, it should be dropped or postponed.

These attitudes were captured in the responses to questions 22 and 47. Pluralists are the sub-group of secularists who consistently accept democratic norms and institutions in their responses to these two questions.

Table 2
The Percentage of Literate Egyptians Who Adopt Each Ideology

	1	2	3	4	1+3	3+4
	Traditionalists	Statist	Modernists	Pluralists	Islamists	Democrats
Egypt	3	7	63	27	66	90

N: 1420

It is important to note that 4.5 percent of the respondents did not respond to two or more of the questions mentioned in Table 1 and furthermore, 7.5 percent of the respondents provided some inconsistent responses that perplexed the classification and were thereby dropped from the analysis. In other words, the previous typology managed to tap around 88 percent (1,420) of the respondents. Based on the tabulation of the 1,420 respondents who consistently fell into one of the four categories that reflect the divisions among the opinion leaders, the following table shows the relative weight of each one of these groups among the surveyed Egyptians.

According to this tabulation, 90 percent of literate Egyptians give lip service to democracy and accept it in principle. This relatively high percentage captures people who think that Islam and democracy are compatible (63 percent) and those who think that democracy is good on a secular basis (27 percent). Only 10 percent reject democracy for religious reasons (3 percent) or on secular basis (7 percent). Table 1 suggests that 66 percent can be labeled as “Islamists” in the sense that they believe Islam should be an important source of political doctrine. In other words, the majority of literate Egyptians pooled in this sample identify themselves with the opinion leaders who advocate Islam as a source of political ideology. This finding is not surprising. The relatively free 2003 elections in the Egyptian syndicate of journalism gave the opposition (mainly pan-Arabists and Islamists) two-thirds of the seats. This result suggests that “when true and genuine democracy prevails, it will definitely lead to the unequivocally opposite direction to the current trends in Arab politics”.⁵⁴

The pooled data suggests that pluralist secularists have weaker support among literate Egyptians than Islamists, while both claim to be advocates of democracy. One cannot attribute that only to the fact that Islamists are more organized. Pluralist secularists are in a structurally disadvantaged position. They do not have the *baksheesh* (tips and free services) that autocratic rulers have.⁵⁵ They do not have the legacy of the past and claims of Islamic *assala* (authenticity) that Islamists have. Their medium to address the Egyptian people is limited to their newspapers, which are largely dependent on government support to continue. They are few in number compared to Islamists, which may raise the question: "how can you have democratic institutions if you have few democrats?"⁵⁶ Unlike pluralist secularists, Islamists meet Muslims in mosques that are abundant in all Egyptian cities and towns. The more Islamists are publicly oppressed, the more they capture the sympathy of the people as the most viable alternative to the incumbents.

However, giving lip service to democracy is not the whole story. There is an ideological war among opinion leaders and the literate masses that casts doubt on the possibility of a viable stable democracy in Egypt.

The Dynamics of the Ideological War

The content and logic of the debate among the main schools of thought in Egypt does not leave much space for compromise or alternative possibilities. Each group of intellectuals and *ulama* handle the debate with an ‘either/or’ dominant strategy. Muslims’ history reveals many ideological and actual civil wars.⁵⁷ The attempts of some groups to purify Islam by stringent application of its imperatives, extraordinary fascination with its penal codes and harsh rejection of their ideological opponents were common causes behind many of these debates and wars. However, in the modern era another factor exacerbated the tension: the dual system of education. Literate traditionalist Islamists travel in time to advocate pre-modern Islamic society instead of a modern un-Islamic

society. Literate secularists travel in space to embrace religion-neutral modern society rather than a pre-modern one. Egyptian modernist Islamists emphasize the possible compatibility between the holy texts and modern developments and achievements of the West and others. Researchers attribute the cultural civil war to the development of the dual educational system: Westernized civil and traditional religious.⁵⁸

This duality of education and tense ideological environment drove many Western commentators to a pessimistic view of the future of a compromising and liberal Islam.⁵⁹

An Arab intellectual once wrote that Arab culture in general

... does not appreciate criticism; they do not even know it... It is a plot, and treason against authenticity... [Arabs] consider their worst enemies those who try to correct their ideas and beliefs.⁶⁰

There is a tendency to equate disagreement with dissidence.⁶¹ It is not uncommon in Muslim culture to spot traditionalists who attribute characteristics of *mobtadea'* (innovator) or *zendeeq* (heretic) to anyone who advances a new interpretation or opinion that does not correspond to the famous readings of any verse or saying of the Prophet. Little distinction is made between Modernist Islamists and secularists. An Egyptian Professor of Philosophy 'Atef al-Iraqi characterized it as an environment of intellectual terrorism.⁶² However, each side claims to be victim of this terrorism.

A. Secularists Wage Their War: Tactics and Dynamics

Statist secularists in Egypt, as in many other Muslim countries, mainly from positions of political power, have their part in this ideological civil war. In an attempt to limit public support for modernist Islamists, the regime puts them in the same basket with traditionalists (violent and non-violent) and pursues the same strategy: annihilate them intellectually if not physically.⁶³ This strategy depicts all Islamists as criminals and/or terrorists who use Islam as a cover for their illegitimate worldly aspirations.⁶⁴ One tactic that the political regime adopts is limiting the modernists' capacity to advance their image as an efficient NGO that accepts Egyptian Christians and co-exists with them. The famous laws disallowing Islamists from helping the homeless during the 1992 earthquake and tightening their capacity to run for the syndicates and unions have been very effective in preventing modernist Islamists from expanding their bases throughout the 1990s.

Statist secularists argue that modernist Islamists who give lip service to democracy are merely skillful public relations students for whom democracy functions as a disposable "ladder" that will be burned once they are in power.

Habib al-‘Adli, the Egyptian Minister of Interior, maintains that an attempt to distinguish Islamist “terror groups” from one another according to their alleged differences is a waste of time and effort because they use Islam as a veil for their political aspirations.⁶⁵

Anti-Islamist secularists do not differentiate among violent and non-violent groups. “It is a division of labor.... The so-called moderate Islamic movements are nothing more than the political wings of the armed movements.”⁶⁶

Farag Fouda, an Egyptian secularist who was assassinated for his writings, in a daring call to the grand Imam of al-Azhar wrote:

Oh Sheikh al-Azhar, thank God profusely for the backwardness of Muslims, for it alone preserves your job for you! But don’t imagine for a moment that anybody will allow you to preside over inquisition courts, to accuse and to oppress, to threaten and to forbid.⁶⁷

Sheikh Mohamed al-Ghazali, who is known to be critical of dictatorship, commented that Fouda was assassinated because the *imam* (state) failed to undertake this mission.⁶⁸

Modernists and pluralist secularists argue that statist secularists in power have developed clever skills to defuse public anger. For instance, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians demonstrated to express their anger against the government’s inability to stop the attacks on their brethren in Iraq. Interestingly, the Egyptian ruling party (the National Democratic Party) managed to march thousands of its supporters denouncing the attacks and declaring their solidarity with the Iraqi people. However, when pluralist secularists and Modernist Islamists demonstrated for Constitutional amendments or refusing the referendum on Mubarak’s fifth term in office, the government banned them.⁶⁹ Furthermore, imposing a monopoly over agencies of political socialization (e.g. public education, public TV and radio stations and mosques) is another popular tactic used by statist to guarantee self-survival.

Many pluralist secularists maintain that Islam, now entering its 15th century, needs to undergo a wholesale re-examination of its basic principles. Toward that end, they recommend reviewing the roots of the Islamic heritage, especially the Prophet's sayings, thereby ending the monopoly that certain religious institutions (e.g. Al-Azhar) hold over interpreting such texts. The tension is further exacerbated when powerful religious institutions like Al Azhar, prominent clerics and scholars argue that Islam is under assault by the West and its secularist “outcasts”. “Fighting back with any means possible is the sole defense available to a weaker victim, they say.”⁷⁰

Some secularists adopt an extreme version of attack on Islamists. To secularists, there is no such a thing as Islamic democracy. It is an oxymoron. "Democracy cannot be

modified by prefixes and suffixes."⁷¹ Others dismiss the capacity of Islamists to even introduce any viable contribution to Muslims' lives. All that they do is to "terrorize us".⁷²

Wahba, a Christian Egyptian Professor of Philosophy, maintains that the main obstacle to democracy is the fundamentalists who claim that they have the full truth; they do not believe in relativism, which is the core of democracy as a struggle among different attitudes and opinions. That is why they tend to call their opponents infidels, disbelievers, sinners and the like.⁷³

Some Egyptian secularists employ defaming mechanisms against Islamists. For instance, they use the word "Islamawi" or "Muta'slem" – best translated as Islamicized-to refer to the Islamists. The use of "Islamicized" is a sensationalism of 'Islamist' and political Islam in general that is meant to convince the public that Islamists manipulate Islam for their worldly purposes.⁷⁴

B. Islamists Wage Their War: Tactics and Dynamics

The ideological war between modernist Islamists and traditionalist Islamists is as tense as the one between Islamists and secularists. Traditionalists play the game of strawman too. They present themselves as followers of *al-salaf al-saleh* (the pious predecessors) who have a pure understanding of Islam with no un-Islamic influences. Thus, typical traditionalists do not think of secularists and modernists as good Muslims but rather as *mubtade'een* (innovators) who represent themselves as "enlightened" Muslims. This enlightenment they claim is primarily derived from un-Islamic sources.⁷⁵ Some traditionalists even consider modernists and secularists polytheists, since they worship their minds, whims, and masters.

Traditionalists accuse modernists and secularists of being like monkeys and parrots in the way they repeat Western ideas such as religion being the opium of the people; and depict the evolution of the human mind shifting from theological to philosophical to scientific reasoning.⁷⁶

Traditionalists use specific technical terms to defame modernists in particular. They describe modernist Islamists as *Muraja'at* who tend to postpone Allah's punishment when it comes to monotheism. They are pacifists⁷⁷ when it comes to jihad, though some traditionalists are pacifists too. They are *mu'tazila* and *'aqlaneen* (rationalists) since they put reason before the holy text. They are relativists since they search for the most modern and thus least authentic verdicts, especially regarding women, songs, arts, liberties, photographing, clothes and so forth. They do not acknowledge the role of *al-salaf al-saleh* (the pious predecessors). Lastly, traditionalists depict modernists as suspicious of consensus because modernists habituate people to different opinions and contradictory verdicts. They are neutral against innovators, heretics and deviant minorities.⁷⁸

To traditionalists, modernists and secularists alike are harbingers of a moral degeneracy rooted in their admiration of the West. Modernists find themselves actually fighting two wars: one against people who claim to be more deductionist (authentic) than they are and another against people to claim to be more inductionist (rational).⁷⁹ Modernist Islamists agree with traditionalists on two counts. First, an Islamic solution should be directly attained with direct references to the Qur'an and Sunna. Both modernist and traditionalist Islamists maintain secularists betray Islam and Muslims when they dilute the differences between Islam and Christianity. Secularism is a solution to a problem that Muslims do not have. Muslims achieved their civilizational achievements under the rule of Islam because of Islam's compatibility with science, not despite it.⁸⁰

Modernists maintain that the Prophet Mohammed's personification of the teaching of the Qur'an was limited by the fact that he was an Arab living in the 7th century and dealt with much simpler problems than those faced fourteen centuries later. Second, they emphasize, along with traditionalists, that what keeps the idiosyncratic character of a Muslim person, and thus his/her belief in the oneness of God, is his/her commitment to the teachings of Islam without objection or arrogance. Yet, this submission to Allah is not to be equated with refusing to develop modern political, economic and social systems that would not contradict the teachings of Islam. Traditionalists, from the perspective of modernists, are dinosaurs who live in the past and cannot carry the responsibility of Islamic *tajdid* (rejuvenation).⁸¹ Modernists argue that traditionalists believe that a contemporary scholar cannot attain the level of knowledge of great scholars of the past. They are worried that those claiming to be religious would distort Islam. Modernists share the same concern as traditionalists towards secularists. Modernists accuse traditionalists of being incompetent to lead Muslims. They are prisoners of *haram-phobia*, meaning excessive fear of taboos. Thus, they tend to render most modern inventions *haram* (taboo).

By moving away from "authentic" traditions, traditionalist Islamists argue that modernist Islamists have no choice other than to imitate the West. Modernist Islamists claim that learning from others is an Islamic tradition practiced by the Prophet Mohammed and his companions.⁸²

Modernist Islamists use two strategies to fight secularists. They first try to prove that they are different from the traditionalists. Second, they attempt to show that they can present a modern understanding of Islam that diminishes the need for Westernization. In other words, they try to Islamize what they deem appropriate and necessary from other civilizations. Modernist Islamists agree with secular intellectuals that the misuse of religion can lead to a theocracy, which is absolutely against Islam. They agree with the secular perspective that political divisions based upon religion may lead to turmoil and even civil wars, which are, again, absolutely against Islam. However, they absolutely

reject the false dilemma of theocracy vs. secularism. From their perspective, there is a third viable option: Islamic democracy.

From Ideological to Cultural Wars

In the survey cited above, the respondents were asked to answer two questions (23 and 46) that captured their tendency to allow "Islamist" parties and "non-Islamist" parties (such as communists, socialists and liberal) to compete for power⁶. Neither question differentiates between genuinely democratic parties and opportunistic ones. The questions assume that if an Islamist respondent refuses all non-Islamist parties regardless of their commitment to democracy, then it is a clear indication that he/she reflects the same tension and distrust that is prevalent among the opinion leaders and thus adopts an illiberal position toward non-Islamic (alien) parties and ideologies. Likewise, if a secularist refuses all Islamist parties, regardless of the parties' attitudes toward violence and democracy, then he/she adopts an illiberal attitude.

Table 3
Tolerance toward Non-Islamist Political Parties (%)

	Tradition.	Statists	Modern.	Pluralists	Total
(Strongly) Disagree	18.39	6.89	10.06	1.24	36.59
Not sure	0	1.72	11.67	1.68	15.07
(Strongly) Agree	0	1.27	27.69	19.37	48.35
	18.4	9.9	49.42	22.29	100

N: 1420, Pearson $\chi^2(12) = 142$ P. = 0.000

Table 4
Tolerance toward Islamist Political Parties (%)

	Tradition.	Statist	Modern.	Pluralist	Total
(Strongly) Disagree	16.7	9.87	0.21	3.73	30.51
Not sure	0.15	0.14	4.91	6.56	11.76
(Strongly) Agree	0.03	0.17	43.65	13.88	57.73
Total	16.88	10.18	48.77	24.17	100

N: 1420, Pearson $\chi^2(12) = 400$ Pr=0.00

⁶ Question 46 reads: Muslims who adopt Western ideologies such as liberalism, socialism or communism should be allowed to form political parties (ahzab) and run for elections (intikhabat). (5 point scale of Strongly agree – Strongly disagree)

Question 23 reads: Islamic movements should be allowed to form political parties (ahzab) and run for elections (intikhabat). (5 point scale of Strongly agree – Strongly disagree)

Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate the literate Egyptians' attitudes toward the legal establishment of liberal, communist, and socialist parties and their attitudes toward allowing Islamist movements to form legal political parties.

The last column in Tables 3 explicitly demonstrates the polarization in attitudes among literate Egyptians regarding entitling liberal, socialist and/or communist parties the right to legally exist. More than a third of Egyptians (36.59 %), (strongly) disagree with giving them this right. The Table also shows that half of those who (strongly) deny these parties the right to exist are the traditionalist Islamists ($18.39/36.59 = 50\%$). However, statist secularists as well are responsible for 20 percent of those who refuse these types of parties ($6.89/36.59=20\%$). This is consistent with their tendencies to reject the idea of a multi-party system. The attitudes of modernist Islamists who, given their other answers, represent the most liberal and pluralist face of Islamists is very intriguing. Approximately 20 percent ($10.06/49.42=20\%$) refuse to legalize such alien parties (Table 3), which puts them in very close relation to traditionalists. Though they give lip service to democracy in general, one in five Egyptian modernists in the pooled data does not seem to be liberal enough to accept parties that are based upon non-Islamic ideologies.

Yet when one considers the 23 percent of modernists ($11.67/49.42=23\%$) who are skeptical (not sure), a preponderance of evidence supports the claim that some modernists are democratic and less liberal. That is to say, they accept democratic mechanisms and institutions as means of participation and competition but only among those who accept the Islamic frame of reference. Does this mean that the secularists, who put traditionalists and modernists in the same basket, are right? This is one possible reading, at least in the case of one-fifth of the illiberal modernist Islamists who give lip service to democracy. Some Islamists, who talked the talk of democracy while in opposition, when given the actual opportunity to govern in the Sudan under the current "Islamic" regime, were not much different from despotic statist secularists. Thus, it can be inferred that not all modernist (democratic) Islamists are liberal or adopt the civic ethics that would tolerate the existence of secular parties. The proportion of illiberal modernist Islamists, according to this data, is 20 percent of all modernist Islamists ($10.06/49.42=20\%$).

However, some pluralist secularists as well have clear reservations about allowing non-Islamic parties to exist, particularly the communist and socialist ones. As shown in Table 4, 15 percent of nominal pluralists ($3.73/24.17=15\%$) seem to be conditional liberals; that is to say they have reservations and concerns about the Islamist and non-Islamist parties' commitment to democratic rules and liberal values. Dr. Hazim Hossni of Cairo University calls himself a "conditional secular liberal." He added: "I am liberal before I am a democrat. Democracy may eat itself by giving illiberals the right to deprive me from all my rights."

Hossni is liberal on the condition that liberalism does not wither away at any point in time no matter what the system of government is. He sees no future for liberalism if

Islamists take over. “They think that they are the soldiers of Allah and speak in His name.” Egbal Barakka, a prominent secularist liberal feminist, prefers the current regime in Egypt, even if it is not fully democratic to “a totalitarian theology under the Muslim Brotherhood.”

The ideological tension among public opinion leaders manifests itself in a cultural tension among the literate masses, when one considers the percentages of literate Egyptians who oppose legalizing non-Islamist political parties (37 percent) and those who oppose Islamist parties (31 percent).

There is a tendency in Egyptian political culture to give lip service to democracy without being genuinely committed to liberal attitudes toward one’s ideological opponents. In the aggregate, the nominal advocates of democracy, i.e. modernist Islamists and pluralist secularists account together for 69 percent of literate Egyptians. However, 20 percent of the modernists and 15 percent of the pluralists are not committed liberals. In other words, they adopt an exclusionary version of democracy that would not allow people who disagree ideologically with them to have their own political parties. These figures suggest that 35 percent of democrats are not liberals although they give lip service to democracy. Although 90 percent of respondents give lip service to democracy (Table 2), around 31 percent are advocates of illiberal/exclusionary democracy. Around 59 percent of the respondents are full-fledged advocates of liberal democracy.

A modernist Islamist argues that secularists are opportunistic politicians who defend democracy only when it takes them to power.⁸³ This argument finds support only among 15 percent of the nominal pluralist secularists. Sa’id al-‘ashmawi, a prominent secularist figure in Egypt and the Arab world argues that if Egyptians vote for nominal Islamist democrats, this will mean the end of the whole march of freedom in Egypt. According to the data, only 20 percent of the modernist Islamist respondents affirm this fear by adopting a democratic illiberal discourse.

On the other hand, approximately 55 percent of modernist Islamists (27.7/49.4) accept and tolerate the existence of non-Islamic parties (Table 3) and 57 percent of pluralist secularists accept the existence of Islamist political parties (Table 4).

Conclusion: Ideological War Impedes Democracy

A stable democracy requires a culture of tolerance, trust and co-existence. The watchword for this required culture has been labeled “civic”⁸⁴ or “liberal.”⁸⁵ In the long run, a democracy cannot preserve itself if it “abandons liberal principles.”⁸⁶ Illiberal culture is an environment for a short-lived democracy that can easily break up under the slogan of “one-person, one-vote, one-time.” This article provides some baseline data for tapping the proportion of literate Egyptians who adopt a culture conducive to liberal democracy. Table 5 summarizes these proportions. As Table 5 suggests, there is good and

bad news for democracy advocates in Egypt. On the good side, only 10 percent of literate Egyptians prefer non-democracy to a democracy. Besides, 59 percent of them not only support the procedural aspects of democracy, but also are civic and liberal enough to allow candidates from all ideologies to run legally, publicly, and fairly for office. On the negative side, 31 percent of literate Egyptians are not supportive of “liberal” democracy. In other words, one-third of literate Egyptians find democracy acceptable if it is a mechanism for maintaining politics within ideological limits. This kind of illiberal democratic attitude reflects sharp ideological divisions among opinion leaders. These divisions make the possibility of a peaceful alteration of power very slim. Stable democracy presumes some level of commitment to liberal values among opinion leaders as well their followers. There is no stable democracy in a culture that negates the other.⁸⁷ According to this study, a non-pluralistic culture is dominant among most Egyptian opinion leaders and one-third of literate Egyptians.

Table 5
Attitudinal Distribution of the Ideologically-Committed Respondents

	Advocates of non-democracy ^a	Advocates of illiberal/exclusionary democracy ^b	Advocates of liberal democracy ^c	Total
%	10	31	59	100

N: 1420

The table excludes the respondents who were not sure.

^a include 7% traditionalist Islamists and 3% statist secularists

^b include 20% of modernist Islamists and 15% of pluralist secularists.

^c include 56% of modernist Islamists and 57% of pluralist secularists.

This article does not intend to give any excuses for the lack of serious steps toward democratization in Egypt. Rather, the opposite is intended. The article shows two weaknesses in the Egyptian political structures. First, the ruling elite decided to dismiss the democratization process on the grounds that it may bring radical Islamists to power, although the data shows that most Islamists are committed to liberal democracy. Even if the Egyptian elite wants to be extra-cautious by denying any legal power to rights, it is still responsible for crafting its institutions wisely enough to accommodate democratic forces while excluding potential non-democrats. Germany, which is widely held to be a consolidated liberal democracy, outlaws parties of the extreme left and right (i.e. Communists and Nazis). Their reasons are based in their own history, coupled with the logic that both extremes are committed to using democratic means to end democracy.

Instead of the current political stagnation, Egypt conceivably would limit political competition to the forces that accept democracy as the “only game in town.”

Second, the ideological civil war among opinion leaders is reflected in the tension among opposition parties who barely offer a viable alternative to the ruling elite. The conference of the *Keffaiah* (Enough) that represented several opposition political parties, independent intellectuals and human rights activists vainly discussed the idea of endorsing one person to symbolically challenge President Mubarak in the presidential referendum of September 2005. The disparity among the opposition figures was so huge that the idea collapsed. As an Egyptian newspaper put it: “Islamists rejected the idea of having a Nasserist or Marxist to be this symbolic figure. Likewise, the Nasserists dismissed the idea of endorsing a liberal or Islamist who opposes the principles of the 1952 Revolution, and so forth.”⁸⁸ This is an ideological and cultural civil war in play. The opposition leaders need to learn from the opposition parties’ successful coalitions in Mexico, South Korea, India, Japan, Kenya, Senegal, Indonesia, and Brazil. Unless the opposition leaders find solid ideological common ground, their differences will undermine their political future and the future of democracy in Egypt.

In conclusion, the Egyptian road to democracy is problematic due to significant tensions among opinion leaders on issues connected to democracy, the ruling elite's fear of democracy bringing Islamists to power, and unclear commitments to democratic values among the "literate" Egyptians.

Appendix

Data Collection

Collection of the data analyzed here was funded mainly by the Middle East Research Council of Beirut, Lebanon. The survey, conceived in 2002, was designed to tap into the opinion of Muslims on political issues in many societies including Egypt. This section will cover the data collection process regarding Egypt.

The Egyptian survey was limited to literate Muslims because of the extreme logistical difficulties that would have faced researchers in surveying noneducated Muslims. If illiterate Muslims had been included, I would have been forced to drop the idea of the survey and obtain secondary sources, or to administer a survey that represented all Muslims but excluded all of the more sophisticated questions.

Most other surveys, such as the Pew and the World Value Survey, ask very broad questions such as whether one prefers a democracy versus a government with strong leadership. These kinds of questions, though standard, do not capture which aspects of democracy a Muslim respondent advocates and which he or she does not. Further, they do not capture the impact of Islam on respondents' political attitudes.

Consultation with some researchers and area experts revealed a preponderant preference to target the "political class" that comprises mainly literate Muslims in order to keep politically sensitive questions. This, however, was more than a practical consideration. Because literate Muslims are more politically engaged than the illiterate, they are more likely to influence political changes in the Muslim world, and their opinions thus would offer a better gauge of future trends. For these reasons, then, information obtained from illiterate Muslims, though rare, was discarded.

I also had to think carefully about how to approach literate Muslims in Egypt. Though mail and telephone surveys are the most common means for surveying people in open societies, many researchers I consulted in Egypt raised concerns that these two tools would adversely affect the reliability and response rates of the survey, given the sensitivity of the questions asked. My consultations led me to conclude that face-to-face written surveys were to be preferred over telephone and mail surveys for two reasons: First, there would be the possibility of explaining any of the survey questions and assuring confidentiality to the respondents. Second, this would open up the possibility of having focus-group discussions with some of the respondents to add depth to the survey findings.

For the purpose of systematically checking for the impact of the suspicion of governmental surveillance, another survey was developed. It was administered through the Web by e-mailing Egyptians, among others, the URL of a website and asking them to

respond to the same questions as those on the written survey. Technically, this kind of e-mail survey is drawn from a nonprobabilistic controlled-quota sample in the sense that there is no known probability for the possibility of including all Muslims who have access to the Internet in the frame of respondents. However, some nonprobabilistic surveys can be more representative than others if there are known possible sources of biases (Scheaffer 2005).

Obtaining survey responses from two different tools poses a methodological challenge and provides a methodological opportunity to examine the efficiency of the two tools as well. The e-mail survey adopted a nonprobabilistic sampling technique that does not ensure the elements are selected in a random manner. It is difficult then to guarantee that certain portions of the population were not excluded from the sample, since elements do not have an equal chance of being selected. Note that it is entirely possible that the elements that were not selected did not differ from the selected elements, but this could be determined only through an examination of both sets of elements. Thus, either of two broad scenarios may be the case: (1) The two tools are in conflict mainly due to the fact that Muslims who have access to the Internet are a homogenous group of Muslims who think alike and thus are not representative of the broader population of literate Muslims. (2) The two tools are complementary in gauging Muslims' attitude since the two pooled samples are drawn from the same population.

To test these two broad scenarios, a question about how many times a week the respondents have access to the Internet was added to the written survey. Contrary to my initial expectations, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) did not demonstrate significant differences between the means of those who have regular access to the Internet and of those who do not (significance level 0.90). To confirm the previous finding, ANOVA was used again to compare the responses from the two samples regarding the questions relevant to the purpose of this project. Again, no statistical difference was found in any case (significance level 0.90). As a third step to confirm the complementary nature of the tools, preliminary regression analysis was used to make sure that the demographics did not differ between the two groups of respondents. Except for age, there was no difference between the coefficients obtained from the e-mail survey and the written survey. The previous precautionary statistical tests suggest that the sampling technique did not produce a systematic bias in the data, which is a necessary condition for relying on the data regarding the relationship between Egyptian Muslims' attitudes toward democracy and the factors that might be influencing these attitudes. This finding supports a similar inference made based on a survey in eight Arab countries, which showed that "in the aggregate, Internet access appears to make little difference in the personal concerns of Arabs. Even where rankings and ratings do differ, the differences are slight".⁸⁹

It has been stated that "the relationships expressed in theoretical propositions are presumed to be universally present . . . both in representative and non-representative samples. To disprove or demonstrate their existence is hence possible in any kind of

sample—biased or unbiased”.⁹⁰ However, when using a biased sampling for a verification, “we must have assurance that the relationship we want to prove is not introduced into our data by selective sampling. . . . Also, when using a biased sample for verification, we should realize that we have no knowledge of the population to which the result can be safely generalized”.⁹¹

This survey’s lack of significant discrepancies can be explained by the fact that the two tools (the e-mail and face-to-face surveys) targeted almost the same population of mostly urban, literate, and nonpoor Egyptian Muslims. Yet ANOVA suggests that some respondents exhibited less self-restraint in criticism of their governments and support for elected accountable governments in the e-mail survey than respondents did in the face-to-face one. This discrepancy can be explained by the freedom of expression that respondents enjoy in cyberspace as compared to face-to-face surveys. This finding has been confirmed by the fact that with the exception of question 43, “Do you think that Muslim countries should have democratic rulers instead of the current political rulers?” the respondents to the e-mail survey were not more or critical of the Egyptian political system than were respondents to the face-to-face survey and the focus-group discussions.

Notes:

¹ "Literate Egyptians" represent around 60 percent of Egyptians above 18 who can read and write.

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³ For one example see: Sa'eed al-Saweriki, Al-Arabi, December 19, 2004.

⁴ Wahid Abdelmaguid, "Interview," *Al-Jazeera*, (2004).

⁵ Tareq Heggi, "The Culture of Compromise (Arabic: Thaqafet Al-Holoul Al-Wassat)," *Al-Ahram*, (2002).

⁶ Mohamed S. al-'Aawa, 'Islamic Sharia and the Legacy of the Ancestors (Arabic),' (Duha: al-Jazeera.net, 2001), Mohamed S. al-'Aawa, On the Political System of the Islamic State (Arabic) (Cairo: Dar-Alshorouk, 1989), Mohamed al-Ghazali, Islam and Political Dictatorship (Arabic) (Cairo: Dar Al-Kotob al-Islamia, ND), Yusuf al-Qaradawi, On the Fiqh of the Islamic State (Arabic: Min Fiqh Al-Dawla Fil-Islam) (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouq, 2001a), Fahmi Howaidi, Citizens Not Dhimies: The Status of Non-Muslims in Muslims' Society (Arabic) (Cairo: Dar Al-Shorouq, 1985), Sayyid Qutb, The Future Is for This Religion (in Arabic: Al-Mustaqbal Li-Hazza Al-Deen) (Gary, Ind.: International Islamic Federalism of Student Organization, 1970).

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⁸ Hisham Sharabi, Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914 (Baltimore,: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970).

⁹ Ahmad Musa Jibril, *Celebrating the Holidays of the Infidels* (2003 [cited]); available from <http://www.alsalafyoon.com/EnglishPosts/HolidayInfidel.htm>.

¹⁰ Sayyid Qutb, Signposts (Arabic) (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1989).

¹¹ Abo Bakr al-Gazza'eri, Who Is Responsible for the Loss of Islam (Arabic) (Cairo: Maktabet al-Kolleyat al-Azhareya, 1984).

¹² Abu Is'haq Al-Howaini, *Alliance and Clearance (Arabic: Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara'a)* (Islamway.com, 1998), Ayman al-Zawahri, 'Alliance and Clearance (Arabic: Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara'a),' *al-Quds al-Arabi*, December 25, 2002 2002.

¹³ Ayman al-Zawahri, The Bitter Harverst of Muslim Brotherhood in Sixty Years (Arabic: Al-Hassad Al-Mor: Al-Ekhwān Al-Mosmoon Fi Seteen 'Amah (NA: NA, NA).

- ¹⁴ Abdel Azeez al-Badry, Islam's Verdict on Socialism (in Arabic: Hokm Al-Islam Fi Al-Eshtrakyya) (Al-Madeena Al-Monawara, Saudi Arabia: Al-Makttabba Al-'elmmyya, 1983), Qutb, Signposts (Arabic).
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- ²⁰ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Our Nation between Two Centuries (Arabic: Omatona Bayn Qarnayen) (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouq, 2000a).
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