

The politics of discrimination

**A comparative study of the situation of Christian Arab
minorities in Egypt and Syria**

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To my forthcoming treasure...

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the puzzle of why the level of discrimination against religious minorities was higher in Egypt than in Syria, and therefore why the transition from "Arab" nationalism to "re-Islamization" of politics was greater in the first country than in the second (at least prior its civil war). The answer is the different survival strategies used by these dictatorships in front of the emergence of a strong Islamist opposition that questioned the existence of these secular Arab regimes. In addition, these strategies depend on the congruence or not between the religious identity of the ruling elites and the majority of the population. When the elite in power have the same religious identity of the majority combined with an important Islamist challenge, the levels of religious discrimination will be high. When the elite-population identity does not match, or when the Islamist challenge is contained, religious discrimination will be smaller.

Resumen

Esta tesis investiga la paradoja de por qué el nivel de discriminación contra las minorías cristianas árabes fue mayor en Egipto que en Siria, y por tanto por qué el paso del nacionalismo “árabe” a la “reislamización” de la política fue mayor en el primer país que en el segundo (hasta el comienzo de su Guerra Civil). La explicación se encuentra en las diferentes estrategias de supervivencia utilizadas por sus dictaduras ante la aparición de una fuerte oposición islamista que cuestionaba la existencia de los regímenes árabes seculares. La variación de estrategias se debe a su vez a la mayor o menor congruencia entre la identidad religiosa de las élites gobernantes y la mayoría de la población. Cuando la identidad religiosa población-élite coincide y se da un importante desafío islamista, la discriminación será alta. Cuando no coincide, o no se da el desafío islamista, la discriminación religiosa será menor.

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Chapter 1

The Introduction: the interest of studying the discrimination of Christians in two Arab countries

The adventure was worth the try...

Kamal Junblat¹, 1976

***Abstract:** we start this chapter by describing briefly the status of minorities in general and Christians in particular in the Arab region. In this chapter also, we identify the detected puzzle, justify the case selection, address the research question and mention the methodology that will be used throughout this thesis. Finally, the last part of this chapter focuses on the thesis division and chapters.*

1.1. Minorities in the Arab Region – In Brief

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2009 Arab Human Development Report² that examined the challenges of human security in the Arab region, the greatest threat to the stability of Arab states and its homogeneous existence is someway-internal (UNDP-RBAS 2009). Therefore, the Arab-Israeli conflict (1948-present day), the Somali and the Iraqi cases (Iraq-Iran war, and the American occupation in 1991 and 2003) could be the exception and not the rule.

It is worth mentioning here that the Arab region is home to approximately 357 million people, of which, Christians constitute 13 million. Egypt is the most populated state in the region with approximately 90 million people, while Syria's population is about 21 million people (Mirkin, 2013). In spite of this, 85% of the total Arab population, which boasts religious, cultural and linguistic domination, is Sunni Arabs.

The impacts of the modern history of the Arab region – from 1971 up till the Arab Spring — were significant on a regional and an international level. Internationally, it witnessed the defeat of the American in Vietnam in 1975 and the Soviets in Afghanistan in 1987, the collapse of Berlin wall in 1989, as well as 11th of September 2001 terrorist attack in USA. Regionally, the consequences of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War; the outbreak of the

¹ *Kamal Junblat* was a Lebanese Durze leader who was assassinated in 1977 at a Syrian army checkpoint near his village in Mount Lebanon. He is the founder of the Socialist Progressive Party.

² Entitled “Challenges for Human Security in the Arab Region”

Lebanese civil war in 1975; the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel: the Camp David Accords in 1979; the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat in October 1981; the Israeli occupation of the first Arab capital—Beirut in 1982; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990; Wadi Araba Treaty— a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel that was signed in 1994; the American occupation of Iraq in 2003 were drastic on the structural composition of the state vis a vis the regime. However, the consequences of the Arab Spring on almost all Arab states were colossal that some of these states were driven into civil wars such as Syria and Yemen. In summary, these international and regional changes have had negative impact on stability and state building process in the Arab region. In fact, the notion of liberalism and independence faded in the face of Arab nationalism. While political/militant Islam and interstate fragmentations have threatened the concept of states and stability.

In December 2010, demonstrations and intensive civil resistance began in Tunisia, and in January 2011, authoritarian President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali was ousted. This was the revolution that would trigger uprisings in neighboring countries and the Arab region, and became known as the “Arab Spring”. A few years ago, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria witnessed popular movements. Some waved a popular peaceful changing like Tunisia and Egypt. While military intervention in Libya and regional political and military intervention in Yemen have turned these countries into civil war. While in Syria, all the regional and international mediation have failed to prevent the full-blown civil war. Meanwhile, some countries – mainly Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Algeria — responded preemptively by leading a reformation process on a legislative, economic and political level.

It is with no doubt that the recent Arab uprisings were a turning point in Arab history, political process, religious expansion and cultural deterioration. In few countries, the awakening and transformation of the role of citizens as a source of public and political authority replaced the traditional “regimes’ legitimacy” and the patriarchal family structure. This raises questions about the rights of minority groups in the region, and, more specifically, the Christian minority. Unlike what was described as the “Arab Spring” of the majority (Sunni), some western and Arab researchers are dubbing this contemporary critical period as the “minority winter”, mainly a Christian one.

It goes without saying that Arab societies, like many other societies today, include various minority groups; Egypt and Syria are not an exception. A mosaic of minorities, as

described by the French a hundred years ago, that shaped the structure of the new state-building process. What could be rich from a broad-spectrum perspective could also be a curse from the state structure, political rights and representation, economical integration, religious participation and freedom as well as cultural coexistence.

In this regard, there are objectively based identities in the Arab region that constitute either a majority or a minority, which includes: racial (Blacks, Semites and Hamites, etc); geographic (urban, rural, Bedouin, etc), or tribal (i.e., vis-à-vis clans or blood kinships, etc) affiliations. There are also elements that are inherited from culture, such as: religion (e.g., Judaism, Christianity and Islam, etc); language (e.g., Arabic, Kurdish and Amazight, etc); sects (e.g., Coptic, Maronite, Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, Sunni and Shiite, etc) ethnic (Arab, Armenian, Kurds, Nubian, etc) and gender. The table 1.1 below (Britannica, 2013) illustrates the ethnic and religious composition in some Arab region. It provides us with a clearer picture of the approximate situation in the Arab region. In addition, it is important to remind the reader, that some of these minorities have been involved in conflict with the government such the Kurds in Iraq, Christians in Sudan, Houthis in Yemen, etc. While other minorities have co-existed but with tension with the government such as Shiite in Saudi Arabia, Berbers in Algeria, etc. Finally, the last group of minorities in the Arab region is those who co-existed normally with the local government such as the Christians of Syria, Copts in Egypt, etc.

Table 1.1: The approximate³ ethno -religious composition in some Arab countries

³ The are no accurate census or numbers executed by governments.

Country	Ethnic composition	Religious composition
Algeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algerian Arab 59.1% • Berber 26.2% • Bedouin Arab 14.5% • Other 0.2% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims: 99.7% (99.1% Sunni, 0.6% Ibadiyah) • Christian: 0.3%
Bahrain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahraini Arab 63.9% • Indo-Pakistani 14.8% • Persian 13% • Filipino 4.5% • British 2.1% • Other 1.7% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims: 82.4%, (58% Shiite, 24% Sunni, 0.4% Other) • Christians: 10.5% • Hindus: 6.3% • Other: 0.8%
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egyptian Arab 84.1% • Sudanese Arab 5.5% • Arabized Berber 2% • Bedouin 2% • Rom (Gypsy) 1.6% • Other 4.8% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim: 84.4% (mostly Sunni) • Christians: 15.1% (13.6% Orthodox, 0.8% Protestant, 0.3% Roman Catholic, 0.4% Other) • Nonreligious: 0.5%
Iraq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab 64.7% • Kurd 23% • Azerbaijani 5.6% • Turkmen 1.2% • Persian 1.1% • Other 4.4% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims: 96% (62% Shiite and 34% Sunni) • Christians: 3.2% (Mostly Chaldean, Syrian Catholic, Nestorian) • Other: 0.8% (Mostly Yazidi)
Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab: 97.8% (32.4% Jordanian, 32.2% Palestinian, 14% Iraqi, 12.8% Bedouin, 6.4% Other) • Circassian: 1.2% • Other: 1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunni Muslim 93.5% • Christian 4.1% • Other 2.4%
Kuwait	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab: 74% (30% Kuwaiti, 17% Palestinian, 10% Jordanian, 9% Bedouin, 8% Other) • Kurd: 10% • Indo-Pakistani: 8% • Persian: 4% • Other: 4% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims: 83% (58% Sunni, 25% Shiite) • Christians: 13% (9% Eastern-rite Catholic 9%, 4% Other) • Hindus: 3% • Other: 1%

Lebanon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab: 84.5% (71.2% Lebanese, 12.1% Palestinian, 1.2% Other) • Armenian: 6.8% • Kurd: 6.1% • Other: 2.6% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims: 55.3 % (34% Shiite, 21.3% Sunni) • Christians: 37.6% (19 % Maronite Catholic, 6% Greek Orthodox, 5.2% Armenian Apostolic, 4.6% Greek Catholic or Melchite, 0.5% Protestant, 2.3% Other) • Druze: 7.1%
Morocco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berber 45% • Arab 44% • Moors originally from Mauritania 10% • Other 1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims: 98.3% (mostly Sunni) • Christians: 0.6% • Other: 1.1%
Oman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omani Arab 48.1% • Other Arab 7.2% • Indo-Pakistani 31.7% • Persian 2.8% • Zanzibari (blacks originally from Zanzibar) 2.5% • Other 7.7% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims: 87.4% (75% Ibadiyah Muslim; other, mostly Sunni and Shiite Muslims, 12.4%) • Hindus: 5.7% • Christians: 4.9% • Buddhists: 0.8% • Other: 1.2%
Saudi Arabia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab: 88.1% (74.2% Saudi Arab, 3.9% Bedouin, 3% Gulf Arab, 7% Other) • Indo-Pakistani: 5.5% • African Black: 1.5% • Filipino: 1% • Other: 3.9% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims: 94% (84% Sunni, 10% Shiite) • Christians: 3.5% (3% Roman Catholic, 0.5% Other) • Hindus: 1% • Nonreligious/Other: 1.5%
Somalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somali 92.4% • Arab 2.2% • Afar 1.3% • Other 4.1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunni Muslims: 98.3% • Christians: 1.4%, (1.3% Orthodox, 0.1% Other) • Other: 0.3%
Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black 52% • Arab 39% • Beja 6% • Foreigners 2% • Other 1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunni Muslims: 70.3% • Christians: 16.7% (8% Roman Catholic, 6% Anglican, 2.7% Other) • Traditional beliefs: 11.9%; • Other: 1.1%
Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syrian Arab 74.9% • Bedouin Arab 7.4% • Kurd 7.3% • Palestinian Arab 3.9% • Armenian 2.7% • Other 3.8% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims: 86% (74% Sunni, 11% Alawite/Shiite 11%, 1% Other) • Christians: 8% (5% Orthodox, 2% Roman Catholic, 1% Other) • Druze: 3% • Nonreligious/Atheists: 3%

Yemen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab 92.8% • Somali 3.7% • black 1.1% • Indo-Pakistani 1% • Other 1.4% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslims: 98.9% (59.4% Sunni, 39.5% Shiite) • Hindus: 0.7% • Christians: 0.2% • Other: 0.2%
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Source: Thesis author (2013), retrieved from Encyclopedia Britannica

In this context, mapping and studying minorities' mosaic in the Arab region based on religion, ethnic, race, linguistics as well as tribal identity is of high sensitivity, since it tackles uncontrolled feelings, deep individuality and human existence. However, despite all the mentioned differences in minorities' identity, this study will focus on the Christian Arab minority since: first, Christians are the indigenous minority that settled in the Arab region before the rise of Islam, that's why they should be considered as "equal partners" rather than "discriminated or controlled group". Second, they are the feeblest minority group, given that other religious groups, whether they are a minority group, like in the case of Jews living within Israel, thus, protected by its massive military power; or the Muslim majority that includes many minority groups, which are affiliated with the state like the case of Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco, etc...

In this environment, based on the abovementioned historical changes nationally, regionally and internationally, both politics in the Arab region and human security were deeply affected especially for ethnic and religious minority groups. When it comes to challenges to human security, vulnerable communities (mainly minorities), in this thesis, the Christian minority is affected the most. Finally, the international community, mainly western one, has been, directly or indirectly protecting Christians in the Arab region since the 18th century when Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798 up to the present day. Historically, the European powers—French, British, Austria and Prussia— played a major role in protecting the Christian minorities of Egypt, the Levant and Lebanon in particular.

1.1.1 A short summary of the Christian presence in Syria and Egypt after the First World War

As we will see in chapter three, historically speaking both the Christians of Syria and Egypt lived from long centuries under Islamic mode of rule and where treated as *Dhimmis*. The gradual emancipation of the Christians (and non-Muslims in general)

started with the *Tanzimat* era for the Syrian Christians and Mohamad Ali's era for Copts in Egypt. This emancipation intensified when Egypt and Syria were colonized. With the creation of the concept of state, for the first time in their history, the Christians of Syria and Egypt were treated as equal and normal citizens (at least in the law and constitution). As a result, during the modern state building era, Christians of the Arab region in general and Christians of Syria and Egypt in particular were considered to be an integral part in the state formation. The history of discrimination against Christians has reached an end. In fact, the first Syrian Prime Minister after independence, Faris Al Khoury was Christian and Egypt had Coptic Christian Prime Ministers such as Boutros Ghali and Youssef Wahba (Ibrahim, 1998). While other Christians were key political players, ideologues and party leaders such as Makram Obeid, Mishel Aflaq, Costantine Zureik, etc...

However, by the end of the short democratic experience during the 1950's and 1960's in some Arab countries, Christian political and social integration witnessed a huge decay. The newly established authoritarian regimes, especially in Syria and Egypt, have encountered Christian's participation in political life and discriminated if not politicized Christians at different level and degrees. On another hand, the loss of the Caliphate, the emergence of Israel, the Arab defeats in 1948 and 1967, as well as the ideological war against communism have led with no qualm to the emergence of radical political and militant Islam of *Hassan Al Banna*, *Sayyed Qutub* and *Osama Ben Laden*, mainly Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis and Fundamentalists. This Islamic radical awakening caused a deep threat to the newly emerged secular dictatorship and abolished the remaining Christian political and social presence especially in Egypt.

1.1.2 A puzzle: not all Christians are treated in the same way in the Arab region

However, this deterioration of Christian situation was not the same in all the Arab states. According to the available literature it seems that Christians of Egypt have been more discriminated in comparison to the Christians of Syria. For example, Dorren Khoury from Henrich-Boll Stiftung concluded that the "relations between minorities are not the same in all Arab countries. While Coptic Christians as integral to Egypt as Muslims, have been discriminated against by the Mubarak regime, Syrian Christians historically have not experienced sectarian attacks, neither from society or the regime" (Khoury, 2011).

In this context, and as we will discuss throughout this thesis, the political, economic, cultural, social and religious discrimination and harassment against the Copts in Egypt are historic and extensive. For instance, huge spectrum of the state central key positions is locked for the Copts. Gunidy (2010) stated that the Coptic representation in the field of court, media, diplomatic missions, army and the police does not exceed 2%. Whereas during the Arab Spring, the Coptic question was used cruelly. On the 2011 New Year's Eve, worshippers leaving mass became the victims of a car bomb that exploded in front of a Church in Alexandria. 21 dead and 79 were injured bodies (Sly, 2011). At first insight, this accident caused clashes between Copts, police and Muslims. Shortly, it turned out to be clashes between Egyptian citizens (Muslims and Copts) with the police; mainly the state. Few days after the bombing, the lawyer Mamdouh Ramzi sends a legal communication to the Attorney General accusing directly the Minister of Interior during Mubarak Habib Al Adli of this accident (Beshara, 2012). In addition, both the military council and later President Morsi have politicized the question of Coptic minorities in many clashes and incidents such as Maspero massacre on 12 October 2011.

Whereas in Syria, the situation has been different. Although al-Assad the father did not fail to politicize and use the Christian minority question, his regime offered economic privileges along with cultural, theological and identity ones in return for their support. Khoury (2011) stated that al-Assad regime presented itself as a protector of the Christians; it also succeeded in instilling a sense of their isolation from mainstream society. But since the regime was authoritarian, it goes without saying that any Christian or non-Christian who oppose the regime suffered catastrophically. However, during the ongoing civil war, Islamic fighters and groups have kidnapped many Christian religious figures, destroyed many churches and invaded many historical monasteries. Therefore, fears among minorities in general and Christian in particular floated again.

Therefore, this thesis addresses this puzzle by investigating the status of Christian minorities in both countries and more concretely during the regime of both Hafez al-Assad in Syria and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

1.2 Case-selection justification: why comparing Syria with Egypt?

The selection of Syria and Egypt is not only based in the fact that their regimes have treated their Christian Arab minorities differently. But other reasons lead to conclude that

these two countries are comparable according to the logic of comparative method (Skocpol and Somers 1980). First of all, these two countries are considered to be geopolitically important. If we look deeper into the structure of the Arab region, we find that both Syria and Egypt share to some extent a similar history and challenges. In fact, for a short period the two countries merged into the “United Arab Republic” (1958-1961). Secondly, the difference in how Christians have been treated differently, both in the last decades and presently in Egypt and Syria is very puzzling when we take into account that both regimes were regarded as secular, presidential, socialist and authoritarian (although Egypt was less secular and less authoritarian than Syria as we will see in chapters 4 and 5), have a Sunni majority and Christian minorities, bordering the traditional enemy “Israel” and both countries are in the same region, anticipated and lead Arab nationalist movements and equally are member of the League of Arab States. Not to mention that both countries have trivial natural resources as well as Christian indigenous minorities. Both states were under western colonial occupation, the French in Syria and the British in Egypt. Finally, both Egypt and Syria fought together the 1948, 1963 and 1973 wars against Israel. Precisely, both Presidents Hosni Mubarak and Hafez al-Assad background came from the military institution, both were high commanders of the 1973 war against Israel, they come from new rural elites, and they have supported the American coalition to liberate Kuwait in 1991 by sending troops.

1.3 Main research Questions

The disparity in how Christians have been treated, both in the last decades during Hafez al-Assad era in Syria and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, is therefore puzzling when we take into account that both regimes and states had many similarities in common. As a result, this thesis will investigate the following questions:

1- Why two rather similar autocratic regimes of Syria and Egypt -under Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak- have discriminated and/or politicized differently -and at different levels- against their Christian indigenous minorities? More specifically, why did Syria, which is more autocratic than Egypt (as I will explain in chapter 2 and 4), discriminate less than Egypt against their Christian indigenous minority?

2- In more general terms, why some Arab autocracies discriminate against Christians, a religious minority which belong to the same ethnic group (Arab)? That is, when and whether ethnic or religious identity matters for autocracies that are generally considered

as secular? And finally, why the degree of discrimination increased in both Syria and Egypt across time (although in a higher degree in Egypt than Syria).

To answer these questions in this thesis we will test in chapter six a set of hypotheses offered by the literature about political regimes and minorities in general and the one in the specific case of the Arab countries.

1.4 Theoretical and empirical contribution

The main theoretical aim behind this research is to make contribution to the academic literature of the mentioned subject along with the political conditions of religious minority groups in the Arab region, particularly in Egypt and Syria during Hosni Mubarak and Hafez al-Assad years in power. Despite some academic production, this topic is still neglected in the Arab region by academic research.

In addition, the analysis of the situation of Christians in Egypt and Syria makes a theoretical contribution to the general literature on the relationship between political regimes and minorities. Therefore, in addressing the thesis main questions, we will learn more in this research about the relationship between dictatorship regimes and minorities. We will also learn more about the reasons behind the discrepancy level of discrimination against religious minorities between similar political regimes; in the case authoritarian ones.

This thesis will add also to the existing literature, a new contribution to the study of harassment and discrimination against minorities across time and across countries; mainly Syria and Egypt. Consequently, comparing the relation between autocratic regimes, discrimination and religious minorities in Syria and Egypt during Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak era, will be considered as a contribution and an added value to the existing knowledge on the relation between political regimes and minorities. In brief the added value of this thesis is to understand how authoritarian regimes treat religious minorities in an academic context.

Finally, this research will add to the available literature new qualitative information that is gathered through the conducted interviews. It is worth reminding the readers that both Syria and Egypt were governed by authoritarian regimes that controlled to some extent the flow of knowledge and the knowledge sharing process. With a very limited exception, many available books and articles on Syria, Egypt and the Arab region did not have concrete information about the status of Christians in these regimes.

1.5 Academic review

In order to better understand the need of such a study, it is important to inform the reader that the social science literature and the knowledge of why Christians were discriminated is insufficient in both Syria and Egypt. In Syria, most of the literature has focused on discrimination against Kurds or the rise of the Alawite minority or the current discrimination against Christians and the ongoing civil war. Scholars such Michael Gunter, Harriet Allsopp, Kerim Yildiz, Radwan Ziadeh, Ceren Belge, Ekrem Karakoç, Leon Goldsmith, Robert Kaplan, Peter Tobia, Eyal Zisser, Van Dam, Patrik Seal, Thomas Pierret, Benjamin Thomas White, Dorren Khoury, Hanna Batatu, Raymond A. Hinnebusch, Mark Farha, Salma Mousa, Robert M. Haddad, Michael Kerr, Craig Larkin, Gema Martín Muñoz, Ray Mouawad, Sami Mobayed, Andrea Pacini, Daniel Pipes, Yvette Talhamy, Lures Vidal and many others have addressed the above mentioned topics on Syria. Therefore, the lack of literature and knowledge about discrimination against Christians and many other minorities during al-Assad is highly significant.

As for Egypt, the knowledge on the reasons behind discrimination against Christians or Copts is very rare. Almost all available data describes discrimination, but few addresses the reasons, especially during Mubarak's rule. The era of Sadat and Nasser was rich in describing discrimination and analyzing its reasons. In this context, most of the literature has focused on either the rise of Islamic groups and movement or the relation between Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic groups with the state. In addition, many scholars have studied the history of the Copts or their theological behavior. As a result, authors such as Laure Guirguis, Kamal Al Gawhary, Derick Brinkerhoff, Vivian Ibrahim, Adel Beshai, Azmi Beshara, Andrea Pacini, Jason Brownlee, Martin Kramer, J. D. Pennington, Micheal Curtis, Jaida Deeb, Sebastian Elsasser, Adel Gunidy, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Dina Khawaga, Hani Labib, Girgis Naiem, Dorren Khoury, Mark Purcell, John Khalil, Omar Salama, Ryan Rowberry, Gema Martín Muñoz, Paul Sedra, Adly Youssef, Heinz Gstrein, Paul Mienrad Strassle, Mariz Tadros, I. Andraos, Simon Allison, Samir Morcos, George Ishak, Tarek Osman, Ibrahim Aoude, Bernard Botiveau, Sahar Aziz, Mark Farha, Salma Mousa, Ashraf El-Sherif, Corin Kazanjian, Marta Latek, Ziad Munson, Barry Rubon, Slac Slackman and many others have addressed the above mentioned topics on Egypt. Finally, it is important to note that few authors such as Mark Farha and Salma Mousa,

Dorren Khoury, Andrea Pacini and Bernard Botiveau have addressed Egypt and Syria in the same research either in a comparative way or in different case studies.

1.6 Research methodology and data collection

1.6.1 Methodology used

The work of this thesis will be tested and validated by using the method of difference or the most similar system design that is used in the macro causal analysis of comparative method. In this context, the method of difference, will allow us to use countries with many similarities, but with causal variable (s) that explains the phenomenon in the end result. In other terms, the method of difference can help us understand why countries with many similarities and common variables might have different results pertaining specific topic. The below table by Skocpol and Somers (1980) is a reflection to the above explanation:

Table 1.2: The method of difference

Positive Cases	Negative Cases	
a	a	Overall similarities
b	b	
c	c	
x	not x	Crucial differences
y	not y	

Key: x= causal variable. y= phenomenon to be explained.
Source: Thesis author (2016). Retrieved from Skocpol and Somers (1980).

As we will explain in chapters 4 and 5, Egypt and Syria are similar at regime structural level, both states have Christian minorities, but the pattern and intensity of discrimination differ. It is important to inform the reader that in this thesis, I have based my findings on interviews as a primary source of data and available literature as a secondary one.

Therefore, the ordinary question to all political scientists and researchers is how to measure whether a research is valid and reliable or not. In this regard, it is important for the hypotheses testing process to take into consideration the descriptive part of each hypothesis along with its logical (causal) side. Together, descriptive and logical part will lead us to what is known as a "good hypothesis".

As a result, the empirical findings of this research will be based on analyzing the interview results as a primary source of information, in addition to other available literature (if needed) such as in books, articles, and journals as a secondary source of information. The

information retrieved along the logical analyses will be the core element used in order to accept or reject the addressed hypothesis.

1.6.2 Interviewees description and selection criteria

In this thesis, I have conducted interviews with 51 people. They are divided as follow: 25 interviewees from Egypt and 26 from Syria, out of which are 7 women in Egypt and 2 in Syria. Interviewees were selected based on their professional backgrounds and their affiliation to the regimes of Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak; they consist of high ranking Christian religious figures, high-ranking Egyptian and Syrian officials, politicians, advisors, researchers in the Christian topic, members of political Islam, young activists that participated in the revolution, businessmen, military members, high civil servants, and diplomats.

Furthermore, this research was keen to represent interviewees from different religious and sectarian background as well as different geographical origins (urban and rural). Out of the 26 interviewees from Syria, 15 were Muslims divided as follows: 12 Sunnis, 2 Alawites and 1 Druze and 10 Christians divided amongst 5 Orthodox, 4 Catholic and 1 Syriac Catholic, while one interviewee preferred not to reveal their religious background. At geographical level, interviewees from Syria were selected between urban and rural areas and covered Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Wadi al-Nassara, Deir al-Zor, Tartous and Druze Mountain. As for Egypt, out of the 25 interviewees, 13 were Sunni Muslims and 12 Christians divided between 9 Orthodox Copts, 1 Armenian Catholic, 1 Evangelic and 1 Greek Orthodox. Interviewees were selected geographically between Upper and Lower Egypt, meaning covering Cairo, Alexandria, Dahliya, Tanta and Aswan governorates.

At the beginning, many whom I approached to conduct an interview with, refused my inquiry. The nature of the authoritarian regime in these states did not open the space for people to freely express themselves. After conducting the first interview based on a family friend who facilitated and organized the first appointment, the domino effect of contacting potential interviewees was put on track. Interviewees started helping me directly or indirectly by referring me by email, or Facebook or by phone to other potential interviewees. Even though trusted and reliable people referred me to potential new interviewees, still many refused to undertake the interview. It took me from January 2016 until April 2017 to conduct all 51 interviews. Some interviewees, mainly researchers and

well-known actors were approached directly by myself through Facebook Messenger or email. Few answered my request regarding whether or not they would undertake the interview. From those 51 interviewees, 28 (13 from Syria and 15 from Egypt) preferred not to reveal their names. While the 23 interviewees who accepted to reveal their names (13 from Syria and 10 from Egypt) most of them live abroad from their countries. Of the interviewees, only 1 whom resides in Syria and 4 who live in Egypt, were flexible with revealing their names. The high ratio of anonymous interviewees in Egypt is due to the current authoritarian regime of president Abdel Fatah al-Sissi that closed all civil society organizations and was accused by Italy and many other states in causing the death of the Italian researcher *Giulio Rengi* in 25th of January 2016. While in Syria, many people still fear the regime and prefer not to speak freely about it.

Lastly, it is important to note that the interviewees answers reflect their own personal experience. Therefore, the interviewees expressed opinions have no representation with respect to the historical interpretation nor to the whole political era. But rather, they are group of reliable elites/subjects who enjoyed a close relation with the regime structure or were part of the regime or close (within) the decision-making circle. In other word, the interviewees answers represent their personal opinion and experience.

1.6.3 Method used in the interview

During the interviews, I used an open-ended question methodology. Interviewees were cooperative and talkative especially that there were no direct questions or optional ones. At the beginning, a brief introduction to the topic and myself was given to each interviewee, in addition to some information about the interview and its methodology. The questionnaire is divided into 3 sections and contains 60 questions. Interviewees had the freedom to answer the questions they want. Almost most of the interviewees answered all the questions, yet a few asked to skip some. The mean duration of each interview varied between one to two hours. It is important to note that all interviews were conducted in Arabic and translated later into English.

Interviews were done either face to face or virtually through phone calls or WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger call or Viber or Skype. 18 interviews (7 for Syria and 11 for Egypt) were conducted virtually. Traveling to Egypt or Syria was not possible due to the ongoing civil war and the threat to researchers in Egypt especially after the death of *Rengi*. I used virtual tools in order to reach interviewees who were residing in Cairo, Alexandria,

Damascus, Roma, Sharjah, Paris, Geneva and Washington. It is important to note that each interviewee chose the communication tool that seemed better for them and their security especially for those who reside inside Syria and Egypt or often traveled to their countries. The thirty-three face-to-face interviews were conducted away from Egypt and Syria and due to the civil war in Syria, many Syrians left their countries, while Egyptians interviewees were either attending a conference or workshop or they also left their countries due to insecurity or simply being expats. Consequently, I traveled to conduct interviews with Syrians in 1) Dubai, United Arab Emirates in which I conducted two interviews; 2) Beirut, Lebanon nine interviews; 3) Vancouver, Canada one interview; 4) Stockholm, Sweden five interviews; and Paris, France for two interviews. As for Egypt, I have traveled to 1) Beirut, Lebanon in which I have conducted six interviews; 2) Stockholm, Sweden seven interviews; and 3) Dubai, the United Arab Emirates for one interview.

1.6.4 Ethical consideration

Interviewees were selected based on the criteria mentioned above (section 3.2). All interviewees had a strong insight of the regime structures and possess close relations with the ruling elite. This thesis ensures that all key players are represented in the interviews and that includes the state, army, church, researchers, journalists, activists and Islamists. Women were also represented in the interview. But the low number of women participation is due to the nature of patriarchal societies and regimes in both countries, in which women were marginalized from state or even social positions and roles.

It is also important to note that prior to each interview, interviewees were informed in specific detail about the research aim and that this research is purely academic and does not have at all any political affiliation. In addition, interviewees were also informed that the thesis author will ensure high confidentiality of their contribution and that the released data will be subject to careful consideration and analysis. Interviewees were also informed that at a later stage, this work might be translated into Arabic. As a result, this would increase the research accessibility to Egyptians, Syrians and Arab-speaking groups.

It is also worth noting, that throughout the interviews, I used handwritten technique rather than the recorder one. The handwriting technique has created a sense of trust and relaxation among interviewees. As a result, many interviewees expressed themselves

freely and few of them acknowledged the sensitivity of this topic especially in the current situation in Egypt, Syria and the Middle East region.

1.6.5 Limitation and impediments of conducting the research

Many limitations were recorded throughout the research phase, first, unlike few Syrians, many Egyptians were more considerate and protective towards not only releasing their names in the thesis but also towards the research. This is due to the nature of the existing regime in Egypt, where freedom of expression is still controlled and under direct state examination. Second, the ongoing civil war in Syria has limited my accessibility to Damascus and other cities, yet I had the chance to meet with many Syrians who were key players, in Beirut, and many other cities (stated in section 3.3). While in Egypt, the death of the Italian researcher and the fragile political and security situation were behind canceling my visit there. It is important to note that many of my close Egyptian friends, and also interviewees, have advised me not to visit Egypt for this subject. Third, due to the war in Syria and insecurity in Egypt especially after 2012, I was obliged to travel to different destinations in order to conduct the interviews, since face-to-face interview was requested by many important figures. Fourth, a high amount of contacted people refused to conduct the interview. The main aim of their refusal was due to fear and insecurity towards themselves and their families. And finally, many Christians from Egypt also have refused to be interviewed; the main reason was due to their fear from the regime on one hand, and Islamists on the second.

1.7 Thesis division

This thesis is divided into 7 chapters. It includes this introductory one (chapter one) and chapter seven that is the conclusion. Chapter two addresses the literature review and the missing gaps in the literature pertaining discrimination against religious minorities in authoritarian regimes in general and Syria and Egypt in particular. Also, more specifically, it addressed the literature that focuses on the relation between autocratic regimes, religious minorities and politicization and/or discrimination in the Middle East. This chapter ends by presenting the research question.

Chapter three tackles the historical relation between Islam and non-Muslim minorities especially Christian ones. It focuses mainly on the historical background of this thesis from the rise of Islam till the present time. It also addressed also how Christians were treated under different historical eras from the Islamic Caliphate time, to the creation of independent states and kingdoms, up till after the era of al-Assad and Mubarak. In addition, this chapter addresses the question of secularism in western democracies compared to the ultimately failed attempts in the Arab region and the challenges for Christians with the emergence of political Islam implies.

Chapter four describes at quantitative and qualitative level the most important characteristics that justify the selection of Syria and Egypt. It mainly describes their political structure, degree of secularization and the characteristics of the Christian minorities. In this matter, the characteristics of the political regimes in the pre and during Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak era in Syria and Egypt will be addressed. In addition, this part also focuses on the degree secularization and/or separation of state and religion in both Syria and Egypt from 1950's in general up till al-Assad and Mubarak eras. Also, this chapter ends by describing in general pattern the Christian community in Syria and Egypt since the Second World War.

Chapter five, describes at qualitative and quantitative level the thesis dependent variable which is, the situation and discrimination of Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt before and during al-Assad and Mubarak eras. Although measuring discrimination is very difficult, this chapter tries to prove that discrimination and harassment of Christians was higher in Egypt compared to Syria.

A clear justification of the selected six hypotheses was given in the sixth chapter of this thesis. The main aim of this chapter is to analyze the collected data and information. And test the selected hypotheses in a qualitative comparative approach based on interviews as prime sources of information, as well as available literature such as books, articles, research papers, etc. as a secondary source of knowledge. Finally, the conclusion chapter emphasizes on the importance of this research at theoretical and data collection (of discrimination against Christians) levels. It also proposes some key questions and themes to be addressed in any upcoming research in the field of the relation between authoritarian regimes and minorities.

Chapter 2

Political regimes and minorities – an unbalanced treatment

They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented

Karl Marx, 1852.

Abstract: *In this chapter, we explain why the situation of Christian Arabs in Egypt and Syria is puzzling according to the general literature on the relationship between political regimes and minorities, and, more specifically, to the literature that focuses on the relation between autocratic regimes, religious minorities and politicization and/or discrimination in the Middle East, and how the explanation of this puzzle makes a theoretical contribution to this literature.*

2.1 Introduction

The main theoretical aim behind this research is to develop and deepen the academic literature available on the relation between autocratic regimes and minority groups and more precisely religious minorities. This research will build upon the existing theories detailing the discrimination and/or politicization against religious minorities by autocratic regimes, many of which are secular ones. The main focus of this thesis is to research the relation between religious minorities and autocracies in the Arab context by tackling the comparative perspective of Egypt and Syria, particularly during the era of Hosni Mubarak and Hafez al-Assad.

As we have said in the introduction of this thesis, this research will shed light on some essential key points regarding the relation between secular authoritarian regimes/autocracies and religious minorities. So far most written literature on the topic have focused on the behavior of minority groups rather than state behavior, or the consequences of discrimination against minorities in general. To the best of my knowledge, few researchers have addressed either the causes of discrimination against minorities and more precisely against non-Islamic minorities in Muslim majority states (or Islamic countries). This means that the causes and patterns of discrimination against religious minorities in secular states with Muslim majority have not been addressed sufficiently in the social science literature.

With the exception of Iraq in 1980, 1991 and 2003, Libya in 2012 and the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948; most of the Arab region's conflicts were/are somehow internal and in specific cases religious/sectarian in nature. It is worth noting that after and during the

Arab Spring, almost all Arab countries (with few exceptions) are at different stages of inter-conflict conditions.

Finally, the relation between minorities and the central government differs considerably based on the following variables:

1. Different regime types
2. Different types of minorities
3. Different forms of discrimination against minorities

The type of minority and type of regime usually affects the relation between minority groups and the state. This relation varies between inclusion and exclusion of different minorities within the state system. In autocratic regimes, the relation between the state and any kind of minority is based on discrimination, repression, politicization and conflict. While the evolution of the discrimination process was and still is connected to first, the changes within political systems (democratic, semi-democratic or autocratic); second, the identity of discriminated minority; and third, the type or form of discrimination that also differ considerably.

Discrimination exists in pluralistic societies. When a society is categorized to be a pluralistic one, the type of political regime and economic performance of the state, governs the social cohesion and integration of all of its components within the state system. Often non-democratic systems are more aggressive and promote segregation rather than integration. Previous studies have determined that discrimination against minority groups is one of the major causes of ethnic or religious protest, rebellion, and later conflict.

2.2 Definitions used in the thesis

2.2.1 Political regimes:

The political science literature does not have a common unified definition of political regimes; i.e. democracy, semi-democracy and autocracy. Nor does it have a common unified database that measures political regimes. Each available database has a separate scale of measuring and classifying political regimes. Therefore, this thesis will rely on Polity IV project database for defining and classifying political regimes since it is widely used among political scientists, scholars and researchers, especially by Jonathan Fox, a political scientist that mainly focuses his research on the relation between minorities and

political regimes. It is important to note that a major part of the theoretical contribution of this thesis will be based on Fox's findings. Finally, we also use this classification in order to avoid discrepancy in the classification of political regimes especially for Egypt and Syria. Polity IV project measures and defines political regimes based on table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1: Political regimes measurement scale being -10 most autocratic and 10 being most democratic

Scale	Type of regimes
10	Full democracy
6 to 9	Democracy
1 to 5	Open Anocracy
-5 to 0	Closed Anocracy
-10 to -6	Autocracies

Source: Polity IV Project.

a) Definition of autocracies according to Polity IV

They are those states that score between -10 and -6 on the Polity IV scale of regime types. Autocracy is defined operationally in terms of the presence of a distinctive set of political characteristics. In mature form, autocracies sharply restrict or suppress competitive political participation. Their chief executives are chosen in a regularized process of selection within the political elite, and once in office they exercise power with few institutional constraints. Therefore, autocratic states engage in more political discrimination, cultural discrimination and repression than democracies.

b) Definition of democracies according to Polity IV:

They are those states that score 6 or higher on the Polity IV scale of regime types. Democracy is conceived as three essential interdependent elements. One is the presence of institutions and procedures through which citizens can express effective preferences about alternative policies and leaders. Second is the existence of institutionalized constraints on the exercise of power by the executive. Third is the guarantee of civil liberties to all citizens in their daily lives and in acts of political participation. Other aspects of plural democracy, such as the rule of law, systems of checks and balances, freedom of the press, and so on are means to, or specific manifestations of, these general principles.

c) Definition of semi-democracies according to Polity IV:

They are those states that score between 5 and -5 on the Polity IV scale of regime types. Semi democracies, known also as Anocracy, have mixed authority traits, and thus can have middling scores on both autocracy and democracy scales. These are the kinds of polities, which were characterized as “anocratic” and “incoherent” in the Polity I study.

2.2.2 Definition of minority

While there are many different definitions of the term “minority”, many taking on personal opinions and biases of authors, in the book/report entitled “Possible Ways and Means of Facilitating the Peaceful and Constructive Solution of Problems Involving Minorities”, Asbjorn Eide (senior fellow at the Norwegian Center for Human Rights at the University of Oslo) offers a credible understanding of the term “minority”. Eide argues that “a minority is any group of persons resident within a sovereign state which constitutes less than half of the population of the national society and whose members share common characteristics of an ethnic, religious or linguistic nature that distinguishes them from the rest of the population” (Glassner, 1998).

Thanks to Hepburn we can now discuss and differentiate between different types of minorities. Hepburn built upon the common understanding of the definition of a “minority” by empirically differentiating between ethnic and religious minorities “Religious minorities were known from ancient times, but ethnic minorities did not become an issue in European politics until the rise of nationalism, political or social philosophy in which the welfare of the nation-state as an entity is considered paramount” (Hepburn, 1979). Minorities have different forms and are defined in section 3.1.4

2.2.3 Definition of politicization and its forms

In general terms politicization mean the demand for or the act of transporting an issue into the field of politics – making previously unpolitical matters political. Politicization is the process by means of which decision-making powers and the associated authoritative interpretations of facts and circumstances are brought into the political sphere, that is, transported either into the political subsystem (defined by the ability to make collectively binding decisions) or into the political space (defined by public debates about the right

course in handling a given problem) (Zürn, 2014). Politicization can also be defined as to give a political tone or character as well as to bring within the realm of politics (Webshtser, 1986) to a specific feeble group in order to be “used” as a tool in a specific political momentum. Politicization has different forms that are defined as follow:

a) Definition of politicization of religion

It is the abuse of religion as a political mean to achieve nationalist political goals. When religion is politicized it becomes the prime mark, while ethnic or other traits become less important. (Ognjenovic and Jozelić, 2014).

b) Definition of politicization of ethnicity

It is given political meaning through the mobilization process performed by majority elites, who attempt to “make state a real nation- state, the state of and for the nation” and the “nationalizing” minority elites who take on a “dynamic political stance” in attempt to impose their claims for specific rights. The politicization of ethnicity thus turns into a process with specific mechanisms and carries long-term implications if both types of actors engage in the public sphere and mobilize ethnic groups. Their actions and reactions define, on one hand, the boundaries and content of the framework that grants minority groups specific rights and on the other hand, the degree of participation in mainstream societies. Together, the dynamics of interaction between these two shape the level of inclusion and participation of different ethnic groups in the public sphere (Andriescu and Gherghina, 2013).

2.2.4 Definition of discrimination and its forms

In this thesis, I will rely on the definition of discrimination and its different forms as used by Fox. Discrimination is defined as the extent to which a certain group’s economic, political and cultural activities and rights are limited by government laws or actions (Fox and Akbabab, 2013). Discrimination has different forms, as they are defined below:

a) Definition of political discrimination

Fox based the definition of political discrimination on two factors. The first being the presence and strength of political restrictions on: freedom of expression; free movement; place of residence; rights in judicial proceedings; political organization; restrictions on voting; recruitment to the police and/or military; access to the civil service; and attainment

of high office. And the second being whether the government's policies are intended to improve the minority's political status, or are discriminatory (Fox, 2004).

b) Definition of economic discrimination

Fox based the definition of economic discrimination on the level of the minority group's poverty compared to other groups and whether the government's policies are intended to improve the minority's economic status, or are discriminatory (Fox, 2004).

c) Definition of cultural discrimination

Fox understands the definition of cultural discrimination as the presence and strength of restrictions on: the observance of the group's religion; speaking and publishing in the group's language or dialect; instruction in the group's language; the celebration of group holidays, ceremonies, and cultural events; dress, appearance, and/or behavior; on marriage and/or family life; and organizations that promote the group's cultural interests (Fox, 2004).

d) Definition of religious discrimination

Fox defined religious discrimination as the extent to which religious practices are restricted either due to public policy or widespread social practice (Fox, 2004).

2.2.5 Definition of repression

There is no explicit definition of repression used by Fox. However, Fox uses the following individual measures based on the following categories: small scale arrests of group members; large scale arrests of group members; the arrest of group leaders; show trials of group leaders; torture of group members; execution of group members; execution of group leaders; reprisal killings of civilians; killings by death squads; property confiscated or destroyed; restrictions on movement; forced resettlement; interdiction of food supplies; ethnic cleansing; systematic domestic spying; states of emergency; saturation of police/military; limited use of force against protestors; and unrestrained use of force against protestors; military campaigns against armed rebels; military targets and destroys rebel areas; military massacres of suspected rebel supporters; and other government repression (Fox, 2003).

2.3 The Political regimes and the discrimination of minorities

2.3.1 General view between political regimes and minorities

In this section, I will show first, that discrimination against minorities actually exists in any regime types, but it is higher in some types compared to others. Second, that the level of discrimination varies according to the type of discrimination, and finally that discrimination varies according to the type of minority. Therefore, the pattern of discrimination varies according to regime types, types of minorities, and types of discrimination.

a) The general pattern of the relation between regime types and level of discrimination: the more democratic, the better?

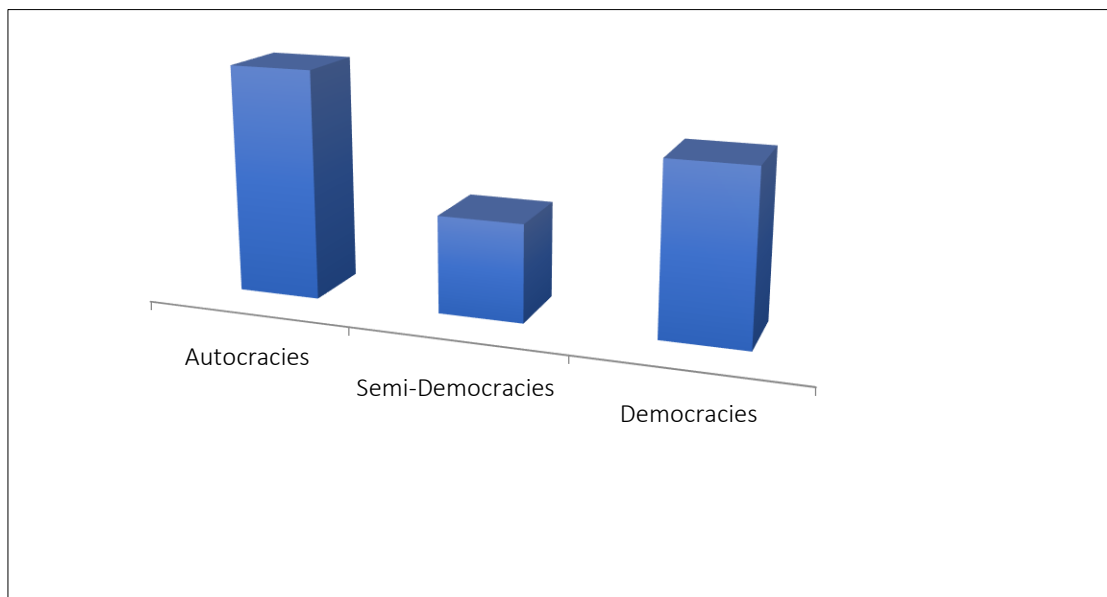
Discrimination against minorities is associated to different regime types. The intensity of discrimination and repression against minorities differs based on regime types. Not all regime types discriminate the same and at the same level against minorities. Each regime type has its own pattern of discrimination and its resulting influence on religious and/or ethnic discrimination or conflicts, both by violent and non-violent means.

It is with no doubt that there are many causes of discrimination against minorities exercised by different regime types. Some of these causes are common between all regime types such as ethnic distinction, the formation of nation state, and the formation of state of people (Wimmer, 1997), when the state or the elite in power denies the existence of minorities (Kumaraswamy, 2003), when citizenship is based on the jus sanguinis (Weldon, 2006), when ethnically based ruling coalition comes into power, when the minority power threat the majority by virtue of their number, militancy or economic power (Sorens, 2010), when the state is formed based on ethnic model state (Ghanem, 1998) or when the state engages in religious hatred or religious prejudice against specific minorities (Ghanea, 2003). While other causes of discrimination are specific for each regime type that I will present in the forthcoming sub-sections.

Until recently, the common wisdom, as reached by Gurr (1988), Fein (1993) and Fox (1998) states that the less democratic the state, the more likely it is to engage in discrimination. Similarly, all three authors argue that discrimination - which might escalate into domestic conflict - is likely to take place within semi-democracies, since democratic regimes “tend to accommodate minorities,” while autocratic regimes tend to

“repress them”. We may consider Lebanon as a semi democratic example in which it is based on a constitutional power sharing system. However, before and after the civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990), the constitution still defines the religious identity of the three top state positions: The President of the Republic must be Christian Maronite, the Prime Minister must be a Muslim Sunni, while the Speaker of the Parliament must be a Muslim Shiite. Despite the fact that Lebanon is home to 18 different religious sects, the three afore-mentioned sects are demographically speaking, the major groups. Nonetheless, the state constitution is clear in including the 18 sects in the power sharing distribution at proportional levels based on their demographic representation either in the parliament or the cabinet or through different bureaucratic positions. Later in 2003, Fox and Sandler (2003) make an interesting point that the general relation between discrimination and regime types is not linear, but rather it is a backward-J-shaped relationship as shown in graph 2.1 that summarizes the result of table 2.3 and 2.4.

Graph 2.1: Graphic representation of the relationship between the autocracy-democracy continuum and discrimination against minorities



Source: Thesis author, data from Fox and Sandler (2003).

Observing the tendency above (graph 2.1), discrimination against minorities scored highest in autocracies, lowest in semi-democracies, and somewhere in between in democracies. Since in democratic regimes, minorities are assimilated within the social, cultural and political cohesion of the state. Despite the inclusion feature of its citizen into

the state system, discrimination in democratic regimes exists. It is mainly related to the social and economic welfare and services of the state.

Discrimination against minorities also exists in semi-democracies. But due to the fragile political system and the fear of slipping into civil war and insecurity, discrimination against minorities in semi-democracies is the lowest compared to other regime types (Fox and Sandler, 2003).

In autocratic regimes, discrimination is mainly targeted against minority groups, which do not belong to the identity or are in conflict with the elite in power or the majority. But in some odd cases, we may find a minority discriminating against the majority, like in the case of Syria during both al-Assad regimes, or in Iraq under Saddam Hussein's rule, or currently in Bahrain.

b) The level of discrimination according to type of discrimination for all regime types

The relation between regime types and discrimination is also strongly associated to different types of discrimination. For all regime types, the level of discrimination differs according to different forms of discrimination as we can see in table 2.2.

Table 2.2⁴: Mean level of government discrimination against minorities

Discrimination in 1998		
Cultural	Economic	Political
0.89	1.63	1,15

Source: Thesis author, data from Fox and Sandler (2003).

Table 2.2 clearly shows that economic discrimination is the highest compared to other types of discrimination, and that political discrimination is higher than cultural discrimination. This leads us to conclude that not only all regime types discriminate against minorities (as described in section 3.1.1), but that the levels of discrimination differ based on the type of discrimination i.e. cultural, economic and political.

c) The pattern of level of discrimination according to regime types and types of discrimination

This general pattern between level of discrimination and type of discrimination varies a little if we take into account the type of political regime. As we can see in table 2.3, in autocratic regimes the highest degree of discrimination happens in the political field. As

⁴ Refer to Annex 1 for variables explanation

for semi-democratic and democratic regimes, the highest degree of discrimination takes place in the economic field.

Table 2.3⁵: Mean levels of discrimination and its types against minorities in democracies, semi-democracies and autocracies

All Types of Minorities (N=267)	Independent variable	Dependent variable								
	Type of government in 1994	Discrimination								
		Cultural			Economic			Political		
		1990-91	1994-95	1998	1990-91	1994-95	1998	1990-91	1994-95	1998
	Autocratic	1.32	1.25	1.32	1.78	1.60	1.55	1.82	1.79	1.86
	Semi-democratic	0.95	0.62*	0.67*	1.46	1.43	1.56	1.37	0.86***	0.82***
	Democratic	0.88	0.78*	0.74*	1.96 [†]	1.92 [†]	1.79	1.14*	0.97**	0.86***
	Total	1.04	0.87	0.89	1.75	1.66	1.63	1.42	1.18	1.15

Notes: Significance (t-test) between marked variable and value for 'autocratic' within same category: *P < 0.05; **P < 0.01; ***P < 0.001. Significance (t-test) between marked variable and value for 'semi-democratic' within same category [†]P < 0.05.

Source: Thesis author, data from Fox and Sandler (2003).

What is also remarkable about democracies that the level of economic discrimination is higher than both, autocracies and semi-democracies. This specific finding is in contradiction to the commonly understood theory of democracy being equivalent to more freedoms, and thus, less discrimination. Therefore, we may confidently claim that although any regime, of any type, is capable of committing acts of discrimination; particularly in economic and political aspects, autocracies discriminate the most compared to other regime types. Also, unlike in dictatorships where discrimination is usually open and visible to both the domestic and international community, discrimination by democratic regimes towards minority groups operates in hidden, non-formal ways and mainly at the economic level.

d) The pattern of discrimination against different types of minorities, different types of regimes and different types of discrimination

At this point of the research, thanks to Fox, we know that the level of discrimination varies according to regime types and types of discrimination. But are all minorities treated or discriminated equally?

This question is many times bypass by scholars because they do not distinguish among types of minorities' i.e. religious minority, ethnic minority, linguistic minority, ethno-religious minorities, color minorities, etc. Thus, in the social science and diplomatic

⁵ Refer to Annex 1 for variables explanation

literature (such as United Nations) there is a mixture in identifying or differentiating between race and ethnic groups/minorities. There is no clear distinction between both terminologies. According to (Morning, 2005) there is widespread mixture in the literature between ethnic and race groups. Religion is not part of this mixture⁶. While the United Nations clearly differentiates between religious and ethnic groups (i.e. in this case the UN used race instead of ethnicity)⁷, many scholars combine explicitly or implicitly the classification of religious minorities under ethnic ones. Can this mixture between religious and ethnic minorities be correct?

The first thing to say is the level of discrimination also varies according to the type of minority, and more precisely the difference between religious and non-religious minorities. Table 2.4 below shows that the level of discrimination against religious minorities is higher than the level of discrimination exercised against non-religious minorities⁸. It is also remarkable that this higher discrimination of religious minorities not only happens in cultural issues, but in political and economic as well.

⁶ **Racial identity:** some meanings are derived from its biological dimension (Spickard, 1992) and others from its social dimension (Helms, 1995; Spickard, 1992). As a biological category, race is derived from an individual's "physical features, gene pools and character qualities" (Spickard, 1992, p. 14). Today, literary and theoretical manifestations of racial identity are discussed not in biological terms (which may imply a racist perspective) but as a social construction, which "refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group" (Helms, 1993, p. 3). Racial identity seems most often, however, to be a frame in which individuals categorize others, often based on skin color (O'Hearn, 1998). The use of skin color is one of many labeling tools that allow individuals and groups to distance themselves from those they consider different from themselves (Chávez, Guido-DiBrito, and Mallory, 1996). Racial identity is a surface-level manifestation based on what we look like yet has deep implications in how we are treated. (Clark and Caffarella, 1999).

Ethnic Identity: viewed as an individual's identification with "a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and share segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients" (Yinger, 1976, p. 200). Ethnic Identity seems most often to be a frame in which individuals identify consciously or unconsciously with those with whom they feel a common bond because of similar traditions, behaviors, values, and beliefs (Ott, 1989). These points of connection allow individuals to make sense of the world around them and to find pride in who they are. If, however, positive ethnic group messages and support are not apparent or available to counteract negative public messages, a particular individual is likely to feel shame or disconnection toward their own ethnic identity. (Clark and Caffarella, 1999).

⁷ In Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was adopted in Paris on 10 December 1948: *Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.*

⁸ Fox and Sandler (2003) show that this pattern does not vary according to the type of regime: autocracies, semi-democracies or democracies. Religious minorities are always more discriminated compared to non-religious ones. For more information, refer to the article "Regime Types and Discrimination against Ethnoreligious Minorities: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of the Autocracy–Democracy Continuum". Political Studies Association, VOL 51, 469–489.

Table 2.4: Comparing mean level of discrimination against religious and non religious minorities

Type of minority	Independent variable	Dependent variable								
	Type of government in 1994	Discrimination								
		Cultural			Economic			Political		
		1990-91	1994-95	1998	1990-91	1994-95	1998	1990-91	1994-95	1998
Religious minorities (N=105)	In all regime types	1.65	1.28	1.31	1.79	1.7	1.66	1.73	1.37	1.34
Non-religious minorities (N=162)	In all regime types	0.63	0.61	0.62	1.72	1.64	1.61	1.22	1.05	1.03

Source: Thesis author, data from Fox and Sandler (2003).

But this is not the only reason not to distinguish between religious and non-religious minorities. Therefore, additional reasons can be recorded that will lead us to distinguish between religious and non-religious minorities i.e. ethnic minorities as per below:

d.1) Inheritance dilemma:

Despite that we tend to inherit our religious beliefs/identity, religion is a flexible concept. At maturity age and so on, religion becomes what we choose to believe in. Humans can change their religion, or their belief based on their faith. Therefore, religion is a matter of perception.

Ethnic identity is also inherited, but it is not a flexible concept. It is mainly related to the prime identity of the individual. Members of same ethnic group “are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and share segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients”. (Clark and Caffarella, 1999). As a result, people can change their religion or their chosen beliefs, but it is harder for them to change their traditions, customs and who they are. For example, a Kurdish can change his/her religious beliefs from a Muslim Sunni to be Muslim Shiite, or a Christian, or Jew or Buddhist etc... But he/she cannot change their Kurdish ethnic identity to become an Arab or Turk or Persian. Therefore, an ethnic group could include different religions and sects. And one religion could include different ethnic groups, for example:

- **At religious level:**

Islam as a religion has different ethnic groups such as Arab, Kurds, Turks, Persian, etc..

Christianity as a religion has different ethnic groups such as Arab, Persian, Roman, etc..

- **At ethnic level:**

Arab as an ethnic group has different religions such as Christianity, Jews and Islam.

Turks as an ethnic group has different religion such as Christianity, Jews and Islam.

d.2) The Arab context

In the Arab context, the distinction between ethnic and religious identity traits is of utmost importance. The region is divided according to many ethnic and religious identities. Sometimes these different identities overlapped (as in the case of Christian Armenians in Lebanon where the majority of the population is Muslim and Arab). But many times, they crosscut each other. Thus:

- Some “minorities” such as Turkmen, Kurds, Bedouin, Circassians, Somali, Berber, have the same religious beliefs of the majority, Islam and more precisely Sunni Islam, but they are not of the same ethnic identity of the majority, that is Arab.
- Other minorities such as Christians and Jews are not of the same religious identity of the majority, which is Islam, but they are from the same ethnic identity, which is Arab.
- Finally, some sectarian identities/minorities such as Druze, Alawites, Zaydis, Ismaeilis, Ahmadis are of the same ethnic identity of the majority, which is Arab and from the same religion of the majority, which is Islam, but they are not from the same sect of the majority that is Sunni Islam.

In this specific research, most of the Christian minorities of Egypt and Syria are actually of the same ethnic group of the Muslim majority, which is the “Arab” ethnic identity, but they are not from the same religion. Therefore, it is not accurate to consider the Christian Arabs of Syria and Egypt (or the ones in Lebanon, Jordan and some of Iraq, Palestine, Yemen) as ethnic, or ethnoreligious minorities⁹. This also means that the Christians Arabs only constitute a “minority” if religion is the identity trait that is highly politicized. But if what matters in politics is the “ethnicity”, the Christian Arabs belong to the majority group in their countries. As a result, constituting a “minority” actually depends on the identity building process of the state and their politicization of either ethnicity or

⁹ Therefore, we should only label as “ethnoreligious minorities” those groups that are different from the majority of the population in both ethnic and religious terms as Christian Armenians in Lebanon.

religion¹⁰. This makes clear that it is important to differentiate in the social science literature between ethnic and religious minorities.

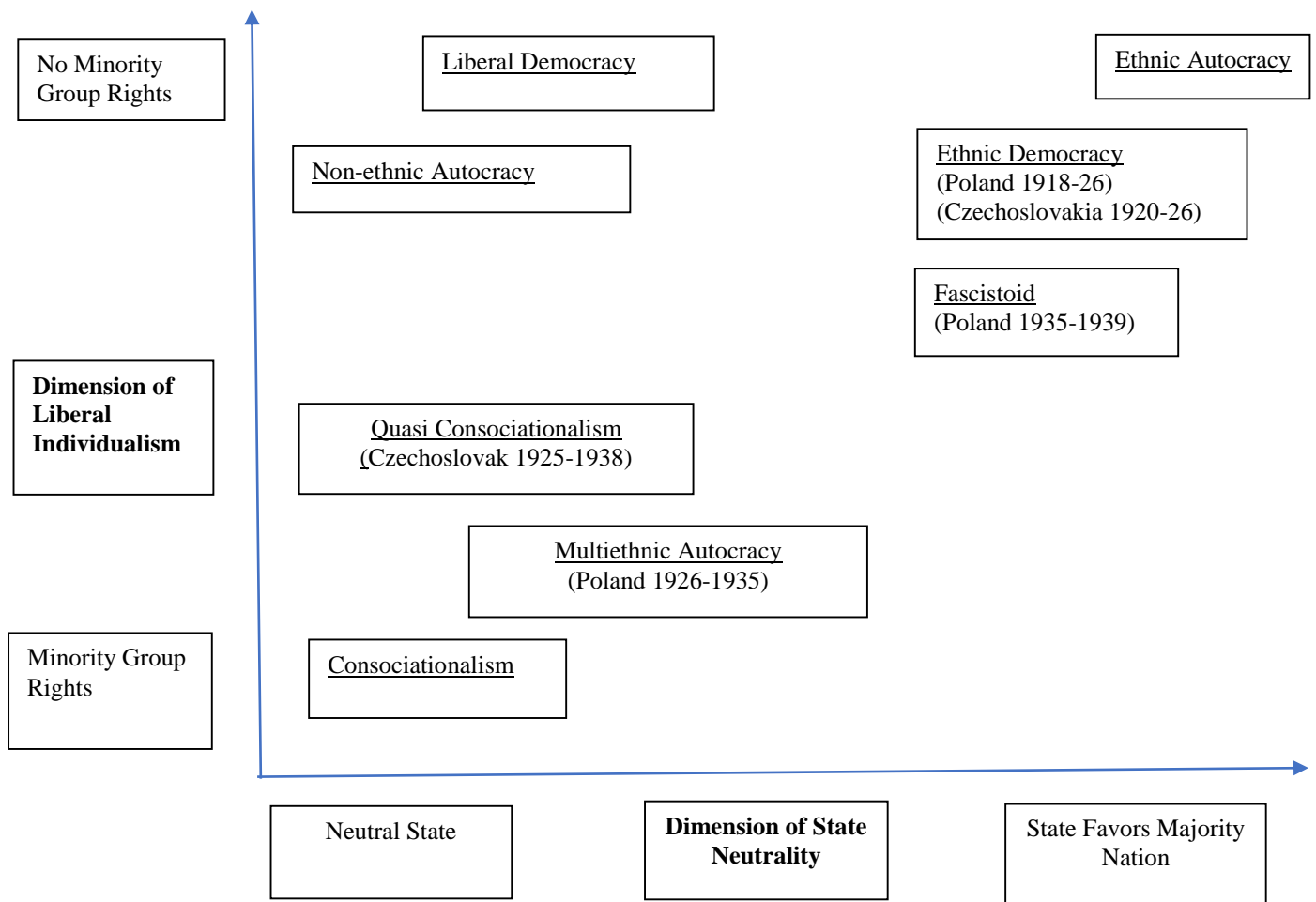
2.3.2. The variation of the level of discrimination within the same kind of political regimes

As said, discrimination against minorities in general and religious minorities in particular exists in all regime types. In addition, researchers have shown that within the same kind of regime the pattern and intensity of discrimination can also vary significantly. In other words, countries categorized under the same political regime can discriminate more or less than other countries. Kopstein and Wittenberg (2010) shows this clearly (see graph 2.2, extracted from their work).

Graph 2.2: Minority inclusion and political regime in Czechoslovakia and Poland¹¹

¹⁰ In the case of Kurds in Syria and Iraq the situation is the opposite. They are of a different ethnic group of the Arab majority, but they believe in the same religion of the Arab majority, which is Islam. Therefore, Kurds constitute a “minority” from an ethnic point of view, but not from a religious one

¹¹ **Liberal individualism** could be defined as “degree to which minority rights are recognized in practice”. **State neutrality** could be defined, as “how vigorously the state promotes or not the majority culture”. **Additional information about graph 2.2 can be retrieved from** <http://cps.sagepub.com/content/43/8-9/1089.full.pdf>



Source: Thesis author, data from Kopstein and Wittenberg 2010.

Graph 2.2 shows that this variation can happen both in democracies and autocracies. In “Liberal Democracies” ethno-national groups do not have any rights, but “the state remains neutral and ethnicity is a private matter”. Therefore, the level of discrimination is minimal. Whereas in “Ethnic Democracies” the state favors the identity of the majority in power, thus the intensity of discrimination against minorities who do not belong to the majority of the population becomes high. In “Quasi-Consociationalism”, the situation of minorities is better than in ethnic democracies, since minority rights are partially recognized, and the state is moderately neutral. Finally, “Consociationalism” is considered to be to the ideal regime for minorities in which the state secures minority rights and remains neutral. While in the lower right part of the graph the situation of minority groups is almost vague, and rights are unattainable.

Interestingly this variation also occurs among autocracies. In “Multiethnic Autocracies”, the level of discrimination against minorities is low compared to other autocratic regime types since these states tend to accommodate and acknowledge minority rights while

remaining as neutral as possible. For Kopstein and Wittenberg this was the situation of Poland between 1926 and 1935. Whereas in “Non-ethnic autocracies” no minority group rights are recognized, but the state does not promote the culture of the majority, that is, it remains neutral. In “Ethnic autocracies” the level of discrimination is high and could be categorized as the worst regime type for minorities. In these autocracies, minority rights are not recognized, and the majority group exploits its control over the state for its own benefit. Finally, in the “Fascistoid autocratic” regime type, the level of discrimination is higher than in Multiethnic Autocracies but lower than both Liberal Democracy and Ethnic Autocracy, since in this case the state favors the culture of the majority, but the level of liberal individualism remains at a mean level. Why is it the case that within the same kind of political regime some states discriminate more their minorities than others?

2.3.3 Causes of discrimination against minorities in autocracies

So far, we have seen that in general: first, autocracies discriminate the most compared to democracies and semi-democracies, although semi-democracies discriminate less than democracies. Second, religious minorities are discriminated the most compared to other types of minorities in all types of regimes; third, that religious minorities are more discriminated at political and economic level than at a cultural one. Finally, some autocracies discriminate more than others.

In this section, I will review the most important causes of discrimination offered by the academic literature, mainly in to autocratic regimes. Some of these causes are common to all types of minorities, while others are specific to different types of minorities.

According to Kopstein and Wittenberg, (2015) ethnic historical division in which political movements representing different interests and ethnic groups were divided along ethnic lines, revenge that occurred when former subject peoples came to rule over formerly dominant group. Undersized states were the rump states of former empires, whose state borders no longer encompassed all members of their respective national communities, and oversized states whose borders were established such that they encompassed not just the eponymous nationality of the state, but other nationalities are considered to be causes for discrimination by autocracies. In addition, state policies, practices and laws that limit religious and/or ethnic practices (Hasmath, 2014), or ethnicity and religious bigotry by the majority towards minorities that leads to superiority and discrimination (Salawu,

2010), or *raison d'état* reasons in which autocratic rulers exercise wide authority against minorities without toleration, or the nature of well-ordered police state in which states try to enforce vast codes of regulations that are restrictive (Scott, 1990).

According to Wimmer (1997) the existence of a pre-colonial clientelist system with a trans-ethnic structure before and after independence, the colonial practices of *divide et impera* in many ethnically very heterogeneous societies and the struggle over collective goods through the conflictive charging of ethnic differences are considered also to be causes of discrimination in autocracies. In addition, seeking legitimacy of the authoritarian ruling regime plays also an important role in discrimination against minorities. Little (1991) and Turner (1991) referred to the use of intense religious discourse as a politicization of religion strategy implemented by the state and/or minority groups in order to fend their existence. According to Sahliyeh (1990), Juergensmeyer (1993) and Haynes (1994) the question of authoritarian regime "legitimacy" is justified through religious discrimination and unrest. Fox (2000) added in this matter that religious legitimacy could be a tool used by many regimes in order to justify discrimination. He added therefore "in states where the use of religion in politics is more legitimate, the level of discrimination should be higher". His argument was based on previous study that relates religious official recognition in the constitution with the concept of legitimacy.

However, in religious autocracies religious factors are considered to be the main causes of discrimination (Basedau M, Georg Strüver, Johannes Vüllers & Tim Wegenast, 2011). While in the causes of discrimination against religious minorities, Fox (2000, 2001, 2013) and Fox and Sandler (2013) mentioned that: first religion is an issue that tends to inflame emotions, therefore the level of discrimination increases against religious minorities who do not belong to the religion of the ruling majority; second, the nature of autocratic regimes tends to discriminate more against minorities in general and religious minorities in particular; third, the fear of ethnic nationalism which, by most states is considered to be a serious threat to national ideologies and national security; fourth, the nature of the state with official religion; and finally, religious demands for religious rights and/or privileges. Such demands can be considered threatening by the majority group because they can pose a challenge to the religious monopoly, domination, and/or ideals of the majority group, thereby provoking discrimination as a response. In addition, religious causes of discrimination can be seen from "religious protection" or what Wentz (1987) calls it "defending the walls of religion" and referred to by Geertz (1987), Greenwalt (1988) and Juergensmeyer (1997). As a result, the majority (and in some cases the

minority) tends to discriminate at all levels against the other in order to protect what Fox (2000) calls it “psychological walls”.

At ethno-religious level, discrimination happens when cultural differences between groups become greater, people tend to identify the other group as the “other” and to see them as a threat or challenge (Fox and Sandler, 2013), or when bureaucratic practices by the majority leads to ethnicization of the state bureaucracy and when bureaucrats trust only to one’s own ethnic group (Wimmer, 1997)

The literature is therefore rich in offering possible factors that explain why discrimination of minorities in general, and religious ones, in particular, can happen. This literature can also offer possible reasons to explain why some particular dictatorships are more discriminatory than others. However, the literature is less clear about explaining some seemingly paradoxes that we find by looking to specific cases such as why the religious identity sometimes is considered to be an important matter for regimes that are in principle secular and had based their legitimation on an ethnic identity (such as the “Arab Republics” of Iraq, Syria or Egypt to mention just a few). Why do ethnic autocracies sometimes discriminate against religious minorities that belong to the same ethnic group of the elite in power and the majority of the population? Why, and when, does religion replace ethnicity? These questions are especially relevant important because, as we said, “Christian Arabs” constitute a “minority” if religion is politicized, but they are just part of the “majority” if ethnicity is politicized.

2.4 Discrimination of minorities and the Arab-Muslim countries

If we are interested therefore in knowing the causes of discrimination of minorities, especially of religious minorities, and why sometimes religion replaces ethnicity as the most important descriptive feature of individuals, the Arab-Muslim countries are the ones to look at¹².

¹² In this thesis, I will use the term Muslim majority states and not Islamic countries when referring to states that have Muslim majority, since “Islamic country” term means that the state is applying Islamic Shariah law, which is not the case of my research.

2.4.1 Some particularities of Arab Muslim countries in their treatment of their minorities

Based on what has been discussed, we know that in general, discrimination in autocracies is higher compared to other regime types; we also know that discrimination against religious minorities is higher compared to other types of minorities. Finally, the intensity of discrimination differs between countries within the same regime types i.e. in this case autocratic regimes. Are these general patterns the same in Muslim majority countries and more precisely in Arab-Muslim countries?

The first thing to say is that discrimination of minorities is particularly high among Muslim countries. According to the government restriction index, which is annually published by Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public life in 2011, the relation between autocratic regimes and restrictions/discrimination against any group not belonging to the majority (mainly in power) is very high, while democratic regimes have registered low measures. According to the government restriction index, the following autocratic states recorded very high discriminatory rates (mainly scores of 6.6 and higher): Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, Indonesia, Maldives, Afghanistan, Algeria, Syria, Somalia, Burma, Eritrea, Pakistan, Malaysia, Russia, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Brunei, Vietnam and Sudan. Almost 13 out of the 20 mentioned countries are considered to be Muslim majority states.

Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public life in 2011 also released data about social hostilities index that scored very high rates (7.2 and higher) for the following countries: Pakistan, India, Russia, Israel, Indonesia, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Palestinian territories, Egypt, Yemen, Afghanistan and Kenya. Almost all the states could be categorized as autocratic or semi-democratic ones. Also, 10 out of the 14 states are considered to be Muslim majority states.

In addition, Fox (2013) has also shown that among all religious minorities in the region, Christian minorities ones (like the Copts in Egypt or Christians in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon) are experiencing higher levels of religious discrimination and restrictions than Muslim religious minorities (such as Shiite). Polytheistic minorities face even higher levels of discrimination, including the Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus.

Arab countries are also considered to have the highest concentration of autocratic governments in the world. According to PEW data and specifically the government restriction index, 13 out of the 20 mentioned countries are been categorized as Muslim majority states and seven out of the 13 states are Arab Muslim states and are members of the League of Arab States i.e. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, and Sudan. Whereas in the Religion and Public life index, 10 out of the 14 states have been categorized as Muslim majority states and six out of the 10 countries are Arab Muslim states, and members of the League of Arab States i.e. Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Palestinian territories, Egypt and Yemen. Therefore, most of the Arab governments' identities are associated with the religion of the majority being Muslim. Many of these countries have official state religions, which are incorporated into these states' constitutions and laws. According to Fox (2013) the combination of autocracy and state religion does not provide an ideal setting for religious freedom as it increases the levels of discrimination and exclusion. Fox added that no religious minority within a Muslim majority state, mainly in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, is free of religious restrictions (table 2.5).

Table 2.5: Religious freedom clauses in Arab Muslim majority state constitutions

Country	Year of constitution	Religious freedom clause	Qualifications
Algeria	1997	No	
Bahrain	2002	Yes	'in accordance with the customs observed in the country.'
Egypt	1980	Yes	None
Iraq-pre 2002	1990	Yes	'in accordance with the rules of constitution and laws and in compliance with morals and public order.'
Iraq-post 2002	2005	Yes	None
Jordan	1952	Yes	'in accordance with the customs observed in the Kingdom, unless such is inconsistent with public order or morality.'
Kuwait	1962	Yes	'in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or morals.'
Libya	1969	No	
Morocco	1992	No	

Oman	1996	Yes	‘in accordance with recognized customs . . . provided that it does not disrupt public order or conflict with accepted standards of behavior.’
Qatar	2003	Yes	‘in accordance with the law and the requirements of the maintenance of public order and morality.’
Saudi Arabia	1992	No	
Syria	1973	Yes	‘do not disturb the public order.’
Tunisia	1959	Yes	‘provided this does not disturb public order.’
UAE	1971	Yes	‘in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or violate public morals.’
Yemen	1994	No	

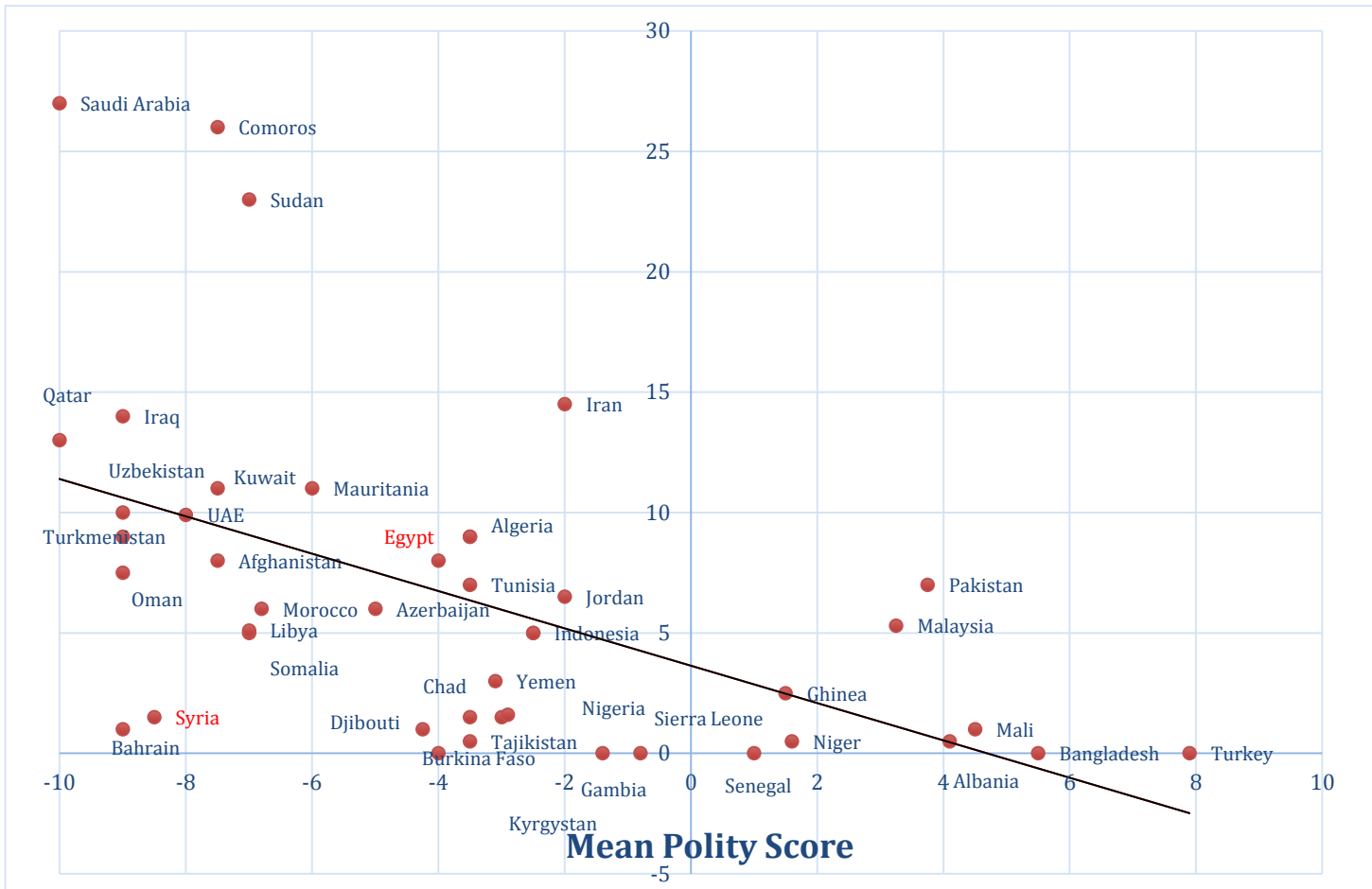
Source: Thesis author, data from Fox 2013.

This will lead to the analysis that the number of autocratic states is higher in Arab Muslim autocracies compared to autocratic Muslim majority states or simply autocratic states. That means that the level and intensity of discrimination in Arab Muslim countries is higher compared to the rest.

But Muslim countries in general not only are more prone to be autocracies, and discriminate their minorities, but also, as we can see in Figure 2.1 below the relationship between religious discrimination (vertical line) against minorities and the average Polity scores (horizontal line from -10 till 10) for Muslim majority states during 1990-2002 is not in accordance with the general pattern given by Fox and Sandler (2003) i.e. J-shape. It is rather linear: the more autocratic the state, the more likely it is to engage in higher levels of discrimination¹³.

Figure 2.1: Democracy and levels of religious discrimination in Muslim-majority countries 1990-2002 average

¹³ But we must take into account that in their analysis there is only one country that can be considered a democracy, Turkey.



Source: Thesis author, data from Ani Sarkissian, Jonathan Fox & Yasemin Akbaba, (2011)

Finally, in the Arab region, religious discrimination, exploitation, and conflict do not have the same characteristics and patterns as they do in the western democratic states because the discriminated religious or ethnic minorities are indigenous groups/citizens (with the exception of migrant workers in the gulf), unlike in the West, where most of the discriminated minorities are mainly migrants.

2.4.2. Standard causes of discrimination in Arab Muslim countries

There are several standard reasons that the literature gives to explain why the level of discrimination in Arab Muslim autocratic countries against minorities in general, and religious minorities in particular, are high compared to Muslim autocratic countries or even other autocratic countries in non-Muslim countries. In this context, it is important to note that with the exception of An-Na'im (1987), scholars who explained the below five possible reasons of discrimination are mainly part of the orientalist and western colonial

thoughts, therefore does not reflect fully the Arab or Muslim point of views that is cited in the work of Edward Said (1978, 1983, 1994), Fawaz Traboulsi (2009), Albert Hourani (1992), Rubén Chuaqui (2002), Roger Owen (2012), Nadine Naber (2010) and many others.

a) Islam as a religion

a.1) The nature of Islamic religion

Fox (2013) clearly mentioned in his findings that Muslim states have higher levels of government involvement in religion and higher levels of discrimination against minorities than countries from other religious traditions. This is due to the interrelation between Islam and the state. The notion of Islam being a religion and state is the essence of all Islamic discourse, which is found in the Quran and *Hadith* (prophet discourse). Even in Islamic philosophy, the strong correlation between Islam and the duty or ruler is found in the philosophy of most of Muslim philosophers such as *Al Farabi*, *Al Ghazali*, *Ibn Arabi* and many others (chapter 3 gives substantial explanation about Islamic rule and minorities). According to *Shariah*, it is the duty of the Muslim leader to rule based on God's order and the teachings of Islam. In the new state order system, which is based on rule of law and democracy, *Shariah* laws could be considered as violations against human rights, women's rights, minorities' rights, economic rights etc... According to *Abullahi An-Na'im* (1987) on a practical level, most of the constitutions of modern Muslim states guarantee against religious discrimination, most of these constitutions also authorize the application of *Shariah*.

In this regard, if we consider Sudan, before 2010, as a virtual case study, which may apply *Shariah* laws within the modern state system. Here we find serious human rights implications and violations. According to *An-Na'im* (1987) for non-Muslim Sudanese, about one third of the population, the immediate options are to become Muslims, *dhimmi* if they happen to be people of the book or become *Harbis* to be killed on sight unless they are allowed temporary *aman* (security). That means if states apply *Shariah* law, non-Muslim indigenous communities will be treated as second-class citizens, therefore leading them to be discriminated.

a.2) Islamic religious legitimacy

In some autocratic regimes, "religious legitimacy" is considered to be part of the state identity. These states will be labeled as being religious (or theocratic) such as the case of

Iran, Saudi Arabia, and India. As a result, state religion, mainly the religion of the majority of the population, is considered to be the prime identity of the state and society. This will result in discrimination against minorities that do not belong to the same identity of the Muslim majority in power; “the resultant ethnocentricity, the belief that one’s own way of life is to be preferred to all others, often degenerates into negative trials and they should live their (majority) lives” (*An-Na’im*, 1987).

In addition, the separation of the state and religion is a key element to end religious discrimination. The more that the state institutions are secular, the more the discrimination of religious minorities decreases (refer to chapter 3). This will lead us to relate the autocratic nature of Muslim majority states with the Islamic doctrine, since in Islamic doctrine, religion is a social, political, religious and community issue that cannot be separated from the society. According to Huntington, “Islamic culture explains in large part failure of democracy to emerge in much of Muslim world, the failure is due to the inhospitable nature of Islamic culture and society to western liberal concepts”. Lakoff (2004) added that due to the lack of separation of state from religion in Islamic countries, it is impossible for Islamic countries to adopt and protect human rights.

a.3) Incompatibility of Islam with democracy

In most of Muslim majority states, discrimination is also related to the rejection of rights, western mode of governing, and freedom. Yet, Muslim states still oppose the modern state system, the minimal human rights and different beliefs. “They oppose all forms of secularization and modernization as well as freedom of thought in matters of faith and morals, the political equality of women, and the notion that believers can choose to conform or not to conform to Islamic law” (Lakoff, 2004). Therefore, Muslim majority states are closely associated to their religion rather than the democratic institutions of the west. Whether they are Arabs or non-Arabs, the degree of controlled freedom and rights in Muslim majority states is almost high. They all registered low scores on the freedom house index as stated by its president Karatnycky (2004) that “among these states, only Mali and Senegal are in the free category and that over the past thirty years, when there was an overall growth in the number of countries ranked as Free, the predominantly Muslim states showed a “diametrically opposite trend”.

Therefore, discrimination against religious minorities is high in Muslim majority autocratic states (and in some particular cases in semi-democratic ones). The Islamic

Republic of Iran is a non-Sunni non-Arab Muslim country. Iran is still ruled based on the enunciated by *Ayatollah Khomeini* (1900–89), who according to Brumberg (2001) denounced democracy as a pernicious example of “Westoxification”. Brumberg (2001) added that *Khomeini* rejected a proposal in 1979 to call the new Iranian state “a Democratic Islamic Republic,” since he associated democracy with his secular opponents and the West. By analyzing this argument more thoroughly we discover that in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, only Christians, Jews and Zoroastrian are recognized religious minorities. According to Article 13 of the constitution of Iran Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians are recognized minorities who within the limits of the law are free to perform their own religious rites, personal affairs and teachings”. While other religious groups such as Bahai’s are not at all recognized and do not have any rights (Fox, 2011). In addition, Article 12 of the constitution of Iran clearly states that Twelvers Shia sect is the official and dominant faith in the country, but tolerates Muslims from other denominations. As a result, the constitution of Iran has approved and legalized the discrimination against some religious minorities similar to many other countries such as Saudi Arabia, or Yemen.

b) Colonial legacy

Some scholars such as Wimmer (1997) referred to the origins of discrimination and/or politicization of any religious or ethnic minority in third world countries to the colonial era. As previously discussed, the relation between various groups (mainly minorities) living together within virtual boundaries is based on the regime type, type of minority and type of inclusion or exclusion i.e. discrimination. Therefore, the state building process in some of the colonized states did not practically take into account equality among citizens. Instead it took division and exclusionary attitude towards the “others” as a result of the authoritarian regimes and policies (refer to Wimmer 1997 in section 3.2.2). Colonized Muslim Arab countries were not exceptions. In Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and many other Arab countries the colonizer – mainly United Kingdom or France – practiced a *divide et impera* policies between majorities and minorities at ethnic and religious level (refer to chapter 4 for more information about Syria and Egypt). As a result, discrimination emerges when certain benefits within society are unequally distributed due to past colonial practices.

c) Arab Culture

Finally, some non-Arab Muslim states such as Turkey and Malaysia, are regarded as democratic (see for example Polity IV classification). These states respect the rights of individuals, and are to some extent, secular. Why is it not the case in the Muslim Arab countries? Many scholars refer to the cultural, political, and economic environment of the Arab region. According to Fox (2013), culturally Arab societies are tribal and are divided ethnically, which make it difficult to accept constitutional and representative rule. Politically, Fox (2013) added, they have new artificial borders and current history that relates between autocracy and stability as interrelated status quo. And finally, the nature of the oil wealth created strong patriarchal society that is dominated by one male figure rather than the family figure or the commonwealth system.

2.5 The puzzle of the different level of discrimination of Christian Arabs in Egypt and Syria

Restriction against, and discrimination of minorities in the Arab region goes back to the time of the Caliphates and Ottoman Empire (for more information refer to chapter 3). Discrimination in the Arab region had religious and/or ethnic dimensions. The creation of independent states in the Arab region after 1945 failed to integrate some minorities into the state building process. When Arab nationalism was the main drive of autocratic rule, it excluded most of the non-Arab minorities such as Kurds, Berber etc... After the 1967 war, and as the wave of Islamization took over these autocratic Arab Muslim states and societies, many non-Sunni minorities (and in some states Sunnis themselves) such as Christians, Shia etc... were discriminated against, and to some extent also excluded from the state building process.

In other words, the failure of the Arab secular nationalism and the re-Islamisation of Arab societies, in a context particularly favorable for the autocratic regimes, seem to offer a satisfactory explanation for the discrimination of Christian Arabs in these countries, as well as why autocracies, which initially had based their legitimacy on ethnic grounds, start discriminating religious minorities, even though they belong to the same ethnic group of the elite in power and the majority of the population. However, the specific cases of the two countries where Christian Arabs are actually more numerous, Egypt and Syria,

do not fit well with this explanation. The comparison of these two cases suggests that other factors must be at play for the substitution of ethnicity for religion.

First of all, in the specific case of these two countries under Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak, figure 2.1 (section 4.1) shows that discrimination against religious minorities between 1990-2002 was higher in Egypt than in Syria, despite the fact that Syria was more autocratic than Egypt¹⁴. As we will see in the next chapters, while Coptic Christians, who are as integral to Egypt as Muslims, have been discriminated by the Mubarak regime, Syrian Christians historically have not experienced sectarian attacks, neither from society or the regime in the same intensity (Khoury, 2011). This finding is at odds not only with the relation between type of regime and level of discrimination in general but among Muslim majority countries in particular.

Secondly, the standard causes of discrimination against religious minorities in Arab Muslim countries offered by the literature that we have just reviewed cannot answer this puzzle. First, both countries have Muslim majorities and Christian minorities (proportionally equal); second, both countries were under colonial rule, the British in Egypt, and the French in Syria; and third, both countries are Arabs and members of the league of Arab states¹⁵.

In brief, the difference in how Christians have been treated differently, both in the last decades and presently in Egypt and Syria is very puzzling when we take into account that both regimes were socialistic autocracies and to some extent secular (compared to their Arab Muslim neighbors), that both have Sunni majorities and respective non-Sunni minorities including indigenous Christians. For both states ethnicity matters as “Arab nationalists” regimes while in practice, religion does. Furthermore, both countries are in the same region, anticipated and lead Arab nationalist movements and equally are member of the League of Arab States. Both states were also under western colonial occupation, the French in Syria and the British in Egypt. Both countries had “serious legitimacy and institutional problems” not only at religious or ethnic levels, but also at the political one. In both states, a Sunni majority revolted against its own regime; a Sunni majority in the case of Egypt and an Alawite minority in the case of Syria. Finally, both

¹⁴ In chapter five we compare in more detail the situation of Christians Arabs in these two countries.

¹⁵ At the beginning of chapter six, we give a more extensive explanation of why these factors cannot explain the puzzle that discrimination was higher in Syria than in Egypt.

presidents Hosni Mubarak and Hafez al-Assad are considered to be new rural elite, they both came from the military institution background, had occupied high military positions, and were high commanders of the 1973 war against Israel.

To the best of our knowledge, the social science literature in the specific subject on the relation between autocratic regimes and discrimination against religious minorities, either in general or in the particular case of Arab-Muslim countries, has not offered yet a clear answer to this puzzle of why similar religious minorities residing in autocratic countries with similar political structures are being treated or discriminated differently. For that reason, this thesis will investigate why the autocratic regimes of Syria and Egypt under Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak have discriminated or politicized differently and at different levels against their Christian indigenous minorities.

In addition, by explaining this puzzle we will address the causes of discrimination against Christian religious minorities under secular autocratic regimes in Muslim majority states, and therefore offer an explanation of why some ethnic autocracies start discriminating, or intensified, their discrimination against religious minorities that belong to the same ethnic group of the elite in power as well as the majority of the population, or in other words why, and when, religion replaces ethnicity as the politicized identity. In other words, investigating this puzzle some of the missing and puzzling areas in the relation between religious minorities, Arab autocracies and discrimination, will be studied and we will make a contribution to the existing knowledge on the relation between political regimes and minorities.

2.6 Suggested hypotheses

Despite that the social science literature have offered some hypotheses to explain discrimination of minorities in Arab Muslim countries, but still and as we will explain more thoroughly in chapter six, all existing hypotheses cannot answer our research questions.

Therefore, and in addition to the already existing ones, I present below briefly my hypotheses that I will be testing throughout this thesis:

Hypothesis one: The relation between welfare services of the state, secularism, and discrimination is based on the proposition that states with developed welfare systems tend to be more secular, and therefore discriminate less against their religious minorities, whereas states with weak welfare systems tend to be less secular, and consequently discriminate more.

Hypothesis two: Regional intervention and social composition is based on the proposition that authoritarian ruling regimes that border extensive numeral ethnic and religious minorities tend to be sensible and collaborative with local minorities. While authoritarian ruling regimes that do not border an immense spectrum of ethno-religious minorities tend to be more stern and discriminative against its national religious minorities.

Hypothesis three: The revenge policy of the new regimes is based on the proposition that ruling elites who took over power by a coup d'état or considered as a continuation of a regime that was established by a coup d'état tend to reprisal against groups who were part of the old ruling system in order to create their own sphere of power. Whereas ruling elites who also took over power by a coup d'état, tend to preserve and collaborate with groups that were harassed and/or discriminated by previous regimes in their country, or at least create new ones that pledge loyalty to the new regime.

Hypothesis four: the match between the main identity features of the population and the elite in power is based on the proposition that ruling elites of dictatorships whose religious identity is different from the majority of the population tend to be more sympathetic, lenient and collaborative with other minority groups inside their country in order to build a coalition of minorities to support their regimes. While ruling elite of the same type of dictatorship, who belongs to the major religious group of the mass population, have a propensity to be hegemonic and less considerate towards other, different religious, minority groups in their country in order to get the support of the majority of the population.

Hypothesis five: The challenge of Islamist opposition groups and the politicization of religion as a safe pathway to sustain regime legitimacy and existence is based on the proposition that authoritarian ruling regimes that attempt to incorporate part of powerful Islamic groups, tend to politicize religion and discriminate against non-Muslim minorities in order sustain their rule and legitimize their existence. While Authoritarian

regime that faces weak Islamic challenges tend moderately to politicize non-Muslim minorities.

2.7 Conclusion

The lack of knowledge and publication concerning this region is not only related to a lack of studies on minority and regime structures, it is also related to the scarce data on discrimination and/or politicization of religious minorities in the Arab region. Unlike, the substantial amount of literature available on the consequences of discrimination against minorities' presence and conflict, literature on the question of discrimination and politicization of minorities is not widely available. Only a few authors have addressed the topic of discrimination and politicization of minorities in the past century. These authors have mainly focused on discrimination against minorities in general or Islamic discrimination against minorities, or the pattern of discrimination against feeble groups, or reasons behind minorities' revolution and civil war engagement. But this study cannot explain the puzzle that that country that was more autocratic, Syria discriminated less than a country which was less autocratic i.e Egypt. In addition, these studies do not explain why a religious minority is discriminated in secular countries.

In more general terms the literature about political regimes and minorities do not explain when the religious identity is considered to be important matter for secular dictatorship. In other words, they do not explain when and whether ethnic or religious identities matter for autocracies.

Chapter 3

From the Dhimmis status of Christians to emancipation, and back to Dhimmitude?

*Secularism is one of the great successes of the Republic...
It is a crucial element of social peace and national cohesion.
We cannot let it weaken.*

Jacques Chirac, 2004

Abstract: *this chapter tackles the historical relation between Islam and non-Muslim minorities especially Christian ones. It focuses mainly on the historical background of this thesis from the rise of Islam till the present time. It also addressed how Christians were treated under different historical eras from the Islamic Caliphate time to the creation of independent states and kingdoms, up till after the era of al-Assad and Mubarak. Finally, this chapter addresses the question of secularism in western democracies compared to the failed attempts in the Arab region and the emergence of different schools in political Islam.*

3.1 Historical introduction – Christians as Dhimmis under different Islamic Caliphates

3.1.1 Christians' presence under Arab Islamic Caliphates

When Islam as a civilization and religion expanded rapidly in the 8th century, none of the previous historical civilizations expanded the way Islam did at the time. Cleveland (2000) stated, “Within 100 years of the prophet’s death, Arab forces had reached the Indian subcontinent in the east, and in the west, they had occupied Spain and crossed the Pyrenees into France before they were finally halted by the forces of Charles Martel at the battle of Poitiers”.

Due to the existence of the Christian tribe “Banu Taghlib” in *Tabuk*, and other tribes such as the Jewish tribe “Banu Nadir” in the Arab peninsula, during the early days of Islamic expansion, the prophet considered all monotheistic minorities to be allies and potential converters to Islam. However, Christians and Jews refused the conversion propositions. Which initiated a debate pertaining the status of non-Muslim within Islamic doctrine.

According to Salibi (2008), Mohammad considered Christians and Jews as possessors of divine revelations, *Ahl-al- Kitab*, “people of the Book,” or *dhimmi*s, those who are believed to be entitled to protection in return for submission and tribute. Unlike atheists and pagans, special treatment was granted to the Christians of the peninsula who were considered also as allies. As for the Christians outside the Arab Peninsula, mainly in Egypt, the prophet stated, “the helper and my followers defend them because Christians are my citizens and by Allah (God), I hold out against anything that displeases them” (Salibi, 2008). This letter had four main historical functions: first, it assured Christian’s security, religion and property; second, it created the first model which was later used by Caliphs to answer the question of non-Muslim religious groups living under Islamic rule; third, it created new identities for non-Muslim citizens in the Islamic caliphate; and finally, it enforced the concept of tolerance and diversity.

During the era of the second Caliph *Umar ibn Al-Khattāb*’s (634-644), Muslim were in charge of governing directly different, indigenous racial, tribal, linguistic, cultural and religious groups (which did not convert to Islam). These are mainly Christians and Jews who inhabited the broader territories of Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Iran and later North Africa, in addition to some parts of Europe. Therefore, the question of non-Muslim subjects living under the newly established Muslim Arab Caliphate was widely used and governed according to *Sharia* rule – mainly the Quran and the prophet discourse. At first when (Christian) Damascus surrendered to the Islamic troops in 635, *Khalid Ibn Al Walid*¹⁶ sent the Christian community the following letter:

In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. This is what Khalid ibn al-Walid would grant to the inhabitants of Damascus if he enters therein: he promises to give them security for their lives, property, and churches. Their city shall not be demolished; neither shall any Muslim be quartered in their houses. Thereunto we give them the pact of Allah and the protection of his Prophet, the caliphs, and the believers. So long as they pay the poll tax, nothing but good shall befall them. (Kennedy, 1986).

It is worth noting in this context, that Islam is a monotheistic concept that considered Christians and Jews as “people of the book” and second-class citizens. As for the non-believers or pagans, they had to choose between converting to Islam, death or simply flee. The Quran ordered Muslims to deal with people of the book in good manner, justly and peacefully:

¹⁶ Commander of Islamic forces during the prophet and Rashidun era

And do not argue with the People of the Book otherwise than in a most kindly manner (Quran, Al-`Ankabut 29:46), and

Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of [your] religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice (Quran, Al-Mumtahanah 60:8)

Islam, according to the Quran, commanded Muslims to respect and protect “people of the book”. They were known in the official Arabic terminology as *Ahel al Dhimma*, alternatively the *Dhimmis* – the protected ones. However, when Islam expanded outside the Arab peninsula, no aggression or offensive act was taken against them. There was no destruction of churches, monasteries or synagogues, instead Muslims abided by the Quran and the prophet’s teachings.

If God had not driven some people back by means of others, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, where God's name is mentioned much, would have been pulled down and destroyed. God will certainly help those who help Him-God is All-Strong, Almighty. (Quran, sūrat l-ḥaj 22:40)

At that point, most non-Muslims were allowed to keep their religion and personal status laws, and even their own criminal laws for crimes committed among them as per below:

They are not all alike: among the People of the Book there are upright people, who recite God's messages throughout the night, and prostrate themselves [before Him]. They believe in God and the Last Day and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and vie with one another in doing good works: and these are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall never be denied the reward thereof: for, God has full knowledge of those who are conscious of Him. [But behold,] as for those who are bent on denying the truth - neither their worldly possessions nor their children will in the least avail them against God... (Quran, Aal-`Imran 3:113-116)

In this regard, *Ahel Dhimma* or *Dhimmis* means society or community with whom an agreement and promises were made along with. They are the followers of religions tolerated by law. The Quran commanded Muslims to protect Dhimis even though they were not considered their equals. Islam offered them security and defense against their enemy, while in return, restrictions were enforced on dress, occupation, residence etc... “*Dhimma* are Christians and Jews who had rights to live within the state and whose lives and properties were protected by the state...they had to obey some restrictions such as wearing different color of clothes, riding horses, carrying weapon” (Cahen, 1997).

The *Dhimmis* concept was also known as the “Pact of Umar” (explained below). “*Dhimmis* were required to pay a special poll tax (*Jizyah*), they were prohibited from

serving in the military and their residences and places of worship could not be as large as those of Muslims” (Cleveland, 2000). Under *Dhimmi* concept, Jews and Christians managed and exercised absolute jurisdiction over matters of personal status, such as marriage, divorce and inheritance. Furthermore, mainly most of non-Muslims were excluded from state governmental roles but they were obliged to pay *Jizyah* either in money or gold or in kind:

Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by God and His Apostle, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued (Quran, At-tauba-9:29)

Shaban (1971) did not fail to mention that early Islamic Caliphs took into consideration class division pertaining *Jizyah*, rural dwellers paid less than the urban ones, while “women, children, old men, slaves, poor monks, and the mentally sick were exempt”.

It is essential to shed light on the importance of “the pact of Umar,” which was drafted during the early days of Islamic expansion. The pact was considered as the main regulatory agreement that governed the relation between *Dhimmi* and Islam. It was the peace accord/pact offered by the Caliph *Umar ibn Al Khatab* to the Christians of Syria and the Levant. This pact, by time, became the Islamic constitution, which was used to deal with the People of the Book that resided in the Caliphate territories. *Muhammad Ibn al-Walid Turtushi* in his book titled “*Siraj al-Muluk*,” the Arabic edition, (Al Turtushi, 1994), listed the following fifteen points:

This is a letter to the servant of God Umar [ibn al-Khattab], Commander of the Faithful, from the Christians of such-and-such a city. When you came against us, we asked you for safe-conduct (aman) for ourselves, our descendants, our property, and the people of our community, and we undertook the following obligations toward you:

- 1. We shall not build, in our cities or in their neighborhood, new monasteries, Churches, convents, or monks' cells, nor shall we repair, by day or by night, such of them as fall in ruins or are situated in the quarters of the Muslims.*
- 2. We shall keep our gates wide open for passersby and travelers. We shall give board and lodging to all Muslims who pass our way for three days.*
- 3. We shall not give shelter in our churches or in our dwellings to any spy, nor bide him from the Muslims.*
- 4. We shall not teach the Qur'an to our children.*
- 5. We shall not manifest our religion publicly nor convert anyone to it. We shall not prevent any of our kin from entering Islam if they wish it.*
- 6. We shall show respect toward the Muslims, and we shall rise from our seats when they wish to sit.*
- 7. We shall not seek to resemble the Muslims by imitating any of their garments, the qalansuwa, the turban, footwear, or the parting of the hair. We shall not speak as they do, nor shall we adopt their kunyas.*

8. *We shall not mount on saddles, nor shall we gird swords nor bear any kind of arms nor carry them on our- persons.*
9. *We shall not engrave Arabic inscriptions on our seals.*
10. *We shall not sell fermented drinks.*
11. *We shall clip the fronts of our heads.*
12. *We shall always dress in the same way wherever we may be, and we shall bind the zunar round our waists.*
13. *We shall not display our crosses or our books in the roads or markets of the Muslims. We shall use only clappers in our churches very softly. We shall not raise our voices when following our dead. We shall not show lights on any of the roads of the Muslims or in their markets. We shall not bury our dead near the Muslims.*
14. *We shall not take slaves who have been allotted to Muslims.*
15. *We shall not build houses overtopping the houses of the Muslims.*

(When the letter was brought to Umar, may God be pleased with him, he added, "We shall not strike a Muslim.")

In this regard, it is critical to know that exceptional treatment was granted to *Dhimmis* when it comes to administration and economic needs of Caliphs. In fact, some positions were even open to them. This exception was mainly based on the policies, visions and needs of each Caliph in different Caliphates. For example, during the first *Rashidun* Caliphs and *Ummayyad* Caliphate, some Christians were employed for the need to keep the governing system functioning due to the linguistic inconsistency in the newly conquered land. Saliba (2008) mentioned, "From the Arab conquest to the beginning of the eighth century, the language of the administration remained Persian in Iraq and Greek in Egypt and Syria. Only *Dhimmis*, especially Christians, had the linguistic and administrative skills to keep the government functioning." While the era of Caliph *Mu'āwiya*, the founder of *Ummayyad* dynasty, was known as the Christian golden age. John bar Penkaye wrote in 687, "Justice flourished in his time, and there was great peace in the regions under his control; he allowed everyone to live as they wanted" (Papaconstantinou, 2008).

In this context, *Dhimmis* continued to fill important positions in the system of governance of the *Ummayyad* dynasty. While during the *Abbasside* Caliphate era and in specific under Caliph *Ma'mun* (813-833) the founder of the "house of wisdom" in Baghdad, Christians were employed sorely in the translation practice from Greek to Arab. They were under the supervision and management of the distinguished Christian scholar *Hunain ibn Ishaq* "between 750 and 950, over the course of two centuries, Christian translators, among others, made available to the Muslim mind virtually the whole Greek and Syriac philosophical, medical and scientific body of knowledge in Arabic" (Salibi, 2008).

On another front, the Cairo based Shiite *Fatimid* Caliphate was known for its tolerance towards Christians and Jew *Dhimmis*. Many of them reached the second highest position in the state, that of *Wazir* (minister). Salibi (2008) in this matter stated, “Four Christians filled the position as Christians, with one even carrying the title of *Saif al-Islam*, or “sword of Islam”. For example, *Badr al Jamali*, was a Christian slave who governed greater Syria. Christian men could not marry Muslim women without converting to Islam, while the opposite case was acceptable. As a result, the enforcement of the mentioned restrictions and discrimination attitudes was not uniform in a well-structured context; rather it was based on personal approaches that varied from Caliph to Caliph, region to region and culture to culture.

3.1.2 The Ottoman Empire: an attempt of modernization

It was for the first time since the death of the prophet that non-Arab Muslims, mainly Ottoman Turks, governed Muslim Arabs. On May 29, 1453 Constantinople fell in hand of Sultan *Mehmet II* the conqueror, ending the 1100 years old Byzantium Empire; hence a new chapter in the history of Islamic Caliphate began. According to Catherwood (2006), *Mehmet II* achieved what the *Umayyad* and the *Abbasid* Caliphs and the Mongols, had all failed to do, by capturing Constantinople and extinguishing the rump Byzantine Empire.

The Ottoman Empire was founded in the end of the 13th century and lasted till the beginning of 20th century. It was with no doubt one of the longest-live empires in the course of history. The Sultan was the protector of holy Islamic cities: Medina, Mecca and Jerusalem. He conquered and governed not only Arab Muslims but also multi ethnic and multi religious communities, mainly Christians and Jews as well as many other ethnic and religious groups.

However, the Ottoman administrative system was not an unchanging one. Rather the Ottomans used a flexible administrative system, in order to cover the religious, ethnic, race, cultures, regions and political diversities of the conquered new lands. Skilled administrative employees were the technical success of this modern system. Ottoman Sultans believed in their responsibility of enforcing and organizing the law, values and the culture of Islam based on Sharia laws. Hence, loyalty to Islam rather than to the tribe or race was considered the critical element of their success. Many senior officials were of European origin, which is why Ottomans were more focused on the efficiency of the

administrative system, rather than uniformity. It is crucial to note that the “Ottoman administrative institutions and practices shaped the structural peoples of the modern Middle East” (Cleveland, 2000).

However, on the 31st of October 1918, the government of Istanbul signed the unconditional surrender agreement, which not only ended the war in the Middle East and the Ottoman Empire, but the Caliphate system as well. Thus, Islamic communities shifted from being ruled under the Caliphate to the modern state system.

The consequences of the fall of the Ottoman Empire on the Middle East were colossal at all levels. Politically, the collapse witnessed the creation and formation of new states and the expansion of colonial powers. Economically, the region gradually moved from having agricultural structure to industrial, oil and services sectors. Culturally, the western culture, mode of life and lifestyle in dressing, eating, communicating, arts, paintings, etc... unhurriedly replaced the old Islamic culture.

Religiously, the fall of the Ottoman Empire drastically changed the structure of Islam by shifting the Muslim community from a well-centralized Caliphate and *Sharia* system, into the newly emerged state system headed religiously by *Mufti*. As of 1919 and onward, the Islamic religious map shifted from a centralized religious system to a new mode of division, consequently fading the concept of universalism in the face of those deep challenges.

But above all, what was significant about the post Ottoman era is that the Christians Arabs culminated their process of emancipation that has started under the Ottomans. The post Ottoman era is the period in which religious minorities and mainly the indigenous Christians of the Arab region became ordinary citizens. They became equal in front of the law, rules and obligations, as did all citizens of the newly emerged states.

3.1.3 How Christians were treated under Ottoman Islamic Caliphate: from the Millet system to the Tanzimat reforms

Contrary to other empires that enjoyed somehow unified language, culture, religion, political centralization as well as a “sense of citizenship”, the Ottomans did not rule a homogenous unified state. It is with no doubt, that the Sultan ruled not only Muslim

Turks, but also a bouquet of different race, tribal, nations, ethnic, cultural and among all religious groups.

In addition, unlike Arab past Caliphates who treated non-Muslims as second-class citizens, Ottomans treated their subjects based on their religious beliefs. They have initiated what was known as the *Millet* system, which is an updated, improved, and pragmatic version of the old Islamic Caliphate *Dhimmi* concept. So, what was the *Millet* system?

According to McCharty, (2001) “the *Millet* system had made the Empire a state of exemplary tolerance in which differing religious groups had lived together in relative peace and did not threaten the stability of government...Christians and Jews were not forced to become either Turks or Muslims. The Empire’s people remained separated by religion”.

When Sultan *Mehmet II* conquered Byzantium, he became the Sultan/Caliphate of not only Muslims, but also of millions of Christians and Jews from Vienna and Balkans, to Istanbul passing by the Levant, Egypt and North Africa. Accordingly, those Ottomans perceived themselves as “protector of the all”. The Sultan provided the Greek Orthodox Patriarch extensive power to organize and manage his community’s affairs. Fletcher, (2003) stated that Sulan *Mehemt II* gave jurisprudence to *Millet* leaders in order to settle doctrinal issues, manage the Church property and collect taxes. However, “the Sultan promised the Patriarch and his ecclesiastical hierarchy protection against fellow Christians, be they Roman Catholics or Serbian Orthodox rivals. In return, the Patriarch promised to guarantee Greek civil loyalty and prevent Greek intrigue with the Ottomans’ enemies”.

Within this colossal religious, tribal, sectarian, cultural and diverse interrelation, Cleveland (2000) selected Istanbul as an example to show this mixture and diversity “of the city’s 700,000 inhabitants in the sixteenth century, 58 percent were Muslims, 32 percent were Christians and 10 percent were Jews”. As a result, the Sultan organized the affairs of non-Muslim subjects in religious communities, giving them considerable degree of autonomy. “Under the direct authority of the leading church officials, namely the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian patriarchs and Jewish grand rabbi, who were selected with the approval of the sultan and resided in Istanbul and were granted *Millet* status” (Yetisgin,

2011). Mainly Christians and Jews were granted religious freedom to maintain their religious educational systems, as well as religious legal structures. But despite that Christians and Jews had the freedom to celebrate their religious holidays, they were not equal to Muslims (Häberlein, 2008).

Therefore, communal officials who held religious and civil responsibilities directly administered their own community affairs, “these officials were in charge of tax collection, education, justice and religious affairs within religious communities” (Cleveland, 2000). In other word, the *Millet* system was categorized as a link or bridge between the Ottoman system and the non-Muslim subjects or flocks. It is worth noting here, that the *Millet* system did not provide non-Muslims with equality, human rights and dignity. They were discriminated politically, socially, culturally and religiously since they were not integrated in the official institutions of the system like the army, government, judicial and executive powers, and prohibited from becoming Ottoman ruling elites or normal citizens with clear social contract. Häberlein (2008) mentioned that discrimination against Christians in the Ottoman Empire – mocking in the streets, subjection to high taxes and special tariffs, the selection of young boys for the Sultan’s service and the enslavement of Christian prisoners were a clear reflection of this inequality.

It goes without saying that the advancement path of Europe hereafter the 16th century affected in a way or another the structure of the Ottoman Empire. The new Europe have forced, the Ottoman political elites to enforce a huge reformation process known as *Tanzimat* (reorganization) which later resulted in the first Ottoman constitution in 1876. As a result, discrimination decreased and the concept of equality between all citizens was institutionalized in the new constitution that according to Bayir (2013):

1. Referred to all subjects without any discrimination or differences as Ottomans regardless their religion or denomination (article 8).
2. Stated that all subjects “are equal in front of the law, they have the same rights and owe the same duties towards their country without prejudice to religions (article 17).
3. Opened public offices to all according to the fitness, merit and ability of the person (article 19).

Tanzimat (literally, reorganization) was a period that began in 1839 and lasted till 1876. Those years of intensive reform did not only come from the Sultan but mainly from the “Europeanized Ottoman” bureaucrats who served as ambassadors in London and Paris. Under the rule of Sultan *Mahmud II*, reformation and modernization of the structure, institution and bureaucratic organization of the Ottoman Empire degenerated the traditional Islamic conventional policies. Yetisgin (2011) clearly reflected on the influence of Europe on Ottoman elites in this matter “it was a result of works performed by *Mustafa Rashid Pasha* who had been an Ottoman ambassador to Paris and London. Western politicians, ideas and administrative methods, political and social life influenced him. He was convinced that the future of the Empire led in modernizations and acceptance of western modern law”, by changing towards the old momentum of rule, the empire slowly shifted into the secular system.

Therefore, *tanzimat* constituted of a set of decrees issued by the Sultan in order to reform the governing process of the state. In 1856, the Sultan issued *Hatt-I Sharif* (royal decree) in which he expressed clearly that the reformation process would be extended to all subjects of the Ottoman Empire, regardless of their religion. In fact, this was the first time, not only in the history of Ottomans, but also in Islam, that the question of non-Muslim subjects was addressed from the perspective of the state and citizenship rather than from second-class subjects of the *Dhimmi*s and *Millet* systems. Hence, Ottomanism took over Islamism and patriotism replaced religious identity. This era witnessed also the adoption of the Nationality in Law in 1869 that replaced the religious affiliation of the *Millet* system by the Ottoman secular identity. Somehow, scholars perceived that era, as the Golden institutional period for non-Muslim subjects living under Islamic Caliphs.

In addition, *Tanzimat Fermani* of 1839 ended inequality and injustice in the judicial system of the Ottoman Empire and provided “equality in the protection of life, honor and property to all Ottoman subjects regardless their religions” (Bayir, 2013). As a result, this wave of modernization and equality also affected the Islamic judicial system. The *Shariah* court was confined to Muslim citizens only in issues related to “family, inheritance, property and criminal law disputes” (Bayir, 2013). In addition, the establishment of the first secular court/*Nizamiye Mahkemesi* in 1856 was considered to be a secular modern change. This secular court dealt with disputes between Muslims and non-Muslims. Unlike

the old traditional system in which Islam should be the religion of the appointed judges, in the secular court non-Muslims were also appointed as judges (Bayir, 2013).

Within the massive process of *Tanzimat*, which included reformation at administrative, economic, judicial, military, education and religious levels, the question of non-Muslims was addressed encouragingly through *Islahat Feremani* of 1856. In this context, equality between all subjects of the Ottoman Empire was endorsed, ending with a broad history of discrimination against non-Muslims. “Muslim and non-Muslim were to have equal obligations in terms of military services and equal opportunities for state employment and admission to state schools” (Cleveland, 2000). In his book titled *Modern Turkey*, Bernard Lewis stressed on the question of transformation process of the Empire from a Millet system and Muslim privileges into equality and state of law “all people’s lives, properties and moral values were to be protected by the law. All the subjects were accepted as equals before the laws” (Lewis, 1991). As for the visual discrimination (such as wearing hats, special colors, etc..) against non-Muslims were abolished too (Bayir, 2013).

On another hand, although Egypt was not governed directly by the Ottomans a similar modernization process took place in the country. The new ruler of Egypt, *Mohammad Ali* had changed and modernized the structure of the state building process. *Mohammad Ali* was known for his equality practices, minimizing discrimination against non-Muslim subjects as well as enforcing justice. He introduced the new European model to state institutions causing a modernization wave within the Egyptian society. The era of *Muhammad Ali*’s dynasty was seen as the golden age for Egyptian Christian mainly the *Copts*. They were employed in the state governmental posts and dominated some official departments such as *Nubar* Pasha senior civil servant and later Prime minister. According to Pennington, (1982) by the end of the nineteenth century Copts occupied 45 percent of all civil servants. At the same time, a considerable number of Copts became wealthy landowners and influential due to the economic prosperity. The age of *Jizyah* and clothes discrimination was abolished. Equality in military service and equality in the state social contract were the core stone of Ali’s dynasty “in 1866, when the first Egyptian consultative assembly was established, Copts and Muslims were given same electoral rights” (Pennington, 1982).

In 1856, the *Hamayouni* Decree (Ibrahim et al. 1996) was released in order to ensure equality between Muslims and Copts for the support of the modern state building process based on the following points:

1. The re-establishment of all previous laws concerning Copts, especially the independent personal status law.
2. The formation of Lay Councils consisting of the clergy and secularists to administer the financial matter of the church and to discuss personal status affairs.
3. Requests for church building to be presented by the Pope to the Sultan and a license to be issued.
4. No one to be punished or prevented from exercising his rights and no one should be forced to change his religion.
5. Equality between Muslims and Christians in employment.
6. Military training and participation is a duty for all males regardless of their religion.
7. All terminologies that discriminate between people on the basis of religion should be abolished from the *diwan*.

In the end, the Christians in Egypt played a leading role (at all levels) during the pre and post-World War One era throughout what was known as the Egyptian renaissance. The monarchy system helped Christians in shaping the modern history, of not just Egypt alone, but the Arab region as a whole. Christians were pioneers in developing Egypt at cultural, political and economic levels. According to Tarek Osman, (2013) “The Christian Takla family in 1875 founded *Al-Ahram*, Egypt’s pre-eminent daily newspaper. George Abyad was the creative force behind the birth of Egyptian theatre. Ya’acoub Artin guided the transformation from a religious based teaching doctrine towards a civic educational system. Christians who were closed to the experiment of the Levant’s Houth of Wisdom (*Dar Al-Hikma*) were among the leading figures that founded Fouad I university (later Cairo University), the first Western-styled education institution in the Arab world. Acia and other Christian producers and directors led the growth of Egyptian cinema. The first banking, Egyptian Christian entrepreneurs and businessmen introduced translation and automated manufacturing facilities in the country. Some of the most visible figures in the history of the Egyptian economy over the past century and a half were Christians, especially from Al-Saeed’s leading family”.

3.2 European colonization and its impact on Christians: from discrimination to privilege?

The fall of the Ottoman Empire have put, Muslims in most of the Levant area and to some extent in the Arab peninsula under the direct rule of not only a non-Arab ruler as was the case with the Ottomans, but this time under non-Muslims westerners. Despite that the Tanzimat era has introduced drastic changes to the Ottoman Empire system of rule, still the colonization has introduced a new modern concept. As a result, the Caliphate religious system mainly *Sharia*, was replaced by the western rule of law system which is based on constitution.

In 1919, based on the League of Nations official mandate, non-Muslims and non-Arab French-British military forces landed on the Mediterranean coastal cities of Beirut, Haifa and Jerusalem. As a result, new countries with new artificial borders were created as per the League of Nations official mandate. The unified Islamic *Ummah* of the Ottoman Empire was abolished at the expense of several new states. In addition, colonial powers had to forge and create not only new artificial borders but also new identities such as Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian, Egyptian, etc... The new states were seeking to impose strict central control over rural tribes and urban dwellers alike and to instill in all their citizens a measure of cultural uniformity (Cleveland, 2000)¹⁷.

In this context, the colonial powers imposed a western modern mode of state, mostly the territorial states as model and democracy as a system to rule on the newly created countries. An additional vital problematic issue that drastically shaped state structure is with no qualm, Balfour declaration in 1917, which led to the formation of Israel in 1948. In this context, the Arab region was divided into four different systems:

- **Independent states in the form of kingdoms and principedoms** under traditional tribal ruling families in the gulf and Arab peninsula: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sultanate of Oman. Those were under the British influence.
- **New states not totally independent but governed by newly appointed monarchies.** Britain mainly and to some extent France (as colonial powers) influenced directly: Jordan and Iraq. It should be noted here that Egypt was a monarchy since the date of Muhammad Ali in 1805 and fell under direct authority of the British.

¹⁷ It is also worth noting in this regard, that some Islamic countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia and Arab Muslim states such as Morocco, Algeria (and Egypt) were already governed before the League of Nations official mandate by a non-Arab and non-Muslim ruler, and way of rule.

- **Presidential new states** under the direct governance of the French colonial power in Lebanon and Syria.
- **Colonies** under direct authority of the colonial power: Italian in Libya, French in Tunisia and Algeria. While Morocco was a “protectorate” under the French and Spanish direct influence.

However, the presence of the western mode of state, directly influenced, shaped and institutionalized the social and political coexistence of the inhabitants of those countries. The integration of minorities, specifically Christian ones into the political scene, ended a long history of discrimination. In Syria its first Prime Minister after independence, *Faris Al Khoury*, was Christian. Egypt had also Coptic Christian Prime Ministers such as *Boutros Ghali* (1908-1910) and *Youssef Wahba* (1919-1920) (Ibrahim, 1998). While *Makram Obeid*, a Copt Christian in Egypt was the senior member of the Wafd party to Versailles and played a role in providing the Egyptian nationalist movement with effective leadership for some twenty-five years. In this context, the colonial power did not only create new states and political systems, it has also created a new political, economic, social, military and even ideological elite. It is with no doubt that Christians Arabs were an integral part of this newly created elite. Therefore, their situation has improved from being a marginalized group or even second-class citizens in some societies to become equal partners and active citizens in the newly created countries.

In Syria, the new constitution was drafted based on the French constitution. It enhanced the idea of secularism of the state institutions. What is important to note in this matter that the French treated the Christians in Lebanon and Syria as their *protégés*. For example, in Lebanon, the constitution clearly stated that the president of the Lebanese Republic should be a Maronite Christian. As per the constitution as well, key positions in the government, such as the head of the National Bank and the commander of the army should also be Christian Maronite. The French played an influential role in shaping Lebanon’s history, economy, culture and politics by giving some advantages to Christians over Muslims. In fact, Christians in general and Maronite in specific dominated the Lebanese political scene up until 1975.

It is not an open secret also, that the colonial power created a sense of religious attachment with Christians Arabs. The number and power of Christians religious, educational and societal missionaries have increased during the colonial era. As a result, (and as we will

see in chapter five), Christians had higher access to the new educational system in the colonized state, they acquired and mastered professional skills and they learned foreign languages which allowed them to easily communicate with the colonial power. In this context, the role of the missionaries was seen as an important tool that empowered the Christian Arabs in front of their non-Christians counterparts.

Last but not least and for the first time in their history since the expansion of Islam, Christian Arabs were secured and protected by the colonial power. In Egypt, the British did not fail to openly support and protect Christians (and Copts). The British have secured their right as of 1920 to intervene in Egypt in order to protect the Copts from violation and discrimination (Pennington, 1982). Whereas in Syria, the French did not fail to empower Christians in the military, political and economic sectors in order to lead the country.

3.3 Secularization of the state and the road towards Arab nationalism – A western implanted system

3.1.1 Short historical background about the western secular model state system

The decline in the power of kings as rulers in the “name of God” and rise of the state as ruling in the name of “people” have diminished the power of religious institutions in the west. Religion shifted from being a divine power to a simple, cultural theological one. Subject to criticism and deep investigation about the way of life, origin of the human, existence of God and many other rational questions, the power of religion faded at the expense of science and human rationality. According to Norris and Inglehart, (2011) “the division of church and state, and the rise of secular-rational bureaucratic states and representative governments, displaced the rule of spiritual leaders, ecclesiastical institutions and hereditary rulers claiming authority from god”.

In fact, the enormous decline in religious power has created a vacuum at a political level, which was filled by human power represented by the “state”. This political vacuum was a direct result to the shift from agrarian to industrial societies. Thus, secular movements

increased and shaped both the individual (at personal level) and the community (at institutional level) (Mills, 1959).

However, during the 21st century the link between religion and social movements varied according to tradition, culture and mode of rule - in other words, the type of the regime in power. In this context, secularization can have two layers: individual and societal (community). When a state has a religious identity such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Vatican, and India, the level of secularization decreases since religious authorities are authoritative and influence the state. When the state is secular; such as Western industrial countries; the level of religiousness decreases. The relation between secularization and religion, at both individual and community level, is explained in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Relation between secularization and religion at individual and community level

		Societal-level secularization	
		High	Low
Individual-level secularization	High	Most areas of contemporary industrial societies 1	Medieval Europe Colonial U.S. 2
	Low	African American communities U.S Protestant Fundamentalism 3	Same traditional societies Contemporary Iran 4

Source: Thesis author, data from Chaves; (1994).

3.3.2 What is secularization?

Secularization has three main dimensions: first, it is considered as a decline in religious beliefs and practices that affected directly religious powers. Second, secularization is similar to the concept of modern democratic states. Third, it is related to the emancipation of religious power. In this chapter, I will focus on the third pattern of secularization. According to Alar Klip, secularization refers to the process whereby authority of religious institutions, beliefs and values declines in society, culture and politics. Secularization goes together with the processes of socio-economic development, which transform traditional agrarian communities into industrial societies.

Some authors such as Steve Bruce, Alar Klip and Donald Smith addressed the question of secularization from the perspective “desacralization” in which societies in the beginning used to be “sacred” by religious thoughts and believes; now the same societies are becoming less sacred. Societies were at first sacralized in a Christian manner and then became secular. As a result, states/governments started to fulfill the roles that were previously under the control of one religious institution (Klip). In his term, Donald Smith (1974) related secularization to modernization that causes “universal movement toward a world culture based in large part on humanism, material values, science and technology, that is gradually eroding all traditional worldviews”. Finally, according to Chaves (1994), secularization is best understood not as the decline of religion, but as the declining scope of religious authority.

3.3.3 Origin and history of secularization – the western experience

In his book *God is Dead*, Bruce (2002) stated, “industrialization brought with it series of social changes – the fragmentation of the life world, the decline of community, the rise of bureaucracy, technological consciousness – that together made religion less arresting and less plausible than it had been in pre-modern societies”. Thus, religion became humanized. It altered from being an obligation to being a lifestyle and simply a choice based on the following:

a) Rationality

The shift from world single point of view; mainly religion (known as *weltanschauung*) to a rational diversified worldview, mainly science, negatively affected the political social power of religion. In fact, nature and science became the main sources of knowledge, rather than God, religion and the unknown. Religion is neither capable nor reliable to answer any mysterious questions such as the birth, after life, judgment, creation and so on.

The diversification of the source of knowledge became the main feature of modern industrial societies. In his book entitled “The Coming of Post-Industrial Society”, Bell (1999) referred to this combat zone as an authority conflict between divine powers and rational scientific ones, “priests, ministers, rabbis, popes and mullahs, appealing to divine authority became only one source of knowledge in modern societies...when competing

with the specialized expertise, certified training, and practical skills of professional economists, physicists, physicians or engineers”.

This mainstream idea, in fact was supported by a sequence of evolution at all levels. Marx and Engels for example, initiated in this matter the question of divine power, religion and state from a communist approach. In many occasions, Marx clearly emphasized on the negative destructive role of religion by referring to it as the “opium of societies and people”. The separation of religion from the state at individual, community and state institutions levels is addressed in the communist system from above, mainly from the elite in power.

b) The decline in the role of religion (the church) – Political and economic

The decline in the role of religion is related to the relation between the agrarian system to religion and industrial to secular one. This decline is therefore associated with changes in human way of life and community behavior. Two systems of secularism were formed: the capital democratic one and the communist autocratic one. In the capital democratic system, each decrease in the religious authority was directly backed up at community level by an increase in the state secular institutions. According to Durkheim, (1995) “industrial societies are characterized by functional differentiations, where specialized professionals and organizations, dedicated to healthcare, education, social control, politics, and welfare, replaced most of the tasks once carried out exclusively in Western Europe by monasteries, priests and parish churches. Faith based voluntary and charitable organizations in the medieval era were displaced in Europe by the expansion of the welfare state”. Thus, this form of secularization of state and community is exercised from below where people, movements, parties and groups started to lobby and advocate for secularization that reached the elite and parties in power. As a result, it forced the move to secularism.

Unlike democracies, the autocratic way of secularism only refers to the ideology and beliefs of the elite in power. When communist took over power in Russia in 1916 secularization was introduced from “above”. The total abolishment of the individual right to practice religious rituals came from the communist elite in power. The abolishing of class classification and introduction of the ultimate individual equality rights replaced the traditional religious and divine security. In fact, secularization was enforced through an

ideology rather than through popular demands. Therefore, secularization was enforced from above.

c) Social

The shift from patriarchal societies represented by religion to human societies represented by the state, have led with no doubt to the increase in the power of secular movements and groups. In her book entitled “believing without belonging”, Grace Davie (1994) has introduced a new phenomenon in secularization at social level. This phenomenon began when people in Europe no longer attended religious rituals, yet they did not lose their individual spirituality in their religion. It later evolved, when people started to lose faith in religion, God and the church institutions. In fact, this has led to the decrease in religious social engagement religious ceremonies and practices, and to an increase in supporting civic secular forces on all levels. For example, religious marriage ceremonies became a choice while the civil marriage practice became an obligation. Yet, at the same time according to Casanova, (1994) Christianity and/or religion changed from being a prime identity to a secondary one, even in the most secular states, which could be identified by Hervieu-Leger as “belonging without believing”.

3.3.4 Secularization process - the European west versus the Arab region

After the first and second world wars, the degree of democracy, freedom and modernization became the core features for secularization. Table 3.2 below shows the relation between democracies and secularization, but to a fair extent. In fact, there is a correlation between democracy and religion. Taking into consideration the comparison between western democracies and Middle Eastern autocracies. As mentioned in the “Separation of Religion and State in the Twenty-First Century” (Fox, 2005) “the Freedom House variable shows strong correlation between democracy and the lack of discrimination against minority religion for both western democracies and the Middle East”.

Table 3.2: Correlation between religious variables and democracy

Religion Variable	Western Democracies		Middle East North Africa	
	Polity	Freedom House	Polity	Freedom House
Structural Separation	.416**	.018	-.272	.024
Other Religions Illegal	-.339	-.412**	-.058	-.433*
Restrictions on Minority Religions	-.236	-.456**	-.173	-.392*
Restrictions on Majority Religions	.094	-.017	-.047	-.289
Religious Legislation	-.018	-.387*	-.202	-.265

* = Significance (p-value) < .1

** = Significance (p-value) < .05

Source: Thesis author, data from Fox and Sandler, 2005.

What was considered a taboo at the social level in the early 20th century, as of 1960's became an ordinary social feature associated with moderation. Faraway from religion, values and ethics, gay marriage, abortion and homosexuality became closely related to the degree of freedom in each society. In fact, religiosity as Norris and Inglehart (2011) stated, became associated to the level of societal modernization, human security and economic equality, the predominant type of religious culture in any nation, generations shift in values, different social sectors and patterns of demography, fertility rates and population change. Table 3.3 below provides a clear relation between secularization and religion based on social movements.

Table 3.3: Relationship between secularization and religion at social movement's level

		Societal-level secularization	
		High	Low
Individual-level secularization	High	Religion as cultural source 1	Anticlerical movements 2
	Low	Religion as organizational base 3	Religio-political movements 4

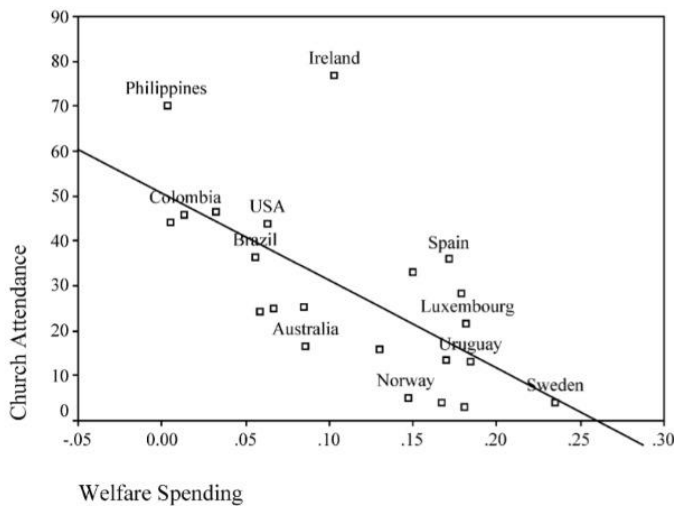
Source: Thesis author, data from Chaves; (1994)

Table 3.3 clearly demonstrates that in box 1 the level of secularization is too high, it can be a purely individual matter with almost null intervention in the state's intuitional decision. In box 2, the level of secularization is in the middle since at the individual level, people start to lobby and challenge religious authority, and religion has a significant influence over societal institutions. In box 3, secularization is also in the middle but in this case the state is secular although part of the mass is associated and affected by religious power. In box 4, secularization is very low, and the state is entirely affected by

religious authority. Consequently, levels of secularization and religiosity became associated with the quality of life and economic welfare.

In this regard, when the state institutions took over the religious power in organizing, providing services and securing daily human affairs, religiosity decreased. Gill and Lundsgaard (2004) stated in this matter, “as governments gradually assume many of these welfare functions, individuals with elastic preferences for spiritual goods will reduce their level of participation since the desired welfare goods can be obtained from secular sources”. As a result, when the state provides social welfare the level of secularization increases and vice versa. According to figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 below, the level of social welfare spending is directly affecting the level of church attending, logged non-religious rate and the comfort in religion rate. As an outcome, countries with higher levels of welfare spending have less religious participation levels and tend to have higher percentages of non-religious individuals. For example, the Philippines is the least country in the social welfare spending scale and the highest in the church attendance scale, as for Sweden it is the highest country on social welfare spending and has the least religious participation.

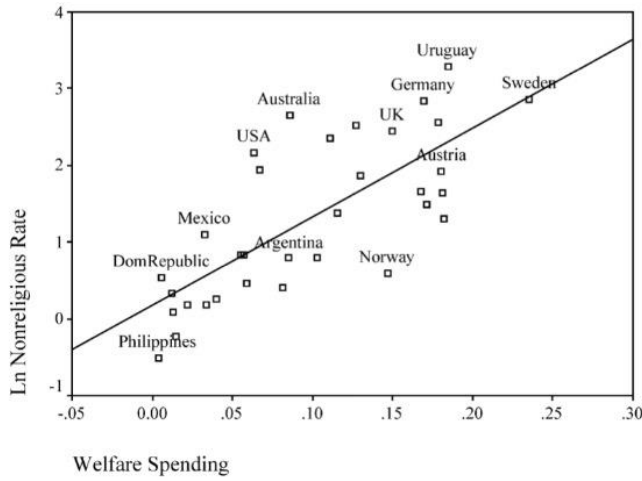
Figure 3.1: welfare spending vs. church attendance¹⁸



Source: Thesis author, data from Gill and Lundsgaard; (2004)

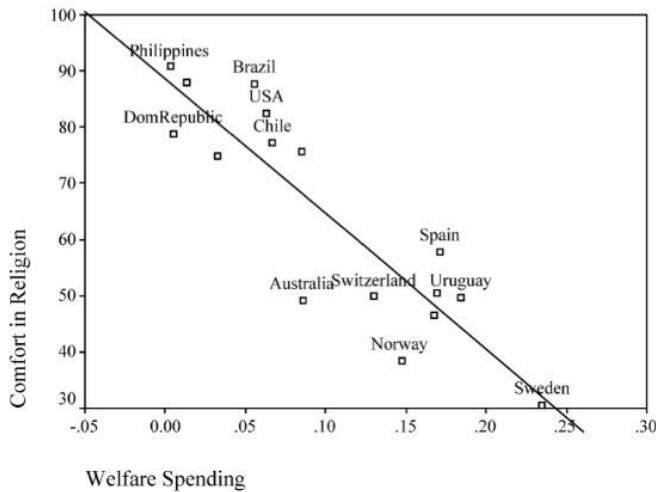
¹⁸ Dependent variable: **Church Attendance**: Percentage of survey respondents for each country claiming to attend religious services weekly or more. Source: World Values Survey 1995 and Eurobarometer 1995. Independent variable: **Welfare**: Total government social welfare expenditures (including social security) divided by GDP and calculated on a per capita basis. Source: International Monetary Fund, 2000. This information is taken from the original source cited under the figure.

Figure 3.2: Welfare spending vs. Ln. non-religious rate¹⁹



Source: Thesis author, data from Gill and Lundsgaard; (2004)

Figure 3.3: Welfare spending vs. comfort in religion²⁰



Source: Thesis author, data from Gill and Lundsgaard; (2004)

¹⁹ Dependent variable: **Logged Non-Religious Rate**: Percentage of individuals in each country classified as 'non-religious', defined as 'persons professing no religion, no interest in religion; secularists, materialists; agnostics, but not militantly antireligious or atheist'. Logged to account for curvilinear skew in data. Source: Barrett et al. 2001.

Independent variable: **Welfare**: Total government social welfare expenditures (including social security) divided by GDP and calculated on a per capita basis. Source: International Monetary Fund, 2000. This information is taken from the original source cited under the figure.

²⁰ Dependent variable: **Comfort in Religion**: Percentage of survey respondents in each country claiming they take 'comfort in religion'. Source: World Values Survey 1995.

Independent variable: **Welfare**: Total government social welfare expenditures (including social security) divided by GDP and calculated on a per capita basis. Source: International Monetary Fund, 2000. This information is taken from the original source cited under the figure.

On the other hand, poor agrarian societies face constant economic, social, political, cultural, rights and rule of law hardships. Poverty and lack of state social welfare raise individual uncertainty and increase daily human survival hardships. Poor states' access to basic needs such as food, water, electricity, education, healthcare, pollution, and others, are nearly limited and in some cases rare. In fact, in agrarian societies, security and humanity are attained at supernatural uncontrollable forces. The fate and destiny of individuals are dependent on these supernatural powers. "Such theistic beliefs were the necessary preconditions for the traditional religions to function as sustainers of moral order in society" (Stark, 2006). As a result, due to human irrationality and lack of scientific methodologies, people tend to relate every single detail in their life to God and religion.

Nonetheless, with the rise of the industrial revolution, the move from agrarian to industrial societies has caused drastic changes to social welfare package. According to Wilson (1966) "The dazzling achievements of medicine, engineering and mathematics – as well as the products generated by the rise of the modern capitalism, technology and manufacturing industry during the 19th century – emphasized and reinforced the idea of mankind's control of nature". As a result, this change has affected individual religiosity levels since religion became more related to the individual's private need and choice, while politics, economy and services were allotted to the state as an independent structure. Therefore, Freedom of opinion and beliefs gradually became part of human and society's evolution. According to Norris and Inglehart, (2011) "the process of industrialization and human development helps lift developing countries out of extreme poverty, greatly reducing the uncertainty and daily risks to survival that people face". In fact, industrial developed states started to provide better educational, social, nutritional, rights, healthcare, economic and political services. Those services reduced daily human anxiety and uncertainty and increased human security. The dual relation between services on one hand and freedom and rights on the other, have resulted in drastic changes in the religiosity of societies.

As nations and countries became divided between rich and poor or developed and under developed or high and low income, the level of secularization and religiosity matters differed. Poor, under developed, low-income nations still face high level of hardships including the drastic increase in population. Therefore, religiosity increased while levels

of secularizations decreased. In contrast, rich developed high-income nations are becoming more secular and less religious, due to the high level of social institutional state “security”. According to the Win-Gallup International - Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism in 2012²¹, people with low income are much more religious than people with high income (Table 3.4). In fact, rich nations are turning out to be more secular while the rest of the world more religious.

Table 3.4: percentage of religiosity according to income

Percent of Population describing itself as religious	
Bottom Quintile (LOW INCOME)	66%
Medium-Low Quintile	65%
Medium Quintile	56%
Medium-High Quintile	51%
High Quintile (HIGH INCOME)	49%

Source: Thesis author, data from Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism (2012).

3.3.5 Pan Arabism and secularization attempts in the Arab region in general - Egypt and Syrian in particular

As previously explained, the concept of secularization of the state and society was a mere western production, it was up until the west colonized the Arab region, these modernist traits which have started in the Tanzimat have evolved better in the Arab countries. The process of colonization did not only introduce the concept of the state to the Arab countries, but also western ethics, values, social, economic, philosophical and political traits. Thus, the newly emerged countries became westernized but not modernized, since they lacked the industrial capacity, scientific innovation and modern way of thinking.

Historically, almost all Arab countries were governed hereafter the death of the prophet according to *Sharia* and Islamic laws. In fact, Islam had an individual and community role. Islam is a lifestyle. It is a combination of both, religion and state management. According to Islam, *Sharia* is the state constitution. Therefore, being a Muslim and living

²¹ According to Gallup International (2012), almost 51,927 persons were interviewed globally. In each country, a national probability sample of around 1000 men and women was interviewed face to face (35 countries; n=33,890), via phone (11 countries, n=7,661) or online (11 countries; n=10,376). In general, the error margin for surveys of this kind is +/- 3.5% at 95% confidence level.

under Islamic laws (and state) is a religious requirement that targets faith, the relation with God, and life after death.

Many attempts were made in order to reform the state system and the concept of Islamic rule, which combines both Islamic *Sharia* and Western traits (secular system) in the Arab region. The first attempt was after the 1850's in Egypt with *Rifai'a Badawi Rafi al-Tahtawi*, *Mohamad Abduh*, *Jammal el Din Al Afghani*, *Ali Abd Al-Raziq* and many others. The first wave started from *Al Azhar*²² in Egypt when *Mohammad Ali* overruled. The second wave began after independence during the 1950s/60s, in the form of revolutions or coup d'état.

a) The first wave – a modest attempt for modernization during the pre-independence era:

As we have discussed earlier in this chapter, the Tanzimat era was considered by many scholars and historians to have secular and progressive traits. The western modern secular thoughts that occurred in the midst of the nineteenth century in the Arab region have forced Islam to face political, ideological and social challenges. However, this kind of reform has started specifically from Egypt when *Mohammad Ali* took over power and spread later to some parts of the region. The capacity of Islam to meet the political, ideological and social demands of modernity became the main question of that era. To answer this decline, *Mohammad Ali* invested in missions to the west, mainly to France and Great Britain. However, the first attempts did not address secularization of the system (since no states were created at that point except for Egypt) but rather modernization of Islam as a first phase to accept nationalism, science, knowledge and the modern system through the following prominent figures:

Imam Rifa'a Al Tahtawi was the first Sheikh to visit Paris in 1826 in a purpose to modernize the state institutions in Egypt and wrote: "The patriot can be described in terms of freedom only if he is obedient to the law of the fatherland and aids its execution so that he is subservience to the principles of his country necessarily entails that fatherland will guarantee him the enjoyment of civil rights and municipal privileges. In his sense, he is a patriot and a native signifying that he is considered a member of the city and ranks as a member of its body. This is considered the greatest privilege in civilized nations"

²² The highest Sunni official religious institution in Egypt

(Esposito and Donohue; 2007). In *Al Tahtawi*'s point of view, citizens of the Islamic Caliphate or kingdoms are considered as foreigners in their countries when it come to the governmental affairs, since they cannot share their opinion, fears or needs with the ruler. All of this avant-garde thinking of *Al Tahtawi* to modernize the state did not reach the level of secularism. In fact, *Al Tahtawi* was looking to civilize and modernize the state and its institutions, by taking advantage of Islam and reshaping the old Islamic way of rule. He clearly mentioned in this matter, "every Islamic Kingdom is a fatherland for all those in it who belong to Islam; it combines religion and patriotism" (Esposito and Donohue; 2007).

The second most important figure was *Sayyid Jamal Al Din Al Afghani*, was considered the father of Muslim nationalism and reform movement in Islam. According to *Al Afghani*, unlike the Christian civilizations, Muslim societies did not free themselves from the tutelage of religion, they tried to stifle science and stop its progress (Esposito and Donohue; 2007). *Al Afghani* used to be considered the prime defender of scientific progress. He preached about the need to have scientific societies that are based on rationality. For him, those who forbid science and knowledge in order to protect Islamic religion "are really the enemies of that religion" (Esposito and Donohue; 2007). Similar to *Al Tahtawi*, he was preaching to the modernization of Islam rather than secularization. Sheikh *Mohmad Abduh*, a third important figure, who was also sent to the west in order to combine between modernity and Islam. Mainly his duty was to introduce "modernism" to the system of rule which made him the founder of modern Islamic thoughts. For *Abduh*, being Muslim and modern is applicable, only if some adjustments were enforced on the system of the state and government. *Abduh* preached for liberal *Sharia* that should be founded on political liberty and freedom of belief. For *Abduh*, Islamic sciences should be labeled as rational discipline (Hourani, 2002). Human beings should govern themselves based on the state of rationality, reason and virtue. "If there comes something which appears contradictory, reason must believe that the apparent is not the intended sense" (Esposito and Donohue; 2007). For *Abduh*, reason is an essential tool to modernize the system of rule and governance. However, *Abduh* failed to introduce vertical drastic changes due to international and national political issues.

The Egyptian *Ali Abd Al Raziq* (d.1966) was considered to belong to the second generation of the avant-gardes religious scholars. *Ali* who was the student of *Mohammad*

Abduh, studied first in *Al Azhar* and later at Oxford University. His work entitled “Islam and the Bases of Power” was categorized by many Islamic scholars as being “dangerous to Islam”. His contribution on whether the prophet should be considered also as a king triggered the Ulama, since it was the first real attempt at the secularization of state (Gazi, 2009). His major argument was mainly focusing on the role of the prophet being a spiritual leader similar to all previous messengers and prophets and not a political leader (Oxford Islamic Studies). *Abd al-Raziq* argued that the *Sharia* laws should neither be part nor intervened in the state affairs. In the same book mentioned above, *Abd al-Raziq* stated that prophet Mohammad had never found a government and “those who established the caliphate after his death believed they were creating a secular worldly government” (Abd al-Raziq, 1925). As a result, *Abd al-Raziq* was condemned and forbidden to hold public office by *Al Azhar Ulama*.

b) The second wave – post-independence path and the golden age of Pan Arabism

In less than 30 years after the First World War, the newly created states in the Arab region turned out to be independent. Under the pressure of the newly emerged Israeli state in 1948 at the expense of Palestine, Arab nationalist feelings took over the region supported by a huge wave of independence. The impact of pan Arabism has turned out some of these newly created monarchies to be republican states mainly in Iraq, Libya and Egypt. After seizing power in 1953, *Gamal Abdel Nasser*, ideologue and father of Pan Arabism discourse not only became an Egyptian national leader but also an Arab one as Cleveland mentioned (2002) the dream of Arab unity was shared by millions all over the Arab era. As a result, pan Arabism or Arab nationalism became the political, philosophical and ideological momentum of that era mainly beginning from the emergence of Israel in 1948 until the defeat of the Arabs in June of 1967.

The concept of one Arab nation is not only ideological or political, but rather it is a concept of identity and solidarity between various fractions of the old elites and the new social forces that resisted not only the western intervention but also the creation of Israel. Rashidi (1991) did not fail to mention that “Arab nationalism represented both a revival of old traditions and loyalties and a creation of new myths based on them, an invention of tradition...”.

Therefore, Arab nationalists in general and more specifically *Gamal Abdel Nasser*, the ideologue *Abou Khaldoun Sati'al-Husri* and the founder/ideologue of Baath party *Michel Aflaq* considered Arab states as artificial creations of the imperial/colonial west. According to *Al-Husri*, (1963) the Arab region “has one heart and a common soul. As such, they constitute one nation, and so they have to have a unified state”. When asked about how seven Arab states lost in 1948-1949 over Palestine against one state (Israel), *Al-Husri* (1965) replied that Arabs lost the war precisely because they were seven states.

From his part *Michel Aflaq* defined Arab nationalism in the constitution of the opening article of the Baath party: “Arabs form one nation. This nation has the natural right to live in a single state. [As such] the Arab Fatherland constitutes an indivisible political and economic unity. No Arab country can live apart from the others” (Baath party constitution, 1962). For *Aflaq*, Arab nationalism is more than just about political, economic and states unity. It is also related to morality, knowledge, human existence and the return to the Arab true selves “their upstanding spirit, clear ideas and upright morality will lead their minds to be able to create” (Aflaq, 1963).

As a result, Arab nationalism was not a mere Muslim ideology; it is mainly an Arab prime identity that combined different religions and sects including Christianity. It is with no doubt for Christians, the dream of a unified state that favor Arabism as prime identity at the expense of religion (Islam) is an ideal solution to end the long history of their discrimination. In reality, due to the major differences between Arab states, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war defeat and the rise of political Arab nationalism turned out Arab nationalism to be “nationness” and “imagined communities” (Smith, 1997).

Hereafter the independence era in the Arab region, dictator military regimes dominated most of the Arab non-monarchy states. Questions of Islamic identity and its role in governance emerged at state and citizens identity levels when people started to ask: are they Muslim citizens or state citizens? The constitutional debate about the role of Islam in governing the new states was raised again both at institutional and national levels. Tension between different groups of the same state (mainly secular and religious) based on the role of *Sharia* in governing the state, the separation of state and religion and the reform of family laws from Islamic to secular have emerged.

c) A comparison between the secular western state system and the secular Arab dictatorship system

About half of Muslims, mainly the non-Arab Islamic states have successfully shared the western values of democracy, rights and secularization of state institutions such as Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Indonesia, etc. While many other Muslim and Arab states have succeeded to adopt the western mode of government but failed to integrate western values. The main reasons of these differences (between adopting the western political values or not) in the Muslim states according to Norris and Inglehart (2011) are “historical traditions and colonial legacies, ethnic cleavages, levels of economic development, and the role of power of religious fundamentalist states”. Arab states are neither industrial nor modernized. Therefore, the failure of electoral democracy and human development (as mentioned in the sections above) in the Arab region have extended the power of military regimes on one hand and the authority of religion and traditions on another. Table 3.5 below clearly shows that the religious influence on state decisions and policies is much higher in the Middle Eastern states (mainly all of these states are – Muslim – Arab states) compared to western democracies.

Table 3.5: Overall Separation of Religion and State in 2001²³

Western Democracies				MENA	
Country	Combined Separation of Religion and State Score	Country	Combined Separation of Religion and State Score	Country	Combined Separation of Religion and State Score
Andorra	24.24	Italy	12.89	Algeria	52.16
Australia	2.42	Liechtenstein	27.42	Bahrain	41.44
Austria	24.14	Luxembourg	10.42	Egypt	59.85
Belgium	24.89	Malta	24.85	Iran	64.09
Canada	3.45	The Netherlands	2.42	Iraq	53.33
Cyprus	16.07	New Zealand	13.82	Israel	35.34
Denmark	25.27	Norway	25.68	Jordan	58.83
Finland	32.93	Portugal	20.03	Kuwait	42.42
France	15.72	Spain	27.11	Lebanon	21.94
Germany	19.74	Sweden	12.66	Libya	45.42
Greece	32.54	Switzerland	21.37	Morocco	47.50

²³ According to Fox and Sandler the measuring scale is from 0 to 100. For the purposes of this variable, the separation of religion and state variable was coded as zero for separationist and accommodationist regimes. Three was subtracted from all other categories. The resulting variable was rescaled from zero to twenty.

Iceland	30.49	United Kingdom	27.48	Oman	45.45
Ireland	15.64	United States	0.00	Qatar	51.67
				Saudi Arabia	74.62
				Syria	42.80
				Tunisia	52.77
				Turkey	45.33
				U. Arab Emirates	51.86
				Yemen	43.03
				<i>Average:</i>	<i>49.44</i>
<i>Average: 18.99</i>					

Significance (t-test) of difference between average for Western Democracies and the Middle East <.001

Source: Thesis author, data from Fox and Sandler (2005)

As a result, to the deficits in adopting western mode of rule in the Arab region, the established dictatorship state became secular/confessional while their community turned out to be religiously radical. According to Mark Juergensmeyer, (1993) “Religion is experiencing resurgence, especially in the Third World, because these secular nationalist ideologies have failed to provide the promised economic well-being and social justice and because they are perceived as having been imposed from the outside by the colonial west”.

Despite that western democratic states have adopted and integrated secularism at state and population levels, still, the level of secularism varies between them. Fox and Sandler (2005) stated in this matter that many western countries fund and indirectly support religious institutions. For example, the “UK and Denmark have established religion. Some countries like Austria and Belgium give different official statuses to different religions, officially recognizing some but not others. Some European countries restrict minority religions. France and Germany restrict proselytizing. Also, every western democracy other than the U.S. provides funds to religious education, and for most of them this funding includes religious education in public schools”. This will lead us to conclude that religious intervention is nearly present in all state systems (with a few exceptions), but the level of intervention differs from one religion to another based on the following table:

Table 3.6: Mean levels of separation of religion and state in the Middle East and Western democracies in 2001

Region	n	Religion Variables				
		Structural Separation of Religion and State	Restrictions on Minority Religions	Discrimination against Minority Religion	Regulation of Majority Religion	Religious Legislation
Western Democracies	26	5.77	0.65	2.15	0.27	5.85
Catholics	13	5.38	0.77	1.69	0.38	5.46
Protestants	10	6.00	0.50	1.90	0.00	6.20
MENA	19	7.63	2.21	13.32	5.37	17.42

- The significance (t-test) of the differences between the Middle East and Western Democracies for all variables in this table is less than .001

- The significance (t-test) of the differences between Protestants and Catholics within Western Democracies for all variables in this table are not significant at the .1 level.

Source: Thesis author, data from Fox and Sandler (2005).

Table 3.6 clearly indicates the level of separation between state and religion. Unlike the Middle East and North Africa, which are mainly Muslim states, it shows that the West have scored low numbers on all variables. Therefore, any religious intervention in any state requires the adoption and implementation of religious laws. Table 3.7 shows the level of religion's intervention in the state from legislative perspectives:

Table 3.7: Extent of religious legislation in the Middle East and Western democracies in 2001

Type of Religious Legislation	Percentage of states which have this type of legislation	
	Western Democracies	MENA
Dietary laws	0.0%	78.9%
Restrictions or prohibitions on sale of alcoholic beverages	0.0%	63.2%
Personal status defined by clergy	3.8%	89.5%
Laws of inheritance defined by religion	0.0%	89.5%
Restrictions on conversions away from dominant religion	0.0%	78.9%
Restrictions on interfaith marriages	0.0%	89.5%
Restrictions on public dress	19.2%	78.9%
Blasphemy laws, or other religious restriction on speech	7.7%	100.0%
Censorship on grounds of being anti-religious	0.0%	78.9%
Mandatory closing of businesses during religious holidays	15.4%	26.3%
Other restrictions on activities during religious holidays	3.8%	21.1%
Religious education standard but optional in public schools	73.1%	10.5%
Mandatory religious education in public schools	3.8%	57.9%
Government funding of religious schools or education	96.2%	68.4%
Government funding of religious charitable organizations	34.6%	5.3%
Government collects taxes for religious organizations	50.0%	0.0%
Government positions, salaries or other funding for clergy	38.5%	73.7%
Other funding for religious organizations or activities	7.7%	79.9%
Clergy/speeches in places of worship need governmental approval	0.0%	63.2%
Some clerical positions made by government appointment	23.1%	52.6%
Official government department for religious affairs	42.3%	84.2%
Certain government officials given official church position	15.4%	10.5%
Certain church officials given government position	3.8%	10.5%
Some government officials must meet religious requirements	11.5%	52.6%
Religious courts with jurisdiction over some matters of law	3.8%	73.7%
Some seats in legislature/cabinet given along religious lines	3.8%	21.1%
Prohibitive restrictions on abortion	26.9%	78.9%
Presence of religious symbols on the state's flag	23.1%	36.8%
Religion listed on state identity cars	0.0%	31.6%
Religious organizations must register with government for official status	42.3%	42.1%
Official government body monitoring 'sects' or minority religions	30.8%	5.3%
Restrictions on women other than those listed above	0.0%	68.4%
Other religious prohibitions or practices that are mandatory	3.8%	21.1%
<i>None of above legislations</i>	3.8%	0.0%

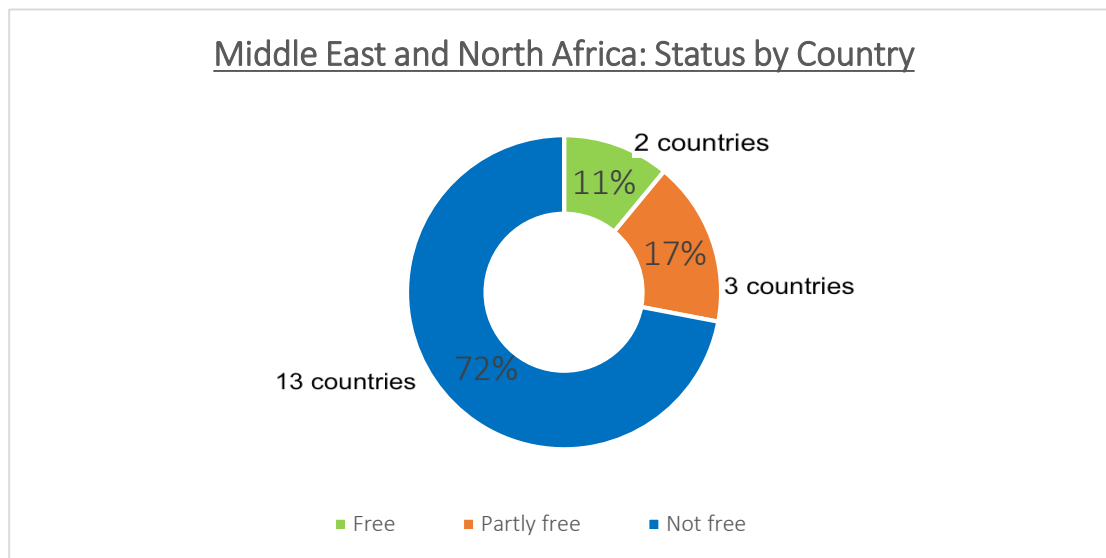
Source: Thesis author (2016), data from Fox and Sandler (2005).

Table 3.7 clearly reflects that all Middle Eastern states have religious laws. It also adds that religious legislations are also present in western democracies but at a lower scale and that western states, except the U.S. still fund religious education.

In this context, according to the Freedom House annual freedom assessment (2015), worldwide, out of the 195 countries, 89 (46 percent) were rated free, 55 (28 percent) were found to be partly free, and 51 (26 percent) were rated not free. It is also obvious in this report that the Middle Eastern and North African ratings recorded very low as being “not

free”. Out of 18 countries in the MENA, only 2 are electoral democracies and 3 are partly free, while the rest of the 13 countries are not free²⁴.

Graph 3.1: Middle East and North Africa governance system



Source: Thesis author, data from Freedom House Annual report on freedom (2015).

As a result, the Freedom House annual freedom assessment (2015) report mentioned clearly that Syria and Egypt, were and still are recorded to be the worst according to the Freedom House report scale. The report states that “**Syria** a dictatorship mired in civil war and ethnic division and facing uncontrolled terrorism, received the lowest Freedom in the world score of any country in over a decade. It received a downward trend arrow due to worsening religious persecution, weakening of civil society groups and rule of law, and the large-scale starvation and torture of civilians and detainees. While **Egypt** received a downward trend arrow due to the complete marginalization of the opposition, state surveillance of electronic communications, public exhortations to report critics of the government to the authorities, and the mass trials and unjustified imprisonment of members of the Muslim Brotherhood”.

²⁴ Free, Partly Free, Not Free Status – The average of a country’s or territory’s political rights and civil liberties ratings is called the Freedom Rating, and it is this figure that determines the status of Free (1.0 to 2.5), Partly Free (3.0 to 5.0), or Not Free (5.5 to 7.0) (taken from Freedom House used methodology <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2015/methodology>). The collected scores were based on the following sections in Political rights and civil liberties: Electoral Process (0–12 points); Political Pluralism and Participation (0–16 points); Functioning of Government (0–12 points); Freedom of Expression and Belief (0–16 points); Associational and Organizational Rights (0–12 points); Rule of Law (0–16 points); Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (0–16 points).

On another hand, the force of the First and Second World Wars replaced to some extent the confessional state system with the national secular one. The Sunni identity was replaced by a secular identity, and the question of minorities became politicized rather than inclusive in the state institutional system. According to Burham Galyoum, (2012) “some elite in powers used the question of minorities for political gains, or personal ones”. The question of religious minorities as a result was politicized rather than secularized.

The so-called secular state in Syria and Egypt did not take into consideration neither equality nor the rights of sects and religious groups. The political rule of these states shifted from secular to a hidden confessional one. Covered by the power of military regimes and parties’ ideologies, secularization became theoretical and sectarianism became practical. Inequality and discrimination replaced the state of law and equality. Military rule controlled the freedom of expression and association, thus neither minorities nor the majorities had the right to express. According to Galyoum, (2012) “secularization in the Arab region controlled the right of expression, social welfare and classes. It created a legal cover for fake equality between religions”. It is worth noting here, that during pan Arabism era, the role of not only Christian minorities, but also the bourgeois, elite and somehow middle class diminished at the expense of military dictatorships. With the exception of Lebanon, none of the 22 Arab states during that era was categorized as democratic one. It is important to inform the reader that, I will elaborate more on the secularization process and state separation of religion for Syria starting 1946 and Egypt 1953 in chapter four.

It is important to note in this matter that the fear of political Islam as a religious power that might take over the state and the regime became the main element of the regime’s policies. This was the case in Egypt and Syria, especially after the 1967 war. One of the drastic consequences of the failure of Arabs in general, and Egypt and Syria in particular, in the 1967 war was the failure of the Arab nationalism project. Political Islam as a prime identity began to spread in the region. Many political and security actions were taken against Sunni Islamists under the notion of secularisation. As a result, the majority was seen in opposition to the state and of course to all minorities –mainly Sunnis versus the rest.

3.4. The Re-Islamisation of Politics and society in the Arab region

Many Muslim scholars categorized the loss of Palestine in 1948 and Jerusalem in 1967 as the beginning of Muslim dark ages. With the full support of the Christians west, Jews took over not only an Arab land but also over Muslim third important city. However, the strike by Israeli air forces against Egyptian and Syrian targets on the morning of June 5, 1967 marked not only the end of Nasser, but also the end of Arab nationalism and the rise of political and radical Islam.

3.4.1 History of political Islam

Since its establishment, political Islam has created a momentum in the political and religious ideologies. It was formed as an interrelated and interconnected system between Islam and the state. It came as a product of modernity, thus became inseparable. It had new, custom-made theories, new ideologies and a new momentum of political activism based on a clear combination of religion and government. This system is based on the unambiguous sentence in the Quran that states, “Islam is a religion and a system – state”. Political Islam, having both national and international dimensions, not only has political and theological aspects, but also, above all possesses a cultural and religious identity.

In addition, political Islam was a reaction of western invasion and domination over the Islamic world. This intervention has started after the First World War by the time the Ottoman Islamic caliphate collapsed, and the division of the back-then strong Islamic empire into many bordered states. In this context, some Muslim ideologues/figures such as Jamal El-Din Al-Afghani, Mohammad Abduh, Mohammad Reza Khan, etc. were keen about the combination and integration of Islam (as state and religion) into the moderation of the new state system (democracy and diversity). These figures, among many others, focused during the 19th and 20th century on the position of Islam in the light of modernity and science.

However, despite the implementation processes and jurisprudence differences, political Islam varies between many schools and ideologies. Although political Islam has a specific aim, it lacks unification. Thus, Islamists and political Islam have no center or unified

leadership. Despite these sectarian, ideological, theoretical and worldview differences, all Islamists have one single objective, mainly the re-establishment of the Islamic doctrine/might. The flexibility in applying Political Islam project ranges from Jihad (which originally means “struggle against infidel or the enemy”) and “suicide attacks” to reach also democracy and election. This has transformed Islam as the only valid truth while its exclusive explanatory concept involving all Muslims and non-Muslims living under its jurisprudence.

The notion of Political Islam surfaced with the emergence of Muslim brotherhood at the hand of Hassan Al-Banna in Egypt in 1928. Political Islam evolved in a drastic way. Its expansion was associated then, with the defeat of Arabs, the emergence and development of Israel, the loss of the Caliphate rule, and the ideological war against communism. This have led with no qualm to the emergence of radical, political, Islamic activists including *Hassan Al-Banna*, *Sayyid Qutb*, *Ayatollah Khomeini* and *Osama bin Laden*, each belonging to a different era and Islamic schools of thought.

It is worth mentioning in this regard, that three events have gave political Islamic strong support: the Iranian Revolution (1979), the defeat of the Soviet army in Afghanistan (1987) by the “*Mujahidin*” that caused the establishment of “Taliban” (that later established into “Al-Qaeda” network), and the September 11 (2001) attacks on the United States of America. These major events have pushed Political Islam from simply being theoretical to more practical grounds. Spiritually, it gave concrete hope that Political Islam is not an imaginary concept but rather a realistic one. The question remains: what is political Islam?

3.4.2 Definition of Political Islam

There is no clear definition of Political Islam or Islamism. Political Islam might have different schools of thought, based on prefixing Islam as the center of all political and military ideologies. Ohlheiser (2003) mentioned in this regard that, “advocates of a political system that favor government rule to be based on the Islamic *Sharia*; however, this means that they can range from modern Islamic groups, to extremists and Jihadists”. Many schools and approaches exist in Political Islam, such as: radical Islam, fundamental Islam, militant Islam, extremist Islam, political Islam, resistance Islam, revolutionary Islam and many others. Knudsen (2003) defined it as, “Islam used to a political end”.

James Piscatori's direct definition to the concept of political Islam is "Politics becomes Muslim". As for the political scientist Guilian Denoeux, Political Islam is "a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups, and organizations that pursue political objectives. It provides political responses to today's societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations for which rest on reappropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from the Islamic tradition".

According to Charles Hirschkind however, Political Islam is the unprecedented irruption of Islamic religion into the secular domain of politics, which distinguishes these practices from the forms of personal piety, belief and ritual conventionally subsumed in Western scholarship under the unmarked category "Islam." When defining Political Islam, Bruno Etienne stated, "it proposes as a cure of all the evils of modernity/modernization the return to political Islam's roots: the ideal City State of the "*Rashidun*" (the rightly guided four Caliphs 632-661AD). Fuller (2003) in his term added that "Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and implemented in some fashion".

Muslim political scientists also made their contribution to what is Islamism or Political Islam represents. But their contribution did not cross the international parameters and understanding of the topic. In fact, they added on to the existing knowledge from an Islamic perspective, rather than from a Western one. Ayoub (2004) defined Political Islam as a "political ideology rather than a religious or theological construct". While Mehdi Mozaffari's contribution about political Islam "a religious ideology with a holistic interpretation of Islam whose final aim is the conquest of the world by all means".

Taking into consideration all the definitions mentioned above, political Islam could be defined as "a set of rules and regulations based on the Islamic religion governed by political institutions of the state. It is in the context when Islam is used for political reasons in order to enforce a new social order, new political and economic system based on organized, new Islamic societies".

3.4.3 The rise of political Islam with the new state system in the Arab countries (mainly after 1920)

The aim of political Islam advocates is to purify Muslim states and societies from the impurity that is caused by the Western world. This impurity, according to Islamists, is mainly behind the decline and deterioration of the Muslim world.

Regardless of the differences in Political Islam schools, the target is one. The differences in implementation are many, but the source of verification and support is one: the Quran and the *Hadith*²⁵. Ranging between *Muslim brotherhood*, *Qubtism* and *Salafism/Wahhabism*, the production of the radical and fundamentalist schools of *Osama bin Laden* entered a “status quo”.

- **Muslim Brotherhood**

It wasn't till 1928 when Islam shifted from being the main ideology of war for liberation (and end of colonialism) to a politico-religious power, by the establishment of Muslim Brotherhood. *Hassan Al-Banna* (b. 1906), a young charismatic leader organized, within a few years, a significant religious and political party that combined both, the western state system with Muslim doctrine and teachings. From the founder's ideology, Islam is a comprehensive system that can be “an alternative to the westernization, secularization and materialism that now threatened Muslim societies” (Knudsen, 2003).

Initially, *Al -Banna's* main aim was pure religious. But, his party went far beyond the implementation of *Sharia* Laws to the call for the creation of an Islamic state based on the original slogan “The Quran is our constitution” and later became “Islam is the only solution”. *Al-Banna* supported his new doctrine by advocating the return to the roots of religion, in particular the golden age of Islam, the *Rashidun's* one (Milton-Edward, 2000). In the introduction of his book entitled *Rasa'il* (messages,) *Hassan Al-Banna* stated:

If Islam is again to play the role of the leader of mankind, then it is necessary that the Muslim community be restored to its original form. It is necessary to revive that Muslim community which is buried under the debris of the man-made traditions of several generations, and which is crushed under the weight of those false laws and customs which

²⁵ Speeches and sayings of the Prophet that are considered to be along with the Quran the core of the Sunni faith

are not even remotely related to the Islamic teachings, and which, in spite of all this, calls itself the 'world of Islam'. (Introduction-Rasa'il).

The rapid, internal expansion of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt at religious, political, educational and welfare-related levels, created a large network of services under an organized institutional system. This massive expansion has turned Muslim Brotherhood be an international movement. Accordingly, such movements filled the void in state welfare and service system. These institutions in some countries like Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen (and to some extent Egypt), are stronger than the state services institutions; in other states, they are older than the state system itself.

The power of services and welfare along with the religious authority gave the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (and worldwide), even before the Coup of 1952, a strong social and political presence. According to *Hassan Al-Banna*, the Muslim Brotherhood represents a “comprehensive religious system to be everything, from Salafiyya to Sunni ways, a Sufi truth, a political organization, an athletic group, a cultural educational union, an economic company and a social idea” (Mitchell, 1993). It is worth mentioning in this regard that the political culture of the Muslim Brotherhood is based on Obedience (*Ta'a*) and Listening (*Sama'a*), which are terms found in the Quran. After being accused of the assassination of the Egyptian Prime Minister *Mahmoud Fahmi an-Nuqrāshī* in 1948, the Muslim Brotherhood's *Hassan Al-Banna* himself was assassinated on February 12, 1949.

Finally, Muslim Brotherhood's General Guide *Umar al-Tilmisani* preached for the creation of an Islamic Society rather than an Islamic State. In fact, according to *Tilmisani*, the majority in any given community or society that implements Islamic teachings will eventually take the state.

- **Qutbism**

Unlike the relatively peaceful approach of *Hassan Al-Banna* mainly through *Da'wa* (preaching) and education, *Sayyid Qutb* (1906-1966) called for radical changes through the use of “force”. *Qutb*'s main aim was to overthrow the un-Islamic governments and rulers by force in order to establish an Islamic one (Milton-Edwards; 2000).

Qutb's main ideology is written in his book²⁶ entitled *Milestones (Ma'alim fi al-tariq)*, in which he clearly differentiated between the ignorant order (*al nizam al jahili*) and the Islamic order (*al nizam al Islami*) or the Islamic divine rule. *Qutb* argues that ending the former and introducing the latter is only possible through holy war or Jihad (Knudsen, 2003).

Those who say that Islamic Jihad was merely for the defense of the 'homeland of Islam' diminish the greatness of the Islamic way of life and consider it less important than their 'homeland'. This is not the Islamic point of view, and their view is a creation of the modern age and is completely alien to Islamic consciousness. ... Of course, in that case the defense of the 'homeland of Islam' is the defense of the Islamic beliefs, the Islamic way of life, and the Islamic community. However, its defense is not the ultimate objective of the Islamic movement of Jihad, but is a means of establishing the Divine authority within it so that it becomes the headquarters for the movement of Islam, which is then to be carried throughout the earth to the whole of mankind, as the object of this religion is all humanity and its sphere of action is the whole earth. (Ma'alim fi al tariq, 1964).

Qutb's key purpose was to end the military/secular totalitarian nationalist state and to enforce a religion totalitarian Islamic system in which human freedom is interrelated to Islam and God (Ma'alim fi al tariq, 1964) when he stated:

This religion is really a universal declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to another men and from servitude to his own desires, which is also a form of servitude, it is a declaration that sovereignty belongs to God alone and He is the lord of all worlds.

What stands out about *Qutb*'s point of view in political Islam is that he labeled the ruling regime (mainly *Abdel-Nasser*'s regime of Egypt) as a pre-Islamic one (*Jahiliyya*), therefore it is categorized as an "unbeliever or impious" (*Kafir*) system. According to Islam, Jihad against nonbelievers is a religious duty that should be used to liberate the Islamic territories and societies. Khan (2001) stated in this context that *Qutb*'s revolutionary ideology gave Islamists a "powerful moral weapon: the modern Jihad, the just rebellion". *Sayyid Qutb* was considered a threat to the state (of Egypt) and by *Nasser*'s regime. He was imprisoned for 10 years until his execution in 1966.

- **Wahhabism/Salafism**

The *Wahhabi* school in political Islam is also considered part of the Sunni Islamic sect. The origin of *Wahhabi* schools goes back to the founder *Muhammad bin Abdel-Wahhab* (1703-1792) who settled in the Arab peninsula, currently known as Saudi Arabia.

²⁶ Which was released during the time he was serving his prison sentence in 1965

Wahhabis are structurally and ideologically connected to the *Salafis* - they mainly follow the way of “*Al-Salaf Al-Saleh*”²⁷. *Wahhabism* is considered to be the Saudi version of *Salafis*, which means all *Wahhabis* are *Salafis*, yet not all *Salafis* are *Wahhabis*. There is no unified *Salafi* movement or one *Salafi* leader, however there is one unified leadership for *Wahhabis*. The *Wahhabi* ideology has a political nature, while the *Salafi* movement(s) is apolitical. At the same time, the uses of both violence against infidel and preaching, are the main tools for their excessive power. They are spread throughout the Gulf region, mainly in Saudi Arabia, and in some Arab and Muslim states, including Egypt, Jordan, Chechnya, Caucasus, etc.

The most important aspect in the *Wahhabi/Salafi* School is the absolute obedience to the ruler in order to preserve Muslim societies from internal divisions. Meijer (2009) clearly states that the authoritarian terms of obedience and listening are of Quranic origin, and are also greatly evident in *Salafism*, where they are used to legitimize the total adherence to the opinion of the ‘ulama (scholars). In order to keep the Islamic society/community unified, total obedience to the ruler is considered to be the most important feature of the *Salafi/Wahhabi* School. “Even when the rulers commit errors and act cruelly, only advice, and not revolt or revolution, is the right way to rectify the rulers’ misconduct. It does not end here, contemporary senior *Wahhabi* ‘ulama’, including Ibn Baz and al-Fauzan, hold the view that to criticize a legitimate ruler might bring about anarchism, an act that is an absolute deviation from the salafist manhaj (method)” (Moussalli, 2009).

What is significant to know about the *Wahhabi* and *Salafi* Schools is their rejection to most sects opposing their own, including the Islamic *Shia*²⁸ sect whose followers are classified as “nonbelievers”. Moussalli (2009) did not fail to mention, “the unification between Sunnis and Shiites is an absolute mistake, because Shiites have deviated concretely from true Islam and consequently consider the political system established by Ayatollah Khomeini to be infidel”.

²⁷ Following the way and path of the early Muslims – mainly companions of the prophet and their followers

²⁸ A sect in Islam. They have religious and jurisprudence differences with Sunni Islam.

3.4.4 The Re-Rise of Political Islam - the 1970's era (Iran, Pakistan and other)

The years of 1970's and 1980's were categorized as political Islam golden era. Many political, economic, religious and social events have shaped or influenced the evaluation of political Islam, from moderation to conservatism, hence more radicalism. The combination of all these factors have led to the creation of the "Jihadist" or "fundamentalist" ideology of Osama bin Laden under Al-Qaeda.

It is worth noting in this matter that many Islamic fundamentalists and radical movements flourished during and after political Islam's golden age. These movements included: *Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyya* (The Islamic Group) in Egypt, the Iraqi Association of Muslim Scholars and Islamic Nationalists and Resistance in Iraq, Hamas in Palestine, Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and many others. In fact, the only part that will be tackled in this part of the thesis is the Iranian revolution and Jihadists (such as *Al-Qaeda*) since they adequate within the parameters of this research, as they have shaped, both directly and indirectly, strongly political Islam.

- **The Iranian Revolution**

One of the important characteristics of political Islam advocates is the Iranian revolution of 1979, which has moved the political Islam from theory to practice and reality. Unlike all Sunni schools in political Islam, the Iranian revolution was in relation to non-Arab, non-Sunni Muslims; mainly Persian *Shia* Islam. The main aim of the revolution was to enforce Islamic order in the community through the *Shia* minority (globally speaking) dominated by the "*Jaafariah*"²⁹ Twelvers doctrine.

In this regard, despite all the ideological and theological differences between all political Islam advocates, *Ayatollah Khomeini* established the first Islamist government/state of the 20th century (Mozaffary, 2007) in Iran under "*Velayat el-Fakih* (The State of the Jurist).

Despite all the differences in Political Islam Schools from one perspective, and the *Sunni-Shia* theological differences from another, *Ayatollah Khomeini* was preaching and calling for a "worldwide Islamic power":

²⁹ Shia sub sect

This is a duty that all Muslims must fulfill, in every one of the Muslim countries, in order to achieve the triumphant political revolution of Islam. We see, too, that together, the imperialists and the tyrannical self-seeking rulers have divided the Islamic homeland. They have separated the various segments of the Islamic Umma from each other and artificially created separate nations.

In order to assure the unity of the Islamic Umma, in order to liberate the Islamic homeland from occupation and penetration by the imperialists and their puppet governments, it is imperative that we establish a government. ... The formation of such a government will serve to preserve the disciplined unity of the Muslims (Islamic Government).

Source: Mozaffari, 2007

- **Bin Laden – The Jihadist**

The execution of *Sayyid Qtub*, along with the increasing controls over Islamic movements in general and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular in Egypt have led to the rise of extremism. Many Muslim Brotherhood members and leaders fled to Saudi Arabia. This has led, however, to a mingling of Wahhabi/Salafi school on one hand and the Muslim Brotherhood school on another. This new Jihadist school tried to combine the dogmatism of *Salafism* with the activism of the Brotherhood” (Meijer, 2009). In a letter translated on the 13th of October 2005 from *Ayman Al Zawahiri*³⁰ to *Al-Zarqawi*³¹, he wrote the steps needed to establish, by force, the Islamic state and regain glory:

It has always been my belief that the victory of Islam will never take place until a Muslim state is established in the manner of the Prophet in the heart of the Islamic world, specifically in the Levant, Egypt.’ To realise this plan, four-stage plan is needed, as follows:

First, expel American forces from Iraq.

Second, establish a caliphate over as much of Iraq as possible.

Third, extend the jihad to secular neighboring countries, with specific reference to Egypt and the Levant – a term that describes Syria and Lebanon.

And finally, war against Israel.

Source: Mozaffari, 2003.

The battlefield of Jihadists was in Afghanistan, and from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan. It was supported by the Jihadi figures such as *Yusuf al-Uyairi*³², *Abdallah Azzam*, *Osama Bin Laden* and *Al-Zawahiri* along with many others who developed the Jihadi ideology. Hunted down and imprisoned by military regimes, among many other reasons including poverty, repression, under development and western interference in Islamic societies and matters (especially the American intervention in Saudi Arabia); all of this have led to the

³⁰ The 2nd man in Al-Qaeda after Bin Laden

³¹ Al-Qaeda leader in Iraq

³² Founder and first leader of Al-Qaeda

notion that the only way to liberate their communities was the “total destruction of the enemy” through the martyrdom concept of *Sayyid Qutb*. According to *Yusuf al-Uyairi*, the American intervention in Saudi Arabia, being a purely Islamic territory, marks real danger on the Islamic civilization. In his work entitled the “American Presence in the Arabian Peninsula” he states, “the manipulation of the region by the west, especially by the United States for its own interests, is the reason for revolt against the prevailing system” (*Al-Uyairi*).

According to Meijer, the use of violence in political Islam evolved due to three main causes:

1. *Qutb*'s theories of rejection – apolitical and political to solve problems
2. Jihad as a permanent revolution concept
3. The use of Jihad as a means for resistance and liberation

In the Jihadi, which is based on *Qutb*, *Uyairi* and many others, the world is strictly divided into good and evil, with no middle ground. It is an eternal fight between the two and the only solution is to enforce Islam as the rule of God on earth on Islamic grounds. Also, to be taken into consideration, a Muslim ruler might not be just, yet having the characteristics of an ignorant or collaborator, in which case the ruler is also subject to Jihad. Many events and clashes took place in this regard in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, and Syria etc.

3.4.5 Different strategies for one divine aim

In general, Islamic movements under the notion of political Islam have been engaged in three different strategies (Meijer, 2009) in order to reach the establishment of the Islamic state. These strategies are supported by “*Fatwas*” (Islamic scholar approval) that vary between each movement and group.

- **The first strategy** is the preaching policy (*Da'wa*), which is a peaceful act that starts from below through teachings and the spread of pillars of the authentic Islamic way of life. At the time when true Islam will guide the whole of Muslim societies, by default the political changes will follow. This strategy is based on changing the core structure of societies.

- **The second strategy** is a rather extreme policy. It is mainly related to Jihad and the use of power in order to capture the state by force, thus imposing the Islamic society as the rule of God.
- **The final strategy** starts with the recognition of the limitation of the *Da'wa* system, reject the use of power and support the change through political parties (of course Islamic ones) known in Arabic as "*Hizbiyya*". The third strategy mainly requires democratic systems (similar to Turkey), which is why the common nature of regimes in the Arab region does not help in adopting the third strategy.

The different approaches and schools in political Islam mainly depend on the relation with the ruling regimes. Knudsen (2003) explained the existence of different faces of "political Islam" such as Turkey (democratic Islamism), Iran (Islamic revolution), Egypt (Islamists' opposition) and Algeria /Iraq/ Afghanistan (Islamists' terror). According to the table below, almost all Islamic parties had negative electoral results with very few representations. These negative results are mainly caused by two reasons: the authoritarian nature of the regime and the offensive attitude towards Islamists. With a few exceptions like Algeria (1991), Indonesia (1971), Jordan (1989), Kuwait (1992), Palestine (1988 and 1990), Turkey (1995) and Yemen (1993) and Indonesia, Islamists' positive results by the end of 1980's and early 1990's were mainly due to the success of the *Jihadi* project in Afghanistan that defeated the red Army in 1987, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the American war on Iraq in 1991.

Table 3.8: Islamist Performance in Parliamentary Elections, 1965-1995

Country	Year	Islamist Party	% of votes	% of seats
Algeria	1991	Islamic Salvation Front	--	81.4*
Bangladesh	1979	Muslim League & Islamic Democratic League	--	6.1
	1986	Jamaat-i-Islam & Muslim League	--	4.2
	1991	Jamaat-i-Islam	--	5.5
Egypt	1987	Alliance including Muslim Brothers	17.5	12.4
Indonesia	1971	Muslim Scholars' Party, Indonesian Muslim Party, Muslim Political Federation, and Muslim Party	27.2	26.1
	1977	United Development Party	29.3	27.5
	1982	United Development Party	25.5	25.8
	1987	United Development Party	--	15.3
Jordan	1989	Muslim Brothers & allied independents	--	42.5
	1993	Islamic Action Front	--	20.0
	1981	Islamic Society for Social Reform	--	10.0**

Kuwait	1985	Independents	--	12.0
	1992	Independents	--	38.0
Pakistan	1965	Combined Opposition Parties including Jamaat-e-Islami	--	8.4
	1970	Jamaat-e-Islami	--	1.4
	1977	Pakistan National Alliance including Jamaat-e-Islami, Moslem Leagues, Jumi'at-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan	--	18.0
	1988	Islamic Democratic Alliance including Jamaat e-Islami-e-Pakistan	29.6	26.8
	1990	Islamic Democratic Alliance including Jamaat e-Islami-e-Pakistan	37.4	51.2
	1993	Pakistan Islamic Front, Islamic Jamhoori Mahaz, & Mutahida Deeni Mahaz	--	4.5
Sudan	1986	National Islamic Front	--	19.6
Tunisia	1989	Independents	12**	0.0
Turkey	1973	National Salvation Party	11.8	10.7
	1977	National Salvation Party	8.6	5.3
	1987	Welfare Party	7.2	0.0
	1991	Welfare Party	16.9	13.8
	1995	Welfare Party	21.1**	28.7--
Yemen	1988	Independents	--	~25
	1993	Yemen Alliance for Reform	--	20.7

*First-round results only (188 of 231 seats). Another 199 seats were to have been decided in run-off elections in January 1002 that were cancelled by the military.

**From journalistic and secondary sources.

Source: (Web Document Online)

Source: Thesis author, data from Knudsen; (2003).

3.4.6 The specific case of political Islam in Egypt (under Mubarak) and Syria (under al-Assad)

The combination of modernism and the new state system along with the constant evolution in the means of life and modernism have led to the expansion and the spread of Political Islam in all over the Arab countries.

- **The Egyptian Experience**

The establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood has shifted the group from a simple *Da'wa* movement into a massive well-institutionalized political party. Suddenly, the Brotherhood was found to be a massive social force and a well-structured organization, based on Islamic doctrine. This expansion has forced its members to intervene in politics and security issues.

The collapse of Arab nationalism opened the door for Islamo-nationalism. However, after the 1967 war many nationalists joined Islamist movements as it imposed being the only

solution to win the war over Israel. Supported by the Muslim Brotherhood discourse and the new teachings of *Qutb*, these organizations started to grow again. President *Anwar al Sadat's* Islamic approach and new constitution slogan "Islam is the only source for legislation," has led to the creation and empowerment of different Islamic groups. The most important group that was initiated in this regard was *Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiya* in the 1970s. It all started across universities as an apolitical and service-oriented group that wanted to spread the Islamic call. It later turned out to be radical and a rejectionist group that justified the excessive use of violence as a mean to reach religious and political ends. The assassination of *Sadat* on October 6, 1981 at the hand of members of *Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiya* could be categorized as a major change in the history of political Islam, not only in Egypt, but worldwide. The evolution of the security behavior of this group is very interesting in the sense that it started as a service provider group, shifting to become an extremely organized and violent and later on (after 1996) once more became peaceful and an advocate for political change.

Notwithstanding the fact that all Islamists played a role in politics, they also had military and security roles that shaped Egypt's history. Dating back to the discovery of the Muslim Brotherhood battalion during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the failed attempt to assassinate *Gamal Abdel-Nasser* in 1954 in Alexandria, the assassination of *Sadat* in 1981, *Hosni Mubarak's* failed assassination attempt in 1995 in Ethiopia, up to several threatening bombings and attacks on government institutions, touristic sites and military points.

On a separate note, Islamists, mainly through the Muslim Brotherhood, have participated in parliamentary elections either formally (which rarely occurred) or informally (via independent candidates). During the British era, the Muslim Brotherhood's organization had changed from being an apolitical group into an actively political one in the 1930's, after which they announced their candidate names for the parliamentary elections in 1941 (*Munson, 2001*). The tension between the Muslim Brotherhood and *Nasser* was obvious and escalated to reach a failed assassination attempt to eradicate *Nasser* from power as an Arab nationalist leader. During the *Sadat* era, however, the relation with Muslim Brotherhood was relatively better. *Sadat* released Islamists from prisons in order to counter attack the leftist (communist) movements. In fact, according to *Rubin (1990)*, Islamists in general and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, were part of the formation of the new constitution that was based on Islamic laws (*Sharia*). The movement did not

cause much trouble for *Sadat*; instead it helped him in the 1976 parliamentary elections. The drastic deterioration of the relation between *Sadat* and Islamists took place in 1979 directly after signing the “Camp David” peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. As a result, *Sadat* started a campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood by champing down, containing and imprisoning its members.

In the pre-Mubarak era, the Muslim Brotherhood mainly in the 1970s and mid-1980s, focused on building their organization rather than political participation. Gradually they started to be involved in political participation through elections at parliamentary, syndicates and local levels. On the same level, the Brotherhood started a systematic revision process hereafter, in the midst 1994, that shaped the Muslim Brotherhood vision and relation towards the state and the society through the movement’s documents in 1994, its electoral program of 1995, its Reform Initiative of 2004, and its electoral program of 2005. The revision process was the result of a gradual change in the leadership process from the old guard to a new youthful generation. According to Shahin, (2007) “In essence, the documents and statements reassert a commitment to the civic nature of political authority, notwithstanding their adherence to the principles of the shari`a and respect for the basic values and instruments of democracy; respect for public freedoms; acceptance of pluralism; transfer of power through clean and free elections; sovereignty of the people; separation of power; rejecting the use of violence and adopting gradual and legal means to achieve reform; acceptance of citizenship as the basis for rights and responsibilities for Muslims and non- Muslims; and support of human rights, including those of women and the Copts”.

When *Mubarak* took over power as a president of the Egyptian state, after the assassination of *Sadat*, he continued most of his predecessor’s policies. The main idea was to start a political liberalization movement in the 1980s, which caused more economic liberalization and the formation of some political parties controlled by the government. Mubarak inherited a platform of fragmented and antagonistic Islamist groups (refer to section 4.3) that could be summarized as first, the “reformist” that is the *Muslim Brotherhood* who opposed the existing political regime in favor of an Islamic one. It should be noted here that Muslim Brotherhood used the political system to reach their end. Although Mubarak's regime attempted to contain the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, they managed to make their way into the parliament between the year

2000³³ and 2005³⁴ due to their stand as independent candidates and their participation in the pro-democratic “Kefaya” movement as mentioned in “The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament” (*Shehata and Stacher*; 2006). It is worth noting here that Mubarak considered the Muslim Brotherhood to be a group using democracy to reach power and implement Islamic rule.

The second group are those who practiced violence to overthrow the political regime such as *Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiya*. For years the regime faced social and security problems, violence and attacks precisely from *Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiya*, on military points, governmental institutions and touristic sites. Mubarak was inclined to repress, imprison, and execute Islamists and mainly the brotherhood and *Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiya* members. The third, the *Salafis* who are considered as extremely conservative group that is dedicated to religious and social preaching. Despite its fundamental approach, it was an open secret that the Salafi group supported Mubarak's regime in return for religious and social preaching freedom.

- **The Syrian Experience**

The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria was founded in 1940. In Egypt, the Brotherhood started as a religious group and later turned out to have political ambitions, however in Syria they initially had both religious and political goals. The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria could be categorized as the strongest Islamic and opposing group that dominated the Syrian scene until 2011. Historically, before *Hafez al-Assad's* era, the Brotherhood ran for elections and cabinet posts, as they had a social, economic and cultural influence within the Syrian community. This can be linked to the politically active “*Jamiat*” (clubs and societies) of the 1920s and 1930s, since they were not allowed to form political parties back then. Consequently, political Islam became more influential during the post-independence time in Syria. During the period between the departure of the French colonization in 1946 and “the Baath” coup in March 1963, the “*Ikhwaan*³⁵” played a legitimate role within the political system, increasing their representation in Parliament from three seats (total of 2.6%) in 1949, to ten seats (5.7%) in 1961.

³³ They won 15 deputy seats in the parliament

³⁴ They achieved 20% of the total seats, i.e. 88 seats

³⁵ Syrian branch of Muslim Brotherhood

The Syrian division of the Muslim Brotherhood always called for deep reforms in the state's institution, which later led to a clash with the state security agencies and military units. At the beginning of the 1960s a new generation of activists took hold of the movement. Many of these activists had studied in Egypt and were influenced by the radical teachings of Qutb who (as discussed in section 4.3) defined governments that failed to implement *Sharia* in all aspects of life as heretical and illegitimate. This young generation accused the Syrian regime of the Baath party of tyranny, corrupt and being an "enemy to Islam". As a result, clash calls were raised by the young generation in order to overthrow the regime by force. Heavy clashes erupted between the *Ikhwan* and Baath parties in 1964, 1965, 1967, 1973 and 1979. As a result, it became an illegal organization that has threatened the existence of the Baath regime in 1982 - 1983. The Muslim Brotherhood had a history of elevated tension with the Baath regime beginning in years 1964, 1965 and 1967. The tension escalated with time up until the year 1980 when al-Assad's regime took action against the "*Ikhwaan*" in the political arena as well, enacting Law No.49 at the beginning of July 1980, which stipulates the death penalty for any proof of membership or loyalty to the Brotherhood, (while also providing shelter to members who surrender).

On the eve of the uprising, many important political and security events took place. On March 11th, 1982, in the wake of the events at the city of "Hamah", a new opposing coalition was declared: the "National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria," also known afterwards as the "National Front for the Liberation of Syria." The alliance included the "*Ikhwaan*" alongside other factions opposed to the regime, some being leftist (from a political viewpoint). The alliance's principles were based on the ideology that Islam should be the state religion, and that *Sharia* must be the basis for state's law. In a guide released in 1984, the alliance's front explicitly called for slaying al-Assad.

The major turning point in the history of political Islam in Syria was the uprising against the secular "Baath" regime of *Hafez al-Assad* in 1982, which aimed to take over power from the Alawite minority and to re-impose Islamic *Sharia* but their aim has failed when *al-Assad* forcefully massacred the uprising in *Hamah* causing the death of 40,000 of the country's population. *Cleveland* (2000) distinctly described the turbulent relation between secularism and Islamism in general, "ever since the Baath party took over power

in 1963, there had been outbreaks of Islamic-inspired protests against the party's secular tendencies".

The crackdown of Hama incidents led to the destruction of the *Ikhwan* structure in Syria and to the exile of what was left from its leadership to United Kingdom. The most important turn in the history of the Muslim Brotherhood started in the year 2000 when a critic of the Brotherhood questioned their history and use of violence based on a revision of their principles. According to the serious revisionist, events took place that ended in "2004 when the Syrian Brotherhood published an extensive document of more than 100 pages, *The Political Project for the Syrian Future*, in which it spelled out its revisionist views not only rejecting violence and accepting democracy but also embracing a fundamentally new concept of Islamic politics based on *Humanity*".

What also stood out about the new approach of the Syrian Brotherhood is their acceptance to "the positive aspects of western culture". Following 2005, as the former Baathist Foreign Minister and Vice President *Abdul-Halim Khaddam* fled to Paris, a connection was established between the latter and the "Muslim Brothers". Both parties agreed to form a dual opposition platform, which concluded with the creation of the *National Salvation Front* (N.S.F.) in March of 2006. However, things did not work out as per expectation. The Muslim Brothers then realized that the step was immature, since *Khaddam* was a Baathist and a leading figure of al-Assad's regime.

3.4.7 Political Islam and minorities in general and Christians in particular in Egypt and Syria

It is with no doubt that political Islam and the Islamic movements helped shape the history of non-Muslim minorities. However, the fate of Christians, as well as non-Arab, non-Muslim minorities, laid in the hands of different schools of Islam that varied between extremists, fundamentalists and conservatives. Nonetheless, the lack of democracy, fair electoral representation and human rights, and the implementation of *Sharia* in Islam enforced by default the marginalization of minorities (whether based on religious, gender or racial backgrounds). In her article entitled: "Of Islamists and Ballot Boxes: Rethinking the Relation between Islamists and Electoral Politics", Vicky Langohr (2001) found no relation between Islamists' agenda and modern democracy. This in fact would affect the

relation between Islam and minorities, since the Islamists' agenda was to impose *Sharia* while “*Sharia* is itself a discriminatory aspect (against women and minorities)”.

In this context, some of those schools answered the question of the Christians' status in an avant-guard way as being normal citizens with equal rights. The conservative Islamic thinker in Tunisia and Head of “*Al-Nahda*³⁶” movement Rashed Ghannouchi stated, “Assuming a popular and widely accepted Coptic figure...winning the elections there would not be a national disaster or a religious sin.” The Egyptian society were familiar with Coptic leaders of high caliber having national and popular acceptance such as Makram Obeid, alongside others who were advisors and close to *Hassan al-Banna* (founder of the Muslim Brotherhood).

“While Syria had a Christian Prime Minister *Fares al-Khoury*, who did great and his relation with Islam and Islamists was excellent; he did not destroy the country, and I wish that all who came after him, who were Muslim, did what he did” (Ghannouchi, 2009).

On another front, fundamentalists and extremists did not fail to threaten the existence of Christian minorities by issuing “*Fatwas*” (religious decrees), especially from the *Salafi* School, in relation to the status of Christians. For example, in Egypt, many statements threatening the existence of Christians were issued. Some of which stated, “Muslim should not salute Christians or share their celebrations, in addition they should not have access to jobs” (Beshara, 2012). According to *Abu-Ishaaq al-Huwaini*, Head of the *Salafi* School in Egypt, currently declared that “Christians should pay the *Jizyah* (Islamic tax)”, (Ahmad, 2011).

Hence, the question of Christian minorities was and still is being asked - mainly politicized by the ruling regime. In Egypt once more, when *Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya* was active in violent acts in the 1970 and 1980's in order to force change, the Christian minorities, along with other groups within the Egyptian societies, were heavily affected. In his memoir book, *Muntasar al-Zayyat*, formerly *Al-Jamaa*'s lawyer, describes a “young zealot in the 1970s who smashed liquor stores belonging to the Christian Coptic minority in Aswan, the town where he was once raised. Universities were also terrorized

³⁶ Moderate Islamic party in Tunisia that was created after 2011

by *Al-Jamaa*, who broke up cultural festivals, prevented singing, forbade mingling of the sexes and enforced a religious code of chastity” (Meijer, 2003).

On another hand, unlike other Islamic groups, the Muslim Brotherhood’s political role gave them some political and national flexibility to accept “the other”. In Egypt, the reform constitution and vision tackled all fractions of the society. Despite its slogan “Islam is the solution”, the Muslim Brotherhood gradually shifted only “politically” towards a more state-oriented group. This process evolved through many stages: in 1987 Muslim Brotherhood recognized the Coptic Christian minority as Egyptian citizens with full equal rights; in 1994, they issued statements on women’s rights and party pluralism. Additionally, in 1995 the Muslim Brotherhood issued a statement “on democracy, reconfirming the equal rights of non-Muslims (Copts), the sovereignty of the people, stating that “people have the right to invent different systems, formulas, and techniques that suits their conditions, which definitely varies according to time, place and living conditions’, and rejecting violence” (Meijer, 2003) (Al-Awadi, 2004).

In Syria, based on “The Political Project for the Syrian Future”, a new booklet by the Muslim Brotherhood, by which they accepted the idea of diversity as an international phenomenon. Also, to start promoting a constructive dialogue based on citizenship that “replaced the concept of protected religious minorities and guarantees complete equality in rights and duties, which must be laid down in the constitution” (Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, 2001).

3.5 Conclusion

It is with no doubt that the situation of indigenous Christian people in the Arab region under different Islamic systems of rule has drastically changed throughout the course history. Sometimes, Christians were treated in less discriminatory attitudes, as a result it was considered their golden era. While most of the time Christians were not considered full citizens, therefore Christians were subject to severe discrimination to an extent they were categorized as second-class citizens.

With the move from a Caliphate system to the state system, under colonialism and so on, Christian minorities were given equal rights as ordinary citizens, but unequal with the same opportunities, duties and state recruitment with the Muslim majority. With Arab

nationalism, non-Arab minorities such as Kurds, Turkman and many others were discriminated. These ethnic minorities were not integrated in the newly independent Arab state system. Similarly, to Christians, these ethnic Muslim minorities have resided in these territories for more than thousands of years, even before Islam. They were subject to ethnic discrimination under the “Arab nationalism” slogan by military regimes.

After the failure of Arab nationalism and the emergence of Political Islam, the concept of prime identity shifted from the national one to religious one. Once again, Islam started to become the only available reliable system of rule. It combined both modern means of rule with Islamic *Sharia*. It is certain that implementing the *Sharia* rule in state systems will hinder Christians’ legal status as equal citizens. Consequently, Christians will be subject to discrimination at all levels as we will see in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Characteristics of the Political Regimes in Syria and Egypt and their Christian minorities

Historically the Eastern Mediterranean was unique because it boasted tremendous human and cultural diversity. There lived in that area a fabulously rich mosaic of Arabs, Muslims and Christian, Jews, Kurds, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Circasians, Armenians and Greeks. Some of my childhood friends were Armenians, Kurds and Greek-Cypriots. All Muslim and Christian sects have deep roots in the cities, mountains and deserts of this region whose long, complex and diverse history cannot be understood without the tremendous contributions of its minorities, particularly that of the Christians.

Hisham Melhem, 2013

Abstract: *this chapter analyses the characteristics of the political regimes in the pre and during Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak era in Syria and Egypt. In addition, it also tackles and measures the level of state secularization and/or separation of state and religion of both Syria and Egypt from 1950's in general and al-Assad and Mubarak eras in particular. The chapter ends by addressing the general description and pattern of Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt.*

4.1 Introduction

The history of the Middle East in general and Arab region in particular, is blended within different types of minorities. The Arab region has been home to different religious, ethnic, sectarian, and tribal type of minorities. Altogether, blended along with the majority³⁷ have shaped the state formation process at different political, economic, social and security levels and forms.

Throughout a long historical process of wars, expansion, occupation, colonization and internal struggles, the current shape and identity of the Arab region was formed. The region is composed of indigenous people, visitors, conquerors, immigrants, and refugees, and within the region displaced groups. It integrates different religions: Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Baha'is, and Yazidis etc or simply Pagans... sects: Sephardim and Mizrahi Jews, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Maronite, Copts, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Sunni, Druze, Shia, Alawite, Zaidis, Ismaelis, Twelvers, and many others; ethnicities: Arabs, Kurds, Turkmens, Circassians, Berbers, Armenians, Greek, Tamazights, Africans, Persians among others. Some of these groups settled in their land

³⁷ I have referred in chapter 2 to the definition of the majority in the Arab context by Albert Hourani. In limited cases, and if we take the modern state as a unit of analysis, we can see that in the case of Iraq and Bahrain the majority is not from the same religious group as Hourani defined.

and preserved their language and custom for thousands of years (even before the emergence of Judaism) such as the Assyrians and Chaldeans – while others, such as the Armenians, are considered to be new comers.

It is with no doubt that the religious identity of the Arab region inhabitant has changed throughout history. The religious identity (along with many other identities) was in many cases the main cause of discrimination, harassment, torture, and execution. For a matter of survival, some have converted to other religions or sects, while others have preserved their faith. The Christian population of this region is no exception. After the emergence and expansion of the Muslim Caliphate, the demographic change has shifted but not in their favor. As discussed in chapter 3, the remaining indigenous Christian communities in the Arab region (and everywhere under the Muslim Caliphate rule) have turned out to be considered as *Dhimmis* or second-class citizens. They were rarely, if ever, treated with equality³⁸ and respect.

After the emergence of the state system, the situation of minorities in general and Christians in particular improved. The new state constitutions expressed equality among all citizens. The United Nations Charter of 1948 emphasized on equality between all human beings regarding their race, religion, color, gender, etc... but the concept of discrimination against minorities in general, and Christians in particular, did not reach an end, especially in Syria and Egypt as we will see in this Chapter.

The Arab Republic of Egypt is located in a strategic location in northeast Africa on both the Red and Mediterranean seas, which allows it to control the Suez Canal. According to the United Nations Development Programme, Egypt has a population of around 90 million (in which two-thirds are below 29 years). The Egyptian political system gives power to the head of the state. Egypt economy is the second largest economy in the Arab world (after Saudi Arabia) and it is based on remittances from workers abroad, tourism industry, oil and agriculture (UNDP Egypt profile and BBC Egypt profile). Egypt is ranked 108 in the Human Development Index (HDI), the unemployment rate is 13.2%, adult Literacy Rate (ages 15 and older) is 74% and life expectancy (by year) is 71.1 (UNDP, Egypt profile). While the Syrian Arab Republic population is 22.4 million

³⁸ By equality, I mean the modern term of equality in which all citizens are equal in front of the state and law.

(UNDP, Syria profile) out of which 45% are displaced due to the ongoing civil war. The Syrian political system gives power to the head of the state. Prior the civil war, the Syrian economy depended on agriculture, oil and to some extent remittances (Cleveland and Bunton, 2014 and Azmeh, 2014). But the consequences of the civil war in Syria are colossal, “85.2 per cent of the population had been plunged into poverty by the end of 2015, and over 50 per cent of the labour force has been pushed into unemployment” (UNDP, Syria profile). As for the Human Development Index (HDI), due to the civil war, Syria’s HDI dropped from 113 to 174 out of 187 countries. UNDP assesses that Syrian “human development indices have been rolled back 35 years since the conflict began”. At demographic level, the Arab region is home to approximately 357 million people, of which, Christians constitute 13 million. The official number of Christians in Syria and Egypt is almost outdated and inaccurate. For example, the last official census in Egypt took place in 1976 reported that Copts constitutes 6.31 percent. Copts refused the census result claiming that they represent more than 15 percent of the population (Pennington, 1982). That’s why in this thesis; I will rely on the CIA Codebook to have mean figures pertaining the number of Christians in Syria and Egypt that constitute approximately 10 percent of their respective societies (CIA, 2012). The Syrian and Egyptian societies are divided not only at economic/development level i.e. higher, middle and lower class, but also at urban-rural and/or tribal and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or sectarian one (please refer to chapter 2). Table 4.1 below maps the religious, sectarian and ethnic classification of the population in Egypt and Syria.

Table 4.1: Mapping religious, sectarian and ethnic groups in Egypt and Syria for the 2000

	Religious Composition	Ethnic Composition
Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 87% Muslim (Sunni 74% and Alawi, Ismaili, and Shia 13%) • 10% Christian (includes Greek Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Syriac Orthodox, Assyrian Church of the East, Melkite, Maronite, Armenian Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Roman Catholic, Chaldean and Protestant.) • 3% Druze • Jewish (few remaining in Damascus and Aleppo), Yezidis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% Arab • 9.7% Kurds, Turkmen, Circassians, Armenian, Yezidis and Other • 0.03% others
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% Muslim (predominantly Sunni) • 10% Christian (majority Coptic Orthodox, other Christians include Greek-Orthodox, Maronite, Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, Maronite, Melkite, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99.66 Arab • Other 0.4%

	Chaldean, Syrian Orthodox, Protestant, Syran Catholic, Armenian Catholic and Anglican)	
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Source: Thesis author, data from CIA Codebook, 2012) and Cardinal (2009)

Finally, this chapter addresses three main sections: first, the characteristics of the political regimes in Syria and Egypt since the 1950s; second, their levels of secularization; and third, the general description and characteristics of the Christians in Syria and Egypt.

4.2 General description of the characteristics of the political regimes in Syria and Egypt since the 1950s

4.2.1 Two countries with a long autocratic history – Syria and Egypt since the 1950’s

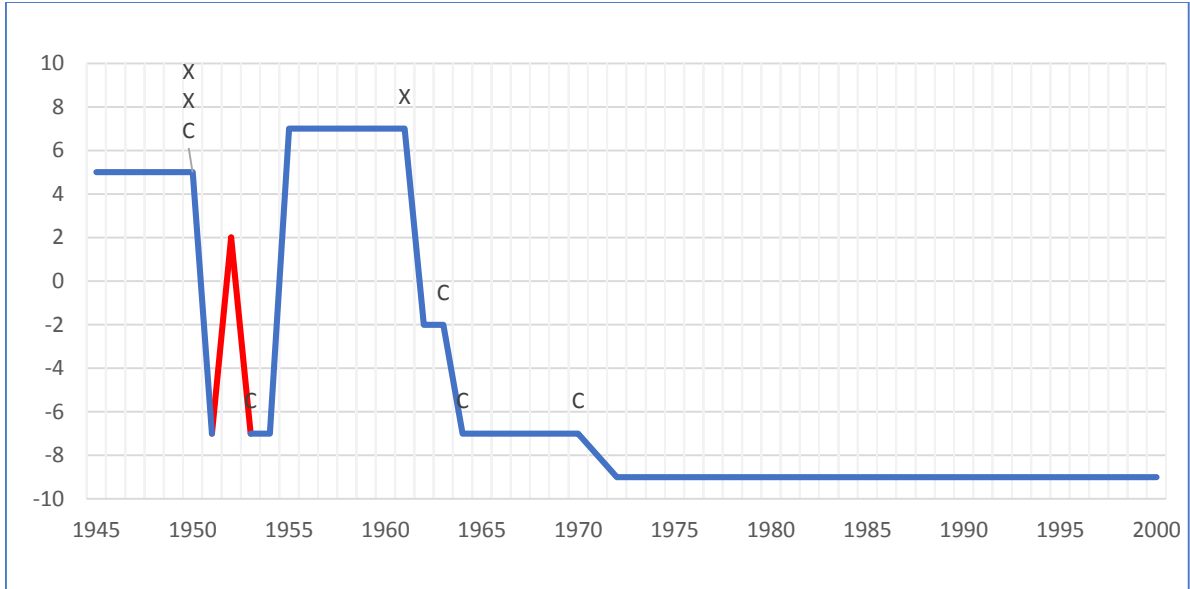
After the Second World War, the Arab region witnessed crucial change in its political, social, economic and cultural formation. As a result, the newly emerged states gained their independence. The post-independence era witnessed political and at certain times security instability. For example, many monarchy regimes in the Arab region have been replaced by long-term autocracies due to military coups and political assassinations. Leading to long-term autocratic regimes in Libya and Egypt. While Syria and Iraq witnessed a long period of political instability, until the Baath party succeeded in establishing sustainable regimes as of 1970’s that combined military, party and personal autocracies.

In this regard, it is important to note that since their formation, and with the exception of Lebanon, almost all Arab states did not experience a democratic rule or democratic transition of power. Therefore, in this section I will focus on the political and power transition in both Syria and Egypt since the independence till the al-Assad and Mubarak eras. It should be noted that both countries were most of the time governed and ruled by autocratic regimes and more precisely party-military and personal dictatorships³⁹ by the most used databases about political regimes. With the exception of a short democratic

³⁹ It should be noted that Egypt witnessed a short democratic experience when Mohamad Morsi was elected president in June 2012. In this thesis, I will not focus on Mohamad Morsi’s era. While in Syria, the pre-1958 era have registered according to Polity IV a short democratic experience. It is important to note that the democratic period according to Polity IV is not recognized by other databases as we will see later in this chapter.

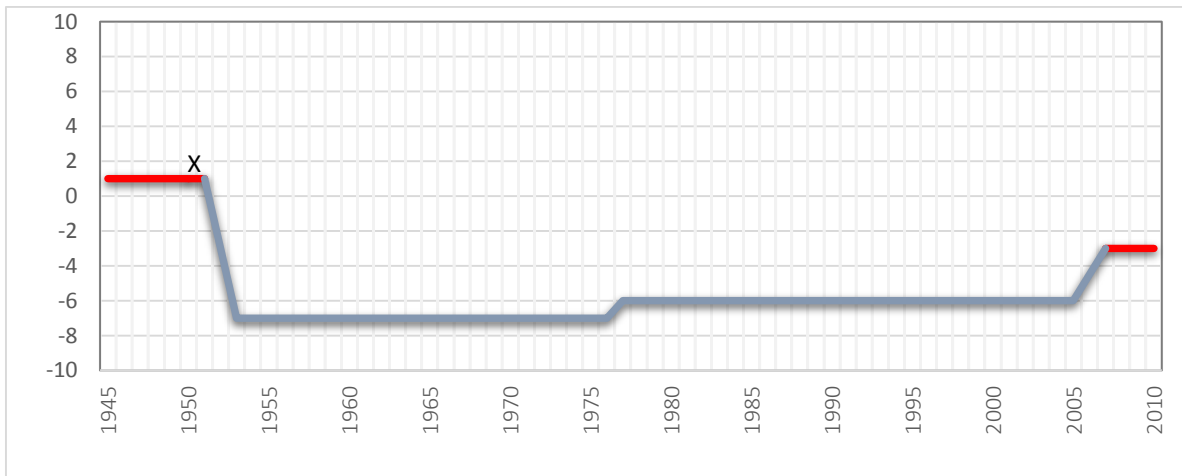
experience in Syria, Polity IV referred to Syria from 1946 till 2000 and Egypt from 1945 till 2010 as autocratic states as seen in figure 4.1 and 4.2 below:

Figure 4.1: Authority Trend for Syria from 1946 till 2010⁴⁰



Source: Thesis author, data from Polity IV.

Figure 4.2: Authority Trend for Egypt from 1946 till 2010⁴¹



Source: Thesis author, data from Polity IV.

⁴⁰ For more information about variable calculation please refer to Annex 4. Please note that C means Autocratic Backsliding and X means coup d'état. It is important to note that between 1958 and 1962 the United Arab Republic (UAR) was created between Syria and Egypt therefore Polity IV marked it as "Direct Foreign Military Regime Change Intervention". **SOLID BLUE LINE** is the Polity scores for January 1 of each year. While **SOLID RED LINE** represents the periods of "factionalism" which are particularly problematic for the durability of established regime authority patterns

⁴¹ Ibid

Figure 4.1 and table 4.1 reflects the political instability in Syria, which lasted until Hafez al-Assad seized power in 1971. Before the al-Assad rule, Syria was stuck in political instability and constant regime change via assassination or coups d'états. From 1945 till 1971, Syria had more than 13 presidents, excluding the United Arab Republic era. With the exception of *Shukri al- Quwatli*, none of the Syrian presidents was elected or reached office through democratic means⁴². According to the Polity IV measurement scale, Syria had very few years of democracy and anocracy both open and close, while the rest were characterized as being autocratic. Apparently when the Baath party took over power in 1963, Syria was drawn into “sustainable autocracy” that survived for more than 50 years.

Table 4.2: Polity IV measurement scale in Syria by year (1946-2000) and ruler⁴³

Year	Ruler name	Political type	Polity IV scale
1946-1949	Shukri al- Quwatli	Presidential	5
1949	Husni al-Za'im*		-7
1949-1951	Hashim al-Atassi		2 in 1950 -7 in 1951
1952- 1953	Fawzi Selu*		-7
1953-1955	Adib Shishakli* Hashim Al-Atassi		7
1955-1958	Shukri al- Quwatli		7
1958-1961	Gamal Abdel Nasser		-66
1961-1962	Nazim Al Kudsi		-2
1963*-1966	Amin Al Hafez*		-7
1966-1970	Nureddin al Atassi		-7 -9 in 1970
1971-2000	Hafez Al Assad		-9

*Baath party in power ** Military rule

Source: Thesis author, data from Polity IV and Encyclopedia Britannica.

Figure 4.2 clearly shows that after the military coup in 1952, Egypt shifted from an open anocracy to an autocratic rule. The newly created regime succeeded to establish “sustainable autocracy,” which lasted for more than 60 years⁴⁴. While the last six years of Hosni Mubarak’s rule witnessed a slight change, the country scale decreases 3 points at Polity IV measurement scale to reach the level of closed anocracy. Table 4.2 below shows the Polity IV measurement scale from monarchy till the Mubarak era.

⁴² For more information, please refer to Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014).

⁴³ Presidents who ruled for less than 3 months were removed from the table.

Table 4.3: Polity IV measurement scale in Egypt by year (1936-2010) and ruler

Year	Ruler name	Political type	Polity IV scale
1936-1952	King Fuad II	Monarchy	1
1953 -1954	Gen. Mohammed Naguib	Presidential	-7
1956-1970	Gamal Abdel Nasser		-7
1970-1975	Anwar Sadat		-7
1976-1981			-6
1982-2004	Hosni Mubarak		-6
2005-2010			-3

Source: Thesis author, data from Polity IV and Encyclopedia Britannica.

It is important to note in this regard that with the exception of Lebanon, the only country that have experienced short period of democratic or semi-democratic rule in the Arab countries was Syria and precisely before 1963 (Polity IV).

According to the Polity IV Coups d'états database that tracks and measures coups from 1946-2015, Syria witnessed between 1949 and 1970 14-coup d'états. Out of the 14 attempts, 7⁴⁵ were successful (including Hafez al-Assad's coup) while the rest ranged between unsuccessful or failed attempts. However, in Egypt, the situation was different, after the successful coup d'états in 1952 and up until 1971 only 7 failed coup attempts were registered. After 1971, no coup d'états attempt was registered.

4.2.2 The characteristics of the regimes in Syria and Egypt since 1950's

Autocracy is therefore, the main feature of the regime type that governed Syria and Egypt from the independence era until 2010. Notwithstanding, both regimes varied in the levels and forms of autocracy (as measured by Polity IV). In order to better understand the general autocratic feature and classification of the regimes (or presidents) that governed both Syria and Egypt in the mentioned era, I will use the three additional databases: 1) Authoritarian Regime Dataset (ARD); 2) Autocratic Regime (AR), and 3) Democracy-Dictatorship database (DD) as shown in table 4.3 and 4.4 below. It is worth noting that these databases are widely used in the social science literature in general and dictatorship literature in particular. With the exception of Authoritarian Regime Dataset (ARD) that covers the period starting 1972 (mainly from early days Hafez al-Assad took over power in Syria), other databases cover a longer period, almost from the mid-1940 till present time.

⁴⁵ Please refer also to Ezrow and Frantz (2011), page 107.

Table 4.4: Classifying the type of autocratic regimes in Syria from 1946-2000 according to ARD, AR and DD

Year Database	Authoritarian Regime Dataset ⁴⁶ (ARD) By Hadenius et al.	Autocratic Regimes ⁴⁷ (AR) By Geddes et al.	Democracy-Dictatorship Data ⁴⁸ (DD) By Cheibub et al.
1946-1949	NA	Oligarchy	Civilian dictatorship
1949		Indirect Military	Military dictatorship
1949-1951		Indirect Military	
1952- 1953		Military	
1953-1955		Military	Civilian dictatorship
1955-1958		N/A*	
1958-1961		N/A**	
1961-1962		Indirect military	
1963-1966		Party-personal-military	Military dictatorship
1966-1970			
1971-2000		Military/one party	

The highlighted years represents the era of Hafez Al Assad as president *It was under democratic rule **Era of UAR

Source: Thesis author, data from ARD, AR and DD.

Table 4.4 above shows, that during 1946-1949, Syria was categorized as an oligarchy according to AR, and a civilian dictatorship according to DD. While from almost 1949 till 1955, according to AR and DD Syria was under a military dictatorship (direct or indirect). From 1955 till 1961, AR does not provide information (since from 1955 - 1958 it was under democratic rule –refer to table 4.1 –and from 1958-1961 Syria joined United Arab Republic); while DD classified the mentioned period to be under civilian dictatorship. Therefore, for the 1940’s and 1950’s the databases agree on the same regime characteristics. It is since 1960’s that these databases started to disagree about their classifications. According the DD it is military dictatorship, for ARD it is military and party one, while according to AR it is military personal and party dictatorship.

In the case of Egypt and according to table 4.4, both AR and DD classified Egypt in the pre-1952 era as a monarchy. Both AR and DD classified the whole era from 1953 till 2010 to be a military dictatorship, which includes personal and party traits in the case of AR. While according to ARD, from 1972 till 1975 Egypt was classified to be under one

⁴⁶ For more information about variable explanation please refer to Annex 4

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

party autocracy and from 1976 till 2010 to be under multi party autocracy. As we can notice, that AR and DD agree on the same regime classification for the pre-coup d'état era. Hereafter 1952, we can trace disagreement between these databases about regime classification. According to ARD it is multiparty dictatorship, for AR it is party, personal and military one, while according to DD, Egypt is a military dictatorship.

Table 4.5: Classifying the type of autocratic regimes in Egypt from 1936-2010 according to ARD, AR and DD

Year Database	Authoritarian Regime Dataset (ARD) By Hadenius et al.	Autocratic Regime (AR) By Geddes et al.	Democracy-Dictatorship Data (DD) By Cheibub et al.
1936-1952	N/A	Monarchy	Royal dictatorship
1953 -1954		Party-personal-military	Military dictatorship
1956-1970			
1970-1981	One party as of 1972 Multiparty as of 1976		
1982-2010	Multiparty		

The highlighted years represent the era of Hosni Mubarak as president

Source: Thesis author, data from ARD, AR and DD.

The fact that these databases disagree about how to classify and categorize these regimes, it exemplifies the difficulties in characterizing them. Therefore, in the upcoming sections, I will try to clarify this discrepancy.

In this regard, the social science literature on the specific case of identifying and classifying different types of autocratic regime is rich. Brooker (2000), Svobik (2012), Ezrow and Frantz (2011), Cheibub et al (2009), Waham et al (2013), Geddes et al (2013) and many others identified the presence of mainly three forms⁴⁹ of authoritarian regimes: personal (monarchy), military and party. Despite that the classification and terminology pertaining each form varies from one scholar to another; the content of the classification is common. For example, one scholar or database might use monarchy dictatorship as a terminology while another refers to it as a royal dictatorship or monarchy. Starting the 1950's, both Egypt and Syria were categorized as being under military and party types of autocracies as per below:

⁴⁹ Many scholars introduced more classification or could be categorized as sub classification. For more information about sub classification of dictatorships please refer to Svobik (2012).

- **In Syria**

After the independence in 1946, wealthy urban (mainly from Aleppo and Damascus) and educated upper class elite took over the political scene of the French established parliamentary system. Rural population and non-wealthy elite of religious minorities were under represented or not represented. In fact, urban clientelist noble families⁵⁰ took control over key positions of the bureaucratic system of the government, the state and parliament (Batatu, 1999).

It is essential to note the importance of the rural-urban dichotomy of the Syrian society that shaped the political, economic and social structure and future of the state. Most of religious minorities (with the exception of the Christians of Damascus and Aleppo) lived in the “poverty-stricken countryside”, while Sunnis dominated rich and large cities (Van Dam, 2011). As a result, a strong distrust was formed by Alawite minority against Sunni majority due the urban-rural dichotomy and a long history of oppression (Van Dam, 2011). This rural-urban split was clearly reflected in the words of Jacques Weulersse (1949) in *Paysans de Syrie et du Proche-Orient*:

The antagonism between urban and rural people reaches such an extent that one can almost speak of two different populations co-existing with the same political frame but without intermingling. The peasant pays all the cost of this antagonism, because the social and economic structure is based on the incontestable primacy of the cities

When the Baath party took over power (along with other sub political parties) in 1963 by a coup d'états, the political, economic and social structure of the state has changed. The party was founded in 1940 in Damascus by two Damascene, a Greek Orthodox Christian *Michel Aflaq* and a Sunni Muslim *Salah al-Din Bitar*. Theoretically, the Baath party highest body is known as the National Command or council, but it ended up after mid 1960's to become powerless. Real power was given to the 21 members of the Baath party Regional Command. The main reason behind the power decline of the National Command at expense to the regional one goes back to the Baath party structure and organization. The National Command had an Arab nationalist approach. It included all the Regional Command bureaus such as Syrian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Lebanese, etc... When the disagreement between Syria and Iraq emerged and led to the split of Baath party National Command during the early 1960's, the Regional Command (at country national level) became the powerful entity. The formation of branches within the Syrian Baath party was

⁵⁰ Most of them were bourgeois families and worked in trade

not only related to National Command (Pan Arab) and Regional Command (Syria), but it also extended as of 1960's to whether or not the party should implement socialist or extreme socialist policies (as we will see later in the upcoming sections).

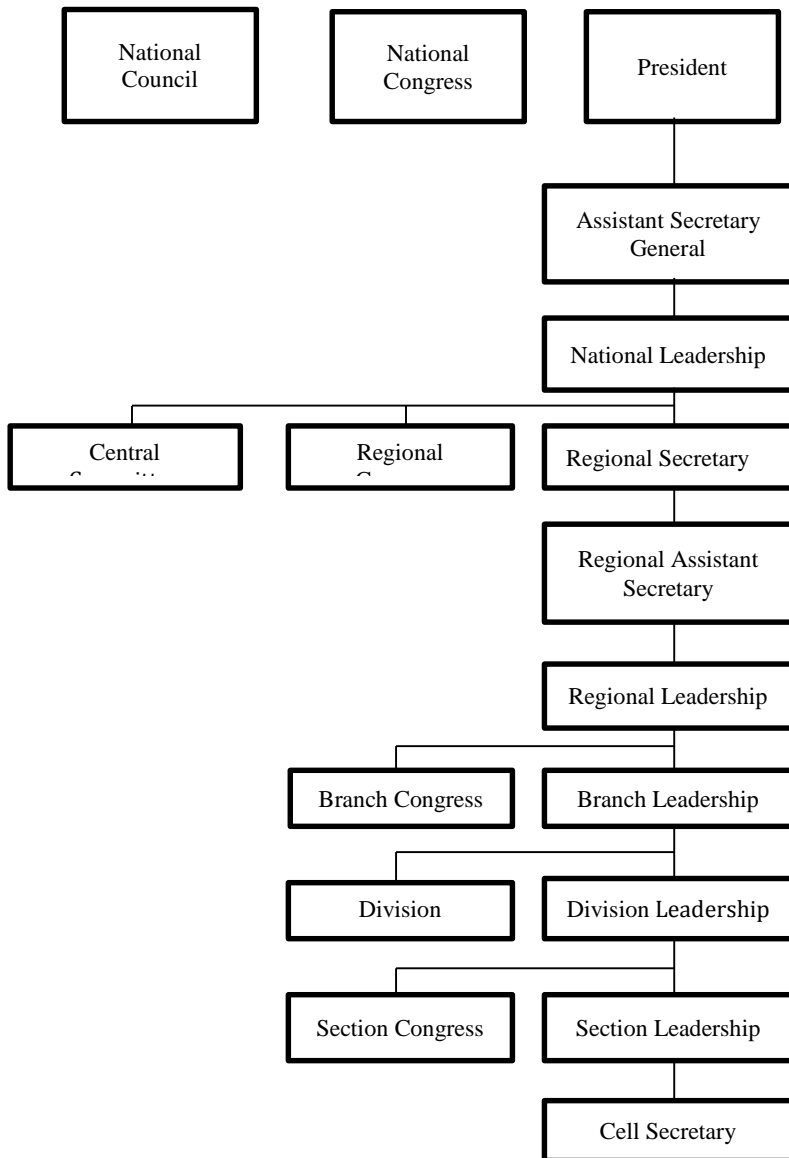
Hafez al-Assad and currently Bashar al-Assad headed both commands (Library of Congress, 1987). The Central Committee that is consisted of 95 members comes directly below the Regional Command. The main role of the Central Committee is to elect the members of the Regional Command. Both the Regional Command and the Central Committee are elected every 4 years during a regional congress. Under the Regional Command, a set of branches, divisions and cells exist, as I will show in Graph 4.1 below pertaining the Baath party organizational structure.

It is worth shedding light on the strategic role of the Baath party Regional Command. According to article 84 of the 1973 constitution, the Regional Command nominates the President of the Republic, which will be subject to parliamentarian approval and popular referendum. On another hand, what could be also important to mention is the role of the army in the Baath party and more precisely in the Regional command. The Regional Command, who became the powerful entity at national level (as discussed in the above paragraph), had two branches, a military and civilian one. The Military Committee at the Baath party Regional Command was the powerful branch that “planned and realized the 1963 coup” (Tilman and Grote, 2016). In the end, the military branch of the Baath party managed to control both the National Command and the Regional one. The history of the army officers' presence in the Baath party goes back to the early days of the party creation. The party attracted officers who held high ranking positions in the state, till up reaching the presidency as of 1966. After seizing power in 1963, the party succeeded to create an ideological army, which has opened the door for many military officers to join the army (Dawisha, 1980). According to Dawisha (1980), al-Assad declared in 1975, that almost 80% of the officers who died in 1973 war were Baathist.

Unlike the urban population (mainly Damascene) who were barely attracted by the Baath party ideology; the party was highly appealing to many countryside and rural groups, which resulted to a party that looked like “a big body with a small head” (Jundi, 1969). Therefore, the balance of power in the state representation shifted towards people who originated from rural areas (mainly Alawites), especially in the army and security positions; for example, between 1966 and 1970, 63.2 percent of military members of the

Syrian Regional Command (SRC)⁵¹ were Alawites (Van Dam, 2011). From 1966 till 1970, there was no representation for Damascus or Aleppo in the Cabinet and the Regional Command; the Command members were mostly from rural Latakia⁵² (29.7 percent), Hawran⁵³ (20.3 percent) and Dayr al Zur⁵⁴ (15.6 percent) (Van Dam, 2011).

Graph 4.1: The Organizational Structure of the Syrian Baath Party



Source: Thesis author (2017). Information retrieved from Baath party website

⁵¹ Ruling body of the Baath Party as we will explain in the next paragraph

⁵² Homeland of Alawite minority

⁵³ It is located in southwestern Syria and bordering Jordan, it is also a homeland for the Druze minority

⁵⁴ It is located in eastern Syria on the shores of the Euphrates River. The population is diverse with Muslim and Christians in addition to Arab, Kurds and Armenian.

The pre-al-Assad Syria was categorized as being politically unstable and a military dictatorship - despite that Cheibub et al (2010) referred to the era between 1955 and 1962 as a civilian dictatorship. Brooker (2000) identified four reasons to political instability in military dictatorship regimes that could explain the situation in the pre al-Assad era in Syria and the high ratio of coup d'états (please refer to part 2.1): first, military regimes tend to usurp power more likely than party or personal dictatorships; second, they are violent against its political leader – mainly during the coups; third, the ratio of countercoup is almost double as in other regimes; and four, their average life is short compared to other types of dictatorship.

When the National Council for the Revolutionary Command (NCRC)⁵⁵, which was dominated by the Baath party⁵⁶, succeeded to overthrow *Nazim al Kudsi* and appointed *Luai al-Atassi* on the 8th of March 1963, the intensity of political instability decreased compared to the pre 1963 era. Hereafter, the 8th of “March Revolution”, discontent and rivals between different factions within the Baath caused the overthrowing of Amin al-Hafez in 1966⁵⁷. The main reason behind the rivalries within the Baath party Military Committee was ideological and personal. According to Line Khatib (2011), the dichotomy inside the Baath leadership was ideological, generational and urban-rural which have led to struggle between “moderate urban leaders against the younger rural radicals”. At personal level, Khatib (2011) mentioned that it was a personal competition between the three important figures *Amin al-Hafez*, *Salah Jadid* and *Muhammad Umran* “each of whom ultimately joined either the moderate or the radical camp”. As a result, the NCRC appointed *Nurreddin al-Atassi* as a president, but real power lay within the hand of the strong Alawite military general and politician *Salah Jadid*. Later in 1970, as a result of the increasing rivalries between *Salah Jadid*⁵⁸ and *Hafez al-Assad*, *al-Assad* organized a peaceful coup d'état known as “corrective movement” (*Al Haraka Al Tashihiya*) that ended the rule of the figurative president *Nurreddin al-Atassi*. By ending *Al-Atassi*'s rule, a long history of political instability and coup d'états reached an end. The

⁵⁵ After 1963 coup d'état, Baath party formed the NCRC, which is a group of military and civilian officials that is formed from loyal political, parties such as SSNP, Communist etc... and independent figures. Real power was in the hand of Baath party.

⁵⁶ In addition to Baath party, the NCRC included few political fractions and independent figures.

⁵⁷ Who supported Baath founder Michel Aflaq at expense of Salah Jadid and Hafez al-Assad branch.

⁵⁸ Nurreddin al-Atassi was a “figure president”. Being an Alawite, Jadid was the strong man who ruled Syria from behind the scene. Al-Assad imprisoned al-Jadid until his death (23 years) and al-Atassi for 22 years.

“corrective movement” did not only secure the position of al-Assad as a head of state, but also as a head of the party, military, and the Alawite community.

The rivalry between Alawites mainly between al-Assad and Jadid in dominating the state, the party and the army is important. The cause of this struggle is not only at “domination” level but also at class level rural (al-Assad) and middle (Jadid) as explained before. This rivalry goes back to the infiltration of rural Alawites within the state and its institutions. Historically, the Alawites were poor rural who resided in the mountains of Latikiya governorates. In the late 1940’s they started to descend from their isolated mountains towards the coast “seeking new opportunities and a better life” (Goldsmith, 2015). According to Seal (1998), *Akram Hawrani* the Sunni from Hama and the founder of the Arab Socialist party was behind fostering the political and social equalities between all sects including Alawites. Therefore, a new educated Alawite elite started to emerge and infiltrate into the state institutions and political parties, while some others (mainly the poor ones) joined the army including al-Assad (Goldsmith, 2015). At party level and similar to other minorities such as Kurds and Christians who joined the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) for its “secular and socialist focus” (Goldsmith, 2015), the Alawite joined both the SSNP up until its decline in the 1950s and later moved to Baath party. With an Arab nationalist, secular and socialist ideology, the Baath party was an attractive political tool for Alawites and a mean to spread within the state institutions and the army.

It is important to note that after the Baath party took over power in 1963, the Alawites whom infiltrated the army as discussed earlier, launched a massive purges process against Sunnis, Druze, Hawranis and Ismailis in the army and the party (Christians already were not represented⁵⁹). In other words, it was a purge against non-rural non-Alawites groups. Van Dam (2011) stated in this regard “after 23 February 1966, the last Sunni officer from Aleppo, *Amin al-Hafiz*, and the last Druze officers *Salim Hatum* and *Hamad Ubayd* were removed. Since October 1968, officers from *Hawran*⁶⁰ have not been represented, and there have been no *Ismaili* officers since March 1969. After which date only Alawite and Sunni officers remained as military members, the Alawites enjoying almost complete supremacy”. As a result, a formal and informal political and military system of rule was established. Formally, al-Assad appointed Sunnis (and others) in very powerful and

⁵⁹ Because during the UAR, Christians were not represented in the army

⁶⁰ I have explained earlier where is Hawran

prestigious positions in the government, the army and other state institutions. While informally, the real power laid in their Alawite vices. In this context, Batatu (1999) explained how al-Assad appointed powerless Sunni officers in key positions in the army and security apparatus such as the commander of the Air Forces, Commander of Civilian Intelligence, Minister of Defense and Commander in Chief. But the main power lied in the hand of their Alawite officers deputies or vices. He added, “none of these Sunni officers does not have and did not have at any moment the power to take any random or critical decision”. For example, and according to Batatu (1999), the Army Commander in Chief *Hikmat al-Shihabi*, whom al-Assad used to depend on for secret missions was a Sunni, but when it came to random military unit transfer, his vice (or 2nd rank officer) the Alawite *Ali Aslan* had the final call. In their turn, Sami Khiyami⁶¹ a previous ambassador of Syria to the United Kingdom and also a close politician to al-Assad regime and a businessman⁶² who preferred his name to remain confidential explained the relation between formal and informal way of rule by mentioning that in key sensitive positions such as military, intelligent agencies (there were five separate intelligent agencies), presidential guard and many others security fractions, al-Assad trusted and appointed only close Alawites who showed loyalty, obedience and originated from his own tribe or family. At the second layer, which is formally the higher positions in the state institutions and the army, al-Assad did not hesitate to appoint Sunnis in very high and important positions such as Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, Minister of Interior, Army General Commander etc... but they were totally powerless. As stated above, the main power lays in the hand of their Alawite deputies. At Judicial level, formally there was the state civil laws and court (as we will see in graph 4.2 below) but informally Syria was ruled based on the state emergency law since al-Assad years in power, which allows the security forces to arrest and detain any suspect of endangering order or state security without justification (Cleveland and Bunton, 2014)

After seizing power, al-Assad changed the constitution in 1973 to include the Baath party as “the leading party in the state and society and head of the National Progressive Front (NPF)⁶³”. As discussed before, it is the Baath party Regional Command who nominates

⁶¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

⁶² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

⁶³ A political alliance of parties in Syria that supports the socialist and Arab nationalist orientation established by Hafez al Assad in 1972.

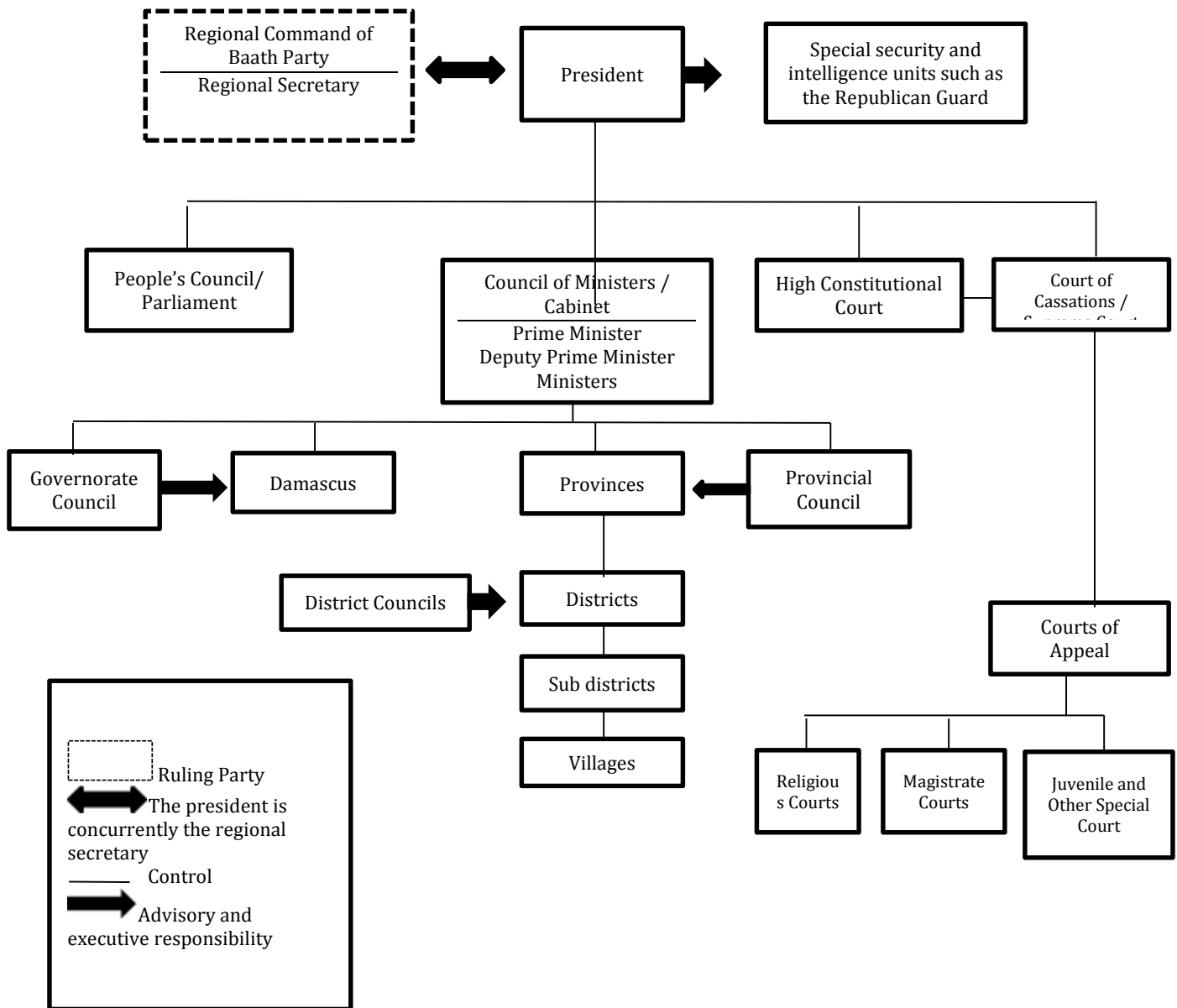
the president; which will be approved by the parliament and subject to popular referendum (Syrian constitution, 1973). Each presidential term is for seven years. Therefore, the executive power in the republican system ensures that the president has “executive as well as some legislative powers” (UN Syria profile, 2004). It is the President who appoints the Vice President, the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, judges, high military and civil servant positions. The president is the “Head of State, the chief executive, the chairman of NPF and the secretary of the ruling Baath Party” (UN, 2004). He is the commander in chief of the armed forces; he approves and dissolves the People’s Assembly (parliament).

At legislative level, the parliament is elected for four years and constituted of 250 members⁶⁴ out of whom 125 should represent peasants and workers (UN Syria profile, 2004). The election is usually conducted in a multi-party system within the national progressive front that included Baath party, Communist party, Arab Socialist Union and Arab Socialist party along with some independent figures. Parties such as Muslim Brotherhood were banned and not allowed to participate in the election. The assembly’s main role is to approve the president election, discuss and monitor the government policies and issuing and ratification of laws. Finally, at local government level, Syria had 14 governorates headed each by a governor who is appointed by the Minister of Interior and reports directly to the President (UN Syria profile, 2004). The governor is in charge of managing the government offices in each governorates.

To better understand the structure of the power in Syria check graph 4.2 below. In this regard, the political system in Syria had three main competing pillars that are the party, the army (or the defense/security institution) and the presidency (or the government). Al-Assad mastered to tighten his control over the three pillars which allowed him to sustain his rule for 30 years. Dawisha (1980) stated in this matter that al-Assad “central and authoritative position stemmed from the fact that the president was the only individual who was the member of all three institutions”.

Graph 4.2: The political system in Syria during Hafez al-Assad

⁶⁴ The number of seats has changed by time. For more information please refer to table 11.



Source: Thesis author (2017). Information retrieved from Library of Congress from Syria Country Profile and other sources.

- **In Egypt**

The pre-Mubarak era was politically stable (despite the few failed coups attempts) compared to pre-al-Assad era in Syria. Egypt was considered as a military autocracy for DD and AR, and party dictatorship for AR, ARD and Trucker (1961). To better describe the pre-Mubarak era, I will focus on AR classification since it combines the classification of other databases and unlike ARD, it covers a longer period starting 1932.

On the 23rd of July 1952, the Monarchy political system in Egypt reached an end. The movement, later known as “Free Officers” (around 100 officers) movement that was headed by General Neguib, Colonel Abdel Nasser and Colonel Anwar Sadat ended

through a bloodless coup d'état, the corrupt rule of King Farouk and his son Fu'ad II. "In July 1952, while Wafd's⁶⁵ leaders were relaxing in St. Moritz and Cannes, a number of armed brigades mounted a coup against King Farouk. The people poured joyfully into the streets and cheered the young officers who led the coup as agents of change" (Osman, 2013).

Many internal reasons have led to the popular uprising and later the 1952 coup, some of which are the emergence of Israel and the defeat of the Egyptian army, the illegal procurement of weapons which resulted to the 1948 defeat of Arab in general and Egypt in particular, the failure of Wafd party to introduce any change and the increase of social instability. In addition, the corruption of the royal family and the King, as well as the political elite and the bourgeoisie resulted of a hard-economic crisis. Therefore, the gap between the rich and poor, as well as between the urban and rural population increased widely. As a result, to the mentioned reasons, the tension between the majority of the people including the army and the ruling elite especially the monarchy has widened leading to what was known later as "Cairo fire"⁶⁶ (Baraka, 1998; Osman, 2013 and Shimon, 1995).

As a result, to the coup d'état, the Monarchy was replaced by a republican regime, political parties were abolished (mainly Wafd and Muslim Brotherhood). The socialist economy replaced the capitalist one, thus minimizing the gap between the rich and the poor. And a massive social mobility from rural to urban cities occurred. In 1954, the rural officer Gamal Abdel Nasser silently took over power from General Neguib and therefore changing Egypt forever. Once in power he initiated land reform, nationalized private wealth, took over Suez Canal and challenged the west and Israel in 1956, by his newly built strong army, therefore he became the most popular leader not only in Egypt, but also across the Arab world. Nasser was seen as a "hero" and champion of Arab nationalism. In 1962, Nasser allowed the creation of the first political party known as Arab Socialist Union, which promoted Arab nationalism, equality and socialist ideology. Upon the defeat of Egypt against Israel in the 1967 war, Nasser's legacy ended. His successor President Sadat described the end of Nasserite project when he stated that the Nasser era

⁶⁵ Established in 1922 by Saed Zaghloul. The party played important role in gaining Egypt independence and adapting 1923 constitution. It was nationalist and liberal party who either formed governments or were parts of the governments from 1920's up till 1952.

⁶⁶ Due the confrontation between the British army, the police, the Egyptian army and palace, riots turned out to be violent which led to burning more than 750 old building in the old city of Cairo in 1952.

did not end on the 28th of September 1970⁶⁷, but in June 5, 1967. After his death, the vice president who was appointed by Nasser, Anwar Al Sadat became the second president of Egypt. However, Sadat introduced deep political, economic and social/religious changes that ended Nasserist legacy under what was known as openness (or *al-Infitah*) (Aoude, 1994). As a result of his new policies, Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, which ended a history of war and hostility. He succeeded to move Egypt from the USSR to the American camp and allowed gradual economic changes that caused the minimization of the old nationalization process and encouraged private investments. While on another hand, Sadat unleashed Islamic forces that were suppressed by Nasser. At political parties' level, Sadat introduced political openness by allowing the formation of three political parties in 1976 but with specific agreed guidelines⁶⁸. The creation of new political parties first, the Liberal Socialist party as a right wing; second, the Egypt Arab Socialist party as a middle wing headed by the President; and third, the National Progressive Unionist party as a left wing (Egypt State Information Service) have gave the rise of contained multi-political party system in Egypt. Hereafter, his visit to Israel in 1977, political instability arouses. As a result, Sadat issued laws to restrict opposition political activities and crack down opponents "allowing the prosecutor general to interrogate intellectuals on their affiliations under what was known as the "political accountability" (Egypt State Information Service).

Unlike Nasser, who was religious at personal level but secular to a certain extent at state level, who defined Egyptians as Arabs and not Muslims and challenged political Islam, Sadat did the opposite. President Sadat declared that Islamic *Sharia* law is the main source of legislation. He regarded himself as a "guardian of the faith" (Osman, 2013) and that he is a "Muslim president of a Muslim state" (Guiguis, 2017). At social level, veil became the regular dress code for girls younger than twelve years old, and thousands of mosques were established (Osman, 2013). Sadat policies allowed the Muslim Brotherhood and many other radical Islamic groups or movements such as Al Jamat al Islamiya to be formed and legally exist in syndicates and unions. The repercussion of the unleashing of over-radical Islamists, led however to his assassination during a military parade in 1981

⁶⁷ Referring to the Nasser's death date.

⁶⁸ These three parties were directly or indirectly associated with the government. Other parties such as Muslim Brotherhood, old Wafd party and many others were banned.

at the hand of *Islamic Jihad* militants. Mubarak in his position as a Vice president succeeded him.

When in power, Mubarak ruled the country based on 1971 constitution that was adopted by Sadat and gave wide power to the president. The executive power lay in the hand of the president who is nominated by the majority in the parliament and elected through popular referendum for six years term (UN Egypt profile, 2004). The 2007 constitutional amendment have opened the door for political parties to nominate presidential candidacy but under tight rules. Article (76) of the amended constitution mentioned that “Political parties, founded at least five consecutive years before the starting date of candidature and have been operating uninterruptedly for this period, and whose members have obtained at least 3% of the elected members of both the People’s Assembly and the Shura Council in the latest election or an equivalent percentage of such total in one of the two assemblies, may each nominate for presidency a member of their respective higher board” (Egyptian amended Constitution, 2007).

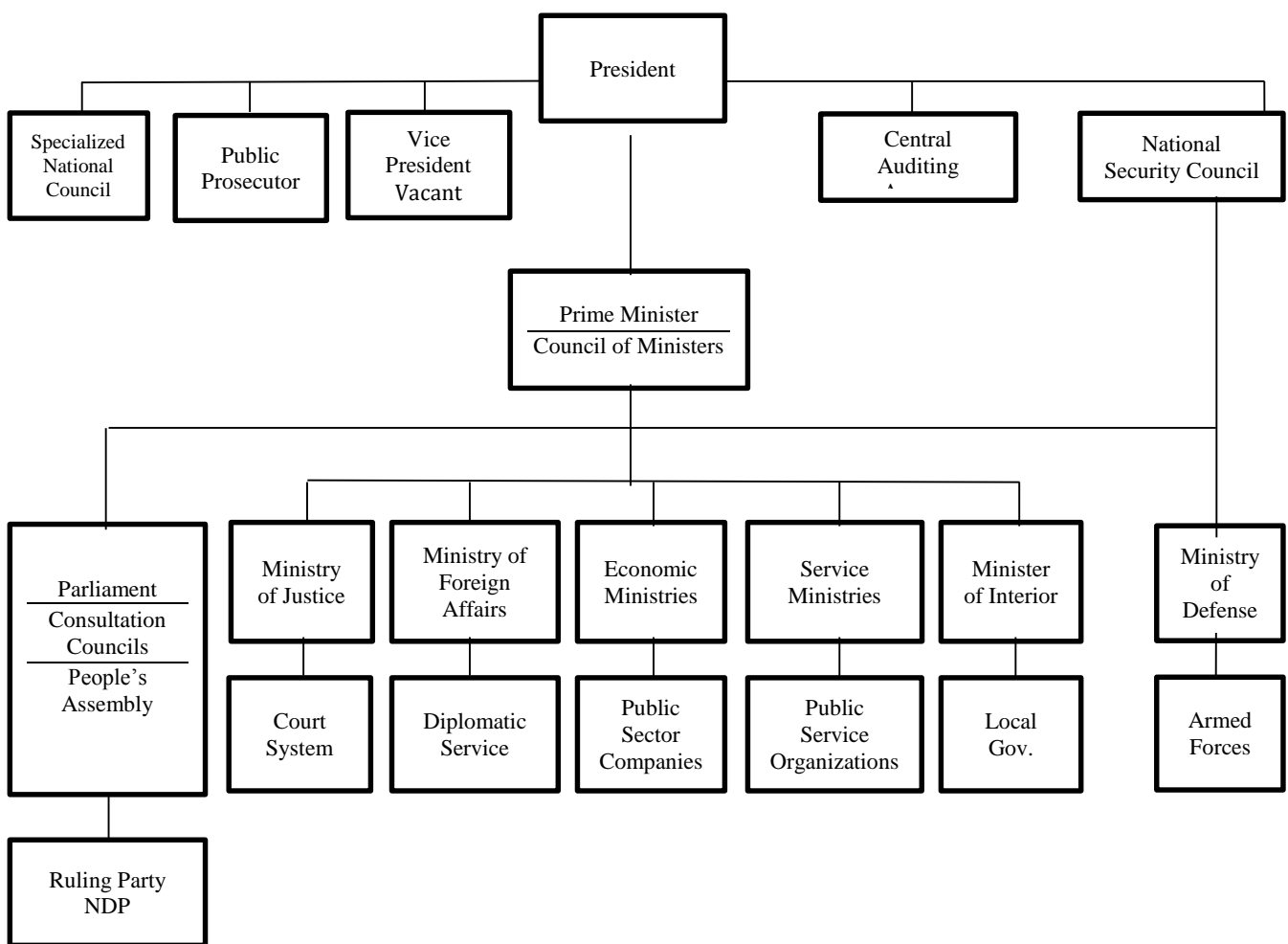
According to Library of the Congress reports on Egypt (1990) “the presidency is the command post of Egypt's dominant executive branch of government and the linchpin of the political elite”. It is the President who appoints the Vice Presidents, Prime Minister, Ministers and high civil servant positions in the state which includes “army commanders, the heads of the security apparatus, senior civil servants, heads of autonomous agencies, governors, newspaper editors, university presidents, judges, major religious officials, and public-sector managers” (Library of the Congress reports on Egypt 1990). Similar to Syria, the president in Egypt is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces (UN Egypt profile, 2004).

At legislative level, there are two assemblies, formally elected based on the multi-party system: the first is the People's Assembly or (*Majlis al-Sha'b*) which held the legislative power, while the second is the Advisory Council or (*Majlis al- Shura*) who hold the advisory power. The number of seats in the People's Assembly that is elected for five years should not be less than 350⁶⁹. Half of the elected members should represent farmers and workers (UN Egypt profile, 2004). It is the People’s Assembly who monitors the government, nominate the President and approve the country development plan and budget (UN Egypt profile, 2004). As for the Advisory Council, who serves for six years,

⁶⁹ The number of seats has changed by time. For more information please refer to table 12.

is composed of 264 members of which the President appoints 88. The main role of the Advisory Council is to provide the People’s Assembly with consultations in addition to new laws propositions (UN Egypt profile, 2004). The real power lays in the People’s Assembly and not Advisory Council. At local administration level, the President appoints the 26 Governors of the 26 Governorates. The role of the Governor is not political but rather administrative one (UN Egypt profile, 2004). To better understand the structure of the political system in Egypt, check graph 4.3 below.

Graph 4.3: the political system in Egypt during Hosni Mubarak



Source: Thesis author (2017). Information retrieved from Library of Congress from Egypt Country Profile.

Similar to Syria, the regime in Egypt had formal and informal balance of power. As explained above, the formal way of rule is clear and held excess of power in the hand of the president. Informally, the backing of the high ranking military officers and more

precisely the Supreme Council of Armed Forces⁷⁰, security, along with the National Democratic Party⁷¹ (including senior bureaucrats and businessmen) was essential (Library of the Congress reports on Egypt, 1990; Osman, 2013 and El Sherif, 2014). Between all these factions, the army had the upper hand. The words of the released CIA report in 2013 entitled “The Egyptian Military Its Role and Missions under Mubarak” stands as a reflection to the powerful role of the army. The report described the army as “Egypt’s single strongest institution, the ultimate arbiter of political power and the key to the regime’s survival”. It was the army who founded the republic and the army generals who ruled Egypt from 1952 up till 2011, the Library of the Congress reports on Egypt argued. In addition, during Mubarak, the army enjoyed huge economic benefits and were not subject to taxation or accountability (Aziz, 2012), which allowed them a flexible margin of independence. One of Mubarak tactics to ensure allegiance with the army was the enormous autonomy granted to officers in creating and running a lucrative military-industrial-business complex” (Hashim). Finally, and similar to Syria, Mubarak ruled Egypt based on the emergency law which allows the security forces to detain and arrest any suspect without justification (Osman, 2014). What is important to note in this matter also is that under the emergency law and when the parliament is not in session, the president can legislate by decree, therefore he is the "chief legislator" (Library of the Congress reports on Egypt 1990).

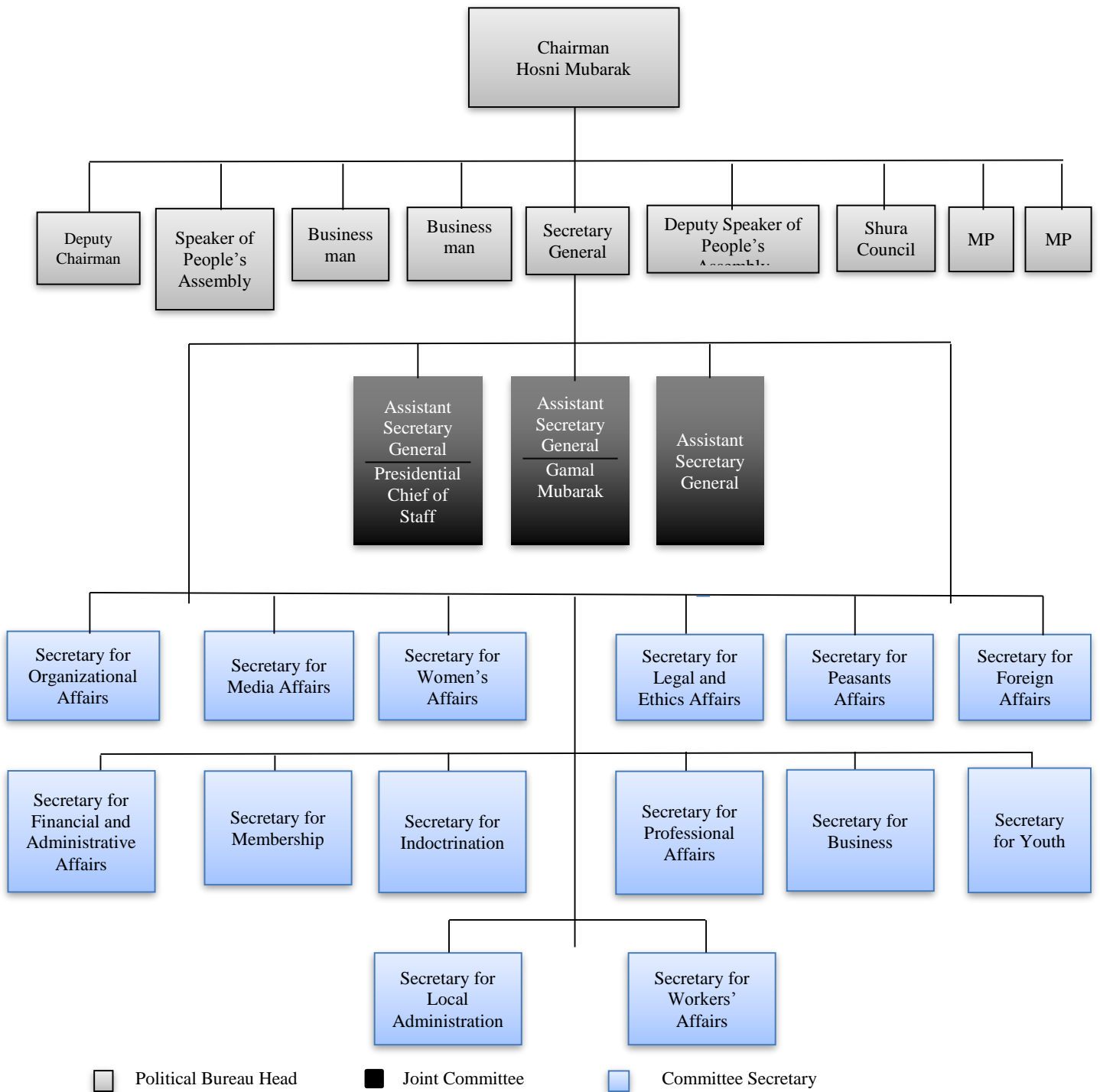
On another hand, unlike Syria where the party was a platform for al-Assad and others to reach power and dominate the state (as discussed previously), in Egypt the situation was different. In fact, the regime created the party and not the party (and other factors) who created the regime (like in Syria). As stated above, it was Nasser who created the first union/party and Sadat who opened the multi-party system. While under Mubarak there were around 25 political parties including NDP (Egypt State Information Service). But all these parties were controlled by the regime. Similar to al-Assad, Mubarak did not allow the formation of religious parties. Article 5 of the 2007 constitutional amendment clearly stated that "The political system of the Arab Republic of Egypt is a multiparty system... Citizens have the right to establish political parties according to the law and no political activity shall be exercised nor political parties established on a religious referential authority, on a religious basis or on discrimination on grounds of gender or

⁷⁰ It includes 20-25 most high-level military officers

⁷¹ It is the new name of Egypt Arab Socialist party that was created by Sadat in 1976

origin" (Egyptian amended Constitution, 2007). It is important to note that NDP have controlled most of the parliamentary seats which gave NDP a flexible margin to nominate the president to additional terms and control the legislations. After 2000, Mubarak's son Gamal started to play a major role in NDP (Osman, 2013). In the last 10 years of Mubarak rule, his son Gamal Mubarak influenced and controlled the businessmen elite and NDP members. It was logical for Gamal Mubarak as NDP vice/Assistant Secretary General to use the party as a platform to his political aims, since he was neither a military man nor holder of any bureaucratic position. What could also explain Gamal Mubarak reliance on NDP is that the party was structured in a way that most of its leaders served in state top bureaucratic positions (Heiss, 2012) therefore by controlling the party he can ensure control of the state institution and the parliament. Graph 4.4 below describes the party organizational structure.

Graph 4.4: The Organizational Structure of the National Democratic Party



Note: For the political bureau head, their professions were taken based on 2010.

Source: Thesis author (2017), information taken from Heiss 2012

4.2.3 The characteristics of the regime in Syria and Egypt during al-Assad and Mubarak eras

In section 2.2 I have relied on some databases that I will also use in this section. Accordingly, AR classified Syria and Egypt during Al Assad and Mubarak era as being personal, party and military dictatorships, while DD as being military dictatorship. According to Cheibub et al (2010), the case of Assad and Mubarak dictatorship does not fit under “civilian category”. It rather fits under “military” classification. As per the ARD, Syria was classified as military/one party dictatorship while Egypt as multi party dictatorship. Therefore, in this thesis we will use AR classification (mainly Geddes et al, 2014) since it is common between both countries and comprehensive database that includes all forms of dictatorships.

At **political** and **regime** structure level, the evolution of autocratic regime forms in the al-Assad and Mubarak era is very important, especially if we study the gradual move from military to party and to personal forms of autocracies. Before taking power, both al-Assad and Mubarak were high-ranking army officers in addition of having political roles in their regimes. Al-Assad being Minister of Defense as of 1966, Prime Minister and president in 1970, while Mubarak as vice president as of 1975 and President as of 1981. At party level, al-Assad joined the Baath party in 1940 and appointed Secretary General (highest position) in 1970. While, Mubarak was appointed in 1978 as Vice Chairman of the National Democratic Party and its head as of 1981. This combination of military and party classifications is addressed in the dictatorship literature of Finer (1976 and 1988), Perlmutter (1977), Geddes et al (2014) and many other political scientists. In the final 10 years of both al-Assad and Mubarak in power, political inheritance of their power/presidency to their sons, Bashar in the case of Syria and Gamal in the case of Egypt, became a tangible plan. As a result, personal autocratic traits categorized by political inheritance and the cult of the president were added to form a triangle in the autocratic features that includes military as a background, the party as political mechanism, and the presidents (and their sons) cult as a personal rule. In Syria, Hafez al-Assad have well-trained and prepared his older son Bassel to inherit the presidency and power. But in 1994, the young parachutist and army officer Bassel died in a car accident in Damascus. As a result, al-Assad the father started to prepare his second son Bashar to inherit the political power in Syria. After the death of Hafez al-Assad in 2000 “Syria

experienced a quasi-monarchical change of leadership...Bashar was installed as a new leader by the relevant state and party agencies. Their decision was ratified by public referendum” (Volker, 2004). While in Egypt, as of 2000, Mubarak started to prepare his son Gamal for political and power inheritance (Osman, 2013). Unlike his predecessors Nasser and Sadat, Mubarak did not appoint any vice president. But the 2011 revolution in Egypt has led to the resignation of Mubarak and the change of the political elite in Egypt including his son Gamal who was imprisoned along with his father and many party members and officials. Therefore, the inheritance project for Hosni Mubarak doomed failure. It is worth noting that during the last years of the al-Assad and Mubarak era, the state was represented by the personal cult of the president (as being head of regime, party and army) and not vice versa. Slogans such as “Syria Al Assad” and “Egypt Mubarak” were raised in both countries.

Brooker (1995) explained the transformation of military and/or party autocratic regimes into personal by what he calls the “degeneration of organizational (party or military)” which turns out to be the agent of the personal ruler. Therefore, in Syria, al-Assad succeeded to survive political instability by relying on both the army and the party (Slovik 2012); and at a later stage of his rule to his personal cult as being “undisputed leader of the Syrian government, military and Baath party” (Hinnbusch, 2002). While in Egypt, Mubarak was also seen as a cult image but not as al-Assad. The political structure of Baath party in addition to the personal characters of both Mubarak and al-Assad differs. Mubarak “supreme rule with unrivalled power and authority” (Osman, 2013) made him according to some newspapers and journalist reports a cult that “became a central plank of his exercise of power” (Allison, 2012).

On another level, the general pattern of **religious freedom** in both countries was to some extent controlled and based on security apparatus. The situation in Egypt was slightly different than in Syria. The religious and sectarian division in Syria had forced the regime to deal with religious practices within the parameter of security concern. The main concern of the Alaweite president in Syria was not the sectarian and religious minorities, but rather the Sunni majority. The regime succeeded to abolish Sunni Islamic threat represented by the Muslim Brotherhood, the Fighting Vanguard (*al-Tali'a al-Muqatila*)⁷² and many other fractions after June 1982 warfare in Hama. Anti al-Assad/Baath Islamic

⁷² Most military operations were carried out by Fighting Vanguard. Muslim Brotherhood were only engaged in 1980 during the open warfare.

groups were not only targeting the regime and its institutions (mainly army and security) but also pro regime ulama and religious scholar figures such as the preacher of the Umayyad Mosque (Pierret, 2013). Unlike other groups, who to some extent enjoyed religious freedom at personal and institutional levels, religious activities of the majority “were subject to drastic limitations” especially after 1982. The regime forced many mosques to close their doors and “prevented the holding of religious lessons, *dhikr* assemblies and celebrations of the *Mawlid*⁷³” (Pierret, 2013).

Similar to Syria, Mubarak dealt with religious practices from security concern. He did not fear the Coptic minority since it posed no threat to his regime. The real threat was from the Sunni Islamic fundamentalist groups/organizations such as *Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya*, Egyptian Islamic Jihad and others who failed to assassinate him many times inside and outside Egypt. As a result, Mubarak centered his security apparatus to contain the growing Islamic groups (Beshara, 2012) who tried to destabilize the regime during 1990's. Unlike al-Assad, Mubarak allowed religious freedom to Sunni majorities despite the radical and Salafi approach of some groups. He did not close mosques or abolish religious celebrations. Rather he used the “carrot and stick” strategy to contain his opponents (Brichs, 2013). At Coptic level, Mubarak was flexible in dealing with Copts and his policies were better than Sadat (Beshara, 2012).

At economic level, despite that both regimes were still formally socialist, Egypt enjoyed economic openness due to the *Infitah* policies inherited from president Sadat's era. A strong alliance between politics and business was formed. Mubarak's vision and plan for Egypt was based on improving the economic situation in order to sustain his regime through popular support (Osman, 2013). Mubarak started a massive economic plan to reduce debt. For the first time after the 1953 coup d'états, more than hundreds of public sector companies were privatized. Mubarak allowed foreign investment, launched massive infrastructure plan and restructured the economy (Osman, 2013). But his policies did not reach the expected end. In fact, unemployment increased especially among youth population (UNDP-AHDR 2003), inflation increased which caused social challenges at housing, marriage and living levels.

As a result, few businessmen and main regime and party figures that were close to Mubarak and his family, especially his son Gamal, benefited from the regime's economic

⁷³ Typical Muslim religious celebrations

policies. As a result, an unchained relation between the regime and strong loyal capitalist forces emerged. According to Osman (2013), in the last ten years of Hosni Mubarak's rule, his son Gamal Mubarak "gathered around him a group of successful businessmen, economists and public relations professionals who gradually became the center of gravity within the party.... unlike his father he did not rely on the military and the intelligence establishment; his allies without exception, came from the upper business echelons". Mubarak –the father and the son –policies led to an increase in poverty rate from one hand and the emergence of businessmen and rich elite tycoons who controlled around 40 percent of the country's wealth (Osman, 2013).

Finally, it is vital to shed light on the important role of the military institution in the economic sector in general and during the Mubarak era in particular. After 1953, military figures controlled much of the political and bureaucratic institutions of the state. During the Mubarak era, the military became a separate institution, which ran what is known as a "shadow economy" that according to Aziz (2012) reached around 40 percent and was free of taxes and accountability.

While in Syria, Hafez al-Assad did not introduce deep changes to the economic sector as Mubarak and his son did. The Economy of the state was mainly related to the Baath socialist ideology, in which the economy is centralized in the hand of the state total control (Batatu, 1999). When in power, al-Assad was keen in reconstructing and empowering economic ties with the traditional "Syrian economic centers" (Azmeah, 2014), mainly the Damascene and to some extent Aleppo bourgeoisies (Batatu, 1999). He was engaged in "liberal domestic economic policy" towards these bourgeois (Van Dam, 2011).

The economy of pre-Assad era was based mainly on agriculture, food processing and cotton's production (Cleveland and Bunton, 2014). Al-Assad succeeded in modernizing the agricultural sector, he was also known of developing the infrastructure not only in the cities but also in rural areas. At industrial level, he failed to modernize the sector and move the state from an agricultural to an industrial economy (Seale, 1988). The booming oil industry has led to an increase in oil revenues, which "contributed to around 20 percent of the GDP, two-thirds of total export, and half government revenues. In 2001, the non-oil budget balance was 16.1 of Syria's GDP" (Azmeah 2014). It is important to note that the state during al Assad has provided social security, economic benefits and low taxation on small-scale private businesses, in return for political and security supremacy and

dominance (Azmeah, 2014). At international and regional levels, al-Assad empowered Syria's economic ties with communist and socialist countries. But the Syrian economy made some shift towards the gulf countries through trade and commerce directly hereafter the Iraqi-USA war in 1991, (Shamle, 2014).

At community level, the perfect situation to sustain stable income for the Alawite was through the security forces and state institutions (Goldsmith, 2015). Hafez al-Assad succeeded to balance labor and the economy of the regime through a sectarian partition in which the Sunnis (and Christians) occupy the "traditional economic sector", while the Alawites occupied the public and bureaucratic one (Goldsmith, 2015). Many rural Alawites and more precisely from al-Assad clan, succeeded to become the new country elite and businessmen (Seale, 1988). Unlike al-Assad who was known for his restrained lifestyle, many members of the president's family, Baath party, security and military grabbed the opportunity to form what *Sadiq al-Azm* described it as "merchant-military complex". Longuenesse (1985) added that these groups "had milked budgets, taken cuts on government projects, formed speculated property and made money". The newly created elite has secured for themselves fortunes that worth millions; al-Assad's brother Rifa't, or Makhlouf family (al-Assad first cousins), or Tlas family stands as good examples. As a result, al-Assad succeeded in building economic ties with some Sunnis, Alawites and Christians whom they paid him loyalty in return for economic benefits (Hinnebusch 2001). According to Lurdes Vidal (2012) "the organic cohesion of this circle of power would not be possible without the support of certain sectors of the Sunni entrepreneurial and commercial middle class in large cities, who have benefited from the economic privileges that their relations with the government in power has brought them".

At **cultural** and **social** level, al-Assad and Mubarak regimes succeeded to shift the attention of their population from public to private matter. Linz (1970) refers to this process as "privatization" or "depoliticization of society". In Syria, the Baath party wanted to establish secular Arab society in which "Arabs would be equal irrespective to their religion" (Van Dam, 2011). This ideology, attracted minorities who hoped that the Baath party would liberate them from their historical minority status and therefore "narrow their social frame of the sectarian, regional and tribal ties" (Umran, 1970). When al-Assad took over power in Syria and especially during and after Hama incidents, his main focus was on reducing the role of Ulama, therefore minimizing the power of religion in society. Assad cleverly realized that the community identity is strongly associated to

the family, tribal, ethnic and religious social network (Spitz, 2014). As a result, al-Assad's depoliticization strategy was used to keep the social and cultural heritages in accordance with the Baath party and under his security apparatus. As for Egypt under Mubarak, the "privatization" or "depoliticization of society" process is quite similar to Syria. But unlike al-Assad, Mubarak did not try to contain the power of ulama. In fact, Mubarak used the increase Islamic traits in the society to control the social structure and to balance between Copts and radical Muslims mainly Muslim Brotherhood and Al Jamat al Islamiya. Beshara (2012) stated that the increase in poverty rate, unemployment and the lack of common national project have led to the failure at social level in general and sectarian one in particular. As a result, the fragmentation of the social (along with political and economic) structure has led to encountering the development process of the state. Based on the above description that reflected different forms of impediments pre and during al-Assad and Mubarak rules, one cannot but ask about the causes that led to the survival of al-Assad and Mubarak's autocratic regimes for more than 30 years.

In this matter, the political science literature about the specific case of autocratic regime survival is rich. Scholars such Linz (1970), Ghand and Przeworski (2007), Wright (2007) Frants and Ezrow (2011), Brooker (2012), Svolik (2012) and many others addressed the question of the survival of autocratic regimes through different reasons and strategies. Some of these factors as shown in table 4.5 below, are directly associated to the survival of al-Assad regime for more than 45 years (if we include the years of his son Bashar) and Mubarak's regime until his outset after 30 years.

Table 4.6: Factors that leads to the survival of authoritarian regimes in the case of Syria and Egypt under al-Assad and Mubarak era

Factors	The case for Syria	The case for Egypt
Mass support	No	No
A fractured and weak opposition	Yes	Yes
Elite loyalty	Yes	Yes
Economic crises	No, it did not affect	Yes, it did affect in 2011
Strengthening control through security and intelligence services	Yes	Yes
Use of force internally	Yes	No

Source: Thesis author, data from Ghand and Przeworski (2007), Frants and Ezrow (2011) and Brooker (2012)

Frants and Ezrow (2011) also referred to the role played by election and parties' formations that leads to the survival of autocracies. Election is needed in order to 1) legitimate the rule; 2) manage and control the elite; 3) eliminate the need for the opposition to use violent means; 4) acquire foreign support; 5) collect information about the strength of the opposition movements. As for the need to establish political parties, Frants and Ezrow (2011) added that this move will 1) co-opt politicians; 2) reduce the risk of coup; 3) manage the elite; and 4) win elections.

In this regard, the Baath regime in Syria was founded in 1963 but its consolidation, empowerment and survival began with Hafez al-Assad. Similar to Nasser in Egypt, a strong military, party and personal autocratic regime was also built in Syria. The absolutist nature of both regimes lasted till the present time. Unlike Mubarak, where no coup d'états attempts were registered during his rule, Polity IV coups d'états database tracked two failed coups attempts during Hafez al-Assad's years in power⁷⁴. Unlike Mubarak as well, al-Assad was subject to real threat even from within his community. Kaplan (1993) words below summarizes al-Assad personal and regime challenges

“Considering that Damascus saw twenty-one changes of government in the twenty-four years preceding his coup, Assad's permanence is impressive. It is still more impressive when one realizes that he belongs to Syria's most hated ethnic group - the group that has historically been suspected by other Syrians of sympathising with the French, the Christians and even the Jews”.

Despite that al-Assad faced security challenges and Mubarak faced internal uncertainty, the survival of both al-Assad and Mubarak regimes can be explained by the reasons stated below (which are in line with table 4.5):

1. According to Linz (1970), when the autocratic regime has been established through a military coup, the military enjoys a special “privileges positions”. Al-Assad (as previously described in 2.2 and 2.3) reached power through coups d'états and in his capacity as minister of defense. Despite that Mubarak did not

⁷⁴ Assad witnessed two serious incidents that challenged his regime and might; if succeeded; deposed him. The first one was in 1980 during Hama incidents against Sunni Islamist. While the second serious threat, came from within the Alawite sect represented by his brother Rifa't Al Assad. Rifa't ruthless forces massacred Islamist in Hama in 1980. Therefore, Alawites owed their position, the regime and the state after 1980 to Rifa't (Goldsmith, 2015). When Hafez al-Assad became ill in 1983, Rifa't seized the opportunity and started promoting himself and acting as the ruler of Syria. Loyal military and security forces to Hafez in addition to Alawite supporters of the regime strongly refused Rifa't actions. Tension increased after Rifa't mobilized his forces and block Damascus entrances. Hafez al-Assad forces heavily clashed with Rifa't forces (Goldsmith, 2015). At this point, Hafez recovered and “undefended, confronted his brother at his house in front of his mother and challenged him to act, saying: Here I am. I am the regime” (Seale, 1988). The crisis within the Alawite community ended when Rifa't was exiled in 1984.

reach power through coups d'états, however the regime was established and structured through military coups in 1953. Therefore, in both countries, the army and security forces enjoyed privileges.

2. Both al-Assad and Mubarak managed to build strong coalition with the elite (whether existing or newly created). When in office, al-Assad ensured respectable relations with rural Baathist officers from all over major cities in general, and Damascus, in particular. He had also succeeded in re-building the relation with some of the old Syrian bourgeoisie⁷⁵ especially in Aleppo and Damascus. Whereas in Egypt, Mubarak succeeded to build a strong coalition with the newly created elite (by his son Gamal) of businessmen and NDP members from one hand, and sustained the army privileges from another.
3. Both regimes solidly relied on security forces and intelligence services. Al-Assad has built strong intelligence and military forces that were according to Batatu (1999) “his ears and eyes”. These security and intelligence forces “were not interrelated, they work totally independent from each other’s and enjoy long margin of freedom” (Batatu, 1999). At a parallel level, Assad has built well-equipped and trained military phalanges that abide by his direct command. Unlike al-Assad in Syria, Mubarak inherited a strong regime. But still, he relied significantly on the central security and intelligence forces (*Mabaheth Amen Al Dawla*). According to Osman, (2013) Mubarak had no confidence in and trusted no one, except “his security chiefs – various interior ministers, army commanders and the heads of the ultra-influential intelligence services”. As president of state and head of the national party, Mubarak ruled a police state of fear and control (Beshara, 2012).
4. The personal character and intelligence was also an additional factor for the survival of their regimes. Both al-Assad and Mubarak were clever and sharp in dealing with internal and external crises. Al-Assad’s character played an important role according to Batatu (1999) in the survival of the regime who described him as follows:

“As a rule, he does not act on impulse. He is patient, passionless, flexible, adept at quiet behind-the-scenes skills, imperturbable in times of crisis, adroit enough to hide his real aims, and he decides only after examining issues from every conceivable angle. He also keeps his eyes fixed on what is realizable and knows

⁷⁵ After it was wiped out by the policy of Salah Jadid. Assad was known for his pragmatism while Jadid was known for his stubborn ideological commitments.

how to trim his sails to new winds or to accommodate his tactics to changing circumstances. In all this he is helped by his intimate knowledge of the forces at work in his home base and regional environment, and by his marked sensitivity to the intricacies of Arab and world politics. This portrayal applies more to the Asad of 1998, of course, than to the Asad of 1966, for although he had a role in shaping events in Syria and the neighboring countries, events at home and abroad also shaped him or he adapted himself to them”

Unlike his predecessors, Mubarak lacked charisma but was smart with a committed personality. He knew how to control his country by being “excellent in executing tasks and delivering policies” according to Osman (2013).

5. Privatization and depoliticization of the society (Brooker 2012) also played an important role by al-Assad and Mubarak to weaken opposition. Al-Assad did not fail to use power to eliminate his oppositions while Mubarak was more diplomatic in using different means to weaken his oppositions and protect his regime.

4.2.4 Level of state secularization and/or separation of state and religion of both Syria and Egypt from the 1950’s in general and al-Assad and Mubarak eras in particular

In chapter 3, I have addressed the essential elements of secularization in general and the Arab world in particular, in addition to its roots and historical process. In this part, I will investigate the level of state secularization in Syria and Egypt and more precisely during al-Assad and Mubarak era. Unlike the gulf monarchies, Syria and Egypt were pioneers in Arab nationalism and secular ideologies. Egypt produced Nasser while Syria produced Aflaq. Both ideologues had secular projects that over crossed boundaries and sectarian identities. Both projects had the Arab identity as a prime identity. In this matter, and in line with chapter 2, if ethnicity matters to the state therefore religion matters less.

In order to check the level of secularization and/or state separation and whether ethnicity or religion matters to the regimes, I will use the following databases: Religion Indexes, Adherent and other data (ARDA) and Cingranelli-Richards Human Rights Dataset (CIRI).

Table 4.7: Level of state secularization for Syria and Egypt in an average year 2008 according to ARDA⁷⁶ - Religion Indexes, Adherent and other data

The Arab Republic of Syria								The Arab Republic of Egypt							
Year	Indicators							Year	Indicators						
	Gov Int	FreRel	Rel Fre	StaRel Sep	LawRel	Rel Dis	Sta Res		Gov Int	FreRel	Rel Fre	StaRel Sep	LawRel	Rel Dis	Sta Res
2008	2	1	5	43.686	2	3	1	2008	2	2	5	62.917	3	18	2

Source: Thesis author, data from ARDA - Religion Indexes, Adherent and other data.

We can notice in table 4.6 that the level of government intervention in the right of individual worship is very high in both countries, while freedom of religion is somehow respected in Syria but limited in Egypt. Table 4.6 shows also that religious freedom in both countries is highly controlled, and that laws influenced by religion are very high in Syria while in the Egyptian state are bit higher. Religion and state separation registered very low in Egypt, but above the mean level in Syria, as for religious discrimination towards minorities, Syria was far less discriminatory than Egypt.

On another hand, according to Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Dataset that covers the period from 1981 till 2009 (mainly the whole period of Hosni Mubarak in power and around 20 years of Hafez al-Assad rule), the government in Syria mostly respected the right to freedom of religion while Egypt did not.

If we refer to chapter 3 table 3.5, we can notice that first, the religious intervention exists in Western countries but at lower scale than the Middle Eastern and North African ones; second with the exception of Lebanon who scores 21.94 on the separation of religion and state scale, almost all countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region are less secular (the average score for MENA region including Lebanon is 49.44) in reality then according to some MENA countries constitutions and laws. And that despite that the level of secularization is low in MENA region with an average of 49.44, still Syria is more secular than Egypt, while Egypt is more secular compared to Saudi Arabia (74.62) or Iran (64.09).

This will lead us to conclude that secularization in the Arab region still not well established compared to western countries, and that the level of secularization in the

⁷⁶ For more information about variable explanation please refer to Annex 4. The green highlighted numbers for Syria means that they are more secular compared to the red highlighted numbers for Egypt.

region is low. And in both regimes, the level of separation between the state and religion is very low compared to the international standard. But within the Arab context, the same level of separation varies between Egypt and Syria, in which the regime in Syria shows a contained margin of flexibility compared to Egypt.

In this regard, the post-independence era in Egypt and Syria witnessed a few attempts to secularize the state and society. These full attempts were doomed to fail. Sunni *ulama*⁷⁷ and political Islam were always ready to counter attack and eventually prevail.

The introductory path of the secular state in **Syria** started with the western educational missionaries in the Levant (Lebanon and Syria). These missionaries started to introduce a new form of education outside the traditional religious educational parameters. Historically in Syria, the *ulama* controlled both religious and educational fields. Therefore, they have exercised massive control over the society. In the early twentieth century, mainly during the pre-independence era, the power of *ulama* in Syria started to fade at the expense of 1) the emergence of the state concept; 2) establishment of military or authoritarian regimes; 3) the adoption of a new educational system; 4) the introduction of secular laws; and 5) state expansion over religious institutions (due to the nature of authoritarian regimes). According to Thomas Pierret (2013), “the first development excluded clerics from the judicial institutions in favor of specialists in positive law. The second which led to the subsuming of religious endowments under state control, the bureaucratization of religious personnel, and the institutionalization of its training under the aegis of the state was likely to put an end to their economic autonomy and take away their monopoly on the training of their successors.”

During the post-independence era, courageous decisions were taken to minimize the impact of religious groups and leaders. “In 1947, local muftis were placed under the authority of a “*Grand Mufti*” (appointed by the state). Two years later a law gave the government ownership of all mosques in the country even those built with private funds. The same law has established the *Awqaf*⁷⁸ Administration ...in 1961 a new law established the current Ministry of *Awqaf*” (Pierret, 2013). The ideology and legacy of *Kemal Atatürk* in neighboring Turkey has found a fertile ground in Syria too.

⁷⁷ Muslim scholars who possess the highest level of knowledge in the society

⁷⁸ Institutions that deals with religious properties

The first military ruler Colonel *Husni al-Za'im* not only “submitted the *Awqaf* to state control and promulgated a secular legal code (not applicable to personal status⁷⁹), but also encouraged the abandonment of Oriental fashions” (Seal, 1965). *Al-Za'im* went further by eliminating religious affiliation from the identity card (Pacini, 1998). In 1951, Colonel *Adib al-Shishakli* “submitted a decree related to the wearing of the – henceforth standardized- religious garb (white turban and dark *Jubba*-dress) to official authorization, and provided for the arrest of violators” (Pierret, 2013).

After 1963, the gradual secularization process of the state and society was in line with the Baath Arab nationalist policies and belief. The Baath was aiming for a “united Arab society with a socialist system, i.e a society in which all Arabs are equal, irrespective of their religion” (Van Dam, 2011). Baath ideologue considered Islam as a cultural heritage rather than an identity. Therefore, education was no longer considered part of the religious responsibility but rather under the state’s formal one. The curriculum that included religious education was revised in a way that favored Arab nationalism and Baath party ideology at expense of religion. According to the Minister of Education during the Baath era in the late 1960s, “Backward preachers and other men of religion can say whatever they want, it will not catch on, and we are not worried about it...we have taken over religious teachings and we know it will transform the entire youth in the good sense” (Pierret, 2013). Additionally, the party excluded Muslim scholars and Ulama from participating in popular committees organized in the towns, villages and cities. While, the regime pre-1973 constitution did not “contain any explicit reference to Islamic Law” (Pacini, 1998).

When Hafez al-Assad mastered his coup in 1971, Islamic awakening was taking ground not only in Egypt but also in most of the Arab countries, including Syria. The identity of al-Assad being the first non-Sunni president⁸⁰ of Syria forced him to balance his political and security decisions between favoring Islamic official institutions and hardly oppressing Islamic militants and parties. His first attempt to secularize political life (based on the regime story) or to legitimize his presidency (based on his opponents) through the

⁷⁹ The Personal Status Law organizes the relationship of marriage through all its stages, from the engagement on, and in all its aspects, laying down the conditions for its constitution and organizing its effects, both as regards the mutual duties of the spouses on the one hand and between parents and children on the other. It also organizes the effects of termination of the relationship by reason of divorce or death (UNESCO). Personal Status Law is not civil laws. They are mainly affiliated to religion.

⁸⁰ For more information regarding the religion of Syrian presidents please refer to table 8.

constitution doomed to failure. The first version of the 1973 constitution did not specify that the President of the state “needed to be Muslim at all” (Talhamy, 2010). As a response to the Sunni uprising that spread all over major cities, al-Assad “quickly backtracked and included an amendment to the original draft that the religion of the President of the Republic has to be Islam” (Goldsmith, 2015). At social level, and in reply to the Hama incidents in 1981, al-Assad’s government banned the wearing of veils in schools in 1982 (Zisser, 2005). On another hand and unlike previous Baath governments, al-Assad increased the expenditures of the Ministry of Awqaf (Batatu, 1999). He also created what was known as Hafez al-Assad Institutes for the Memorization of the Quran. We cannot deny the fact that al-Assad’s secular ideology was based on the party. Al-Assad tried to integrate secularization of the state within the social and political layers of the country. But on another side, his support to the Alawite community cannot be denied (Kerr and Larkin, 2015) which in fact had turned him into a sectarian president (Goldsmith, 2015). As a result, their number grows in the military and state institutions compared to before al-Assad era. Batatu (1998) archived the religious identity of the head of military units⁸¹ in which Alawites controlled 2 out of 5 in 1973 compared to 7 out of 9 in 1992. A retired high-ranking army General⁸² added in this matter that al-Assad used to exercise an indirect pressure mechanism on all sects by appointing Alawites directly or indirectly in sensitive positions, party members in less sensitive positions, while normal positions were to be shared with the rest. He⁸³ confessed that because of his Sunni religious background, therefore neither Alawites nor a member of the Baath party, he was not granted any promotions for 15 years. As a result, al-Assad mastered well-balanced policies that contained Islamic radical groups and militants empowered and depended on his Alawite community without offending the Sunni majority.

In the same context, and according to a high-ranking retired senior civil servant⁸⁴, al-Assad used not to take advises from anyone except trusted loyal Alawites. He⁸⁵ recalled a story "that in approximately 10 years, al-Assad did not meet with his advisor for International Affairs". Sam Dalla⁸⁶ also recalled a story about one of al-Assad Alawite advisor Mohamad al-Fadel who was once been asked if he is really the President's advisor,

⁸¹ It does not include the Presidential Guard, Defense Brigades and Special Forces who were headed by Alawites and fell under his direct command.

⁸² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

⁸³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

al-Fadel replied "does Hafez al-Assad take advises from anyone?" by "anyone" Dalla⁸⁷ clarified they are those loyal trusted Alawites who served in the regime security apparatus.

While in **Egypt**, the creation of a secular state hereafter the 1952 coup d'états that abolished the monarchy rule was mainly a desire rather than a mere social and political process. The newly assumed secular state "never in fact broke free from its religious moorings" (Hibbard, 2010). Political elite in power used religion in order to contain the political authority of their opposition.

Despite that *Gamal Abdel Nasser* tried to introduce an Egyptian national and Arab nationalist project, his attempts were never successful. Due to his modern policies in containing ulama and al Azhar, in addition to his fierce confrontation with political Islam represented by the Muslim Brotherhood who failed to assassinate him in 1954, Nasser was seen as an "enemy to Islam" (Osman, 2013). Nasser contained the influence of Al-Azhar University by ensuring strict control on the historical role it played in Egypt's social life. Nasser's project was considered as a pure civic one, and as an alternative to the newly emerged political Islam project. Nasser embraced Islam as civilizations, and not as political movement or governing framework (Osman, 2013). As a result, religion was isolated from politics, legislations and state identity. The trick with *Nasser* lays in the use of Islamic discourse to support his nationalist ideology. Hibbard, (2010) did not fail to mention that *Nasser* appealed to a liberal or modernist interpretation of Islam as a means of challenging traditional elite and sanctifying his political vision.

The Arab defeat in 1967 had diminished Arab nationalism at the expense of political Islam. Unlike *Nasser*, his successor *Anwar Al Sadat* had an Islamist approach in dealing with local politics. *Sadat* abandoned Nasser's secular program. The 1971 new constitution clearly stated Islamic *Sharia* as "being the only source of legislation". According to Hibbard (2010), during the *Sadat* era, the government promoted a more literal or *Salafi* interpretation of Islam as part of a broader effort to redefine the direction of Egyptian politics. The *Sadat* regime used this theological conservative rendering of religious tradition to eradicate the ongoing influence of the political left and to construct a new basis of political authority rooted in Islam.

As a result, during *Sadat's* years, religion again, turned out to be the main identity, of not only the state, but also the society. Many social features have changed and turned out to

⁸⁷ Ibid.

be “Islamized” for example, “colloquial Egyptians changed good morning and good evening to be replaced by peace be upon you, Islam’s greeting (*al-salamu aleikon*) (Osman, 2013). Unlike Nasser who contained Al-Azhar, Sadat again, expanded his role at the educational and social sphere. Consequently, Osman’s (2013) words were clear when he wrote, “in less than a decade the civic nature of the Egyptian state of the 1950s and 1960s was replaced by a quasi-Islamic one; and a liberal public atmosphere and discourse became predominantly religious and conservative”.

At social level, Slackman (2008) in a New York Times’ report described the changing face of Egypt from Arab nationalist identity during Nasser era, to the growing influence of Islam during Mubarak era “In 1986, there was one mosque for every 6,031 Egyptians, according to government statistics. By 2005, there was one mosque for every 745 people”. In addition, Osman (2013) emphasized on the growing features of social Islam especially of the growing proportion of women wearing the veil, (unlike Mubarak’s wife) which increased from 30 percent during the Nasser era, to 65 percent during Sadat’s time, to have been established as a “dress code” as of 1990. At economic level, Islamic banking flourished during Mubarak as well as *halal* money exchange and trading, despite the governmental effort to contain it.

It goes without saying that the heavy use of Islam as a political power means during the era of *Sadat*, has negatively affected the establishment of the Egyptian secular state. In his capacity as the new president, Mubarak was baffled between the growing power of political Islam internally and the shifting of international and regional policies towards a steady integration of Islam as a political and military mean in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Algeria, Palestine, Lebanon and many other countries. Therefore, Mubarak’s priority was not to separate religion and state, but to contain the growing force of political Islam and to fight the rising power of militant Islam such as Al Jamat al Islamiya. He was forced to smartly balance between keeping stability and internal order from one hand and restrain from issuing laws that could provoke the growing Islamist political (and military) force. Politically, the lack of national project and the weak governmental services has created a fertile ground for Islamists to shift the identity of Egypt to their favor. Mubarak did not amend the constitution in favor of a less Islamic influence. His regime stifled the Muslim Brotherhood and other radical Islamic fractions such as Al Jamat al Islamiya, but at the same time, he unchained the hands of the Salafi movement.

It is important to note in this regard, that similar to Hafez al-Assad, President Mubarak did not trust anyone. Mubarak main concern was to ensure loyalty, obedience and sustainability of the regime, Samir Morcos⁸⁸, a well-known Coptic figure and Depute President during Mohamad Morsi's era stated. He⁸⁹ added that those who were loyal to Mubarak including Copts have enjoyed many privileges and secured great personal benefits. In his turn, a high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman⁹⁰ related Mubarak's divide and rule technique with his unwillingness to solve the Coptic question. Since according to him, Mubarak favored his personal interest at expense of the state and its problems. Whereas according to the researcher in Carnegie Endowment and one of the most leading researchers on Coptic issue Dr. George Fahmi⁹¹, Mubarak divided the Egyptian society into different groups such as Copts, labors, Muslim Brotherhood, liberals etc.. In order to tighten his control over the state and the economy from one hand and sustain his rule from the other. Fahmi⁹² added that Mubarak was not sectarian but rather a dictator who succeeded in forming a group of loyal people around him that preserved his regime.

In order to better understand the secularization process in each country from 1950's in general and the era of al-Assad and Mubarak in particular, I will investigate the religion of each president that ruled Syria and Egypt from independence until the eras of al-Assad and Mubarak.

Table 4.8: Religion and region of each president that ruled Egypt from 1953 till 2010

#	Name	Period	Religion	Region
1	Mohammed Naguib	18 June 1953 to 14 November 1954	Sunni	Khartoum*
2	Gamal Abdel Nasser	24 June 1956 to 28 September 1970	Sunni	Alexandria
3	Anwar Sadat	15 October 1970 – 6 October 1981	Sunni	Manufia
4	Hosni Mubarak	14 October 1981 – 11 February 2011	Sunni	Kafr El-Meselha**

* Currently the capital of Sudan. Sudan (including Khartoum) was part of the Kingdom of Egypt and Sudan

**In Manufia

Source: Thesis author, data from Rejwan (1998) and Polity IV.

⁸⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

⁹² Ibid.

Table 4.9: Religion and region of each president that ruled Syria from 1945 till 2000

#	Name	Period	Religion	Region
1	Shukri al- Quwatli	24 October 1945 – 29 March 1949	Sunni	Damascus
2	Husni al-Za'im	30 March 1949 – 14 August 1949	Sunni	Aleppo
3	Sami al-Hinnawi	14 August 1949 – 15 August 1949	Sunni	Aleppo
4	Hashim al-Atassi	15 August 1949 – 2 December 1951	Sunni	Hims
5	Adib Shishakli	2 December 1951 – 3 December 1951	Sunni	Hama
6	Fawzi Selu	3 December 1951 – 11 July 1953	Sunni	Damascus
7	Adib Shishakli	11 July 1953 – 25 February 1954	Sunni	Hama
8	Maamun al-Kuzbari	25 February 1954 -28 February 1954	Sunni	Damascus
9	Hashim al-Atassi	28 February 1954 – 6 September 1955	Sunni	Hims
10	Shukri al-Quwatli	6 September 1955 – 22 February 1958	Sunni	Damascus
11	Gamal Abdel Nasser*	22 February 1958 – 29 September 1961	Sunni	Alexandria-Egypt
12	Maamun al-Kuzbari	29 September 1961 – 20 November 1961	Sunni	Damascus
13	Izzat al-Nuss	20 November 1961 – 14 December 1961	N/A	N/A
14	Nazim al-Kudsi	14 December 1961- 8 March 1963	Sunni	Aleppo
15	Luai al-Atassi	9 March 1963 – 27 July 1963	Sunni	Hims
16	Amin al-Hafez	27 July 1963 – 23 February 1966	Sunni	Aleppo
17	Nureddin al-Atassi	25 February 1966 – 18 November 1970	Sunni	Hims
18	Ahmad al-Khatib	18 November 1970 – 22 February 1971	Sunni	Swaida
19	Hafez al-Assad	22 February 1971 – 10 June 2000	Alawite	Qardaha

*During United Arab Republic (UAR)

Source: Thesis author, data from Mbayed (2006), Polity IV, and Cheibub et al (2010)

Based on table 4.7 and 4.8, we notice that from 1945 till 2010 with the exception of Hafez al-Assad in Syria who belong to the Alawite minority, all presidents of Syria and Egypt were Sunni Muslims. In addition, there were neither non-Arab nor Christian (or any other minority) presidents that ruled Egypt and Syria during the mentioned eras. It is important to notice that presidents such as al- Quwatli, al-Za'im and Shishakli in Syria and Nasser in Egypt, were Sunni presidents who enforced secularization at political and social levels. Of course, I am not assessing whether secularization process in these countries and during the mentioned eras succeeded or not. But at least, this secularization attempt was considered to be avant-gardist compared to after 1967 era and till the present day.

At constitutional level, the 3rd article of part 1 of chapter 2 of the Syrian constitution that was drafted and approved by the regime of Hafez al-Assad in 1973 clearly stated “The religion of the President of the Republic has to be Islam” and “Islamic jurisprudence is a main source of legislation”. While according to article 35 “the freedom of faith is guaranteed, and the state respects all religions” and “the state guarantees the freedom to hold any religious rites, provided that they do not disturb the public order”.

Whereas in Egypt, article 2 of the 1971 constitution (which was slightly amended in 2007) stated that “Islam is the religion of the State” and that “Islamic law (Sharia) is the principle source of legislation”. Article 19 of part 2 in chapter 1 stated, “Religious education shall be a principal subject in the courses of general education”. Whereas in article 40 there was a clear indication of equality of all citizens before the law, “They have equal rights and duties without discrimination between them due to race, ethnic origin, language, religion or creed. Freedom of belief was guaranteed in article 46 “The State shall guarantee the freedom of belief and the freedom of practice of religious rites”.

Both Syria and Egypt’s constitutions had no articles emphasizing on the separation of religion and state or secularization. These constitutions did not include any articles that straightforwardly mention discrimination against religious minorities or dichotomy between majority and minority. In fact, the religion of the president, and Islam being the main source of legislations, were considered the main articles in both constitutions that hindered secularization process therefore discriminates against non-Muslim minorities.

4.3 General description of Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt since WWII: Who are the Christians Arabs of Syria and Egypt

Both Copts of Egypt and Christians of Syria are considered to be the indigenous communities who inhabited their lands before Islam. They are officially recognized in both countries. In Syria, similar to the rest of the population, Christians are divided according to rural and urban, rich and poor as well as peasantry and urban businessmen divisions. Christians in Syria have resided and still in rural districts such as Huwaran, Kamishli, Hasaka, Ladkiya, Djezirah, Wadi al Nassara (Valley of the Nazarenes) and Homs (rural part) in addition to major cities such as Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Damascus (Joseph, 1983). The geographical distribution has also reflected upon their means of living. Christians who live in agricultural areas mastered agricultural work and peasantry, while other were leaders in cotton industry such as Asfar and Najjar brothers (Joseph, 1983).

It goes without saying that western missionaries and colonization have helped improving the situation of Christians of Syria especially at educational level. Therefore, compared

to the rest of the community, Christians were well educated (Belge and Karakoc, 2015). They are present in the middle and upper classes of the society (Farha and Mousa, 2015). They receive (proportionally) more education, which allowed them to join skilled profession and speak western languages (Farha and Mousa, 2015). As a result, they were the first who granted the newly created state with administrative skills, medicines, public works, town councils, banks and many other services (Moussalli, 1998). Christians in Syria are also recognized for creating new professions in the market such as brokers, consultants, specialized technician, import-export, tailoring and gold manufacturing (Moussalli, 1998). They are also well known in the liberal professions such as lawyer, engineers and doctors (Cardinal, 2009).

In general, the Christians of Syria are considered to be religious community. Their relation with the church (institution) is based on respect and obedience. In the modern history, there was no opposition by pupils against different church institutions there. The Church in Syria does not have a political role. Their role is pure theological and spiritual (Farha and Mousa, 2015). Christians of Syria hold a “prestigious and dominant role” in state and society (Farha and Mousa, 2015). They are peaceful, law-abiding community and committed to the Arab cause (Moussalli, 1998). According to Moussali (1998) “despite these achievements, the Syrian Christian still believes he must always be a step ahead, otherwise he may slide into insignificance and ephemerality. He knows his avant-garde ideas are not well thought of and that they will soon be taken over and absorbed if adopted by others”. On another level, inter-marriage with non-Christians is almost unwelcomed not only within the Christian society in Syria, but also among all groups.

The Syrian society looks at Christian community as being a trusted one. For example, Moussali (1998) stated that Christian schools and hospitals have long been trusted establishments in Syria, serving both Christians and non-Christians. On an individual level, the most reputable or wealthy figures among them are seen (amongst other Christians and Muslim) as representative symbols of their society such as Michel Aflaq, Faris al-Khoury, Qustantin Zurayq and many others (Hechaime, 1998).

As for the Christians of Egypt, the word “Copt”⁹³ derives from the Greek name of the country term Aigyptos, which was used to describe the Greek inhabitants of Egypt. The combination of the Greek and Arab languages “Arabised” this term to become “Qibt” and

⁹³ According to Egyptian Orthodox Christian history, Saint Mark founded the Coptic Church during the age of the Roman Empire between 48-63 CE. Saint Mark was one of the four evangelists and the writer of the oldest canonical gospel.

then anglicized to “Copt” (Rowberry and Khalil, 2010). As such, “Copt” means “Egypt” in its Latin origin. Between all Christian’s sects in Egypt, Copts are considered to be the majority that constitutes around 90 percent of the total Christian population. Copts or Christians are not concentrated in major areas; rather they are spread across the country. The Coptic Church in Egypt is totally an independent institution that does not belong to Rome. Over 60 percent of them live in Upper Egypt mainly in their “traditional stronghold” in Assiut and Minya provinces. While the rest around 25 percent live in Cairo, 6 percent in Alexandria and the rest are spread between Delta and Suez Canal provinces (Pennington, 1982, Labib 2004 and Osman, 2013).

Similar to the Muslim majority, Christians of Egypt – whom the majority are Copts – are divided between few rich and a deprived majority. The situation of the Christian of Egypt during the Monarchy era was far better than the presidential one. Alike Muslims in Egypt, the socialist and nationalization policies of the revolutionary government during Nasser era have confiscated their wealth and properties (Beshai, 1998). In this part, I will focus on the post- monarchy era in general and the era of Mubarak in particular. In this context, we cannot deny the fact that being closer to foreigners compared to Muslim majority during Monarchy, Copts were better equipped which helped them survive the consequences of the post-independence era. “Copts learned a lot from them (foreigners). Therefore, with the open-door policy (of Sadat) they were again close to foreigners. They knew foreign languages and travelled widely” (Beshai, 1998). Copts focused on the private sector rather than the public one (Pennington, 1982). Copts owned many of the biggest firms such as “Sawiris, Saad, Ayoub” families, in automobile manufacturing three companies are owned by Copts such as Ghabbour. They are leading also in the pharmaceutical industry, while in tourism they control around 50 percent of the medium-sized companies. In hospitals businesses, textile, Jewelry and trade, Copts fingerprint is still powerfully present (Beshai, 1998). It is important to note that Copts control around one third of the national wealth (Beshara, 2012). Which allows them to control the Flea Market (second hand) and 80 percent of the banking employees (Beshai, 1998). On a different level, Copts also control the garbage collectors known as *Zabbalin* in Cairo city. The only 15 Bosses controlling Cairo’s seven districts in addition to 50,000 to 40,000 *Zabbalin* are Copts (Beshai, 1998).

At religious level, the role of the Coptic institution has changed after Nasser’s policies (nationalist and socialist). As a result, the Church turned out to be focusing more on

religious and social issues. The church's new strategy focuses more on mitigating the danger to its community and supports them by being the main social services provider (Osman, 2013). In general, the Copts of Egypt are considered to be a religious community. Their relation with the church (institution) is powerful for two main reasons: social services and protection from Islamization of the society and militant Islam (Khwaga 1998 and Osman 2013). According to Copts intra-marriage with Muslim, divorce and conversion to Islam are very rare and almost impossible (Pennington, 1982). Copts are family oriented community and social and religious ties among them are strong (Pennington, 1982). Finally, unlike Muslims, Copts are an educated community and they are considered to be a law-abiding community and respectful group (Pennington, 1982). It is important to note the first and final attempt made by Copt to integrate themselves in the post 1952 political system through the establishment of "Coptic Nation" *al-Umma al-Qibtiya*. As its name shows, the 1952 created Christian national radical political party was dissolved in 1954 (Guirguis, 2007).

Similar to any other society, the most reputable or wealthy figures among Copts are seen (amongst other Copts and Muslim) as representative symbols of their society. Egyptians looked up at successful people (and not the community) in their fields who happened to be Copts such as Naguib Sawaris, Boutros Ghali, Yousef Shahin and many others.

4.5 Conclusion

According to the collected information and used databases in this chapter, we can notice that first, both regimes were to some extent authoritarians; second, that the structure of the authoritarian regimes in these two countries were similar in general but different in the composition and sphere of powers; third that the Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt were powerless; and fourth, both the Christians minorities in Syria and Egypt were considered to be the indigenous population and an integrated part of the state social composition.

However, in the next chapter, I will try to integrate the collected information in this chapter with the descriptive situation of discrimination against the Christian minorities in Egypt and Syria at political, economic, social, religious and cultural levels.

Chapter 5

A comparison of the discrimination of Christian Arab minorities by the autocracies of Syria and Egypt

"The protection of the rights of Christians is a duty rather than a favor. Christians have always played a key role in building our societies and defending our nations"
King Abdullah of Jordan

Abstract: *Based on quantitative and original qualitative data, this chapter compares the situation of discrimination of Christian minorities across countries (Syria and Egypt) and across time (before and after the arrival to power of al-Assad and Mubarak).*

5.1 Introduction

It is with no doubt that the Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt were exposed to different levels and different forms of harassment and discrimination. Some of these forms were direct while others were indirect. As we will see in this chapter, the pattern of discrimination and harassment against Christians in the studied countries was also different not only across countries but also across time.

Based on the collected quantitative data and qualitative information, I will describe in this chapter the pattern and level of discrimination and harassment against Christians in Syria and Egypt. Therefore, discrimination will be examined from political, economic, social, religious and cultural levels. In this regard, I have taken as a starting point the pre al-Assad era in Syria, mainly from the first republic up until the al-Assad era. Whereas in Egypt, I have tackled the era of the establishment of the first republic under Gamal Abdel Nasser up until Hosni Mubarak years in power.

This chapter focuses on the pattern and levels of discrimination against Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt in the pre/during Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak era. It will show that both minorities were treated differently than the rest of the people. This behavior against Christians was not a mere product of specific dictators. Both regimes treated Christians as a minority and not as citizen. Both regimes discriminated against Christians either publicly as the case with the Egyptian regime or indirectly as the case with the Syrian regime. Therefore, in order to better understand the pattern and level of discrimination against Christian minorities of Syria and Egypt, I will rely in my research for the below sections on both qualitative information and quantitative data. At qualitative level, I will rely on the available books and articles in this subject, in addition

to the interviews that I have conducted with Syrian and Egyptian figures (for more information refers to the introduction chapter). At quantitative level, in order to measure the degree of discrimination against Christians in Syria and Egypt, I will use the following databases:

1. **Ethnic Power Relations (EPR)** database was created in 2011 by Andrea Wimmer and other researchers in ETH Zürich and UCLA. The EPR main aim is to identify all political relevant ethnic groups and measure their access to state power from 1946 to 2010.
2. **Minority at Risk Database (MAR)** was created in around 2003 by Ted Gurr and other researchers in the University of Maryland. MAR aims to identify, monitor and analyze the status and discrimination against politically-active ethnic groups from 1945 up till the present time.
3. **Global Restrictions on Religion Data (GRRD)** database was created in 2009 by Brian Grim and other researchers by Pew Research Center. The main of GRRD is to measure the levels of government restrictions, discrimination and social hostilities against religious groups and minorities from 2007 up till 2013.
4. **The Association of Religion Data Archive (ARDA)** was created in 1997 and founded by the American Religion Data Archive. In the beginning ARDA focused its interest in American religion. Later the database expanded to include the behavior of governments pertaining religion and minorities at international level. It is important to note that ARDA is a platform for many databases, educators, researchers and journalists that work on religious topics.
5. **Religion and State (RAS)** database is part of ARDA and was created by Jonathan Fox. The main aim of RAS is to measure and examine government religion policy towards other religious groups and covers the period from 1990 till 2008.

However, it worth noting that measuring discrimination against religious minorities in general (and Christians of Syria and Egypt in particular) at quantitative level is very difficult. From one part these databases give clear images and numbers about discrimination (as we will see in the below tables). But from another level, it is very unclear how these databases have reached their specific data and conclusions. The reader cannot but notice the absence of a unified common results or agreement among the mentioned databases. For example, Minority at Risk (MAR) database does not give any information or data about the discrimination of Christians in Syria. Therefore, and unlike

the other four databases, according to MAR the Christians of Syria were not discriminated.

In this Chapter, and as I have already mentioned, I will be using quantitative data to support the qualitative one. The main aim of using quantitative data is to give a first and direct image about discrimination against Christians of Syria and Egypt across time. In this regard, the selected databases are considered to be by many researchers and political scientists such as Fox, Gurr, Keith Jagers and many others as important ones. They are widely used in the social science research. And in this specific case, with the exception of MAR, all of them cover directly or indirectly the period in which al-Assad and Mubarak were in power. Some of them cover a longer period of time, mainly before the pre-independence era.

Finally, the below part has two sections. The first focuses on the situation of Christian during the pre al-Assad and Mubarak era, while the second addresses the era when both presidents were in power. The main aim behind this process is to facilitate for the readers the comparison process of the Christian situation in the pre and during al-Assad and Mubarak eras.

5.2 Comparison of the situation and discrimination of Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt before al-Assad and Mubarak eras

This section describes the pattern of discrimination and the status of Christians in the pre al-Assad and Mubarak eras in Syria and Egypt based on the following levels:

5.2.1. Political and regime structure level

According to the first used database, EPR shows that Christians of Egypt were powerless⁹⁴ regardless to the regime type i.e. monarchy, or military or presidential as we can see in table 5.1 below. Ethnic Power Relation (EPR) scores for Syria are very interesting, since from 1946 till 1958 Christians of Syria were considered as junior partners⁹⁵. From 1958 till 1960, during the United Arab Republic (UAR) that was headed

⁹⁴ According to EPR codebook, powerless is explained as no political power is granted for the representative elite of any targeted group at the national or regional levels without being explicitly discriminated against.

⁹⁵ According to EPR codebook, junior partner is explained as the participation of the representatives of any targeted group in government.

by Nasser, Christians of Syria were considered powerless. Hereafter the collapse of the United Arab Republic till 1969, EPR considered Christians of Syria as Junior Partners again.

Table 5.1: The degree of Christian’s access to power in Syria and Egypt according to Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Project data during 1946-2000 in Syria and 1946-2010 in Egypt⁹⁶

Christian Arabs in Syria		Christian Arabs in Egypt	
Year	Degree	Year	Degree
	Access to power		Access to power
1946-1957	Junior Partner	1946-2010	Powerless
1958-1960	Powerless		
1961-1969	Junior Partner		
1970-2000	Powerless		

Source: Thesis author, data from EPR data set.

Based on table 5.10, we can notice that the level of political discrimination and/or access to power in the pre-Assad and Mubarak era exist and varies in both states. Unlike Syria where discrimination varied from one ruling regime to another and due to the secularization process of the state (refer to chapter 4, section 2.4), the pattern of political discrimination against Christians in Egypt was constant during Nasser and Sadat eras.

- **Syria**

However, as we can see in table 5.1, EPR refers to Christians in the pre UAR era as junior partners in which they were always been represented in the governments (Van Dam, 2011). Whereas during UAR (1958-1961) Christians were being powerless, since no Christians was represented in the regional cabinet nor the central government (Van Dam, 2011). In the post UAR era, mainly the Baath party era, between all minority groups in Syria, Alawites were better represented than the rest. As a result, Christians were represented in the Syrian Regional Command (SRC) of Baath Party by less than 2 percent between 1963 and 1966 and 6.3 percent between 1966 and 1970. It is important to note that none of the Christian members of the SRC were military officers i.e. the dominant group of the SRC. As for the representation in the Cabinet, Christians consisted around 12.2 percent of all cabinets formed between 1942 and 1958, 0 percent between 1958 and 1961, 14.6 percent between 1961 and 1963. When Baath party took over power their percentage decreased to 6.5 percent between 1963 and 1966 and 8.3 percent between

⁹⁶ For more information about variable explanation please refer to Annex 4

1966 and 1970 (Van Dam, 2011) compared to pre-Baath era. At parliamentary level, table 5.2 below shows the difference in Christian representation before and after Baath party reached office. Whereas at institutional level, the teacher of Hafez al-Assad who was the Commander of the Syrian Air Forces and Air Defense Forces before 1963, Gen. Wadih Moqaabari was an Orthodox. Gen. Moqaabari⁹⁷ also mentioned that before the emergence of the United Arab States, the Naval Commander General *Hana Hadad* was Christian and the Commander of the Artillery General *Filip Sawaya* and Later *Bassil Sawaya* were also Christians. While the Christian politician and lawyer Nader Jabali⁹⁸ who currently resides in France as a political asylum seeker asserted on the pre-Baath and more precisely pre-al-Assad era in which Christians were politically present and active.

Table 5.2: Number and percentage of elected Christian deputies in Syria after independence

Era	Year	Total number of Christian deputies	The percentage of the total number of Christian deputies	Total number of deputies
Post independence	1947	17	13.38%	127
	1950	13	11.40%	114
	1953	7	8.53%	82
	1954	11	7.74%	142
Pre Baath	1961	16	9.30%	172
Baath	1971*	6	3.48%	173
	1973	15	8.06%	186
	1977	12	6.15%	195
	1981	13	6.66%	195
	1985	13	6.66%	195
	1990	14	5.60%	250
	1994	15	6%	250
	1998	12	4.8%	250

*This parliament was appointed by al-Assad

Source: Thesis author, data from Haffar (2012), Nohlen et al (2001).

On the same context, as table 5.2 shows, the Christians of Syria were better represented at parliamentary level in the pre-Baath era compared to the Baath one. Table 5.2 clearly shows that after the independence, Christians were politically active. Their power started to decrease gradually especially after Baath party took over the power. It is also important to note that when Baath party took over power in 1963, parliamentary elections were

⁹⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

⁹⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

suspended for almost 10 years. The first parliament after the Baath reached power was appointed by Hafez al-Assad in 1971.

- **Egypt**

As seen in table 5.1 and by using the second database as shown in table 5.3 below, the pre-Mubarak era has witnessed a sustainable mode of political discrimination against Christians despite the drastic difference between Nasser and Sadat eras.

Table 5.3: Level of political discrimination against Christians in Egypt (and Syria according to Minority at Risk (MAR) Project data set from 1956 till 2003⁹⁹

Christian Arabs in Syria		Christian Arabs in Egypt	
Year	Degree/type of discrimination	Year	Degree/type of discrimination
	Political		Political
1950 - 1971	NA	1956-2003	3

Source: Thesis author, data from MAR project.

As mentioned in the introduction of this section, and as shown in table 5.3, MAR dataset does not include the Christian minority of Syria. Therefore, according to MAR Christians of Syria are not discriminated. MAR considered only the Alawite (MAR code 65201) and the Kurd (MAR code 65202) as the only discriminated minorities in Syria. As for Egypt, MAR database included and considered the Coptic minority as a discriminated one. From Nasser to Mubarak, MAR's degree of political discrimination in Egypt against the Coptic minority scored 3 in a scale from 0 to 4 in which 0 is referred to as no discrimination and 4 is referred to as exclusion and repressive policy, while 3 is explained as social exclusion/neutral policy.

In section 2.4, I have showed that religious identity did not deeply matter to Nasser. Copts were considered as a peaceful minority that causes no harm. But the ideology of the revolution and the abolishing of the monarchy - that was seen by many Christians as their golden era - were not welcomed. Christians of Egypt felt anxious and discriminated by the new regime since neither the Free Officers Movement nor the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) that was formed in 1952 had any Christian officer (Pennington 1988 and Beshara 2015). The new policies taken by the new regime were not in their favors. Many Copts saw land reform and nationalization laws as their end. While, the new

⁹⁹ For more information about variable explanation please refer to Annex 4

RCC appointed army officer to hold state institutions positions, among whom very few if none were Christians (Pennington, 1988). Prior to 1952, Christians were integrated within the state political structure either by being ministers, prime ministers, or by leading *al Wafd* party who was later abolished similar to all parties in 1954. But during Nasser's era, Christians were barely represented. One Christian minister was appointed in each government with no significant political weight (Pennington 1998, Labib 2004 and Beshara 2015). While political parties were abolished.

At parliamentary level, Copts were under represented. In the first post Monarchy election held in 1957 under the new electoral law and suspension of political parties, no Copts won the election (Beshara, 2012). As a result, Nasser used his constitutional power that allows him to appoint deputies. Nine deputies were appointed starting 1964, a process that became a trend. Table 5.4 below shows the number of appointed and elected Copts during Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak eras. It clearly shows that the percentage of Christian representation in the parliament increased slightly from Nasser to Sadat. Finally, it is important to note that historically, Christians were used to the concept of discrimination and also adaptation. A current Ambassador¹⁰⁰ reflected on the long history of discrimination against Copts exercised by the ruler of Egypt except Mohammad Ali and the kingdom era. In her turn, the former Ambassador Soad Shalaby¹⁰¹ acknowledged that historically, Christians had all the characteristic of a minority in Egypt; that include their problems with the state and society.

Table 5.4: Number and percentage of elected and appointed Christians deputies in Egypt after post 1952 revolution

President	Year	Number of appointed Copt deputies	Number of elected Copt deputies	Total number of Copts deputies	The percentage of the total number of Copts deputies	Total number of deputies
Nasser	1957	0	0	0	0%	350
	1964	9	0	9	2.5%	360
	1969	7	2	9	2.58%	348
Sadat	1971	9	3	12	3.33%	360
	1976	8	0	8	2.16%	370
	1979	10	4	14	3.88%	360
Mubarak	1984	5	4	9	1.92%	468
	1987	4	6	10	2.18%	458
	1990	6	1	7	1.54%	454
	1995	6	-	6	1.32%	454

¹⁰⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹⁰¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in January 2017

	2000	3	3	6	1.32%	454
	2005	5	2	7	1.54%	454
	2010	7	3	10	1.93%	518

Source: Thesis author, data from Beshara 2012.

Despite that he studied in Coptic schools, when in power, Sadat had no Copts in his close circle. In addition, the intensity and pattern of violence and societal violations against Copts increased during the era of Sadat (Pennington 1988 and Osman 2013). Some of Sadat's governments included 2 or even 3 Copts about 2.25 percent of the cabinet (Youssef, 2006) but with a limited power; for example, Butors Ghali hold the position of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and not Minister of Foreign affairs (Pennington 1998 and Youssef 2006).

However, despite few polishing decisions taken by Sadat to minimize discrimination against Copts, *Le Monde* reported the opposite in 1977 that "out of 600 under-secretaries in the government service only 14 or 15 were Copts" (Pennington, 1988). While some key positions related to intelligence and security services were totally closed for Christians. In his 1972 report to the People's Assembly, Gamal al-Oteify stated that Christians are treated as a second-class citizens since they were 0 percent represented in university presidents/deans, police and army generals, newspaper chief editors, 0.4 percent were represented as ambassadors i.e out of 127 only 1 ambassador in Nepal was Christian; 1.5 percent as member of parliaments and 1 percent as Judges in the high Courts and 1 percent as students in military and police academy (Nissan 2002 and Youssef 2006). In addition, appointing Christian deutes became a precedent by Nasser that was used later by presidents Sadat and Mubarak to ensure "proper" Christian representation. If we compare the pre-1952 elections to post Monarchy's elections, we can notice that Copts were elected and not appointed during the Monarchy era and that in the elections of 1926, 23 Copts out of 235 (9.78 per cent) were elected and in 1942, 27 Copts out of 264 (10.2 per cent) were elected compared to post Monarchy era in which the highest representation was during 1979 election with 14 deutes out of which 4 were only elected. Sadat excluded Christian candidates from the National Party's lists (state party) since they cannot secure the needed number of votes that allowed them to be elected.

It is important to note a major difference between Nasser and Sadat in which the first contained political Islam while the second released them from prisons. When Sadat chose the Islamization path of the society and the state, Copts felt discriminated. Many incidents at political, social and security level emerged in which Christians were subject to discrimination. As a result, the Church was forced unwillingly to represent the Christians politically (Khawaga, 1998) since the state discarded its neutral role for all citizens. As a result, tension aroused between the Copts headed by Pope Shenouda and the state headed by Sadat resulting to an increase level of civil unrest against Copts. Sadat took direct discriminatory measures against Christians when he deposed and exiled the Pope in 1981 (Osman, 2013).

In this regard, the situation of Christians in Syria was better in the pre-1958 era. Christians before the UAR were an integral part of the Syrian political system. Hereafter the Baath party took over power, the intensity of political discrimination against the Christians of Syria have increased. As for Egypt, the 1952 coup d'état contained the Christian presence in the political arena. The 1952 coup d'état failed to produce an equal political participation for all Egyptians. Therefore, discrimination against Christians increased gradually to reach its peak under Sadat's era and continued under Mubarak.

5.2.2 Economic level

- **Syria**

As we have seen in the introductory part of section 4.1, MAR dataset does not consider Christians of Syria as a discriminated minority. In addition, according to the available literature (please refer to section III), Christians of Syria were not discriminated at economic level by the pre-Baath regime until 1963. It is important to note that Christians enjoyed a better social status than Muslims therefore being classified in the middle and/or upper class (Saad, 2016). When Baath party came to power, rough socialist revolutionary policies were taken such as land reform and nationalization laws that have encountered both Christian economic advantage and the traditional Sunni urban bourgeoisie. As a result, Christian landlords lost their lands while businessmen lost their industries or capital. Christian institutions also were affected by these policies especially when the state controlled Christian schools (Youssef 2006 and Saad 2006).

- **Egypt**

When Nasser’s socialist and nationalization approaches were put in practice; both rich Muslims and Christians suffered. But the impact of these policies was higher on Christians compared to Muslims, for two main reasons: first, due to their numbers compared to Muslims since Christians are a minority. Second Christians lost all the economic privileges and skills they owned since the Monarchy and colonization era. All in all, Christians lost almost 75 percent of their property and businesses (Minority Rights Group International, 1996). Table 5.5 below describes the level of economic discrimination during Nasser and Sadat. In a scale from 0 to 4, in which 0 is equal to no discrimination while 4 is explained as exclusion/repressive policies, Nasser’s era scored the highest level of discrimination (4), while Sadat’s era scored the lowest (0).

Table 5.5: Level of economic discrimination against Christians in Egypt according to Minority at Risk (MAR) Project data set from 1956 till 2003¹⁰²

Christian Arabs in Egypt	
Year	Degree/type of discrimination
	Economic
1956-1970	4
1971-1981	0
1982-2003	0

Source: Thesis author, data from MAR project.

It is obvious according to the above table that Nasser highly discriminated economically against Christians, while Sadat did not exercise any pattern of economic discrimination against Copts during his years in power. However, in 1952, when the land reform law was applied, Christian peasants and lower class were in its favor. Christian upper class was divided between businessmen and landlords such as Wissa, Khayyat and Andraos and many other families who lost their lands (Pennington, 1988). Christians thus shifted towards investment and industrial production that were nationalized too starting 1958 and on. As a result, in 1961 Christians/Copt lost the transportation sector owned by Magar and Morgan bus companies (Pennington, 1988) and their capital that was invested in the Egyptian local banks (Banque du Caire, Banque Misr and the National Bank) (Beshai, 1998). In addition, the number of Christians who were working in public sector and government gradually faded (Beshai, 1998). As a result, the economic situation of Copts

¹⁰² For more information about variable explanation please refer to Annex 4

started to diminish since 1952 and pushed Copts to the “lower down the economic scale” (Pennington 1998).

When Sadat initiated the openness, policy known as *al-infitah* policies, economic discrimination against the upper class started to decrease. Due to their education, connection with the west and professional expertise, Christians were well equipped to enter the private sector again. Many of them succeeded to form again Egypt upper class that was abolished by Nasser’s policies. As a result, the private sector was revived again and economic discrimination against Christians partially ended in the private sector. But at public sector and governmental positions, the pattern of public professional discrimination against Christians remained the same as it was during Nasser era, but with few exceptions (Beshai, 1998). Copts gradually lost control over their traditional strongholds such as Minister of Finance. While Out of 360 head of state-owned companies, only 10 are Christians” (Nissan, 2002).

In this context, the economic discrimination against Christians of Syria started when the Baath party took over the power in Syria. Land reform and nationalization policies were applied on all Syrians but Christians felt its impact higher than the rest. As for Egypt, the economic consequences of the 1952 coup d’état on Christians were enormous. During Nasser, Christians lost almost most of their economic privileges and properties. While under Sadat, the non-socialist economic policy has led to minimize the impact of economic discrimination against Copts.

5.2.3 Cultural level

- **Syria**

Other than the confiscating Christian private schools and to the best of our knowledge there was no cultural discrimination against Christians in Syria. Few random incidents took place in rural areas but worth not the discussion.

- **Egypt**

The shift from the monarchy, westernization and Europeanization to the Arabization process of the society that was directly or indirectly rooted into the Islamic culture have

restricted, discriminated and contained the role of Christians in Egypt (Osman, 2013). Nasser's policies to contain Muslim Brotherhood especially after organizing the failed 1954 coups against him had negative effect on Copts. Nasser introduced obligatory religious teachings for school pupils, created the Quran center and Quran radio station to spread Islamic teachings (Beshara, 2012). According to Iskander (2006), many Islamic magazines and state owned media "published material of which a substantial part was hostile and humiliating to the Christian faith".

At educational level, Christian schools were brought under the control of Islamic authorities according to the 1958 law (Iskander, 2006). Only 2 percent of the students sent abroad in 1973 were Christians. Christians in educational sectors had limited expectations to improve their professional career since they know that the "chances of reaching the very top are almost null" (Pennington, 1998). They were customarily barred from positions of leadership (including university presidencies and governorships, with a few exceptions discussed below) as well as positions deemed sensitive to national security, from the upper echelons of the security apparatus to the pedagogical front lines where Copts are prevented from teaching Arabic (Brownlee; 2014). Iskander (2006) mentioned that during Nasser's era the teaching staff of the faculty of medicine has dropped to less than 4 percent compared to 40 percent in the pre-1952 era. While in his turn, Sadat have increased the budget of al-Azhar and expanded their education system, whereas control over Christian institutions remained the same (Osman, 2013). As a result of pre-1952 policies, many young Christians either emigrated to the west or migrated internally towards the church and joined the priestom path.

In this regard, Christians of Syria were not subject to cultural discrimination. While in Egypt, the expansion of the Islamic religious culture along with the state control over the educational sector has caused enormous cultural discrimination against Copts.

5.2.4 Religious level

- **Syria**

After the independence era, the privileges of Muslim minorities (Alawites and Druzes) that were granted by the colonial power have diminished. In fact, "the communal (religious community) rights of non-Muslims were recognized" (Belge and Karakoc

2015). Despite changes to reform of personal status law¹⁰³ (1953 and 1975), the community jurisdictions of non-Muslim were retained (Botiveau, 1998).

During Baath era, the situation became more complicated. In fact, members of the clergy must always express their allegiance to the regime; they have to report on their activities outside the country when they come back from travel, in addition, all associations were carefully scrutinized; while the importation of foreign books was very difficult, and so on.

- **Egypt**

The church building and restoration law issued in 1934 by Deputy Interior Minister *Ezaby Pasha* was applied during Nasser and Sadat eras (also Mubarak as we will see below). El-Azaby Pasha wrote a list of 10 questions (refer to box 5.1) that were taken as guidelines for granting a church building permission (Brownlee, 2014) such as 100-yard distance between Church and nearest mosque (Fastenrath and Kazanjian, 2008). Therefore, presidential official permission to build or restore churches is required and only granted after specific investigation that ensures proper implementation of El-Ezaby guidelines (Guirguis, 2017). As a result, Christian institutions have to convince and justify to the governmental and local officials the need to build or restore Churches (Pennington, 1982). But usually applications were often refused or delayed in order to give time for Muslims to build a mosque near the allocated land, thus preventing Christians from building Churches since it does not meet the requirements. As a result, during his 15 years in power Nasser authorized to build twenty-five churches while Sadat doubled the number to reach 50 in his 11 years (Guirguis, 2017).

Box 5.1: El-Ezaby Pasha's guidelines on Church Construction in Egypt

1. Is the land on which the church is to be built empty or agricultural land, and does it belong to the person presenting the request? Land ownership papers have to be appended to the presented request.
2. What is the distance between the proposed church and surrounding mosques?
3. If the land is vacant, is it amid Christian or Muslim settlements? 4. If it is amid Muslims, do they have any objections to it?
5. Is there another church belonging to this denomination in the same town or village?
6. What is the distance between the nearest church belonging to this denomination and to the town in which the requested church is to be built?
7. What is the number of Christians in the area?
8. If the land on which the church is to be built is close to Nile bridges or public utilities belonging to the Ministry of Irrigation, approval should be sought from the Ministry itself. Also, if it is near to railway lines, the railway authorities should also give their approval.

¹⁰³ Please refer to chapter 4, footnote 43

9. An official report should be made on all of the above points, and it should indicate the surrounding buildings to the requested spot on which the church is to be built, including the nearest utilities of a public nature, and the distances between these utilities and the church. This report is to be sent to the Ministry.

10. The applicant must present with his request architectural drawings in the ratio of 1/1000 that are signed by the head of the religious denomination and the engineer who has expertise of the area on which the church is to be built. The competent administration should investigate the truthfulness of the papers, should sign it, and present it with the investigation papers.

Source: Christian Fastenrath and Corin Kazanjian, "Important Factors for Church Building in Egypt," *Arab-West Report* Paper 4, April 2008, 32–33.

On a different scale, after abolishing the secular court and the formation of “national court” in 1955 discrimination against non-Muslims increased. The national court became in charge of personal status law that includes both Christians and Muslims. State trained judges who the majority were Muslims and from a different religion of the individual before the law (Copt), have experienced to some extent kind of discrimination (Belge and Karakoc 2015, and Botiveau 1998). As a result, since Christians did not play major role in the state institutions (refer to section III), they were subject to higher forms of discrimination by Muslim judges. Pennington (1988) added that dispute among Christians of different sects or between mixed marriages was settled according to Islamic law. It is worth noting that the Ministry of *Waqf* (responsible for Islamic property and endowments) that was established in 1968 confiscated many Christian religious sites. It is estimated that during Nasser and Sadat eras around 150 to 200 Christian properties were confiscated (Pennington, 1982).

In this context, religious discrimination against the Christians of Syria started to appear when the French colonial power granted Syria its independence. The pattern of religious discrimination remained to some extent on the same level despite the changes in the type of regimes and governments. While in Egypt, Christians have always experienced religious discrimination even during the monarchy era. But with the emergence of the republican mode of rule in 1952 in Egypt, the pattern of religious discrimination started to increase gradually and reached its peak under Sadat.

5.2.5 Social level

- **Syria**

The 1953 Code of Personal Status (CPS) was considered to some extent fair for minorities and non-Muslim groups. Despite that Christians, Druze and Jews have enjoyed judicial

autonomy only in family law such as marriage and divorce, etc., article 306 have ensured that Islamic Law is the main source of legislation and considered to be predominant over other religions such as parentage, guardianship and inheritance (Arab Center for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Education). As a result, Christianity, which is the dominant non-Muslim minority, was highly discriminated by the CPS.

- **Egypt**

Unlike Nasser's era that was considerably calm and peaceful due to his Arab nationalist approach, Sadat offensive policies and speeches towards Copts were in some cases humiliated. In 1965, being the Secretary General of the Islamic Conference and not yet the president, Sadat stated according to Salama (2002) that Copts in Egypt will convert to Islam in a ten years period or they will be transformed to beggars and shoe shiners. When in power, due to Sadat policies that lifted Islamisation in the society, Coptic anxiety started to increase. Tension between the Copts and the state from one hand and with Muslim majority (in some areas) from the other started to increase as well. Many socially based and religiously based incidents took place between Christians and Muslims as of Sadat era and so on. According to Shukri Ghali (1991), harassment and discrimination against Copts started during Sadat era whom he released furious Islamist from the prisons. These newly released prisoners have targeted their anger towards the state into the weaker composition i.e. Christians (Beshara, 2012). As a result, different attacks were launched against Christians in universities, cities, public and private eras in all Egyptian districts have resulted to high number of casualties and destruction (Pennington, 1988).

In this regard, the state did not intervene to prevent these incidents, Amr Hamzawi¹⁰⁴ elucidated since Sadat and the Pope were not in good terms. One of many reasons behind the tension between the president and the Pope i.e. the state and the church lies with Sadat's decision to release (militant and political) Islamists prisoners, he¹⁰⁵ added. These prisoners were armed, trained and they tried to assassinate Nasser and Mubarak and succeeded with Sadat, a high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman¹⁰⁶ affirmed. Another high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman¹⁰⁷ accused Sadat of being pro-terrorism and

¹⁰⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹⁰⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

pro-Muslim Brotherhood. He added that unlike the armed militant and political Islamists, Christians were “unarmed, peaceful and looking for equality among all Egyptians”.

Therefore, we can conclude this section by saying that in general Christians of Syria were less discriminated at different levels compared to the Christians of Egypt. It was clear also in this section that both Christians had respectable economic and cultural positions despite favoritism of the majority for the majority. While Christians in Egypt had experienced social discrimination, Christians of Syria did not. What could be also important to mention, is that the intensity of discrimination against Christians have drastically increased (or even started) when the Baath party took over power in Syria in 1963 and when the monarchy was abolished in Egypt in 1952.

5.3 Comparison of the situation and discrimination of Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt during al-Assad and Mubarak eras

It is with no doubt that the pattern and level of discrimination during al-Assad and Mubarak era differs compared to the era when they were not at the top of decision-making level. The changes in the national, regional and international scene have shaped their policies and actions, which affected directly or indirectly the Christian minorities in both countries. Similar to section 4.1, I will rely also in this section on the quantitative data from MAR, EPR, GRRD, ARDA and RAS databases. In addition, I will rely also on the qualitative data available in books and articles, along with the interviews that I have conducted for this thesis (for more information about the interviews please refer to chapter one). It is worth reminding the reader that despite that the qualitative databases can give direct information about the level and pattern of discrimination against Christians, still the reader cannot but notice the disagreement between all these databases and the absence of common unified results.

Table 5.6 below shows that the constitution of both Syria and Egypt does not totally provide freedom of religion but does protect some religious practices. In both countries, governmental authorities harassed and intimidated Christians. Both countries' constitution favored Islam as an important/main source for legislation. According to the available data per year, both countries penalized apostasy but they do not penalize hate speech. While in Syria, the government intervened in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2011 to end

discrimination and abuse against Christians; the government of Egypt did not intervene. Global Restriction on Religion Data notes that religious education in Syria is a requirement by the national government in public schools. But the situation in Egypt was different, religious education was not a requirement in 2007 and 2011 but it was in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Table 5.6: The degree and types of discrimination against Christians (and other groups) in Syria and Egypt during Mubarak (and al-Assad) according to Global Restriction on Religion Data (GRRD) from 2007 to 2011¹⁰⁸

Christian Arabs in Syria								Christian Arabs in Egypt							
Year	Degree/type of discrimination							Year	Degree/type of discrimination						
	Rel. free.	Agg. Chri.	Gov. Int.	Cons. Fav.	Rel. Edu	Apo	Hat		Rel. free.	Agg. Chri.	Gov. Int.	Cons. Fav.	Rel. Edu.	Apo	Hat
2007	0.5	0	0	1	1	N/A	N/A	2007	0.5	1	1	1	0	N/A	N/A
2008	0.5	1	0	1	1	N/A	N/A	2008	0.5	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A
2009	0.5	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	2009	0.5	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A
2010	0.5	1	0	1	1	1	0	2010	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	0
2011	0.5	1	0	1	1	1	0	2011	0.5	1	1	1	0	1	0

Code range from 0 to 1 (0 being yes – 1 being no)

Source: Thesis author, data from GRRD.

It is important to note that the Global Restriction on Religion Data (GRRD) covers the era from 2007 till 2013. But for this thesis, I have only selected up to 2011, the year in which Hosni Mubarak was ousted. As for Syria, Hafez al-Assad died in 2000 in office. But his regime continued throughout his son Bashar al-Assad who was appointed president hereafter his father's death. In this thesis, I will not tackle the situation and discrimination of Christians during the era of Bashar al-Assad. Therefore, the main reason behind constitutional referring only to 2011 and not to 2013 is that Bashar and up to 2011 was ruling based on 1973 constitution that was issued and ratified during Hafez al-Assad era. It is important also to note that Bashar al-Assad issued a new constitution in February 2012 as a response to the uprising against him. One of the main changes in the 2012 constitution was the removal of article 8 from the old constitution that indicates the Baath party as the leader of the state and the society. Most of the articles that combine between socialist systems with the educational, economic, military and cultural aspects were all removed. In addition, unlike the old constitution where the number of the president terms

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

in office was unlimited, the 2012 constitution restricted the presidential terms to only 2 with 7 years period each.

In order to better understand the level of discrimination of Christians and/or secularization of the state in Syria and Egypt, I will compare table 5.6 above to table 5.7 below which includes the same variables but for Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. Since both countries are in the Arab region, but the first is considered to be a free semi-democratic country, while the second is an authoritarian monarchy that takes of Islam and Sharia law as its constitution. In fact, these two countries are opposite and extreme cases in their context. Lebanon had a Christian community that according to the constitution consist of fifty percent of the country bureaucratic representation. Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country that has a working immigrant Christian minority.

Table 5.7: The degree and types of discrimination against Christians (and other groups) in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia according to Global Restriction on Religion Data (GRRD) from 2007 to 2011¹⁰⁹

<i>Christian Arabs in Lebanon</i>								<i>Christian Arabs in Saudi Arabia</i>							
Year	Degree/type of discrimination							Year	Degree/type of discrimination						
	Rel. free.	Agg Chri.	Gov. Int.	Cons. Fav.	Rel. Edu	Apo	Hat		Rel. free.	Agg Chri.	Gov. Int.	Cons. Fav.	Rel. Edu.	Apo	Hat
2007	0.5	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	2007	1	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A
2008	0.5	0	1	0	0	N/A	N/A	2008	1	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A
2009	0.5	0	1	1	0	N/A	N/A	2009	1	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A
2010	0.5	1	1	1	0	0	1	2010	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
2011	0.5	0	1	1	0	0	1	2011	1	1	1	1	1	1	0

Code range from 0 to 1 (0 being yes – 1 being no)

Source: Thesis author, data from GRRD.

Table 5.7 clearly shows that Lebanon enjoys a higher level of religious freedom than Saudi Arabia but similar to Egypt and Syria. While aggression against Christians took place in Lebanon (mainly once in 2010), there was no aggression recorded in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria. Unlike Syria where the government intervened many times to end discrimination and abuse, the governments of Lebanon (exception in 2007), Egypt and Saudi Arabia did not. While the constitutions of Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia favorites Islam, the Lebanese constitution recognizes and favors both Islam and Christianity in addition to their relevant sects. Religious education is not required in Lebanese public school; it is required in Saudi Arabia and Egypt and to some extent in Syria. According to the available data, apostasy is not penalized in Lebanon, but it is in

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, while hate speech is not penalized in Lebanon but it is in Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This will lead us to conclude, that Syria and Egypt lies in the middle point between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. At secularization level, the national profiles for Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia in table 5.8 below shows that Syria is more secular than Egypt if we compare it to Saudi Arabia and Lebanon.

Table 5.8: Level of state secularization for Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia in 2003, 2005 and 2008 according to ARDA – National Profiles for Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia¹¹⁰

Year	The Arab Republic of Syria				The Arab Republic of Egypt				The Republic of Lebanon				Kingdom of Saudi Arabia			
	Dependent Variables				Dependent Variables				Dependent Variables				Dependent Variables			
	GRI	GF I	SR I	R P	GR I	GF I	SR I	R P	GR I	GF I	SR I	R P	GR I	GF I	SR I	R P
2003																
2005	6	5.7	9	6	8.3	8.3	8	7	4.9	7	9.3	2	9.8	9.2	10	4
2008																

Code range for the four variables is from 0 to 10, lower means less regulation. As for the fourth variable (RP) 0 = None; 1 = 1-10; 2 = 11-20; 3 = 21-100; 4 = 101-500; 5 = 501-1000; 6 = 1001-5000; 7 = 5001-10000; 8 = 10001-50000; 9 = 50001-100000; 10 = greater than 100000.

Source: Thesis author, data from ARDA – National Profile for Syria and Egypt.

It is important to note that table 5.8 covers the years 2003, 2005 and 2008, in which Bashar al-Assad (son of Hafez) was ruling Syria. While in Egypt, Hosni Mubarak was still in power. If we consider that the regime of Bashar was an extension to his father's rule, especially at secularization and state separation of religion level, since Bashar did not change the constitution during the mentioned era (he did in 2012) nor the internal laws. Therefore, in table 5.8, the level of government regulation of religion is in the mean level for Lebanon and to some extent Syria, it is lower than the excess in Egypt and approximately the utmost for Saudi Arabia. Similarly, the level of government favoritism of religion is above the mean for Syria and a bit higher in Lebanon, it is lower than the excess in Egypt and near the excess level in Saudi Arabia. The table also shows that all four countries has very high social regulation of religion, Saudi Arabia being the utmost excess, then Lebanon and Syria closer to excess and Egypt being less than the three countries. As for religious persecution, it is above the mean level for Egypt being higher

¹¹⁰ Ibid

than Syria, while Lebanon and Saudi Arabia recorded lower levels mainly lower than the mean. This will lead us to say that if we compare Egypt and Syria to Saudi Arabia, then the level of secularization of both countries will be higher than if we compare these two countries to Lebanon. If Saudi Arabia is being the excess and Lebanon being the defect, therefore Egypt and Syria will be somehow considered as the mean level in the Arab region.

While in Egypt, as shown in table 5.9 below, from 2003 to 2006 (the only available records for Egypt) religious discrimination recorded somehow visible restrictions while culture discrimination recorded null. MAR dataset also recorded discrimination against Coptic representation in executive and legislative branch of central government. Unlike 2003 where the level of conflict was null, it escalated drastically to reach communal rioting and armed attacks against Copts in 2004 and anti-Coptic demonstrations in 2005.

Table 5.9: Level of discrimination against Christians in Egypt during Mubarak era according to Minority at Risk (MAR) Project data set from 2003 till 2006¹¹¹

Christian Arabs in Egypt								
Year	Degree/type of discrimination							
	Pol	Ec o	Rel	Cul	Leg	Exe	Inter conf	Conf lev
2004	3	0	2	0	1	1	0	0
2005	3	0	2	0	1	1	1	4
2006	3	0	2	0	1	1	1	5

Source: Thesis author, data from MAR project.

Based on what we have discussed, we have reached a conclusion that discrimination against Christians in both Egypt and Syria existed during al-Assad and Mubarak era and that the level and pattern of discrimination differs based on the following levels:

5.3.1 Political and regime structure level

With the exception of MAR dataset, most databases used in this thesis consider that Christians of Syria are discriminated. They also consider that the level of discrimination is higher for the Christians of Egypt compared to the Christians of Syria. EPR data set (refer to table 5.1) considers that the degree of accessing power for both Christians under al-Assad and Mubarak regimes as “powerless”. Therefore, both Christians of Syria and Egypt are discriminated against. It is important to note in this matter, that EPR

¹¹¹ Ibid.

classification is general, and if we look into the details, we can say that according to all the databases that we have used, there is contradiction and differences in the levels of discrimination against Christians in both countries.

- **Syria**

According to EPR dataset in table 5.1, if we compare access to power degree during pre/post Assad era, we can realize that when the religious identity of the Syrian president was Sunni (from 1946 till 1970 with the exception of UAR era), Christians were considered as junior partners. When the Alawite minority took over the rule in Syria from Hafez al-Assad era till 2010, Christians of Syria were considered powerless. That led us to conclude that Alawite minority discriminated more than the Sunni majority against the Christian religious minority of Syria. Therefore, al-Assad appointed Christians based on an "undeclared quota system" (which is not mentioned in the constitution nor in any laws or custom as in the case in Lebanon) that secures the representation of all minority groups in the government, the state institutions, the parliament, the Baath party and the army as Sam Dalla¹¹² stated who was close to Hafez al-Assad in his capacity as the Dean of the school of Law in Damascus University and Bashar al-Assad previous advisor for legal and constitutional matters as well as the Official Speaker of the 2012 new constitution drafting committee. In addition, Bassam Imadi¹¹³ who served as an ambassador during Hafez al-Assad era and currently the ambassador of the Syrian Opposition to Rome along with other interviewees whose names were to remain confidential also mentioned that Hafez al-Assad resorted to a quota system in order to secure the "representation" of all minorities, including Christians. For example, according to a Christian former Senior Civil servant¹¹⁴ elucidated how the quota system was extended to some ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to an extent that between every 30 diplomats, only 2 or maximum 3 positions were to be "reserved" for Christians. He¹¹⁵ pointed out that Christian's maximum representation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cannot exceed the level of an ambassador.

As a result, Christian's representation during al-Assad era in the Syrian Regional Command (SRC) of Baath Party in 1970-2000 was around 7.1 percent compared to 6.3

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

percent before. Despite that the representation slightly increased, none of the Christian members of the SRC were military officers that is the dominant group (Van Dam, 2011). In the same context of Baath party, many interviewees confirmed that al-Assad ensured Christian presence by one seat out of 20 in the Baath party General Command. In this respect, Sam Dalla¹¹⁶ mentioned the names of four Christians who were members of the Baath party General Command consecutively *Kostantine Zoreik, Elias al-Lati, Wahib Tanous and Saeid Elia*. In other terms, Christian representation in the SRC and Baath party General Command was figurative only.

In his small closed circle, al-Assad appointed few powerless Christians. According to Firas Tlas¹¹⁷, Son of Hafez al-Assad childhood friend and his Minister of Defense for 30 years Gen. Mustapha Tlas, al-Assad close circle of advisors included few Christians such as *Iskandar Louka* his speechwriter and *Gibran Kourieh* his advisor for International Affairs. Tlas¹¹⁸ added, that al-Assad private doctor was also a Christian who got assassinated by Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s. The Commander of Syrian Air Forces and Air Defense Forces before 1963 as well as the one who selected and taught al-Assad in the Military Aviation School General Wadih Moqaabari¹¹⁹ mentioned also the name of *George Jabbour* as al-Assad's advisor for media and press.

As for the representation in the Cabinet, Christians consisted 8.3 percent of all cabinets formed between 1966 and 1977, when Hafez al Assad took over power, the level dropped to 3.9 percent between 1970 and 1976 (Van Dam, 2011). In addition, only 1 Greek Orthodox Christian, *Yousuf Shakour*, as named by Firan Tlas¹²⁰ and other interviewees reached high military position in all armed forces, elite military formation and apparatuses of security and intelligence during 1970 till 1977 compared to 11 Sunnis and 19 Alawites. Other minority groups were not represented (Batatu, 1999). While in Commanders of Army division positions, no Christian commanded a division from 1973 to 1992 compared to 15 Alawites, 3 Sunnis, 1 Druze and 1 Ismaili (Batatu, 1999). Whereas according to a Christian former Senior Civil Servant¹²¹ mentioned the name of *Rasmi Eid*

¹¹⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹¹⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

who was appointed as head of Military Police during the 1990s. From his side, a high-ranking retired military General highlighted on the "decent presence" of Christians in the army. He added that their presence did not reach up to the level of holding key positions except for one or two odd cases such as the Commander in charge of the Syrian Army in Lebanon in 1980s Gen. *Issa al Shidyak*.

This will lead us to conclude that Christians were not appointed in key positions such as secret police, special army units, etc... On individual level, Christian politicians were allowed to play a limited role within the state and party apparatus but never at communal one (Van Dam, 2011). At parliamentary level, Christians were represented only by 3.48 percent when al-Assad appointed the first parliament in his term in 1971. According to table 5.2, the level of Christian parliamentary representation from 1973 till 1998 varied between 5 and 6 percent approximately. If we compare the parliamentary representation in the pre and during al-Assad era, we can say that the percentage of their representation clearly decreased. As a result, after 1963 and up till 1970 and so on, Nader Jabali¹²² mentioned, that Christians political role has totally disappeared. In his turn, Roger Asfar¹²³ denied any active Christian political participation outside the parameter drawn by the regime. For Asfar¹²⁴, al-Assad minimized and contained Christian political participation to become figurative.

On another hand, it is important to note that Christians of Syria were subject to high level of aggression when expressing anti-regime statements or actions. In a socially based conflict, Christians were treated normally in the police station, but in politically based cases Christians and Alawites "suffered the most", a Syrian Christian former Senior Civil Servant¹²⁵ expressed. The Deputy Director and Director of Research at the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) and the grandson of the famous Islamic and Arab philosopher Abdel Rahman al-Kawakibi, Dr. Salam Kawakibi¹²⁶ acknowledged the exercised high pressure against Christian political opposition by the regime who were subject to torture and exclusion. Al Kawakibi¹²⁷ realized based on a collected data that the intensity of harassment and torture throughout the investigation process increases when political

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

¹²⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

¹²⁷ Ibid.

prisoners were to be Christians or Alawites. A personal example was given by Nader Jabali¹²⁸ whom he himself got arrested and tortured by the regime security forces during the current civil war as an anti-regime activists and politicians. He clearly stated that the fact he is a Christian Catholic, the level of verbal, physical and psychological torture increased drastically. Many investigators blamed him for being Christian and opposing the regime. In the same context, Roger Asfar¹²⁹ affirmed that Christians who opposed the regime were subject to extreme levels of torture and harassment compared to other political prisoners. He¹³⁰ added that the regime made it clear to eliminate all political opposition especially any kind of opposition exercised by Christians. He¹³¹ recalled a case of one of his family members who was arrested as a political activist. During the investigation process, an Alawite officer beat him hard and shouted in a clear Alawite accent "your church bells are freely ringing and your women are wearing short sleeves...what do you want more?" Based on the retired army General's¹³² personal experience, there was kind of informal and clear direction to increase the level of harassment and torture when the political opposition members belong to a minority group especially Alawites and Christians. He¹³³ added investigators and officers were keen to send messages that the regime is their only protector of minorities.

- **Egypt**

Mubarak inherited a state that highly discriminates against Copts as mentioned in the previous section. According to EPR (please refer to table 5.1) and MAR databases (please refer to table 5.3) the pattern of discrimination or access to power during Mubarak, Sadat and Nasser remained the same. Mubarak did not take actions to minimize discriminatory practices that were initiated by his predecessors. In fact, the Islamization of the curriculum that refers to Islam as the "only source for ethics and morality", refusal to change the churches building law and allowing sectarian practices have remained (Farha and Mousa, 2015). Similar to al-Assad, Mubarak succeeded to create an informal agreement with the Church in which they support his regime in return for a margin of state protection and offer the church internal autonomy over Christian community.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

¹³³ Ibid.

Despite all the efforts that were taken by Mubarak to support Copts¹³⁴ such as ending Pope Shenouda's term in exile in 1985 and containing political and militant Islam in return for their support, Christians were politically discriminated at social exclusion/neutrality level according to table 5.3. Hamzawy (2010) did not fail to mention that Copts/Christians remained excluded from "governmental posts, the armed forces, diplomatic corps, judiciary and intelligence services, and were banned from presidential administrative and security bodies" (Farha and Mousa, 2015). According to the 31 Egyptian interviewees, Hosni Mubarak did not appoint any Christian in his closed circle of power or advisors. A very close politician¹³⁵ to the regime stated in this matter "to the best of my knowledge, no Christians were present in Mubarak close circle or advisors. His son Gamal appointed only Boutros Boutros Ghali".

At parliamentary level, Mubarak also used his presidential power to appoint Copts deputies instead of drafting new law that ensure proper representation. Table 5.4 above shows the number of appointed deputies Christian compared to the elected one in the seven elections held during 30 years of Mubarak rule. Throughout his term, Copts were represented above 2 percent (above 2.18 percent) in the election that was held in 1987. As for the six other elections, their representation varied between 1.32 percent at the lowest to 1.93 percent. When comparing Mubarak to Nasser and Sadat eras, we can notice that the Christian representation have dropped significantly to almost the half during Mubarak years in office.

At governmental level, Hosni Mubarak did not hesitate to appoint few Christian ministers for "décor" or decorative reasons as mentioned by many interviewees. Mubarak secured Christian representation in all governments through the Minister of Environment and/or Minister of Tourism. Beshara (2012) and Osman (2013) stated in this regard that only two powerless Christian ministries were appointed during Mubarak era to hold Ministry of emigration and Ministry of Environment who was headed by Majed George. In some odd cases, only two Christians (from Ghali family) performed their duties as the Minister

¹³⁴ According to Farha and Moussa (2012), the situation of Copts under Mubarak improved. He granted them holiday on the 7th of January, included Coptic history in the text book and many others.

¹³⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

of Finance or Minister of State for Foreign Affairs issues. As of 2004, and due to his close relation with Gamal Mubarak¹³⁶, Boutros Ghali was appointed Minister of Finance. According to a high-ranking Orthodox Coptic clergyman¹³⁷ "Copts were always represented in the government by 1 or 2 ministers. Mubarak secured our representation in the government through a quota system that was included also our representation in the parliament by a maximum 10 seats. But I have to admit that the quota system was not proportional at all to our number...we were simply appointed for decor". In this same path, four interviewees: a former high-ranking diplomat¹³⁸, a politician¹³⁹ and two businessmen¹⁴⁰ who all refused to reveal their names confirmed the clergyman's statement. The journalist and TV presenter for political and inter-religious subjects Passant Hassan Salama¹⁴¹ emphasized on what was known during Mubarak era as the "Christians of the regime", who were very well known wealthy Christian elite such as Butros Butros Ghali and Mounir Fakhri Abdel Nour. Last but not least, a current high-ranking diplomat¹⁴², who served for two decades under Mubarak's regime, supported Salama's statement when he mentioned that Mubarak preferred few wealthy Christians at expense of the majority who similar to all Egyptians suffered from corruption, bad economic situation, extreme poverty, under development etc...

At different level, Christians in general and Copts in particular, had almost no presence in the state institutions and bureaucratic positions compared to the Sunni majority as mentioned by George Ishak¹⁴³ a well-known political activist and founder of "Enough" movement¹⁴⁴ known in Arabic as *Kefaya*. A current high-ranking diplomat¹⁴⁵ added also in this respect that Christians and mainly Copts played no significant role or active presence in the state institutions. Consequently, The Director of al-Asfari Research Center and researcher on Coptic issues Dr. Dina Khawaga¹⁴⁶ described Christian's presence in the state institutions during Mubarak as "symbolic and decorative". Ishak¹⁴⁷

¹³⁶ The Son of Hosni Mubarak, he was planning to succeed his father.

¹³⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

¹³⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in January 2017

¹³⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹⁴⁰ These two interviews were conducted by thesis author in April 2017

¹⁴¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

¹⁴² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in January 2017

¹⁴³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

¹⁴⁴ it is a grassroots movement that was established in 2004 against Mubarak's regime.

¹⁴⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in January 2017

¹⁴⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

and many other interviewees whose names are to remain confidential confirmed Dr. Khawaga¹⁴⁸'s statement when they referred to Christian's presence in the state institutions as "powerless and decorative". Within the same context, a high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman¹⁴⁹ explained the inefficient, powerless and decorative role of Christians in the state institutions, when he recalled the famous reply of Mubarak's Minister of Interior Habib al-Adly (1997-2011) to Christian's under-representation in the state institutions question as "a custom and tradition and not based on specific law". Another high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman¹⁵⁰ related the recent historic Christians under-representation to Sadat's era when he terminated President Nasser's custom in appointing a Christian in the position of the Commander of the Second Egyptian Army. As a result, very few senior powerless positions were reserved for Christians in some Ministers like the Interior or Foreign Affairs (Beshara 2012 and Osman 2013).

On another hand, unlike Baath party in Syria, the National Democratic Party (NDP) in Egypt did not secure any quota for Christians in its political bureau; therefore, Christian's presence was symbolic and decorative. Despite that the party had no religious or Muslim ideology, still, Christians did not join the NDP, a Christian politician and businessman¹⁵¹ stated. The existence of few and very limited number of Christians figures such as *Mounir Fakhri Abdel Nour* and others had an "interest and benefit" ground rather than ideological one, he¹⁵² added. A high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman¹⁵³ reflected the Church point of view when he stated, "few Copts joined NDP, but to be honest the church did not ask its people to join any party". Those Christians who joined NDP were powerless and politicized a high-ranking priest¹⁵⁴ in the Egyptian Evangelic Church and a member of the inter-dialogue religious committee between 2005 and 2016 stated in his criticism of Mubarak's regime and the corrupt NDP.

In this regard, we can notice that the level of political discrimination against Christians during al-Assad and Mubarak eras has increased compared to the previous eras. Based on section 4.1.1 and this section we can say that the situation of political discrimination of Christians during al-Assad era remained the same compared to the 1963 when the Baath

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹⁵⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

¹⁵¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

party took over power. Despite that al-Assad appointed few Christians in the military, Baath party and governmental positions; still they were powerless and figurative. As for Egypt, the path of political discrimination that started with Nasser and increased with Sadat, have remained the same with Mubarak. Christians during Mubarak were not represented fairly in the parliament, government, army and the party.

5.3.2 Economic level

- **Syria**

In his first years in power, al-Assad economic policies were based on Baath socialist ideology. Despite that al-Assad was not strictly implementing socialist approach, still the economy was totally controlled by the state. Al-Assad used Baath party to control lower class who benefited from the land reform law and social benefits. While upper and middle classes were formed based on loyalty to Baath party and the state. As a result, reaching high positions in the state apparatus is based on faithfulness towards Baath party (Spitz, 2014). During 1990's, al-Assad has engaged into more liberal economic policy towards Syrian bourgeois (Van Dam, 2011). As a result, very few benefited from the economic openness initiated by the state mainly those who are closed to the ruling elite (Spitz, 2014), in other word Alawites and Sunni bourgeois. Christians who were closed to the regime benefited from the privileges they offered, while the rest did not prosper.

According to a Syrian politician and famous businessman¹⁵⁵, Christians during the al-Assad era were pampered economically. For a contractor and politician¹⁵⁶, the strong economic partnership that was established between the regime and Christians, have facilitated and prioritized Christian businessmen in the contracting and businesses field at expense to the rest. He¹⁵⁷ added this partnership have led to the emergence of the well-known "regime powerful Christian businessmen" *Takla, Yaacoubian, Haykal, Karour, Hamod, Sara, Abou Khater* families and many others. There were no proper selection criteria adopted by the regime to choose state contract holders, both a retired army General¹⁵⁸ and a former Christian Senior Civil Servant¹⁵⁹ explained. From his side, Sami

¹⁵⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹⁵⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

Khiyami¹⁶⁰ summarized the strong economic bond between Christians and the regime based on the following factors: trust, professionalism and socially accessible. By socially accessible he narrated a story of "two businessmen George and Mohammad who owned each a contracting company and applied separately to state tender. Both established a strong relation with the state decision-making unit that approves contracts and encloses state projects. George invited few people from the decision-making unit to a dinner in a fancy restaurant and drunk alcohol. After few shots, the setting became less rigid and broke up the usual formalities between the guests, as a result invitees started to dance, sing and laugh and left the restaurant late night in a pleasant mood. Mohammad also invited the same group to the same restaurant but without drinking. Formal discussions were taking over the dinner. After two hours, they left the restaurant like any other dinner...after few weeks George took the contract". For Khiyami¹⁶¹, Christians were professional and socially accessible. He used this example to explain that Christians caused no threat to the regime; in fact they were more attractive. On another level, Salam Kawakibi¹⁶² referred to the economic benefits and facilities that were bestowed to religious institutions and its clergymen during Hafez al-Assad and more openly during Bashar al-Assad era. As a result of the no taxes on religious properties law, many Christian clergymen took advantage of that law especially in the black market, while other Patriarch owned luxurious cars in the supposedly socialist country, Kawakibi¹⁶³ added.

- **Egypt**

According to table 5.5 the level of economic discrimination against Christians was almost null. Despite discrimination in specific public sectors, Christians during Mubarak era enjoyed relatively economic freedom compared to Nasser and Sadat eras. Few Christian elites who were closely linked to Mubarak circle or the National Democratic Party such as Naguib Sawiris and few others benefited from the economic freedom and state support they have enjoyed. As for the majority, they were marginalized. Few Christian elites benefited widely at telecom, constructions, pharmaceutical, tourism, medical, banking and food and beverages levels (Osman, 2013). In its reply to Human Rights report 2007 that have criticized the Egyptian regime of discriminating economically against Copts,

¹⁶⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

¹⁶³ Ibid.

the government stated that Copts possess around one third of Egypt total wealth (Beshara, 2012). This number proclaimed by the government is not that correct.

In his turn, Amer Hamzawi¹⁶⁴ analyzed the economic freedom given to Christian from a regime strategy perspective. He¹⁶⁵ stated that Mubarak used four layers to sustain his dictatorship by depending on the 1) military, 2) intelligence, 3) businessmen and 4) political advisors. He¹⁶⁶ added Christians were part of the third layer. Hamzawi¹⁶⁷ related the strong presence of Christians in the economic sector to their exclusion from the political, military and governmental positions. In this context, Dina khawaga¹⁶⁸ added that Mubarak created a new loyal political Christian elite from businessmen, bankers, and the private sector. The newly created rich Christian elite was the result of the economic freedom given to Christians by Mubarak's regime, both Samir Morcos¹⁶⁹ and George Fahmi¹⁷⁰ analyzed. Finally, on the opposite side, a high-ranking Evangelic priest¹⁷¹ emphasized on the role played by the regime to benefit from Christian businessmen by keeping their wealth inside Egypt and improves its image internationally.

On a different level, Egypt Christians middle class started to decline. This have resulted to a decrease in their representation in private enterprises from 35 till 25 percent, university positions from 25 to 15 percent while doctors and engineers' positions have dropped from 30 to 15-20 percent (Osman, 2013). Christians gradually became underrepresented and poorly integrated in the state professions. Copts composed only 2 percent of positions in the judicial, media, diplomatic, army and police sectors (Beshara, 2012). According to ILO (2014), Copts in Egypt are denied equal access to education and equal opportunities in recruitment and promotion. Few are appointed in key positions in the government or are candidates for parliament. ILO report added that the Copts enrolment in the police and security institution is almost restricted.

The above discussion has led us to conclude that both al-Assad and Mubarak were keen about the economic performance of their regimes. As a result, the level of economic discrimination against Christians in both states was low. But if we compare the economic

¹⁶⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

situation of Christians to the pre-Mubarak and pre-al-Assad era, we can notice that their situation slightly improved.

5.3.3 Cultural level

- **Syria**

During al-Assad era, Christians and non-Christians publications were censored. The regime executed an iron control mechanism against publications. In 1967, the Baath party government in which al-Assad were along with *Salah Jadid* the powerful figures (refer to chapter four) nationalized Christians schools “after a decree imposing government control on curriculum in private, religious and missionary schools” (Moussalli, 1998). When in power, al-Assad refused to grant back Christian institutions their schools. Sam Dalla¹⁷² stated in this matter that Baath government whom Hafez al-Assad was its Secretary of Defense considered these schools as western imperial and colonial tools. Therefore, the concept of private schools was abolished. In his turn, Roger Asfar¹⁷³ a resigned priest and journalist had criticized the regime constant rejection to deliver back the (1967-1968) nationalized school to the Catholic Christian institutions, despite several calls in this regard. As a result, Christians lost the superior standard in education they have inherited from western models through Christian missionaries (Mouawad, 2001).

In the only available public schools, religious education was a mandatory course. During religious education classes, students were divided based on their religious background. Unlike most of the interviewees, Roger Asfar¹⁷⁴ recorded an objection regarding the "martyrdom spirit" in the religious education book, which according to him it is an Islamic concept rather than Christian. At the university level, Sam Dalla¹⁷⁵ mentioned that Islamic Sunni Jurisprudence was a compulsory set of courses for university Law students. A statement, which was confirmed by Nael George¹⁷⁶ "We were informally obliged to memorize some parts of the Quran and Prophet discourse and analyze Islamic Jurisprudence which does not fit within our field of work".

¹⁷² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹⁷³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹⁷⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

On another level, Christians Armenians also suffered since they were not Arab but at lower scale compared to Kurds. The regimes have created obstacles “to any associations, publications, language, teaching in addition to banning Armenian party (Tachnag and Hentchag) is proving particularly disillusioning to them. They feel isolated and place little faith in their future in Syria” (Mouwad, 2001).

It worth noting in this regard, that according to a political activist and businessman¹⁷⁷ as well as a Christian former Senior Civil Servant¹⁷⁸, Christians during al-Assad enjoyed a proportional margin of religious and educational freedom compared to Sunnis. The resigned catholic priest¹⁷⁹ added in this regard that, after Sunday's prayers churches doors remained open for social and religious activities. Christians had also access to scouts and religious associations, activities Sunnis could not enjoy, the resigned priest¹⁸⁰ added.

- **Egypt**

Christians enjoyed a light margin of religious education freedom. The Egyptian curriculum includes religious education as a mandatory course for both public and private schools. In public schools, students were to choose their religious classes based on their religion background. According to most of the interviewees, the government did not intervene in the Christian religious education. Unlike Islamic tradition, most of the Christian theological concepts are not part of the teaching material. In Arabic language classes, Christians (similar to Muslims) are obliged to memorize and study section from Quran as part of Arabic teaching materials (Beshara, 2012). As a result, a high-ranking priest¹⁸¹ in the Egyptian Evangelic Church and a member of the inter-dialogue religious committee between 2005 and 2016 criticized the Arabic teaching classes as "humiliated towards Christians". He¹⁸² added Christian students hated Arabic language classes since they were obliged to memorize parts of the Quran. It is important to note in this matter that no parts from the Bible were included in these classes. Also, the history book does not include the Christians heritage in Egypt (Beshara, 2012). According to a well-known Christian politician and businessman¹⁸³, public schools were the golden space for

¹⁷⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

¹⁷⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

¹⁷⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2016

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

discrimination against Christians, in which unveiled students were to be harassed and subject to constant discrimination. A high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman¹⁸⁴ added that Christian students in public schools did not have proper rooms or place to study Christian theology. Their number was small compared to Muslim students, that's why Christian students were asked to leave the class, he added. On another hand, three years military service will be reduced to one year if a Muslim soldier memorizes the Quran. Christians does not enjoy these privileges (Andraos, 2010).

When it comes to state scholarship for students to study PhD abroad, only “one Copt out of 425 graduates” was chosen in 2007 (Gunidy, 2010). Pennington (1982) clearly stated that Copts who enter university teaching or government service or the public sector have to accept that their chances of reaching the very top are almost unattainable. As a result, out of 17 presidents and 54 depute presidents of the 17 public universities, no Copts were appointed; while out of 274 public university Deans only one Copt was appointed (Gunidy, 2010). In addition, a well-known university professor and political activist¹⁸⁵ mentioned that Christian students had some difficulties in accessing some university majors while some professors used to manipulate with their grades. Consequently, Dr. Mustapha al-Sayyid who was interviewed by Jeida Deeb during her Master's thesis on the Coptic question in Egypt acknowledged what have been discussed and added that the division process in schools and universities between Muslim and Christians students have led to the institutionalization of racism and discrimination inside the Egyptian society. In this context, cultural and educational discrimination against Copts were recorded under al-Assad and Mubarak era. But as discussed earlier, the level and pattern of discrimination differs between both states. For example, the Syrian regime was to some extent lenient in appointing Christians in university positions, while the Egyptian regime was not.

5.3.4 Religious level

As previously said, the intensity and level of discrimination against Christians differs between al-Assad and Mubarak. According to Religion and State (RAS) database (table 5.10) in which it covers the period between 1990 and 2008 religious discrimination against Christians is higher in Egypt than in Syria. Despite that the period does not cover

¹⁸⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

¹⁸⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

all the ruling years of Hafez al-Assad (from 1970 till 2000) and Hosni Mubarak (from 1981 till 2011), it covers at least the last 10 years of Hafez al-Assad in office and up to 18 years of Hosni Mubarak. According to RAS data scale that ranges from 0 to 38 in which higher scores means higher level of religious discrimination, Egypt scored twice higher (15) than Syria (5) in the religious discrimination against religious minorities in the period between 1990 and 2008.

Table 5.10: Level of religious discrimination against Christians in Syria and Egypt during Assad and Mubarak according to Religion and State database (RAS) from 1990 till 2008¹⁸⁶

Christian Arabs in Syria		Christian Arabs in Egypt	
Year	Degree/type of discrimination	Year	Degree/type of discrimination
	Religious discrimination		Religious discrimination
1990-2008	5	1990-2008	15

Source: Thesis author, data from RAS project.

- **Syria**

Christians had the freedom to perform freely their religious practices but within the parameter of the state security. Almost all Syrian Christian interviewees expressed no restrictions on their religious or cultural practices. The regime has applied indirect strict rules on priests whom they should always express full support to the regime. While activities outside the countries should always been reported to the secret police by members of the clergy (Mouawad, 2001). Therefore, Church social activities should not by any mean “challenge the existing political order” (Spitz, 2014). On another hand, despite that there is a freedom of worship for all Christian sects in Syria. And despite that official holidays for Christians and Easter are recognized “and celebrations are broadcast on radio and television” (Moussali, 1998), still Christians depends on their community *ta'ifa* for support and protection. On another hand, it is important to note that dissimilar to Muslims religious *Sheikhs* who are paid by the state, Christian priests are not paid (Moussalli, 1998).

It is worth noting that the proportional margin of religious and cultural freedom given by al-Assad regime to Christians (and other sects) was not for granted. Al-Assad established an undeclared agreement with most of the Christian institutions (and other groups and sects including Sunnis) that guarantees religious freedom in return for full obedience and

¹⁸⁶ For more information about variable explanation please refer to Annex 4.

total support, a famous Syrian politician¹⁸⁷ stated. The academic and political/human rights activists Dr. Nael George¹⁸⁸ avowed that Christian religious freedom was granted by the regime in return for some concessions. He added that the regime benefited greatly from this agreement since it gave him an international standing as the sole "protector of minorities". Successively, Salam Kawakbi¹⁸⁹ emphasized on the politicization technique that was implemented by the regime to subordinate all religious groups within his structure. He¹⁹⁰ added, "During al-Assad, the Patriarch was a state employee and not a member of a religious institution. The Vatican knew that the clergy expressed loyalties to the regime and not to the Vatican. They were fine with the al-Assad regime as a protector of minorities and Christians". On another level, the hidden layer of discrimination lies in the strict security control over clergy members and Sunday prayers. According to Nader Jabali¹⁹¹, the regime fully controlled all religious institutions, which were subject to constant investigation. He¹⁹² shaded light on the presence of security forces and intelligence units (usually Christian members) in all religious ceremonies and prayers. Jabali¹⁹³, Kawakibi¹⁹⁴, and a resigned Catholic priest¹⁹⁵ did not fail to mention in this matter that the security apparatus of the regime used to read and approve Friday's prayer (for Muslims) and Sunday's prayer (for Christians) speeches prior to their deliveries. The resigned Catholic priest revealed that indirect investigation pertaining the purpose of travels, missions and meetings were to be undertaken with clergymen prior and after any religious mission outside Syria. Finally, what could explain the strong relation between the regime and church was expressed by Salam Kawakibi¹⁹⁶, Sam Dalla¹⁹⁷, the resigned Catholic priest¹⁹⁸ (Roger Asfar) and other interviewees (Christians and Muslims) who preferred not to reveal their names when they all labeled Gregory III Laham, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and Alexandria and Jerusalem for the Melkite Greek Catholic Church as the "intelligence officer Patriarch" or the "regime Patriarch" or the "Baath

¹⁸⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

¹⁸⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

¹⁸⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2016

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

¹⁹⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

Patriarch". They all mentioned that the same labels were applied to the Sunni Mufti and religious leaders of other sects.

As a result, Christians in Syria have accepted and acknowledged the restrictions imposed by al-Assad regime against their political liberties and integration within the political arena in return to freely practice their religion. As a continuation to the Baath era policy, members of the clergy during al-Assad era must always support the regime and report on their activities.

- **Egypt**

Similar to Nasser and Sadat era, the building of Churches during Mubarak was subject to *El-Ezaby Pasha* law. Mubarak facilitated the church restoration process through simple written notification to the local authorities in each governorate (Guirguis, 2007). But the new procedure was not properly applied since in many cases, local authorities considered restoration as construction (Guirguis 2007 and Beshara 2012). The 1980 and 1990's era witnessed a huge increase in building churches (Osman, 2013). While from 1998 till 2007 the number of granted degrees to build churches was as follow 5 in 1998, 10 in 1999, 10 in 2000, 12 in 2001, 2 in 2002, 8 in 2003, 6 in 2004, 9 in 2005, 1 in 2006 and 2 in 2007 (Gunidy, 2010). It is important to note that according to a high-ranking priest¹⁹⁹ in the Egyptian Evangelic Church and a member of the inter-dialogue religious committee²⁰⁰ between 2005 and 2016, Mubarak regime enforced high restrictions on building Churches, especially for non-Copts. Throughout his years in office, Mubarak did not approve the building of any Evangelic church, the priest²⁰¹ added later that these decisions were communicated verbally and informally.

On another hand, still Islamic traditions, values and norms indirectly guide the social behavior of the state. Religion conversion to Christianity is almost impossible compared to Islam. According to the United States Department of State - International Religious Freedom Report for 2011 "the government does not recognize the religious status of Muslims who convert to other religion, but Christians converted to Islam are accorded official recognition". When it comes to inter-religion marriages, as per law, Muslims are

¹⁹⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁰⁰ It is religious committee that included Muslim and Christian official representatives of religious institutions. The aim of the committee is to enhance dialogue and minimize social tension between Christians and Muslims.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

not allowed to convert to Christianity, while Christians cannot but convert to Islam (Youssef, 2006). Finally, Muslim laws were and still applied on any inter-religious conflict, which is seen as supremacy not only to the Islamic law but Muslim society.

In this regard, the intensity and level of discrimination against Christians differs between al-Assad and Mubarak. Al-Assad did not exercise directly high patterns of religious discrimination against Christians, but still religious practices were related to national security matters. As for Mubarak, the intensity of religious discrimination and harassment against Christians has increased if we compare it to the era of Nasser and Sadat. Despite that Mubarak offered few gestures related to the Christian religious practices, still the level of religious discrimination remained very high.

5.3.5 Social level

- **Syria**

During al-Assad era, a “glass ceiling” restricts Christians and other non-Alawite minorities from reaching the highest-ranking positions not only in political arena but also social one (Farha and Mousa, 2015). Social relation between different religious groups, sects and ethnic groups are governed according to their religious communities (Spitz, 2014). Islamic traditions and customs are the main features of the Syrian society, which to some extent had Islamic touch. It is important to note that the status of women in the society is determined according to personal status law that are influenced and based on Sharia law (Spitz, 2014).

In addition, to the utmost of our knowledge, no literature or qualitative research has referred to Islamist systematic attacks against Christians during Hafez al-Assad era. In fact, all Syrian interviewees expressed clearly that no religiously based attacks against Christians of Syria were recorded during al-Assad years in power. Despite that Muslim brotherhood assassinated al-Assad private Christian doctor during the 1970s, this accident was an explicit message to al-Assad and not to Christians, as a result of his engagement in an internal warfare to eradicate radical Islam groups represented by Muslim Brotherhood, Firas Tlas²⁰² stated. (For more information about Muslim brotherhood in Syria, refer to chapter 3). Most of the inter-religious clashes between Muslim and

²⁰² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

Christians were socially based quarrels and not religiously based ones, Sami Khiyami²⁰³ clarified. He²⁰⁴ added, that these quarrels used to take place when rural Muslim teenagers used to show up in Christian villages to glimpse a look on some unveiled women during Christian religious ceremonies. Most of the Syrian interviewees asserted on the same reasons for these inter-religious quarrels since the rural society in Syria is still governed by old traditions and customs which enforce high restrictions on their societies.

- **Egypt**

The path of interreligious clashes between Christians and Muslims drastically increase when Sadat started to Islamize the state and its institutions. The Wahabi culture that was brought to Egypt by Egyptian immigrant workers from the gulf and more precisely from Saudi Arabia have increased significantly as of 1970's, most of the Egyptian interviewees expressed. The available literatures Penington, J.D. (1982); Ibrahim; S. (1996); Khawaga, D. (1998); Labib, H. (2004); Tadros, M. (2009); Osman, T. (2013); Gunidy, A. (2010); Elsasser, S. (2014); Deeb, J. (2015), Saad, A. (2016) and Guirguis, L. (2017) support to a large extent the relation between the spread of Wahabi Islamic culture in Egypt and rise of radical Islam mainly Al Jamat al Islamiya. In this context, George Ishak²⁰⁵ did not fail to accuse al-Azhar policies and teaching materials behind the rise of social discrimination against Christians during Mubarak's era. Ishak²⁰⁶ related the increase social radicalization to the Wahabi theological approach adopted by al-Azhar. Al-Azhar's role in increasing radicalization was also pointed out by a high-ranking priest²⁰⁷ in the Egyptian Evangelic Church and a member of the inter-dialogue religious committee between 2005 and 2016 whom he criticized al-Azhar curriculum of being "rejectionist and exclusive towards non-Muslims". His personal experience of being a member of the inter-dialogue religious committee between 2005 and 2016 enlightened him to some insights from within al-Azhar. Accordingly, al-Azhar was invaded by Islamic radical thoughts such as Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi, and Wahabi through their huge financial supports, the Evangelic priest²⁰⁸ claimed.

²⁰³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

In this context, the retired Ambassador Soad Shalaby²⁰⁹ accused militant and “fanatic Islam” of the social, religious and even political discrimination against Copts, since the Islamist project and agenda clearly express refusal towards “equality” between all Egyptian citizens. She²¹⁰ blamed Mubarak’s fragile security system that prevented security forces from protecting and safeguarding Christians and their churches from Islamist attacks. At judicial level, Laure Guirguis (2017) accused Mubarak regime by being lenient with violence committers against Christians. Guirguis stated “with only one exception, no penal sentence was ever handed to the perpetrators of crimes and abuses against Christians before the fall of Mubarak”.

It is worth noting that in socially based conflict, Christians were subject to high level of discrimination in the police station, especially when the conflict happens to be between a Muslim and a Christian. George Ishak²¹¹, as well as most of the interviewees, added that religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims were solved either by the police or intelligence forces or based on tribal tradition under what was known as "reconciliation sessions" and never in the court. A High-ranking priest²¹² in the Egyptian Evangelic Church who attended some of these "reconciliation sessions" criticized their approach, which was based on threatening Christians rather than forgiveness and tolerance. Finally, it is worth noting that most of the Egyptian interviewees’ especially Christian clergymen expressed their resentment from these reconciliation sessions and prefer that these cases will be redirected to the court.

Police failure to protect minorities during Mubarak era has led to a fruitful climate that encourages sectarian violence against Copts and Shiaa (Brownlee, 2013). The withdrawal of Christians from the political and cultural arenas along to their economic policies of “self-isolation²¹³” resulted to the emergence of clear sectarian lines. Christians neighborhood have emerged in Cairo, university class rooms were divided according to sectarian divisions, same for syndicates²¹⁴, for women dress code, and in public position advertisement that mentions “for Muslims only” (Osman, 2013). This has led to what

²⁰⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in January 2017

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

²¹² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²¹³ They support only each other as a result to the informal isolation policies to protect the community.

²¹⁴ Trade or labor unions

Laure Guirguis (2017) described it as the “special and social segregation”. With very few exceptions, Christian and Muslim families “rarely visit one another’s home”, Guirguis (2017) elaborated. She described the increase gap and barriers in the Egyptians social structure with the following words “Muslim buys bread at the Muslim’s bakery rather than the Christian’s; Christians forget to offer well-wishes for the end of Ramadan, and Muslim forget Easter; a Muslim building owner refuses to sell to a Christian for fear the latter may reserve usage for Christians”. The growing social split between Christians and Muslims was also extended to humanitarian and medical sphere. Dr. Hamdi al-Sayyid, the president of the Doctor’s Syndicate declared in July 2008 “he would prohibit transplants between Muslims and Christians” Guirguis (2017).

In this context, fundamentalists and extremists didn’t fail to threaten the existence of Christian minorities by issuing *Fatawas* (religious degrees) such as “Muslim should not salute Christians or share their celebrations and Christians should not have access to public jobs” (Beshara, 2012). In addition, according to a high-ranking civil servant²¹⁵ in development, wearing the veil (*Hijab*) was one of the main sources of socially and religiously based quarrels between radical Muslim and Christians. A Christian businesswoman and political activist²¹⁶ accused militant and fundamental Islam groups of the systematic social and religious discrimination against Christians. “We were offended by some Islamists who publically tried to enforce some un-Christian dresses on Christian women”. Reasons behind the increased level of social discrimination against Copts were interconnected and proportional with the increasing number of radical Islamists and their “enforcing” habits as well as actions, a high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman²¹⁷ witnessed.

This has led to serious incidents against Copts such as the increase of church burning and sectarian violence. It is estimated that from 1992 till 1997 around 96 Christians were killed in Upper Egypt for refusing to pay “collecting taxes”²¹⁸ (Youssef, 2006). While the Minister of Interior stated clearly that “kidnapping Christians is an easy way to make money, since they lack backup from the government that will deter kidnappers”; he added

²¹⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in January 2017

²¹⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

²¹⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

²¹⁸ Taxes imposed on Copts by radical Muslims.

“Kidnapping in Minya where Christians are estimated to make up more than a third of the population, have been a weekly occurrence since Mubarak’s ouster” (Brownlee, 2013).

Therefore, in general Christians of Syria were less discriminated at all levels compared to the Christians of Egypt. The level of discrimination against Christians in pre-al-Assad and Mubarak era was lower if we compare it to when they were in power. It was clear also in this section that both Christians had respectable economic position and that their political representation was decreasing compared to pre-al-Assad and Mubarak eras. In Egypt, the level of social discrimination and insecurity has increased compared to pre-Mubarak era, while in Syria the situation remained the same. In addition, we cannot but notice how the situation of Christians deteriorated gradually from 1952 in Egypt and 1963 in Syria till it reached its peak with Mubarak and al-Assad.

5.4 Conclusion

According to the databases used in this chapter, we can conclude that Christians of Egypt were more discriminated compared to Christians of Syria; and second, when the Sunni majority was ruling Syria (refer to chapter four) discrimination against Christians was less compared to era of Alawites in power. While in Egypt, despite the regime type and chronological era, the Sunni majority (refer to chapter four) always discriminated against Christians. Finally, it is important to note that there is discrepancy between the databases. While **MAR** does not consider Christian of Syria as a discriminated minority, **RAS** and **EPR** and to some extent **GGRD** (focused mainly on constitution) considers Christians of Syria as a discriminated minority.

At qualitative level, almost all the academic literature used in this thesis was chosen from inhabitants of both countries or the region as well as international experts in the Egyptian, Syrian, Arab studies and Christians of the Arab region. The literature was clear in identifying and pointing on the levels and forms of discrimination against Christians. It was clear also according to the qualitative data that Christians of Egypt were discriminated at a higher level compared to Christians of Syria and that the level of discrimination was higher in the al-Assad and Mubarak era compared to their precedents eras. It is beneficial to add also that both minorities enjoyed economic and professional characteristics that allowed them to have a better economic and social level than the rest.

On another, hand due to the discriminatory policies, Christian minorities of both Syria and Egypt have migrated towards the west. In Syria, due to this policy of aggression and insecurity Bassel Oudat (2003) did not fail to mention that the exodus of the Christians in Syria increased due to Baath and Assad family policies “in 1945 Christians represented 20 percent of the population, but by 1980 this figure had dropped to 16.5 percent and it dipped to 11 percent I 1990. Today, it is estimated at 6 percent of the population, or 1.5 million people”. While in Egypt, Arab nationalist and economic policies of Nasser, the Islamization of the state and society of Sadat and the sever economic crises along with the increase in violence against Copts during Mubarak have left the Christians of Egypt with limited choices. It is estimated that more than 100.000 middle class Copts immigrated to the west (Pennington, 1988).

Chapter 6

Discrimination and its “raison d’être”

We accept the logic of right and wrong in political dialogue, because its issues are controversial, in which the concept of right and wrong are relative. And we refuse to conduct the political dialogue on the basis of halal and haram (Islamic religious way) in which the concept of right is absolute and the concept of falsehood is also absolute, and where the difference in opinion is harsh.

Faraj Fouda, 1988 (from The Missing Truth)

Abstract: *in this chapter, we will present some hypotheses that are already available in the literature. In addition, five new hypotheses suggested by the thesis author, that are related to the welfare of the state, geopolitics, revenge and history, identity and Islamist challenge, will be presented and tested in a qualitative comparative approach. Based on the result of the mentioned hypotheses, a sixth new hypothesis emerged. It is based on the interaction effect of elite-population religious convergence with the Islamist challenge which will help us understand the thesis main questions. Finally, it is worth noting, that the result of the tested hypotheses, were based on interviews as a prime source of information, as well as available literature such as books, articles, research papers, etc. as a secondary source of knowledge*

6.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to shed light on the major causes that led to the existence of different levels of discrimination against Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt under the regimes of Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak. In order to better understand the causes of the changing pattern of discrimination against Christians in those two countries, I will answer the thesis (main) questions presented in chapter one and addressed in chapter two. By doing this, we will acquire a full depiction of why Christians in Syria and Egypt were treated differently.

As we saw in chapter two, in the Arab region the more autocratic the state is, the more likely it is to engage in discrimination against minorities. We have thus the puzzle of: why Syria, which is somehow more autocratic than Egypt (as explained in chapter 2 and 4), however discriminates less than Egypt against their Christian indigenous minority. In fact, in chapter five we have seen that the level of discrimination against Christian Arabs not only varies across time, but also across countries (as summarized in table table 6.1). This means that we have to reformulate the previous puzzle into a new one that is: why has the situation of Christians deteriorated more in Egypt than in Syria across time,

although the Egyptian regime became less autocratic since the 70s whereas the Syrian one became more authoritarian? By solving this puzzle we make an original contribution to the literature available on the relation between political regimes and discrimination of minorities.

Table 6.1: Discrimination against Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt across time

Discrimination against Christian minorities			
Political regimes	Syria	Political regimes	Egypt
French colonial period	Very Low	Monarchy/British colonial period	Low
Pre al-Assad republic periods		Nasser republic period	Medium
		Sadat republic period	Very high
Al-Assad republic period	Medium	Mubarak republic period	High

In addition, by answering this question, we will be able to understand and answer our second main question: *why some Arab autocracies that started as secular regimes discriminate against Christian minorities which belong to the same ethnic group (Arab)? That is, when and whether ethnic or religious identity matters for Arab autocracies that are regarded as secular?* Answers to the above questions will be given by testing the hypotheses addressed in this chapter.

6.2 Hypotheses Selection

In this section, I will review the existing standard hypotheses on discrimination against minorities in the Arab countries suggested by the current literature.

6.2.1 General hypotheses on discrimination in Arab (Muslim majority) countries

In Chapter two, I have already argued that the common reasons the literature offers to explain discrimination of minorities in Arab-Muslim countries cannot answer our research questions. Here I develop more in detail my arguments. The first hypothesis was related to the nature of “Islam as a religion” that is not compatible with human rights in

general and minorities' right in particular. I have explained in chapter two that this hypothesis is invalid since the majority of the population (around 90%) in both Syria and Egypt are Muslims, thus it cannot explain why Christians in Syria were less discriminated than the Christians of Egypt. If we consider in the specific case of Syria, that Christians were less discriminated than Egypt because the ruling elite was an Alawite (a legitimate branch of Shiite Islam according to Zisser 1999) therefore less aggressive towards other religious groups (unlike the case of Egypt, where Sunni Islam is the dominant sect), we might be misguided for two main reasons. First, as discussed in chapter four, when the Sunni elite was ruling Syria and precisely from independence till 1958, Christians of Syria were integral part of the Syrian state and less discriminated than the al-Assad era. Therefore, the situation of Christians was better in the pre-1958 era compared to Hafez al-Assad one. Second, if we consider that in general Shiite (and Alawites) are more lenient towards minorities and human rights since within the greater Islamic religion Shiite are minorities compared to Sunnis. But Iran that is a Shiite state, stands a great example about the invalidity of this argument. According to most of human rights organizations, Iran does not respect the rights of non-Shiites minorities and even Shiite opposition groups.

The second already rejected hypothesis as discussed in chapter two was mainly related to the incompatibility of the "Arab culture" with human rights in general and rights of minorities in particular. It is important to note that in chapter two, I have clarified that this proposition is incorrect and does not explain the discrepancy level of discrimination between the Christians of Syria and the Christians of Egypt. Since both countries are Arabs and most of the Christians in these two countries are also Arabs. Therefore, Christians in the Arab region has different religion background than the majority of the population, but they belong to the same ethnic group, which is Arab.

The third hypothesis that was also rejected in chapter two is related to the general literature that says the more autocratic the regime, the more likely to engage in discrimination against minorities. Therefore, if we relate the literature and the collected data in chapter four to the specific case of Syria and Egypt, we find first, that the Syrian regime under Hafez al-Assad was less discriminatory against Christians compared to the regime of Hosni Mubarak. Second, we have found also that the Baath regime in Syria was more autocratic than the Mubarak's regime. As a result, in the specific case of Syria and Egypt the existing literature does not seem coherent w effect of elite-population

religious match with the Islamist challenge pith all possible cases of the relation between autocratic regimes and minorities.

On another hand, additional simple hypotheses were rejected by historical facts and rationality such as the formation of Baath party in Syria in comparison to the National Democratic Party (NDP) in Egypt. It could be argued that this difference between the degrees of the discrimination of Christian Arabs is simply the result of the different ideologies of their ruling parties, their different degree of secularism, and the role of Christians in their creation. As described in chapters three and four, the main founder of the Baath party in Syria was the Christian Orthodox *Michel Aflaq*. However, the tensions within the Baath party Syrian branch have led in 1966 to the exile of Aflaq to Iraq. Few months later, Aflaq received death condemnation from the Syrian government. In this context, this argument that the Syrian regime would be more sympathetic to their Christian minority because the founder was of that religion is not convincing. While in Egypt, on the contrary, the role of Copts in the foundation of either Nasser's Arab Socialist Union or Mubarak's National Democratic Party was inexistent. Finally, based on the collected qualitative and quantitative data in chapter four, we can also state that the ideologies of both parties were to some extent secular.

The final simple hypothesis that we review is that the Copts of Egypt were more rebellious in comparisons to the Christians of Syria. In fact, neither the Copts of Egypt nor the Christians of Syria hold weapons against their central governments. As referred to chapter four, Copts complained only politically and religiously about Sadat's decision to Islamize the state and society. But these complains did not reach the level of military confrontation. Therefore, there complains could not constitute a convincing reason behind the higher level of discrimination and harassment exercised against them, compared to the Christians of Syria.

6.2.2 More complex hypotheses and their justification

This research aims to answer the thesis main questions by testing and analyzing the five subsequent hypotheses, which are stated and justified as follows:

Hypothesis one: The relation between welfare services of the state, secularism, and discrimination

As we have discussed in chapter three, the literature have mentioned that the level of secularization of the state is related in general terms to its welfare spending. In addition, according to the same literature, the level of secularization in any state is also related to the level of discrimination against religious minorities. Scholars such as Gill and Lundsgraade (2004) related directly the welfare spending of the state with the level of secularization. Stark (2006) related poverty with religiosity; whereas Norris and Inglehart (2011), did not fail to mention that the positive consequences of the industrial revolution along with the concept of welfare state is deeply related with human development. In other words, countries with higher levels of welfare spending have less religious participation levels and tend to have higher percentages of non-religious individuals; therefore, lower level of discrimination against religious minorities. However, for the concrete cases of Syria and Egypt, and with the exception of the Egyptian scholar Samir Morcos who related harassment, attacks and social discrimination against the Copts in Egypt with the increase level of poverty and illiteracy rates, and to the best of my knowledge, almost no author or scholar related the discrimination against Christians in these two countries to the welfare system of the state.

Therefore, this will lead us to propose that *states with developed welfare systems tend to be more secular, and therefore discriminate less against their religious minorities, whereas states with weak welfare systems tend to be less secular, and consequently discriminate more.*

Hypothesis two: Regional intervention and social composition

As we saw in chapter two, the general literature has addressed indirectly the relation between discrimination against religious/ethnic minorities, regional intervention and social composition. Fox (2000, 2001, 2013) and Fox and Sandler (2013) did not fail to relate the fear of creating ethnic and/or religious nationalism feelings with discrimination against minorities. According to Fox, such kinds of feeling are considered by authoritarian regimes to form a serious threat to states national ideologies and national security.

In this context and to the best of my knowledge, almost no research has addressed the relation between regional intervention and discrimination against Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt during the rule of al-Assad and Mubarak. In fact, some research and publication targeted either the role of Egypt in Gaza or peace process in Sudan such as Sabry (2015) and Bartal (2015), or the role of Syria in Lebanon and Iraq (after 2003) such as Weinberger (1986), el-Husseini (2013), Kaufman (2013), Evron (2013), Osoegawa (2013), Geukjian (2016) and many others. It is important to note that the literature on the Syrian intervention in Lebanon during the era of Hafez al-Assad is rich, but it did not tackle the impact of al-Assad intervention in Lebanon on the Syrian Christian minority. But rather it addressed the impact of Syrian intervention on the Christians of Lebanon. As for Egypt, the possible influence of the Christians of Sudan on the Christians of Egypt was barely targeted in any available literature.

In this regard, Egypt borders three Arab Sunni-dominated countries, Libya, Sudan and Gaza (part of the Palestinian National Authority). Despite the existence of different ethno tribal and race minorities on its border: Sudan a home for 56 ethnic communities, and over 600 sub-ethnic groups, mainly African, Manassir, and Nubians, while in Libya Berber (Amazigh) and Tuareg, Egypt major internal discriminatory feature was religious and not ethnic.

Syria however, borders five countries, two non-Arabs: Turkey and Israel, and three Arabs, which are Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. In addition to Syria, those five countries, with the exception of Turkey, constitute what is known as the Levant, which includes different types of minorities. It includes a garland of religious, tribal and ethnic minorities in addition to the Sunni-dominated majority (Arab and non-Arab –Kurds and Turks). The ethnic minorities constitute of Kurds, Turks, Turkmens, Armenians, Aramites, Jews and Iranians. Whereas the Levant's religious minorities are somehow substantial and historical, and all together, shared the same land, traditions and culture such as the Alawite, Ismaili, Twelver Shiite (Ithna'ashari), Druze, Abadhi, Greek Orthodox, Nestorians (Assyrians), Yaccobian Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Greek Roman Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Maronite, Syrian Catholic, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Caledonians, Protestants along with Jews, Sabians, Yazidis and Bahais.

This will lead us to the proposition that *authoritarian ruling regimes that border extensive numeral ethnic and religious minorities tend to be sensible and collaborative with local minorities. While authoritarian ruling regimes that do not border an immense spectrum*

of ethno-religious minorities tend to be more stern and discriminative against its national religious minorities.

Hypothesis three: The revenge policy of the new regimes

As we saw in chapter two, the general literature has underlined that one of many reasons that could explain discrimination against minorities by new political regimes, is the previous collaboration of these minorities with the old ruling regime. Wimmer (1997) related the causes of discrimination against religious minorities with the impact of colonial legacy that have empowered the divide and rule method. He explained that the colonial power has created a clientelist system based on religious and/or ethnic divisions especially in “very heterogeneous societies”. As for Kopstein and Wittenberg (2010) the relation between political authority and ethnic groups is related to regime change that could have serious repercussions on either the majority or different minorities.

In the specific case of discrimination against Christians of Syria and Egypt, and to the best of my knowledge almost no research has tested the relation of discrimination against Christians during Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak era, with specifically to the impact of divide and rule hereditary concept from the pre-independence era. However, it is of great benefit to remind the readers that in the case of Egypt and to a lesser extent Syria, some authors such as Beshai, A. (1998); Osman, T. (2013); Elsasser, S. (2014) and Saad, A. (2016) related the specific case of discrimination against Christian minorities in these countries to the impact of the created socialist regimes. These newly established socialist regimes have enforced and implemented nationalization and socialist policies, which directly affected the bourgeois class (Christians forms part of it) that was created during the colonial era. Consequently, discriminatory policies adopted by these regimes against minorities continued, as a sequence of regime have continued to rule. These authors, therefore, suggest that the discrimination of Christian could be the result of previous Christian connection with previous regimes.

In Egypt, before the 1952 military coup d'état of Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Coptic minority has witnessed what was described as their golden age. Supported by the British colonial power from one hand and King Farouk, as well as all previous khedives from the other, the Copts were politically represented. Some of them took key positions in the government and the Palace, while others formed a decent economic elite, which was seen as an integral part of the Egyptian society.

In Syria, the French recruited minority groups - Alawite, Druze, Isma'ilis, Christians, Kurds and Circassians - into its local force, Les Troupes Speciales du Levant. This policy has caused tension with the Sunni Arab majority and other minorities. As for the Christian minority precisely, and with the support of the French colonial power, their economic power was strengthened and empowered which allowed it to still exist till the present day. At political level, the French colonial power did not fail also to empower the Christian minority in Syria. In fact, the first Syrian Prime Minister after the Independence was the Christian Fares al-Khoury. However, the Alawites under Hafez al-Assad military coup d'états of 1971 created a political, economic and security hegemony over the Sunni majority, while keeping the Christian economic elite confederated to the ruling ones.

All this encourages us to propose that ruling elites who took over power by a coup d'état or considered as a continuation of a regime that was established by a coup d'état tend to reprisal against groups who were part of the old ruling system in order to create their own sphere of power. Whereas ruling elites who also took over power by a coup d'état, tend to preserve and collaborate with groups that were harassed and/or discriminated by previous regimes in their country, or at least create new ones that pledge loyalty to the new regime.

Hypothesis four: the match between the main identity features of the population and the elite in power

As we have seen previously, the literature has mentioned that the relation between a minority in power and a powerless majority in a state with diverse social structure is an important factor to experience discrimination. One of the addressed topics that could be indirectly related to this case is the official religion of the state that was mentioned by Fox (2000, 2001, 2013) and Fox and Sandler (2013). Fox (2000) stated in this matter that some authoritarian regimes might have used the religious question to explain discrimination and fend their legitimacy.

Let's remember that the population in Egypt is approximately 85 million, 90% Sunni Muslims while the rest are Christians divided between Orthodox Copts, Catholic Copts, Maronite, Evangelic, Syriac Catholic, Syriac Orthodox and Armenian. In Syria, the population is approximately 22 million, 74% Sunni Muslims, 11% Alawite Muslims, 2% other Muslims (including Ismaili and Ithna'ashari or Twelver Shiite), 10% Christians

(including Greek Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Maronite, Syriac Catholic, Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic, Assyrians), and 3% Druze (UNHCR, 2011). In this regard, historically, the ruling elites in Egypt are Sunni. While in Syria hereafter 1971 coup d'état, the ruling elites turned out to be Alawite, which is part of other religious minorities.

In the specific case of Syria, social science literature is rich in addressing the impact of Hafez al-Assad Alawite religious background on his community (the Alawite minority), other minorities, and/or the Sunni majority such as Van Dam (2011), Pierret (2013), Keir and Graig Larkin (2015) and Goldsmith (2015). In addition, many politicians, journalists and interviewees (for this thesis) in the Levant area have referred during their discourse to the coalition of religious groups that was created by Hafez al-Assad as a central structure to the sustainability of his authoritarian rule, which later on included Lebanon. In this regard, for this hypothesis I was inspired by Lebanese politics and the period of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) in which al- Assad tried to create what was known as "minorities coalition" with Shiite, Druze and later some Christians groups in Lebanon in order to fend Syria's military presence in Lebanon and its fight against Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

This will lead us to propose that ruling elites of dictatorships whose religious identity is different from the majority of the population tend to be more sympathetic, lenient and collaborative with other minority groups inside their country in order to build a coalition of minorities to support their regimes. While ruling elite of the same type of dictatorship, who belongs to the major religious group of the mass population, have a propensity to be hegemonic and less considerate towards other, different religious, minority groups in their country in order to get the support of the majority of the population.

Hypothesis five: The challenge of Islamist opposition groups and the politicization of religion as a safe pathway to sustain regime legitimacy and existence

The literature has mentioned that the relation between minorities and the regime in power is subject to some internal challenges. As we have already mentioned in chapter two, some scholar such as Fox (2000, 2001, 2013) and Fox and Sandler (2013) related the state religious background with discrimination against minorities. In addition, other scholars such as Wentz (1987), Geertz (1987), Greenwalt (1988) and Juergensmeyer (1997) pointed out on the relation between religious protection that is referred to as “defending

the walls of religion” or what Fox (2000) calls it “psychological walls” with discrimination against minorities. As for other scholars such as Little (1991) and Turner (1991) authoritarian regimes tend to fend their existence by using intense religious discourse and politicization technique against other religious groups and minorities. Sahliyah (1990), Juergensmeyer (1993) and Haynes (1994) added on this matter that religious discrimination and unrest in some authoritarian countries could be explained within the “legitimacy” approach of these authoritarian regimes.

In the specific context of Egypt and to a lesser extent Syria; the literature however is less clear in addressing the relation between political and militant Islam with harassment and/or discrimination against Christian minorities. On one hand, scholars such as Penington, J.D. (1982); El Khawaga, D. (1998); Munoz, G. (1999), Saadeddin, I. (1999), Labib, H. (2004); Deeb, J. (2005); Tadros, M. (2009); A. Gunidy, A. (2010); Beshara, A. (2012); Osman, T. (2013); Elsasser, S. (2014); Elsasser, S. (2014); Saad, A. (2016) Saad, A. (2016) and Guirguis, L. (2017) did not fail to relate radical Islam with discrimination and/or harassment against Christians in the case of Egypt. On the other hand, in Syria, very few authors such as Mouawad, R. (2001) and Saad, A. (2016) have related political Islam with discrimination against Syrian Christians. In this context, instead of targeting the state and its security apparatus, radical Islamists turned their anger towards the weak composition of the state i.e. Christians. While according to Christians, the state was considered to be a “needed” and sole “protector” from Islamists attacks.

As a result, this will lead us to propose that authoritarian ruling regimes that attempt to incorporate part of powerful Islamic groups, tend to politicize religion and discriminate against non-Muslim minorities in order sustain their rule and legitimize their existence. While Authoritarian regime that faces weak Islamic challenges tend moderately to politicize non-Muslim minorities.

Finally, it is worth noting that the importance of these five hypotheses stem from the need to address the question of discrimination against Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt from an academic approach rather than a political one. These hypotheses give five different potential reasons of why Christians were being treated differently. These reasons vary between welfare scheme of the state, geopolitical consideration and societal structure, historical legacies, the elite-population identity match, and the ongoing current issue of the rise of radical Islam.

6.3 Explaining the puzzle: testing the hypothesis

In the below section, I will test each hypothesis in order to understand why the pattern of discrimination against Christians in Egypt and Syria differs.

6.3.1 Hypothesis one: The relation between welfare services of the state, secularism, and discrimination

As we have presented earlier, this hypothesis suggested that states with a developed welfare system tend to be more secular, and therefore, to discriminate less against religious minorities compared to countries with weak welfare system and a lower level of secularism. Therefore, in this section, I will test the mentioned hypothesis in order to check its validity or not.

At first sight, this hypothesis seems plausible. In chapter four, we saw that according to quantitative data and qualitative data the level of secularization is actually higher in Syria than in Egypt. Table 3.5 in chapter three or table 4.7 in chapter four shows this clearly. In addition, many scholars such as Pacini (1998), Slackman (2008), Hibbard (2010) and Pierret (2013) have emphasized on the secular approach experience of the 1st republics in Syria and Egypt. In the specific era of al-Assad and Mubarak, Pacini (1998), Van Dam (2011), Osman (2013) and Goldsmith (2015) shed light on the level of secularization in each country, which varies across Egypt and Syria considerably. But if we look at the data more carefully they do not fit so easily.

Although the constitutions of both Syria and Egypt recognize clearly the responsibility of the state to provide social security and social protection services to their citizens, the welfare system in Egypt was more developed compared to Syria. According to the United Nations Human Development Index²¹⁹ (UN-HDI) that measures the efficiency of state welfare system including the provided social security and social protection services, from 1990 up till 2015 Egypt was ranked between the medium human development countries whereas Syria was ranked between states with low human development. If we take the

²¹⁹ According to the United Nations, Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. For technical notes on the calculation of HDI please refer to http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2016_technical_notes.pdf

common years in which both presidents Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak were in power 1990 and 2000, HDI for Egypt recorded 0.580 for the year 1990 and 0.624 for the year 2000, while for Syria it recorded 0.556 and 0.589 respectively (UNDP-HDR). While the average annual HDI growth between 1990 and 2000 was higher in Egypt (1.12) compared to Syria (0.58).

- **Egypt**

One of the major reasons behind the development of the Egyptian welfare system is Nasser socialist ideology. It is true that the welfare system scheme in Egypt has deteriorated across time; i.e. from Nasser up till Mubarak; but still it was considered to be the biggest welfare system in the Middle East that is based on an efficient social contract.

The history of the existing welfare system in Egypt goes back to early years of the first republic that was established in 1952. However, when the 1961 Socialist Decrees were adopted, Egypt was turned out to be a socialist “patron state”²²⁰ in which it controls both the economic (private and public) and social welfare of the state (Harik, 1997 & Richards and Waterbury, 1992). As a result to the decrees, Nasser issued and implemented both the land reformation law and privatization law, which were in favor of the poor and peasant class. According to Wahba (1994) from 1950 up till 1956 “gross public investment increased from 22 to 66 million Egyptian pounds”. In accordance with state domination of the economy, Nasser’s government provided a well-maintained welfare scheme. Starting early days of the Republic up till *Infitah* era with Sadat, the Egyptian state delivered what was known as “basic human needs” such as food, health care, housing, free education and secure employment (Ali, 1994).

Upon Nasser’s death, Sadat initiated the *Infitah* era that resulted to gradual liberalization of the economy and politics. Hereafter the 1974, the private sector was encouraged to take leading role in the economic formation of the state that replaces Nasser’s socialist policies. According to Rivlin (1985), during Sadat “the private sector was encouraged, and Egypt moved toward closer economic links with the Arab oil states and then with the

²²⁰ According to Harik (1997), the patron state is made up of a set of rules in which the provision of livelihood of citizens and the management of business enterprises fall within the public domain as a responsibility of the government

West”. However, one of the essential few positive economic consequences of the *Infitah* is that it increased employment rate in the governmental sector from 15 percent in 1970 to become 22 percent in 1978 (Rivlin, 1985). It is important to note that Sadat openness policy did not reduce the welfare system that was created by Nasser. According to Wahba (1994) and Harik (1997), the GDP spent on state welfare and more precisely on subsidies have increased from around 3 percent during 1950’s up till 13 percent in late 1970’s. However, despite that the rise in funding state welfare have increased due to the population growth, Sadat era have failed to introduce economic development plans for the lower class.

With the assassination of Sadat in 1981, Mubarak did not only inherit political and social problems but also massive economic ones. Starting mid 1980’s, Mubarak’s government initiated carefully its economic reform in order to reduce the huge budget deficit. As a result, severe regulations on the social welfare scheme were introduced especially the ones related to funding essential subsidies such as food products and others. While other direct and indirect financial support from regional and international actors has resulted to changes in the structure of the Nasser’s welfare system. In this context, the massive population growth starting 1970’s along with the newly adopted economic changes have obliged Mubarak government not to eliminate but to deeply contain and control the welfare system. These changes have caused the Egyptian government during Mubarak to face two strategic welfare challenges; mainly reducing poverty and improving equity in the distribution of income (Loffredo, 2004).

Nonetheless according to Loffredo “social security system in Egypt is one of the most comprehensive in Africa and in the Arab region”. But the problem lies in its implementation that minimized the impact of the welfare system; Loffredo added in a United Nations publication entitled “Welfare in the Mediterranean Countries - Arab Republic of Egypt”. In this context, the author and based on the United Nations report entitled “Poverty Reduction Strategies in Egypt” mentions 5 government actors that are related to combat poverty and ensure social security:

- The Ministry of Planning - draws the overall economic and social development plans for short, medium and long term;
- The Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs (MISA), provides several safety net programs;
- Free education and literacy programs through the Ministry of Education;

- Free health care through the local health units and large public hospitals of the Ministry of Health and Population;
- Subsidies for bread, sugar and oil through Ministry of Trade and Supply.

In this context, both the food subsidies program and cash transfer one are considered to be Egypt long standing element in the welfare system. In addition, both programs helped the government reduce poverty rate. For example, the food subsidies program constituted around 1.5% of Egypt GDP for the year 1999. As a result, 730.000 people were lifted out of poverty between 1999 and 2000 due to the government bread subsidy programme (World Bank, 2002).

On another hand, the social security scheme especially in the health and educational sectors were considered to be below the average (Loffredo, 2004). The main reason behind this disparity in the health sector is the “inefficiency, corruption and inequality” of the system (el Hennawy).

In general, the welfare system in Egypt was not designed to equally serve all the citizens. According to Loewe (2000) “Egypt’s social security systems are not equitable, either. Most of the systems discriminate against the poor and benefit the urban upper and middle classes”. Corruption and politicization of the welfare system by Mubarak regime is another element that hindered its efficiency. According to many researchers, Mubarak regime through its National Democratic Party controlled the welfare system in general and more precisely the social fund for development in order to ensure political loyalty.

In this regard, due to the deep challenges in the welfare system in Egypt, official (in the case of Christians) and non-official religious institutions took the lead to replace the government in ensuring social security services. These institutions ranged between Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi movement, Coptic Church and other Muslim radical/fundamental groups such as Al Jamat al Islamiya. Between all these groups, the social welfare system of the Muslim Brotherhood was considered to be a “direct competitor to the state” (al-Arian, 2014). In his article entitled “A State Without a State: The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s Social Welfare Institutions” al-Arian (2014) emphasized on the role of Muslim Brotherhood in providing social services “the proliferation of social welfare projects, from clinics and schools to bread lines and charities, played a direct role in mobilizing millions of impoverished Egyptians to vote

for the Muslim Brotherhood's candidates". In the same context, al-Arian (2014) did not fail to mention that the evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood social service has moved its beneficiaries from lower/poor class to serve the middle class. For example, in her study about Islamic medical clinics in Egypt and other Muslim majority countries, Janine Clark realized that the relation between services and political mobilization is not as perceived and known. She added that most of the Islamic medical clinics in Egypt are managed "by and for the middle class."

Finally, according to Samir Morcos, the increases of poverty and illiteracy rates are strongly associated with rise of radicalism as well as sectarian tension between Muslims and Christians especially in poor neighborhood. He referred to a study conducted by himself by saying "when the economic welfare system of the state was performing good between 1949 up till 1969, two sectarian incidents were recorded. But due to the bad economic situation and recession from 1970 up till 2011, 400 incidents were recorded".

- **Syria**

The history of the welfare system in Syria goes back to the era of the United Arab Republic (UAR). The adopted socialist policies including privatization and land reformation, in addition to social security assistance for peasants and poor classes were the main social and economic policies of the UAR. However, when the Baath party led the government in 1963, socialist policies dominated the Syrian economic and fiscal sectors. As a result, the power of traditional elites such as landlords and urban merchants was contained and diminished at expense of social security and welfare services for peasants and poor class.

When Hafez al-Assad took over power in Syria through the corrective movement, deep changes to the state economic and fiscal policies were introduced. Al-Assad succeeded to maintain the socialist identity of the economy but managed to change its key holders (Harvard Divinity School, 2016). In fact, al-Assad relied on oil revenues and developmental projects to fund the state welfare system. But due to the new economic policies, a newly created class of businessmen a rich public servant was created. As a result, this have affected the quality of the state provided services and its welfare system. According to a United Nations report entitled "Welfare in the Mediterranean Countries - The Syrian Arab Republic" the welfare system in Syria is hard to be evaluated. The report

says that “The Syrian Arab Republic still lacks efficient monitoring procedures and those already in function are not coordinated, often overlap, and predominantly offer data without providing further analysis to be used in the policy development. In addition, the authorities still not have made public numerous international studies carried out on planned reforms”. Additionally, the nature of the closed autocratic regime in Syria, especially during Hafez al-Assad era, made it hard for researchers and international organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, UNDP and others to collect data related to the welfare state system and social security services in Syria.

However, when Bashar al-Assad succeeded his father in 2000, the 1990’s privatization policies were enlarged, and diversifications of the economic sector policies were implemented. As a result, “investment rates increased from 17 percent of the GDP in 2000 to 23 percent in 2007” (Berzins, 2013). But these new policies had serious consequences not only on the economy but also on the state welfare scheme. According to (Harvard Divinity School, 2016) the Baath party 10th regional congress in 2005 adopted the “social market economy” who according to the same source was “social in name only”. As a result, the quality and efficiency of the welfare system was affected and led to an increase in unemployment, poverty and inequality.

In fact, according to Berzins (2013) “the share of agricultural investment fell from 16 percent in 2000 to 9 percent in 2007, and investment in industry was significantly reduced, making once exporting local firms to change to trading or importing. Although according to recent official data unemployment rate was 8.1 percent, in 2009 Syrian economists estimated it to be 24.4 percent. In 2010, the poverty rate as a whole was 34.3 percent, while in rural areas it was considered to be around 62 percent. Real wages fell, with nearly 71% of works earning less than S£13,000 (around USD 274 in 2012), at the same time the average household monthly expenditure with food was approximately USD 295”. Additionally, the above mentioned United Nations report have mentioned that many challenges are facing (before 2011) the welfare system and the economy in Syria such as “growth in the population of young age group (40.5% under 15 years), urbanization and high fertility rate present a key-issue for the country’s economic development, which will pressure the labour market and lead to an increase in poverty level”.

Based on what have been discussed, it seems that the welfare system in both Syria and Egypt during al-Assad and Mubarak was not up to the expected level. Despite that both regimes have tried hard to contain their economic challenges from one hand, and to maintain their welfare system from the other, still the challenges related to social security affected Christians and Muslims equally. But we cannot say that Syria was more secular, and less discriminatory, than Egypt because it had a more developed welfare state and a higher HDI. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected.

6.3.2 Hypothesis two: Regional intervention and social composition

As we have presented earlier, in the second hypothesis we suggested that authoritarian regimes that border extensive numeral ethnic and religious minorities tend to be sensible and collaborative with local minorities. By contrast, authoritarian regimes that do not border an immense spectrum of ethno-religious minorities tend to be more stern and discriminative against its national religious minorities.

At the first sight, this hypothesis seems to explain the different treatment of Christians in Syria and Egypt. This means that the degree of discrimination against Christian minorities might be related to geopolitical factors. The only direct case of intervention that could be recorded in the case of Egypt and Syria during Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak era was the Syrian direct intervention in Lebanon as of 1975. In Syria, it could be argued that Hafez al-Assad tried to “seduce” Christians of Lebanon in order to control this country. To “seduce” them, the al-Assad regime integrated Syrian Christians and minimizes discrimination against them. However, in Egypt, Hosni Mubarak regime (as well as previous regimes) could have sensed an alarming behavior from Christian Sudanese (from Southern part of Sudan) due to their engagement into civil war against *Khartoum* central government. Then, the Egyptian regime was keen to suppress and discriminate against Egyptian Christians as a mean to contain any separatist approach or instability attempts caused by them. Looking deeper at the facts, however, things do not fit so easily. Historically, Syria claimed that Lebanon in its current geographical borders did not exist and that the newly created country (with the exception of Mount Lebanon) was under the administrative jurisprudence of Syria and/or Syrian provinces. George Antonius (1934), clearly described the detachment of Lebanon from Syria when he said that “Syria was

divided into five parts; one was the Lebanon, including as its principal towns Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon and Tyre; the second was called the State of Syria, with the main towns of Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus; the third was the mountainous region of the Jabal Druse, of which the principal town is Suaida; the fourth was the province of Latakia, with Latakia as its principle town and the fifth was a sort of hybrid, the Sanjak of Alexandretta, in theory part of Syria, but in practice separate and subjected to a special autonomous form of government”.

Prior to the creation of Greater Lebanon by the French in 1919 and the French mandate to Syria in 1920, Prince *Faysal* (the son of Sharif *Husayn*²²¹) declared the creation of the “Independent Arab Government” from Damascus in 1919 (Young, M.; Eric Zuelow and Andreas Sturm, 2007) which have expanded to Lebanon and the South of Syria (Antonius, 1934 and Fildis, 2011). However, in 1920 French troops moved from Lebanon towards Syria and toppled by military force Faisal’s Independent Arab Government. As a result, to these historical events, Syria used to consider Lebanon as a province and not a state. In his article entitled “Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed”, Bassel Salloukh reflected on the cautious and sensitive strategy adopted by Syria towards Lebanon “when Lebanon was offered independence in 1943, Syrian politicians foreswore their historical claims to those areas annexed by France in 1920 to create Greater Lebanon, but only with the provision that independent Lebanon would not constitute a beachhead (*mustaqarr*) or a corridor (*mamarr*) for Arab or foreign actors bent on destabilizing the Damascus regime”.

The Syrian vision towards Lebanon was also extended to al-Assad era. During the Lebanese civil war, Syria used Lebanon as a mean to serve its geopolitical agenda. Salloukh (2016) added in this regard “Damascus has always considered Lebanon to be a sort of backyard bound to its eastern neighbor by “distinctive relations” (‘alaqat mumayyaza), a euphemism Damascus deploys to legitimize its interference in Lebanon’s domestic and foreign politics”. Within the same context, according to Daniel Pipes in his book entitled “Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition” (1992) “A Syrian official told a U.S. reporter in May 1981: Surely everyone understands that of Syria, Lebanon and Transjordan were historically part of natural Syria”. During the Syrian presence in Lebanon especially after the end of the Lebanese civil war (1990-2005), “one people in

²²¹ Sharif and Emir of Mecca from 1908, after proclaiming the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire, he became King of the Hejaz from 1916 to 1924. His dynasty is still ruling in Jordan.

two countries” slogans were raised. It was an expression to the strong social bounds and unity between both countries and to emphasize that the colonial division is against the historical will of the people.

It is also important to note in this context that there was no official visit made by President Hafez al-Assad to Lebanon. From 1970 till 2016, only one visit was recorded by Bashar al-Assad who accompanied the Saudi King *Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud* in July 2010 in an official visit to Lebanon, as a result to the diplomatic pressure made by Saudi Arabia to minimize the rising tension between Lebanese (supporters of Syria and against it) from one hand and Lebanon and Syria from the other. Many Lebanese considered the official visit of Bashar al-Assad to Lebanon as recognition to the independence and legitimacy of Lebanon.

However, the al-Assad regime had more reasons to intervene in Lebanon than just a historical claim. The al-Assad regime was afraid that its enemies could use this country as a platform to destabilize their power in Syria. Since the 50s most of Syrian opposition personalities used to flee to neighboring Lebanon as it was considered “a safe place”. This has led Syrian governments to categorize and consider Beirut during the 1950s and 1960s “as a center for conspiracy and subversion against Syria” (Salloukh, 2016). This danger became higher when the Palestinian Liberation Movement (PLO) moved its headquarter from Jordan to Lebanon in 1970. It is with no doubt the presence of the heavily armed and trained Sunni organization in nearby Lebanon might have threatened the existence of an Alawite rule in Syria. In this sense, the Commander of Syrian Air Forces and Air Defense Forces before 1963 as well as the one who selected and taught al-Assad in the Military Aviation School Gen. Wadih Moqaabari²²² analyzed al-Assad intervention in Lebanon as a reaction to his fear of a potential coalition between the highly militarized and trained (Sunni) Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) with the Sunni majority inside Syria. In addition, al-Assad feared that PLO might pledge full control over Lebanon due to its military machine; therefore it will be hard for him to contain Lebanon. Finally, al-Assad has always tried to include Jordan, Lebanon and PLO under his own command when dealing military or diplomatically with the Palestinian subject (Pipe, 1986). In 1975 al-Assad suggested, the establishment “of a single Syrian-Palestinian political leadership [and] military command. Arafat refused this offer, rightly understanding it as a veiled

²²² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

attempt to dominate the PLO” (Pipe, 1986). Therefore, a powerful PLO cannot help al-Assad to reach his aim.

On another hand, it was an open secret that al-Assad military and politically intervention to protect the Alawite minority in Tripoli in Northern Lebanon in an area known as *Jabal Mohsen* was more related to the protection of its power in Syria than to protect alawites in other countries. During the Lebanese civil war, many clashes erupted between the Sunni Islamist *Tawheed* Movement (backed by both Sunnis and PLO) and the Alawite Arab Democratic party. After several rounds of clashes, the Syrian army along with other Lebanese loyal militias succeeded in 1986 in eradicating the Islamist *Tawheed* Movement from northern Lebanon. According to a high-ranking Syrian army General²²³, the end of the *Tawheed* Movement was not seen as a victory of the Lebanese Alawites, but rather an internal victory for al-Assad since he eliminated another radical Sunni threat that was growing near the Syrian border. This is the case because historically and geopolitically Tripoli is interconnected with Homs and Hama the retired General²²⁴ added. A well-known Politician and Businessman²²⁵ realized that the protection role of al-Assad in Lebanon towards the Alawite minority was extended to the political arena especially with the end of the Lebanese civil war. Throughout the Lebanese civil war negotiation process, al-Assad succeeded to secure two parliamentary seats for the Alawite community and a decent political presence (before the war Alawites were marginalized) despite their disproportional number compared to the Lebanese confessional parliamentary distribution.

The beginning of the Civil War in Lebanon offered a golden opportunity for al-Assad regime to intervene directly in this country. Al-Assad knew that Christians of Lebanon were a considerable group, so an alliance with them means enhancing his control over Lebanon. The question was how to convince the Lebanese Christians that the direct military intervention of a Muslim country, such is Syria, was not a threat for them. The first hypothesis suggests that this fear would diminish if the al-Assad could prove that his regime already collaborated with the Christian in Syria, as part of a “coalition of minorities or groups”.

²²³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

There are certain facts that do not fit, however, with the hypothesis that the relation of the Syrian regime was just an instrument to convince the Lebanese Christians that the Syrian army was “reliable”. First of all, Gen. Moqaabari²²⁶ pointed out that al-Assad intervened in the Lebanese civil war after the Lebanese Christian’s leaders sought his help to save their strongholds from falling at the hand of the PLO. Lebanese Christians and the Syrian regime had therefore a common enemy within Lebanon. This means that the threat of the PLO for the Lebanese Christians was big enough for them to accept Syrian intervention. Secondly, the relation between the Lebanese Christians and the Syrian army deteriorated rapidly. Shortly after their intervention, a fierce war, known as the “100 days war” erupted between Christian militias and the Syrian army, a high-ranking retired army General²²⁷ narrated. He²²⁸ added that throughout the 15 years of the Lebanese civil war, direct and indirect wars and clashes erupted several times between the Lebanese Christian militias and parties with the Syrian army and its Lebanese allies and militias. Fierce battles were fought between Syrian military forces and Christian’s militias in 1978, 1981, 1982, 1988 and 1990s.

What’s more, *Bashir Gemayel* (Christian Maronite) a senior member of the Phalange party and the supreme commander of the Lebanese Forces militia (up until his assassination in 1982), succeeded wickedly to engage direct confrontation between Syria and Israel in Lebanon in 1981. The use of two Syrian helicopters in April 28, 1981 over the Christians Mountains of *Sanin* that surrounds *Zahle* (one of the major Christian city in the *Bekaa valley*), requested an Israeli direct military action. The two helicopters were shot down as a result to what Israel considered as a Syrian violation to the “Red Line” agreement²²⁹ between Israel and Syria in 1976 allies (Laipson, E and Clyde Mark). As a result, al-Assad accused the Lebanese Forces (headed by Bashir Gemayel) of allaying with Israel against Syria and its allies (Laipson, E and Clyde Mark). In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon and occupied its capital Beirut. An open alliance between Israeli forces and Christian minorities headed by Gemayel was created. Christians facilitated the Israeli besieged of south Beirut (majority Muslims) in return for military and political support.

²²⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

²²⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ It was an agreement negotiated by the American and accepted indirectly between both parts. According to Salloukh (2016), “The agreement stipulated that no Syrian troops could be dispatched beyond a line running directly east from Sidon toward the eastern Bekaa region. It also stipulated that Syrian troops south of the Beirut-Damascus highway could not number more than a single brigade, that Syria could not deploy surface-to-air missiles in Lebanon, and that Syria could not use its air force against ground targets in Lebanon”

Under Israeli military presence and after 22 days of his election (on the 23rd of September 1982) as the President of the Lebanese Republic, Bashir Gemayel was assassinated. The pro-Syrian militant *Habib al-Shatrouny* was accused of the assassination. It was later revealed by al Shatrouny (pro-Syria) Syrian Social Nationalist Party that the assassination was executed a respond to the alliance between Gemayel (Christians) and Israel.

But the most important fact that goes against this hypothesis is that, in spite of the deterioration of the relations between Christian Lebanese and the Syrian army, the relation between the Syrian regime and the Syrian Christians did not change. Although almost all interviewees affirmed that throughout the Lebanese civil war and after (up to 2011) there was no direct intervention from Lebanon towards Syria. The businessman and former Ambassador of Syria to the United Kingdom Sami Khiyami²³⁰ recalled the story of a car bomb that exploded in Damascus during the late 1970s in which the regime accused the Lebanese Christian Phalange party (known in Arabic as *Kateeb*) for its responsibility. As a result, Khiyami²³¹ added, the regime security forces chased the Christian neighborhood (known in Arabic *al-Hay al Massihi*) in Damascus and arrested few Christian youth who were released after 24 hours. The fast release of the arrested youth will lead us to conclude that Christians of Syria were isolated politically and military from the Christians of Lebanon.

The data about Egypt also do not fit well with the first hypothesis. Again, similar to Syria and Lebanon, Sudan was considered to be part of Egypt under one state/Kingdom known as “the Kingdom of Egypt and Sudan” ruled by Mohammad Ali dynasty²³². In 1956 Sudan was granted independence from Great Britain and Egypt. As a result, the creation of new Sudan was based on ethnic, religious, tribal and economic division. The north being Arab Muslim while the South of Sudan being African Christians in addition to a minority of Muslims and other African traditional religion (Federal Research Division Library of Congress, 2015).

In 1983 the conflict between the north and south in Sudan that had started in 1955 was intensified. A civil war started between the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement

²³⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Egyptian rule ended in 1885 but left a mark on Sudan’s political and economic systems. The emergence of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in 1899 reinforced the Cairo– Khartoum links. After Sudan gained independence in 1956, Egypt continued to exert influence over developments in Sudan. (Federal Research Division Library of Congress, 2015).

(SSLM) (African Christians and others) and the central government of Sudan (Arab Muslims) over resources, identity, historical, religious and other issues. It is important to mention in this regard that the adoption of Sharia law in Sudan as “basis of Sudanese legal system” (Federal Research Division Library of Congress, 2015) in 1983 under what was known as “September Laws” by President *Numairi* was considered to be the spark of the Sudan civil war. Signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 ended the civil war and opened the door formally and legally to the creation of South Sudan in 2011. As a result, it could be argued that the harassment of Egyptian Copts could be the result of a policy of the Egyptian regime to signal them not to follow the path of the Christians in South Sudan.

However, all interviewees and the literature point that the Egyptian regime did not consider the situation of Christians in South Sudan similar to their Copts. First, despite that Sadat initiated Islamic laws and Sharia as main source of legislations, Christians of Egypt (and mainly Copts) did not hold weapons against Sadat’s decision. Unlike Christian Sudanese who openly engaged in a civil war against the enforcement of Sharia, the discontent of Egyptian Christian was mainly expressed peacefully.

In this regard, it is important to shed light that according to most of the interviewees for both Syria and Egypt, Christians of Syria and Egypt are characterized by their peaceful attitude and rejectionist behavior towards autonomy or holding weapons against the central government. In addition, Christians of South Sudan are African while the majority of Christians in Egypt are Arabs; and that Christian of Sudan are not Copts and does not follow the Coptic jurisprudence as the case with Ethiopia.

In fact, contrary to the Syrian-Lebanese case, the Egyptian rulers did not intervene in Sudan as confirmed by all interviewees and literature. Unlike Hafez al-Assad, Hosni Mubarak did not intervene in Sudan neither directly nor indirectly to support any of the fighting groups. According to most of the Egyptian interviews, no record of Mubarak direct or indirect intervention was documented other than facilitating peace negotiation. The Egyptian regime never tried to build with the rulers of Sudan a coalition of Muslims against Christians.

The Egyptian regime did use its connections with the Copts for some international issues. For example, a high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman²³³ revealed that Mubarak used to rely on Pope Shenouda to discuss the Nile problematic issue with Ethiopia. He²³⁴

²³³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²³⁴ Ibid.

added, Mubarak acknowledged the historical relation between the Coptic Church and Ethiopian Christians who are attached theologically to the jurisprudence of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt. The Director of al-Asfari Research Center and researcher on Coptic issues Dr. Dina Khawaga²³⁵, former Ambassador Souad Shalaby²³⁶ and four interviewees who preferred not to reveal their names, confirmed this information.

In sum, the data do not support the first hypothesis to explain the different treatment that the regime of Syria and Egypt gave to their Arab Christians. In the Syrian case, the al-Assad regime did not need to use the situation of Christians in Syria to seduce Christian Lebanese, nor does it seem that the situation of Christians in Syria is related to the relationship between the Syrian regime and the Lebanese Christians forces. What's more, as explained in chapter four, Christians of Syria were less discriminated and better represented in the pre-al-Assad and pre-Baath era, when the Syrian intervention in Lebanon had not started. In Egypt, it is dubious that Nasser, Sadat or Mubarak thought that the Copts could follow the path of the Christians in South Sudan, nor there were many connections between these two groups of native Christians.

6.3.3 Hypothesis three: The revenge policy of new regimes

For testing the third hypothesis we will focus on the relation between Christian minorities and regimes across countries (Syria and Egypt) and across time; mainly from the French colonial period up till al-Assad era in Syria and from the British occupation up till Mubarak era in Egypt.

As we saw, the third hypothesis suggest that *ruling elites who took over power by a coup d'état, or are considered as a continuation of a regime that was established by a coup d'état, tend to reprisal against groups who had been part of the old ruling system in order to create their own sphere of power. Whereas ruling elites who also took over power by a coup d'état tend to preserve and collaborate with groups that had been harassed and/or discriminated by previous regimes in their country, or at least create new ones that pledge loyalty to the new regime.* Therefore, if this hypothesis is correct, then in the specific case

²³⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

²³⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in January 2017

of Syria and Egypt, the relation between Christian minorities and successive political regimes should be as described in the below table:

Table 6.2: The expected relation of Christians towards political regimes across countries and across time

Expected relation of Christians towards political regimes			
Political regimes	Syria	Political regimes	Egypt
French colonial period	Good	Monarchy/British colonial period	Good
First republic	Bad	Nasser republic period	Bad
Baath period	Good	Sadat republic period	Bad
Al-Assad republic period	Normal or Good (at least not bad)	Mubarak republic period	Bad

Bold cells are considered to be the revenge period.

According to table 6.2, we can notice that the expected relation between Christians and political regimes in both Syria and Egypt should have been changed at each turning point of a regime change. The first recorded regime change in Syria was the end of the French colonial rule and the establishment of the first republic. While in Egypt, the abolishment of the monarchy by Nasser's coup d'état in 1952 was categorized as the first regime change. The pre-republic era in both countries was associated directly or indirectly to foreign intervention. After granting Syria its independence, the French colonial power did not intervene in the postcolonial regime. While in Egypt, when the British granted Egypt independence, their political, military and economic intervention was officially acknowledged between both sides through treaties.

Hereafter the 1952 coup d'état in Egypt, no regime change was recorded since the military regime of Nasser succeeded to sustain power up until Mubarak era. While in Syria, the Baath coup d'état could be categorized as another break in the sequence of regime change. According to this hypothesis, the newly established regime in Syria should record some positive change regarding the Christian minorities.

- **The colonial *divide et impera* legacy**

The main aim of the colonial power in Syria and Egypt was to establish the divide and rule strategy such as empowering some groups at the expense of others, in order to sustain

their interest and strengthen their dominance. As we have seen in chapter three and four, the colonial powers have played a major role in integrating the Christians of Syria and Egypt within the state system. But on the other hand, there was a systematic plan initiated by the colonial powers to point out on existing differences in these communities in order to raise tension, create problems and preserve their interests. However, the French in Syria have empowered minorities for the sake of creating new modern state and keep their presence as an essential need. General Wadih Moqaabari²³⁷ stated in this matter that a balanced sectarian division within the Syrian army and state institution was a mere French policy. Their hidden purpose, he²³⁸ added was to sustain their control over the country. Yet, the main attempt of the French to control both Syria and Lebanon, by using divides and rule policies, resulted in the rise of tension followed by a revolution against the French occupier forces in 1925. The 1925 Syrian revolution was caused (and headed) by *Sultan Basha al-Atrash* a Druze tribe leader from southern part of Syrian, mainly *Jabal al Druze*.

It is with no doubt that Christians of Syria have benefited and were empowered by the French colonial presence. For example, *Nubar Gulbenkian*, according to Nisan, (2002) was an Armenian-Syrian who was supported by the French, he played an important role in the oil industry in the Arab region. Furthermore, Christians of Syria controlled both railroads and silk production along with many industrial and agriculture sectors. At the educational level, a prominent community of Christian lawyers, doctors and educated elite emerged due to the French missionaries and modern educational system. But sometimes the policy of empowering Christians backfires the French colonial power, as the case of Aflaq. During the 1940's, *Michel Aflaq*, a Greek Orthodox from Damascus who studied in France was the founder, ideologue and thinker of the *Ba'ath* pan Arab nationalist party, which ruled Iraq and still ruling Syria today. While, *Constantine Zuraiq* a Christian pan Arab Syrian ideologue wrote against Zionism and the emergence of the Israeli state. As a result, the French facilitated to some extent the Christian economic interest at the expense of other groups, causing the Christians of Syria (and Lebanon) to be considered as the French protégé. Finally, unlike the British who openly expressed their support to Christian minorities in Egypt, the French did not.

While in Egypt, Christian empowerment discourse was a sheer British policy that allowed them to secure and sustain a powerful dominant position. As a result, the British used the

²³⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

²³⁸ Ibid.

Coptic question in order to empower and justify their military and political presence. The first Egyptian constitution of 1923 made a decent progress towards secularism; it based full citizenship on birthright regardless of religion, race or creed. Although, the same constitution still considered Islam as state religion. British officials clearly acknowledged their protection role to the Christian/Coptic minority. “Looking back to a time when the British colonialists used the protection of the Coptic minority to legitimize their presence in Egypt... Intervention begins with the dictating of political conditions. It ends with military interventions” Al Gawhary (1996) stated. While Carter (1986) clearly mentioned in his book “The Copts in Egyptian Politics” that missionary called the British government to protect new converts and Egyptian Christians. He later added, “when Britain granted Egyptian independence in 1922, it reserved certain prerogatives for itself. The third reserved point gave Britain the right to intervene in Egyptians affairs to protect minorities and foreigners... eventually, agreement did emerge that the protection provided in the draft treaty should guide British intervention on behalf of minorities”. As a result, Christians felt powerful not only politically, but also economically due to the open British support. Copts were “secure” and empowered due to the western Christian achievements in the region on one hand and the failure of the Ottoman Empire from another. This have resulted as Pennington (1982) mentioned that the famous Coptic lawyer *Aknoukh Fanous* proposed a Coptic political party to defend Coptic rights and based on Coptic identity – “The Egyptian Party”. But shortly, this proposition of establishing Coptic political party has failed since few have joined it.

However, on another front, some Copts had foreseen the upcoming challenges from the open British support of Christians at the expense of Muslims, by refusing the British occupation. As a result, the British mandatory power felt threatened by the nationalist movement in Egypt, starting the *Orabi* revolution that rose under the slogan “Egypt for Egyptians.” Therefore, the British used the Coptic question by empowering segregation rather than national unification by “first, dealing with Copts on an ethnic basis; second, to isolate Copts from the national movement that fought against them and third, to break up local Coptic religious institutions” (Ibrahim et al, 1996). But a Coptic national movement started to lobby against the British aims and agenda. Father *Sergius* in 1919 openly criticized the British presence as the protector of Copts when he said, “I would rather have every single Copt die and Egypt live” (Al Gawhary, 1996).

What could be of great value is that throughout the independence negotiation process, both French and British did not fail to trade minorities' protection slogans and policies in return for their advantages. As Belge and Karakoc (2015) stated in *Minorities in the Middle East: Ethnicity, Religion, and Support for Authoritarianism*, that privileges given to Muslim minorities in Syria from 1920 up till 1936 were withdrawn after 1936 due the 1936 treaty between France and the Syrian Nationalist movement. Finally, it goes without saying that Christian economic and educational empowerment in Syria and Egypt, was a direct policy adopted by the British and French (please refer to chapter three and four). Therefore, this empowerment policy did not only discriminate against the Sunni majority in Syria (and Egypt) but also against all other minorities.

- **The revenge policies of the independence of Syria and the Egyptian post-coup d'état?**

According to this hypothesis, we would have expected that in 1946 in Syria and 1952 in Egypt, the situation and status of Christian minorities would have deteriorated as a result of a "revenge policy" for their collaboration with their previous regimes and the privileges obtained during the colonial era.

But in chapter four, we have shown that this proposition is incorrect since the nature of the established authoritarian regimes along with the adopted economic policies affected the majority of citizens in both countries. It is important to point out again that Christians were economically better well off compared with the rest. Therefore, the negative results of the socialist policies had higher repercussions on Christians compared to other groups. In this context, almost all Syrian interviewees emphasized on the first democratic experience of the post-colonial era in Syria included and represented all Syrians. As mentioned in Chapter four, Christians in Syria were fairly represented and treated as "citizens" rather than *Dhimmis*. As a result, no sign of systematic discrimination at political, economic, religious, social and cultural levels against Christians of Syria was recorded during the first republic. In addition, as discussed in chapter four, Christians were represented in all pre-1958 governments by around 12.2 per cent (Van Dam, 2011), while their parliamentary representations for the same period varied between 13.38% in 1948 at a peak level, to 7.74% in 1954 at its lowest. A well-known Syrian historian and

researcher²³⁹ described the postcolonial era as Syria's "golden age". As for the academic and political/human rights activists Dr Nael George²⁴⁰, the pre-1958 constitution was "an avant-guard, secular, liberal and democratic", and not comparable with Hafez al-Assad 1973 "unjust" constitution. As result, the community jurisdictions of non-Muslim were retained in the personal status laws (Botiveau, 1998). In early days of independence, Christians were an integral part of the newly created Syria, Gen. Wadih Moqaabari²⁴¹ mentioned. Christians held a key position in the state and the army since the recruitment process was based on professionalism and qualification rather than a quota system, he added.

On another hand, Gen. Moqaabari²⁴² along with a well-known Syrian historian and researcher²⁴³, a Christian Former Senior Civil Servant²⁴⁴, and Sami Khiyami²⁴⁵ explained the changes in the Alawites approach towards the state that could be summarized from isolation to integration. This integration policy started with the collapse of the United Arab Republic (UAR) when the Alawites started to integrate into the army and non-sectarian parties such as al-Baath and Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP). According to a well-known historian and researcher²⁴⁶, Alawites also started to migrate from their mountains towards the coast and major cities precisely Damascus. He analyzed the Alawite peaceful state integration tactic or if we can call it as the "bloodless revolution" as "revenge" to the discriminatory practices they suffered at the hand of Sunnis and urban dwellers during the Ottoman era. He²⁴⁷ described the socio-economic historic status of Alawites as poor peasants, totally ignored, isolated and rejected from the urban bourgeoisies that happen to be mainly Sunnis and few Christians. Religiously, Alawites were not even recognized as a Muslim sect, up until the Lebanese Shiite clergy Imam *Moussa al-Sader* legalized and included them within the Shiite theology and jurisprudence in the 1970s, the well-known historian added.

Both a famous Syrian businessman²⁴⁸ and the former ambassador Sami Khiyami²⁴⁹ emphasized on the political, economic and social gains that were secured by Alawites as

²³⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

²⁴⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

²⁴¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

²⁴⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

²⁴⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁴⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

a result of changes in their status from by being "a controlled minority" to become "a controlling minority". It was a matter of revenge a famous political activist and businessman²⁵⁰ added, since during the first years of independence, and with the exception of Druze, Muslim minorities were denied their rights and even status. Belge and Karakoc (2015) article that was mention above referred also to the changes of Muslim minorities' rights during the pre and post-independence.

While in Egypt most of the interviewees emphasized on the nature of the established authoritarian regime that discriminated against and controlled the freedom of both Christians and Muslims. Sebastian Elsasser (2014) did not fail to mention that after the revolution in general and Nasser era in particular "Muslim and Coptic elite families still remained wealthy and some regained political influence after Sadat's accession". In fact, as described in the previous sections, the post-1952 socialist and nationalization policies were not only targeted against Christians, since one of the coup main aims was to ensure equality among all Egyptian citizens. As stated by High-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman²⁵¹, "Nasser did not directly target his policies against Christians as Sadat did, in fact, Nasser policies were against all Egyptian bourgeois, elites, and political oppositions (mainly political Islamists), that happened to have a considerable number of Christians". As for the Egyptian lower class, both Muslims and Christians poor have enjoyed Nasser's socialist policies represented by the privatization and the land reformation laws. Almost all Egyptian interviewees emphasized that Nasser's policies were not discriminatory and did not target any religion at the expense of the other. Elsasser (2014) added in this regard "together with government subsidies for agriculture input and improved healthcare and education, the land reforms in 1952 and 1961, substantially reduced rural poverty and promoted rural economic growth between 1952 and 1975". On another level, Nasser allocated around half a million pounds to fund the building of St. Mark's Cathedral in Egypt (Tadros, 2009). Tadros also emphasized on the special personal relation that was created between Nasser and the Pope Kyrillos. In his article entitled *Vicissitudes in the Entente between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the State in Egypt (1952-2007)* recounted *Mohamad Hassanin Heikal*²⁵² words on the good consequences of the personal relation between Nasser and the Pope on Christians "It was

²⁵⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

²⁵¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

²⁵² Egyptian political commentator, sage, and distinguished journalist

understandably humiliating for the Patriarch to find that any applications for building permits he made got lost in the labyrinth of the Ministry of Interior. So he approaches Nasser on the subject. Nasser was sympathetic and asked how many new churches the Patriarch thought he needed. The answer was between twenty and thirty a year. Right, said Nasser and immediately gave him permission to build twenty-five new churches a year". Whereas at political level "it was an open secret that anyone wishing to get into the single party electoral body he [the president] had set up, the Liberation Rally, had to get the Pope's blessing, because Nasser submitted the list of his electoral appointments to the pope for scrutiny" (Tadors, 2009). Last but not least, in a sign of solidarity between Nasser and the Copts, Pope Kyrillos announced from the Nasser's home on the eve of 1967 defeat and resignation of Nasser "Copts insistence on his (Nasser) leadership" (Tadors, 2009). Tadros (2009) added "personal friendship between the two became a symbol of the forces binding the Egyptian state with its Coptic citizenry".

As a result, Nasser's socialist and nationalization policies have affected negatively the Egyptian Muslim and Christian elites. Whereas the rural and lower class, have benefited greatly. A high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman²⁵³ emphasized on the dual effects of the 1952 revolution when he mentioned that rich Copts (and all Egyptians) have suffered from Nasser's socialist policies but many poor Christians have enjoyed the land reformation laws equally with their Muslim counterpart. At political level and as mentioned in chapter three and four, according to Pennigton (1988), Nasser was "more secular than Islamist". Therefore, he suppressed Muslim Brotherhood not to please Christian but to counter their Islamic project that could hinder Nasser's Arab nationalist one. As for the relation between Nasser and Christians, the researcher in Carnegie Endowment, political activists, and previous parliament member Amr Hamzawi²⁵⁴ portrayed it as "normal", since Nasser's main aim was to maintain power, spread Arab nationalism and fight Israel. Consequently, both the majority and the minority have suffered from the establishment of the authoritarian regime, a retired ambassador²⁵⁵ stated. He recalled stories about the role of Arab nationalism project in the unification of the whole Egyptian society under the framework of the state and its socialist approach.

²⁵³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

²⁵⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

²⁵⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

Finally, it is important to note that the implemented "revenge" policies were not targeted against one community. But it was mainly a reply to the old economic policies adopted by the bourgeois elite whom Christians constituted its integral part. Therefore, these revenge policies were affected by changes at international level between the pro-communist camps versus the liberal one. The openness policies under Sadat stands as good example as a result of shifting Egypt international alliance from the Soviet Union towards the western liberal camp i.e United States.

Based on what we have discussed above, we can conclude this section by saying that the situation of the Christians in Syria did not get worse, as we have expected, when the French left Syria. In fact, their role in the post-independence era was a mere example of their integration within the state system. As in Egypt and in contrary to what we have expected in table 6.2 the post-British and post-Monarchy era did not witness a high level of discrimination and harassment against Christians. In fact, the newly established socialist military regime did not target Christians in specific. The increase level of discrimination and harassment against Christians started with Sadat and not with president Nasser (as we have expected according to this hypothesis).

- **Consequences of the authoritarian and socialist policies on the Christian of Egypt under Sadat and Syria under the Baath party**

Unlike Salah Jadid who was an extremist and known as "by the book" in applying Baath socialist policies, Hafez al-Assad his comrade was not. The disagreement between al-Assad and Jadid grew up until al-Assad initiated in 1970 the "correction movement". When in power, al-Assad enforced a dictatorship regime that discriminated against most of the Syrians who opposed his regime or were considered as a threat to his rule (as we will mention in hypothesis three). By using the divide and rule strategy that was inherited by the French, al-Assad ruled Syria, Salam Kawakibi²⁵⁶ the Deputy Director and Director of Research at the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) and the grandson of the famous Islamic and Arab philosopher Abdel Rahman al-Kawakibi explained. In line with al Kawakibi²⁵⁷, Nader Jabali²⁵⁸ a Christian politician and lawyer who currently resides in France as a political asylum seeker, explained how al-Assad and his regime corrupted the Syrian

²⁵⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

political life by shifting the Baath party ideology from an Arab nationalist party inclusive to all religious groups, to becoming a pro-Assad and pro-regime party. Jabali²⁵⁹ emphasized on the historical political role played by Christians in the post-independence era, which was totally abolished during the Baath party and later with al-Assad.

"The fact that there was no equality among Syrian citizens, and that one group (Alawite) dominated the rest, the level of discrimination between Syrian citizens increased", stated Bassam Imadi²⁶⁰ who served as an ambassador during Hafez al-Assad era and currently the ambassador of the Syrian Opposition to Rome. He pointed out on the negative consequences of the quota system (that I will explain later in this chapter) that limited the Christian political participation and turned it to a matter of representation rather than qualification.

At an economic level, the result of the socialist economic policies, corruption, and prioritization of the regime and Baath party members, has forced Christian lower and middle class to migrate, as many interviewees declared. "Christians of the Arab region have adapted and survived political discrimination for ages, but they cannot handle economic hardship", a Christian businessman and political activist²⁶¹ stated. Finally, as we will explain in hypothesis four, only those Christians who were close to the regime have enjoyed kind of political and economic privileges, while the Christian majority and mainly all Syrians have suffered from the Baathist authoritarian and socialist policies.

While in Egypt, as mentioned in chapter four, Sadat openly offended Christians when he referred to Islam as the state religion and amended the constitution accordingly. Elsasser (2014) clearly stated that the relation between Copts and the state started to deteriorate as of 1977 when "People's Assembly discussed draft legislation that would have criminalized apostasy (*ridda*). This law would have had the side effect of preventing Christians who converted to Islam from returning to Christianity later". Later on Sadat amended to the constitution to include "Islam as the main source of legislation" (*al-masdar al rai'isi lil tashrii*). Tadros (2009) enumerated four factors that led to the [political] tension between Sadat and the new Pope Shenouda: first, "the rise of Islamists; second, increased sectarian incidents; and three, the growing role of Coptic emigrants as a lobby group in the United States against Sadat's policies" in addition to "fourth, the

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁶¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

revolutionary style of politics of Popel Shenouda”. As a result, the Pope responded by word, deeds and political means against Sadat’s decision. In return Sadat’s canceled the 1971 presidential decree that appointed Shenouda as a Pope (Pennington, 1986), put the Pope in house arrest and appointed a “papal committee” of 5 bishops to manage the Pope duties (Tadros, 2009). It is worth noting in this matter, that the main aim of Sadat’s decision to Islamize the state and release Islamic prisoners is to counter the pro-communist and old guards (mainly Nasserists) from their opposition to his strategic decision to move Egypt from Soviet camp to Western pro-American one. Therefore, Sadat’s policies had negative consequences on Copts as well. Finally, the words of the editors Adly Youssef, Martyn Thomas, Heinz Gstrein and Paul Strassel (2006) in a book entitled “Copts in Egypt – a Christian minority under Siege” can summarize the situation of Copts during Sadat as being “nonresponsive to the minority’s demands for protection, justice and inequality and heightened the trend toward Christian”.

According to the high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman²⁶², Sadat's reprisal against the Copts in general and the Pope, in particular, was lucid due to first, the Coptic professional and efficient political experience gained throughout the kingdom era and second, the Pope character, charisma and political wisdom. The political role along with the Pope's character has frightened Sadat, the clergyman²⁶³ added. Another High-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman²⁶⁴ criticized Sadat as anti-Copt who did not consider Christians as Egyptians. He²⁶⁵ added that during the peace negotiation process between Egypt and Israel, Sadat did not claim or discussed the status of the occupied Coptic Orthodox properties in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. He²⁶⁶ added that Sadat considered these assets as Coptic properties and not Egyptian ones.

Hence, we conclude that with the exception of a very limited number of those who benefited from the regime in both Syria and Egypt, almost the majority of Syrians have suffered from the Baath policies and Egyptians from the well-established authoritarian regime

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁶⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

- **The policies of al-Assad and Mubarak**

According to table 6.2, we have expected an improvement of the situation of Christians in Syria when al-Assad took over power. We have also expected that the situation in Egypt shall remain the same as the result of Mubarak being in office. But once in power, al-Assad started to strengthen his dictatorship by focusing mainly on the intelligence, security and army apparatuses. As discussed in this chapter (mainly fourth hypothesis) and Hana Batatu's book (1998), al-Assad trust circle was limited to include a very limited number of closed Alawites. Therefore, the structure of al-Assad authoritarian regime discriminated mainly against Sunni (since al-Assad feared the Sunni majority) in particular and against everyone who opposed and threatened the sustainability of the regime being Alawites, Christians, Sunni, and others in general. Similarly, in Egypt, Mubarak used his strong security apparatus to control the state and prevent any possible threat to his regime.

According to the academic and political/human rights activists Dr. Nael George²⁶⁷, discrimination against Sunnis in key positions was crystal clear during al-Assad years in office. As I will discuss in hypothesis four, al-Assad appointed powerless figurative Sunnis in important positions. In his turn, the resigned priest and journalist Roger Asfar²⁶⁸ realized in this matter that the ideology of the Baath party has changed from being a secular party in the pre al-Assad era to become an anti-Sunni under the al-Assad rule. Jaber Zuayyin²⁶⁹ son of the previous Prime Minister (from September till December 1965) Yussef Zuayyin a board member of the Baath party Regional Command who was imprisoned by Hafez al-Assad during the corrective movement in 1970 added in this regard that al-Assad succeeded in dividing the Syrian society based on anti-Sunni approach. From his experience in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Bassam Imadi²⁷⁰ pointed out on an example taken from the Ministry that could be generalized on all state institutions. He²⁷¹ recalled that al-Assad regime replaced most of the Sunni civil servants in the ministry with Alawites who ended up representing around 80 percent of the Ministry's employees.

²⁶⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

²⁶⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

²⁶⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

At judicial level, al-Assad regime succeeded also in politicizing and controlling the judicial power in a way that any Baath party member or member of intelligence forces can manipulate and change a court decision, Jabali²⁷² noticed in his explanation to al-Assad's authoritarian structure.

At constitutional level, Jaber Zuayyin²⁷³ described the 1973 constitution as a "major mistake towards the Syrian people" since it institutionalized both the dictatorship and the discrimination not only against Christians but also against most of Syrians who were not members of the Baath party.

While in Egypt, Mubarak recreated the entente (that was terminated by Sadat) between the regime and the church. As we have described in hypothesis one, Mubarak discriminated against all those who opposed him and that only few Egyptians have benefited from the regime. According to an Egyptian politician²⁷⁴, those who benefited from the regime were a minority hated by all Egyptians. He²⁷⁵ added that each government included those who were known as the "Christians of the regime". Despite that few Christians benefited from the regime, Mubarak did not act to end discrimination, a well-known political activist and founder of "Enough" movement²⁷⁶ known in Arabic as *Kefaya* George Ishak²⁷⁷, the TV presenter and human rights activists Passant Salama²⁷⁸ and High-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman²⁷⁹ stated. Mubarak offered Christians some small gestures that could be described as "calming pills" such as confirming 7th of January as a public holiday and facilitating church building process a High-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman²⁸⁰ described. Sebastian Elsasser (2014) in his book entitled "The Coptic Question in the Mubarak era" goes in the same line with what have been mentioned when he stated that "these measures did not bring any of the demands voiced by the Coptic Church leaders any close fulfillment".

Despite that Mubarak continued with the openness policies adopted by Sadat at the economic level and the flexible authoritarian approach at political and security one, still many interviewees described Mubarak's era as the worst compared to his predecessors. According to an interview undertaken by Jaida el Deeb (2015), the interviewer described

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁷⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ it is a grassroots movement that was established in 2004 against Mubarak's regime.

²⁷⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

the era of Nasser (and the kingdom) as "the best time for Copts", since unlike Mubarak and Sadat eras, there was equality, peace, and respect between Christians and Muslims. According to a well-known businessman and politician²⁸¹, Nasser and Sadat had a vision while Mubarak had "nothing other than corruption and personal benefits". An interesting comparison between Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak projects was also discussed in Tarek Osman's book (2013) *Egypt on the Brink*. Mubarak regime exposed all Egyptians to the same authoritarian practices, Ambassador Soad Shalaby²⁸² stated. These practices have led to the deterioration of the political, economic, cultural and societal values of the Egyptian society and affected equally all Egyptians regardless to their religious background. Within the same context, Dina Khawaga²⁸³ criticized Mubarak regime of being responsible for the corruption, bad economic situation, security control, illiteracy, poverty, etc... which exposed all Egyptian to the same hardship, problems, and authoritarian discrimination.

At non-Sunni level in Syria, once in power the regime headed by al-Assad initiated pro Alawites pro-al-Assad policies. As a result, every Syrians who opposed the Alawite regime was under constant threat. According to a Former (Christian) Senior Civil Servant²⁸⁴, it was a taboo for Christians to oppose the regime. Many Christian's oppositions were imprisoned and torture such as *Aref Dalal* who was imprisoned for seven years or *Michel Kilo* or others, he added. In his turn, Ambassador Imadi²⁸⁵ blamed the al-Assad regime for transforming Christians from being normal citizens in the pre al-Assad era, to become a minority that depends on the regime for its survival. As for a high-ranking (Sunni) army retired General²⁸⁶, some Alawite soldiers were pampered by their superior non-Alawites officers simply because they feared them. He²⁸⁷ elaborated that Alawites officers were promoted faster than the rest regarding their professionalism or years in duty. In this environment, Gen Moqaabari²⁸⁸ mentioned that Hafez al-Assad feared a coup d'état against his regime, for this reason, he changed the structure of the Syrian army to include only Alawites in sensitive key positions. Al-Assad created a new ruling elite that is composed at military and security level of only Alawites while he kept

²⁸¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁸² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in January 2017

²⁸³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

²⁸⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

²⁸⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

the political scene open to mostly Sunnis, Ghassan Zakaria²⁸⁹ a Syrian politician and previous member of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) political bureau stated. Lastly and in support of this argument, I have described in hypothesis one, the previous section and chapter four how Alawites started to control key positions in the army as of Hafez al-Assad rule.

At a social level, Alawites had indirect dominance and support over other citizens. In the case of a social conflict between Alawites and other sects or groups, the security forces support with no qualm the Alawite, a high ranking retired army General²⁹⁰ stated. Nael George²⁹¹ in support for this argument recalled the historical tension between Alawites and Ismaelies in rural areas and how al-Assad regime used to support and defend Alawites.

While in Egypt, the number of other minorities such as Jews, Bahais, and Shiite is very minimal. The number of some minorities such as Jews have dropped to be only less than 50 persons, Passant Salama²⁹² mentioned. She²⁹³ added that the Egyptian Personal law does not recognize Bahais as Egyptian citizens. It is important to note that almost all interviewees with exception of Salama, recognized only Sunni Muslim majority and the Christian minority as part of the demographic composition in Egypt.

For this hypothesis to be accepted, I suggested at the beginning the following table:

Expected relation of Christians towards political regimes			
Political regimes	Syria	Political regimes	Egypt
French colonial period	Good	Monarchy/British colonial period	Good
First republic	Bad	Nasser republic period	Bad
Baath period	Good	Sadat republic period	Bad
Al-Assad republic period	Normal or Good (at least not bad)	Mubarak republic period	Bad

Bold cells are considered to be the revenge period.

In fact, as a result to our discussion in the above section along with the explanation of the chronological relation between pre/post regime change and Christian minorities, we have reached the following result that summarizes my findings

²⁸⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

²⁹² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

²⁹³ Ibid.

Table 6.3: Relation of Christians towards political regimes

Relation of Christians towards political regimes			
Political regimes	Syria	Political regimes	Egypt
French colonial period	Good	Monarchy/British colonial period	Good
Pre al-Assad republic periods	Good	Nasser republic period	Normal or Good (at least not bad)
		Sadat republic period	Bad
Al-Assad republic period	Normal or Good (at least not bad)	Mubarak republic period	

Bold cells show that there was no revenge in the indicated period.

Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected for Syria, since during the first republic (up till 1958) Christians of Syria were fairly represented. In addition, no direct or indirect discriminatory actions and harassment were recorded against them. In fact, during the Baath and even al-Assad era, the structure of the established authoritarian regimes has exercised discrimination and harassment against most of those who opposed the regime. Regardless to their religious background, most Syrian citizens who opposed the regime have suffered greatly.

While in Egypt, my findings also reject this hypothesis since we have expected that Christians under Nasser’s first republic should have been treated badly. But according to our findings, they were to some extent treated normally and no major direct discriminatory actions were taken against them by Nasser’s first republic. However, the path of direct and systematic discrimination against Copts of Egypt has started when Sadat started to Islamize the state and the community. Islamizations policies continued to be regarded as the main feature of Mubarak era due to the failure of the Arab nationalism project from one hand and the expansion of Islamic forces that could not be contained from the other.

What could help us reject this hypothesis is that both presidents were not responsible for the socialist measures taken in the post-coup d’état era. It is important to note that al-Assad was a "flexible" socialist but real Baathist as Firas Tlas²⁹⁴ Son of Hafez al-Assad childhood friend and his Minister of Defense for 30 years Gen. Mustapha Tlas and many other interviewees described him. While Mubarak was not that socialist since his political

²⁹⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

and economic policies were based on state monopolization. Finally, with the exception of Sadat, no direct anti-Christian law was recorded in the modern history of both Syria and Egypt. In addition, almost the 51 interviewees assured that with the exception of the “ennobled religion” no direct laws were issued against the Christians of Syria and Egypt.

6.3.4 Hypothesis four: the match between the main identity features of the population and the elite in power

In this section, I will use the collected qualitative data to check whether the state composition could be an important element in the discrimination against minorities. In this regard, I am suggesting the following hypothesis: ruling elites of dictatorships whose religious identity is different from the majority of the population tend to be more sympathetic, lenient and collaborative with other minority groups inside their country in order to build a coalition of minorities to support their regimes. While ruling elite of the same type of dictatorship, who belongs to the major religious group of the mass population, have a propensity to be hegemonic and less considerate towards other, different religious, minority groups in their country in order to get the support of the majority of the population.

In this context, it goes without saying that the regimes of both al-Assad and Mubarak have created a loyalty system that differentiates between those who support their regimes and those who do not. The nature of these autocratic regimes has created a controlled authoritarian system that gave advantages only to those who served the president and its interest. As we have discussed in chapter five, despite Christians of both Syria and Egypt had a presence in their regimes, still they were discriminated, and the level of discrimination varies between both countries. It is clear that since the Monarchy era and especially during the Republic era up till Mubarak regime in Egypt, the regime or the ruling elite shared the same ethnic and religious composition of the majority of the population that is Sunni Arab. While in Syria, the pre-al-Assad ruling elite and even Baath regime (up until the Corrective Movement 1970) shared also the same ethnic and religious composition of the majority that is Sunni Arab. Hereafter the Corrective Movement in 1970, the religious identity of the elite in power turned out to be Alawite, which is a Muslim minority, but the Arab ethnic composition of the population remained the same.

- **Egypt: the elite and population congruence of the ethnoreligious identity features**

In the specific case of Egypt, the collected information at the first hand seems to support this hypothesis. Both the president and the majority of the population belongs to the same composition; i.e. Sunni Islam. That's why the religious identity of the president was not a major concern for the regime legitimacy and sustainability. The demographic structure of the society along with the regime composition was in favor of the Sunni majority.

But, how can this hypothesis explain the temporal change in the level of discrimination that we saw? We have seen that despite both Presidents Nasser and Sadat were Sunnis, their relationship with the Christian minority was not the same. In fact, the level of discrimination and harassment was higher during Sadat compared to Nasser (refer to table 6.3). It is important to remind the reader, that from an ethnic point of view the Christians of both Egypt and Syria are not considered to be a minority (refer to chapter 2). In this regard, one cannot but ask why religion matters more than ethnicity in a regime that was created in an ethnic ideology and identity (in this case Arab nationalism).

Whereas in the special case of Syria, the temporal change pertaining discrimination against Christians is even more puzzling since hereafter 1970 the regime turned out to be Alawite i.e a religious minority. It is important to remind the reader that according to the results obtained in table 6.3, Christians were better treated when the elite in power was Sunni i.e the religious majority, especially during the first republic. However, when the elite in power turned to be Alawite, the level of discrimination increased in comparison with pre-al-Assad era.

- **The base of the Syrian regime: not a coalition of exclusively minorities but of groups**

What is interesting about what we have mentioned in chapter five about discrimination of Christian minorities in Syria under al-Assad and could help validate or reject this hypothesis logically is that al-Assad appointed few Christians and other minorities in some key positions based on an undeclared quota system²⁹⁵. Still, most of the interviewees of Syria asserted that the quota strategy was simply a "décor" and a tool used

²⁹⁵ It is the division of public positions according to the religious, sectarian and ethnic composition/group of the state according to the proportional number of each group.

by al-Assad authoritarian regime to approach the international community. For example, al-Assad appointed many Christians in internationally appealing positions such as Syria's Ambassador to France. While in Egypt, according to a current ambassador, Christians had a strong presence in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs only since the regime was keen in approaching and tackling the international community.

In this context, it is important to shed light on what most of the interviewees from Syria have stated about the nature of Baath autocratic regime who made it difficult to non “pro-regime members” to be integrated within the state system, regarding their religious background including the Christian civil servants in the ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to a Syrian retired army General²⁹⁶ “loyalty to the president and the regime should always be the prime identity of any public servant”.

As described in chapter four, al-Assad did not appoint any Christians or other non-Alawites in key sensitive positions in the state or the security apparatus such as intelligent and the army. In fact, almost all who held key positions were Alawites. Al-Assad trusted no one other than a limited number of close Alawites who belongs to his own tribe/clan, Nader Jabali²⁹⁷ stated. Firas Tlas²⁹⁸ confirmed Jabali's statement "only Alawites held sensitive and key positions in the regimes...Hafez al-Assad trusted no one other than some Alawites". He²⁹⁹ added that by succeeding in eliminating all his Alawites opponents from one hand and abolishing the old traditional Alawite elites from the other, al-Assad claimed the sole and ultimate representation of the Alawite community.

In addition, both a Christian high-ranking senior official³⁰⁰ and a well-known Syrian historian and researcher³⁰¹ emphasized on al-Assad's policy that guaranteed the participation of all sects in the state and the party and ensured that "Alawites were to be the most represented". It is important to remind the reader that most of the appointed non-Alawites in important and sensitive state positions were powerless (refer to chapter four). In this context, Gen. Wadih Moqaabari³⁰², Dr. Fadi Esber³⁰³ who is a Managing Editor for Damascus Research Center and political activist, in addition to many interviewees

²⁹⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

²⁹⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

²⁹⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

³⁰¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

who preferred not to reveal their names acknowledged al-Assad main aim to protect the Alawite community and ensure the survival and sustainability of his regime by appointing only Alawites in key positions. Gen. Moqaabari³⁰⁴ added in this matter, "al-Assad invested in Alawites area of Latakia, he built industries, developed the region and kept a strong military presence there".

In this respect, al-Assad cared less about religious issues. Many Syrian interviewees pointed out on the secular approach of president al-Assad since his main aim was the survival and sustainability of the regime. A Syrian (Christian) former senior Civil Servant³⁰⁵ stated that al-Assad was very firm in protecting his regime but flexible with other issues. He emphasized on al-Assad secular approach since any Alawites or Sunni or Christian etc... who disobeyed him or threatened his regime have suffered greatly. A famous politician³⁰⁶ confessed in this respect, that al-Assad least concerns was religion and professionalism. His only concern, he added, was the sustainability of his regime by depending on a group of loyal Alawite security officers. From his side, Salam Kawakibi³⁰⁷ used the term "securitocracy" to shed light on the relation between the regime's survival and the total reliance on its security apparatuses. Kawakibi added that al-Assad main sect was "the regime itself since all sects and religious groups were part of a greater sect called the regime".

As a result, we do not find an exclusive coalition of minorities as some scholars and journalists used to claim. By default, this type of coalition means that only members of the religious (or even ethnic) minorities can be part of the coalition, and therefore any member of the majority is excluded. On the contrary, we have found that within the coalition of people that support the Syrian regime there were also members from the Syrian Sunni majority. We have rather found a coalition of "groups" that included most of those groups who were loyal to the regime and benefited from it. In fact, the coalition of groups was a platform that contained all those who served and benefited from the regime. These groups included members of the existing minorities in Syria along with members of the Sunni majority. This does not mean, on the other hand, that all members

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

³⁰⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

³⁰⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

of the different religious sects had the same chances of attain political power within the regime. We have seen that Alawite tended to monopolize the highest power position. Based on what have been discussed, we can reject this hypothesis. The concordance of the religious background of the president/elite in power with the one of the majority of the population cannot explain why the situation of Christians deteriorated in both countries, nor can explain in Syria the situation of Christian Arabs was actually better under Sunni rulers than the Alawites.

6.3.5 Hypothesis five: The challenge of Islamist opposition groups and the politicization of religion as a safe pathway to sustain regime legitimacy and existence

In this section I will test the hypothesis that says that the discrepancy in the level of harassment and discrimination against Christian Arabs is related to the existence or not of a challenge to the regime, in this case the Islamic challenge. As we said, the hypothesis consists that authoritarian ruling regimes that attempt to incorporate part of powerful Islamic groups, tend to politicize religion and discriminate against non-Muslim minorities in order sustain their rule and legitimize their existence, while authoritarian regimes who faces weak Islamic challenges tend moderately to politicize non-Muslim minorities.

The defeat of Arabs at the hand of the Israeli army in 1967 marked the end of the Arab nationalist project and the beginning of political and radical Islam one. Many international and regional events, as well as direct and indirect support, have led to the expansion of political, militant and radical Islam project³⁰⁸. The assassination of President Sadat, the war in Afghanistan, the Iranian revolution, the Lebanese civil war, the Algerian civil war and many other events have clearly shown that the radical and political Islam project is hard to contain. But can we say that the challenge of Islamist has been significantly higher in Egypt than in Syria?

- **The Islamic challenge in Egypt**

³⁰⁸ The explanation of the rise of the radical Islamism across the Arab region deserves its own research, but this thesis does not deal with the causes of its emergence, but with their consequences for the destiny of Arab Christians.

Unlike in Syria (as we will see below) where the role of Islamists was contained since al-Assad succeeded to eradicate militant Islam until the beginning of the civil war, in Egypt political and militant Islam (such as Al Jamat al Islamiya, Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Movement) played a crucial role in the calculations of Mubarak's regime. In previous chapters I have pointed out on the challenges exercised by Islamists against the regimes of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak. Islamists (Muslim Brotherhood) tried and failed to assassinate Nasser in Egypt and Mubarak in Ethiopia (by Al Jamat al Islamiya/Islamic Jihad). But Islamic Jihad have succeeded in assassinating Sadat during a military parade in 1981. The exercised challenges from Islamists, mainly from Islamic Jihad, did not end in targeting the Egyptian rulers but was also extended to governmental institutions, military and police targets, tourists, thinkers (mainly seculars) and Copts.

Two main events have caused the expansion of the Islamists project in Egypt and led to increase their challenge against the regime. The first event was the defeat of Arabs in 1967 war against Israel, while Sadat Islamization policies of the state and society is considered to be the second event. As a result, to the increasing powerful radical and militant Islam such as Al Jamat al Islamiya, the state security forces controlled less Islamists oppositions. As discussed in chapter five, they have exercised social and religious pressure not only against the government but also against Christians.

From his part, Mubarak succeeded somehow to contain militant Islam but failed to eradicate it. The demographic structure of the Egyptian society along with high level of Islamisation and radicalization did not allow Mubarak to eradicate the political power of militant Islam. According to editors Trevor Salmon and Mark F. Imber (2008) "By the late 1990s, armed groups have been eradicated, but political pressure on Mubarak remained". Therefore, the tough troubled years of the 1990's between security forces/intelligence and militant Islam represented by Islamic Jihad and Al Jamat al Islamiya have led to the containment and not the total defeat of Islamists. Consequently, the role of militant Islam was minimized at the expense of the political one. Islamists used different gateways including the Christian question in Egypt to pressure the regime.

In this regard, Mubarak considered the challenge from Islamists as a real threat to the regime survival and sustainability. Due to the violent history of militant Islam (Islamic Jihad and Al Jamat al Islamiya) and their bloody role during the 1990s and even before, Mubarak feared his assassination, a political advisor³⁰⁹ explained. A high-ranking Coptic

³⁰⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

Orthodox clergyman³¹⁰ related the release of Pope Shenouda from his exile four years after Mubarak's being in power, with the president's fear of being assassinated by Islamists. The clergyman³¹¹ added that in his reply to a question about the exile situation of the Pope, Mubarak affirmed that any random decision in this matter could provoke Islamists and cause trouble to the regime. According to the political advisor³¹², because Mubarak was afraid of being assassinated by Islamists as they did with Sadat, he was very precaution in his approach with Christians. As a result, Mubarak provided Islamists with a "controlled political margin" represented by the indirect political participation of Muslim brotherhood at least in unions, civil work, university cabinets etc...he³¹³ added. In the same context, a retired army General³¹⁴ explained how Mubarak was keen not to provoke Islamists with sensitive subjects such as the Christian question and rights. He³¹⁵ added that Mubarak did not favor any tension or political and military escalation with Islamist as a result of "insignificant subjects" such as the Christian ones.

At political level, Islamists have exercised a systematic pressure against the appointment of Christian civil servants in some high positions. This kind of pressure used to be exercised either by attacking Christian houses, churches, and properties or by demonstrations, as some Egyptian interviewees claimed. The example given by a high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman³¹⁶ about how Islamists forced the government to adjust its decision and refrain from appointing a Christian governor in Qana governorate stands as a good example. In the same context, another Coptic Orthodox clergyman³¹⁷ added that in rural areas some Muslim voters did not vote for Christian candidates while in some villages Christians were not allowed even to vote or to participate in any political activities.

On another level, a high-ranking priest³¹⁸ in the Egyptian Evangelic Church and a member of the inter-dialogue religious committee between 2005 and 2016 shaded light on another form of pressure exercised by Islamists against al-Azhar. Moderate clerics in al-Azhar

³¹⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

³¹⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

³¹⁸ Ibid.

were discriminated by the radical dominant wing inside the al-Azhar³¹⁹ institution. He³²⁰ added, based on his personal relation and professional experience, many clerics expressed their discontent and resentment from the increasing power and unchallenging role of Islamists and Wahabi influence inside the al-Azhar institution.

In this regard and as mentioned earlier, in order to get the support of Christians, Mubarak did not fail to revive the entente which aimed first, to ensure Coptic support to his regime and contain their opposition; second, minimize somehow the pressure of the Coptic lobby in the United States and third as Tadors (2009) claimed that the growing power of militant Islam has unified the state and church against one common enemy i.e Islamists. Laure Guirguis (2017) explicitly explained how the Pope supported Mubarak in his electoral campaign when she wrote, “the Holy Synod addressed a letter of support to the president. The high clergy gave directives to all dioceses so that bishops and preaches would encourage their congregations to head to the polls...several bishops dedicated time to preaching in favor of Mubarak”. She also added that a priest was suspended from his work due to his connection with an opposition candidate to Mubarak.

In this context, it is important to shed light on a very important element that if succeeded could have challenged the entente policy of Mubarak, that is the contained relation between some independent intellectual Christians and some groups of the reformist sector in political Islam that is the Muslim Brotherhood. The activists that formed the Kefaya movement³²¹ stands as a good example since it was headed by Muslim Brotherhood activists along with the liberal Coptic activist Georges Ishak and others (Trager, 2013). In addition, some Copts have joined the Islamist Labor party. In an interview with Nelly Van Doorn-Harder (2011), the chief editor of al-Shaab newspaper and member of the Islamist Labor party Adel Husayn stated that “some Copts had joined his party and insisted on their protection and full rights as equal citizens in an Islamic state”. Another interesting example of the relation between some Copts and Islamists is the member of the Islamist al Wasat party Rafiq Habib who is a Coptic intellect and researcher. In an interview with Karim al Gawhari in the Middle East Report Journal (1996), Habib stated that “our Islamic identity is both religious and cultural. When we speak about al-Wast, we refer to a cultural identity which all people, whether in Egypt or any other Arab country have in common, be they Muslims or Christians”. In his reply to a question of

³¹⁹ The highest Sunni official religious institution in Egypt

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Popular Campaign for Change that is a coalition of anti-Mubarak activists.

being a Christian and member of Islamic party, Habib replied that “as an Arab Christian, I identify with the value system of the Arab and Islamic civilization which expresses my feelings and preferences”.

As a result of such interaction between some Copts and Muslim liberals, the intelligence forces of Mubarak regime were accused many times by being behind the attacks on Christians (Thune, 2015). The main reason behind such attacks is to keep Christians under the control of the regime. In addition, to destroying any possible powerful collaboration between Christians and Islamists. Since the success of such relation could have created a powerful opposition to the regime that might have threatened also its existence. In other words, it was for the regime interest that Islamists are labeled as terrorists and promoters of confessional attacks in the Egypt.

Finally, as a result of the exercised radical Islamist pressures (Al Jamat al Islamiya and Salafi movement) towards the state, the church extended its patience with Mubarak regime out of fear of Islamists (Elsasser, 2014). Elsasser, S. (2014) in *The Coptic Question in the Mubarak Era* added on the fear of pressure exercised from Islamist “Muslim Brotherhood was mistrusted deeply by the church’s leaders, as much as by the community...after 2000, church leaders repeatedly expressed their preference to Mubarak and his party in the run-up to elections...and thus explicitly expressed the conviction that a stable authoritarianism was strategically preferable to uncertain democratic experience that might bring Muslim Brotherhood into a position of power”.

- **The Islamic challenge in Syria**

According to this hypothesis we would expect that in Syria there was a lower level of discrimination of Christian Arabs because the Syrian regime faced a weaker Islamist challenge than Egypt. We are going to see however that this is not the case. In fact, the challenge and pressure of political and radical Islam is not only associated to al-Assad or Baath era. As discussed in previous chapters, the post-independence ruling elite in Syria was to some extent against Islamic thinking and movements. What Pierret (2013) addressed in chapter three in relation to pressure from the ruling elite stands as a good example. Another element that has also caused a real threat to political Islam was the military institution. Pierret (2014) stated that the army was “heavily influenced by the founder of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s experience of authoritarian secularization” which have caused increase of enmity and later tension between the army

and Islamists. Despite the indirect tension between Islamists and ruling elite, still they have succeeded to reach the parliament in 1949 and 1962.

Islamists saw the 1963 coup d'état that was headed by Baath party as a threat to their presence and ideology. Both the Baath party and Islamists had opposing point of views and ideology towards the face of Syria. While Islamists wanted to rule in accordance to religion, Baath party was advocating and implementing secularization. As a result, and according to Pierret (2014) hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood members were self-exiled to the Gulf countries.

However, the increase tension between Islamists and Baath party reached its peak when al-Assad reached power. Militant Islam represented by Muslim Brotherhood has challenged the Baath regime in general and al-Assad rule in particular from 1976 up till 1982. A series of assassination, civil unrest and attacks on police and government forces were recorded. This have forced Hafez al-Assad regime to ignite a war against their threshold in Hama³²² in 1982, ending by that their powerful presence in Syria. In his war against militant Islam, al-Assad was supported by almost all minorities including Sunni elite (military, official clergymen, businessmen and the bourgeoisie of Aleppo and Damascus) such as the governor of Hama *Abdel Halim Khadam*, the Minister of Defense *Mustapha Tlas* as well as many other Sunni figures and tribes (Lefevre, 2013).

In this regard, the diverse structure of the Syrian society along with the defeat of militant radical Islam at the hand of al-Assad troops in 1982 have led to the containment of the Islamist project in Syria. Despite that Islamist has exercised and recorded few political gains up till early 1980's, al-Assad succeeded in restraining their political power from growing.

The first released draft of the 1973 constitution did not include an article that emphasizes on Islam as the religion of the President. Consequently, Sunni Sheikhs and clergymen headed demonstration against the released draft in most of Syria's major cities. To calm down the situation, al-Assad amended and released a final draft of the 1973 constitution that explicitly mentions Islam as the religion of the president. Firas Tlas³²³ stated in this regard, that al-Assad main aim of the released first constitutional draft was to test the reaction of the Sunni majority regarding the historical perception in Syria that exclude the Alawite community from being a Muslim sect. Therefore, he tried and failed to pass

³²² for more information refer to chapter three and four

³²³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

the first constitutional draft that if succeeded, Tlas³²⁴ added, could have secured for him a flexible political margin. From the perspective of a Sunni Sheikh³²⁵, al-Assad tried in a smart way to change the constitution in favor of his sect since he absolutely knew that the Sunni majority in Syria does not recognize Alawite as a Muslim sect. The Sheikh³²⁶ added, the al-Assad action did not have at all any secular or Baath ideological background as the regime spokesmen revealed, but rather it had a pure Alawites sectarian aim which was brought to an end “thanks to god and Sunni wise clergymen”. From a Christian Orthodox clergyman’s³²⁷ perspective, al-Assad action could have opened the door for an efficient and equal Christian participation in the state institutions, but the fierce Islamists and Sunni pressure detained it. It is with no doubt that al-Assad first draft aimed to legitimize his presidency (as an Alawite), the clergyman³²⁸ added, but the concession given in the final draft has empowered his position politically. For both a retired army General³²⁹ and a former senior Civil Servant³³⁰, al-Assad knew very well that the Sunni majority would reject the first draft. But the main aim of the whole “play” as they both described it, is to appeal to the Sunni majority in general and Islamists in particular as being the sole guardian of their rights.

In this regard, other than the 1973 constitutional incident and the already existing article about Islam being one of the sources for legislations along with the Personal status law that favors the “ennobled” Islamic religion at expense of Christianity, no political pressure was exercised from political Islamists and advocates to amend the constitution at least after the year 1982.

Finally, in their role to contain the pressure exercised from Islamists, it is important to note that al-Assad was very smart in not provoking the Sunni majority especially after 1982. In fact, al-Assad used the carrot and stick technique. From one hand, he used excessive power against militant Islam such as the case of Hama in 1982, while from the other hand he smartly created for himself a Sunni figure by practicing publicly in all Sunni rituals as Ghassan Zakaria³³¹ stated. In addition, he expanded the Quranic teaching schools when he created “Hafez al-Assad institute for Memorization of Quran”. In

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

³³⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

³³¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

addition, according to a historian and researcher³³² “Syria during al-Assad witnessed a huge increase in building mosques”. In his article entitled “Hafiz al-Asad Discovers Islam”, Eyal Zisser (1999) stressed on the Sunni and Muslim rituals that al-Assad used to conduct such as praying in Sunni mosques and pilgrim to Mecca. According to Ghassan Zakaria “al-Assad truly believed in the Sunni theology and sharia”. Zakaria added that upon his death, Sunni clergymen and sheikh performed the religious prayers and ceremony. While for Zisser (1999) the regime “encouraged the activities of moderate clerics such as Muhammad Sa'id al-Buti, who (now) broadcasts a popular weekly religious program on Syrian television. It allowed clerics to run in the elections to the People's Assembly of 1990, 1994, and 1998”.

While in Egypt, Mubarak was more lenient. He relied on his security forces to pressure Islamists but in the same time he allowed them to participate indirectly in the election at parliamentary and syndicates levels. Mubarak was keen in appealing to the Sunni majority and Christian minority as a man of peace and inter-religious dialogue. Mubarak ensured that both Sheikh (head) al-Azhar and the Coptic Pope were to be present in all public ceremonies Dina Khawaga³³³ as well as many other interviewees stated. Khawaga³³⁴ added, that Mubarak launched the inter-religious dialogue sessions that were delivered by either Sheikh al-Azhar or Pope Shenouda or their representatives.

In conclusion, although it is clear that both presidents used the threat of Islamists to fend their existence and sustain their rule, we cannot say that Syria was more secular than Egypt and therefore discriminated religious minorities in lower degree simply because the presence of Islamic challenge was more reduced. Therefore, we reject this hypothesis.

6.3.6 Author's hypothesis: The interaction effect of elite-population religious convergence with the Islamist challenge

The result of what we have discussed in hypotheses four and five does not help us understand the thesis main questions: why the Christians of Syria and Egypt were discriminated differently by their respective ruling regimes, when ethnic or religious

³³² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

³³³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

³³⁴ Ibid.

identity matters for secular dictatorships; and finally, why the degree of discrimination increased in both Syria and Egypt across time (although in a higher degree in Egypt than Syria). In the analysis of the fourth hypothesis, we concluded that the internal match between the religious identity of the population and the elite in power cannot explain however the last main question, the cross-time evolution of that discrimination in both countries. The fifth hypothesis could explain this increase of discrimination across time in both countries, but not why the increase was higher in Egypt than in Syria. Therefore, in order to answer these questions, we present now a new hypothesis, developed by the author, that is a combination of hypothesis four and five: the interaction between the existence of an Islamic challenge to the regime with the elite-population match of their main descriptive features.

As discussed in hypothesis five, the existing of a powerful Sunni Islamic challenge to al-Assad regime was contained mainly by using the military force. This does not mean that al-Assad fail to perform also some Sunni rituals to calm down the Sunni majority. In the case of Egypt, the relation between sticks and carrots was different. Under Nasser the containment of the Islamic threat was based on full repression. However, Sadat and later Mubarak combined repression as well as allowing some degree of political and social participation which were unknown in Syria. As of 1980, Mubarak, on one hand, allowed the integration of Islamists within the syndicates and unions (as discussed in chapter four) as well as in the parliament. While from other, Mubarak regime did not fail to launch military and security operations against Islamists stronghold and leadership.

Therefore, we cannot say that the Islamic challenge was much higher in Egypt than in Syria. The difference lies mainly in the specific way of dealing with that Islamic challenge. In this regard, we cannot but ask why this difference in the use of sticks and carrots. Simplifying what it is a complex reality we could say that, while al-Assad used the Islamist threat to obtain the support or at least acquiesce within the Christian community for its regime and its highly repressive measures, Sadat and Mubarak used instead the Copts subordination to prove their Muslim credentials and obtain the support or acquiesce among the majority of the Egyptian population. Here we are going to argue that this is explained by the different match of religious identities between population and the elite in power that exist in both countries.

- **The combination of factors in Egypt**

As discussed previously, both the elite in power and the society in Egypt share the same religious and ethnic composition, which is Arab Sunni Islam. When Nasser took over power in Egypt, he established a socialist secular military rule and succeeded to contain the power of a nascent political and radical Islam such as the Muslim Brotherhood. In his turn, his successor Sadat started to initiate deep changes to Nasser's socialist secular military rule. Sadat initiated the "liberalization" policies that affected the whole Egyptian society as we saw in previous chapters. At economic level, the openness policies resulted in the emergence of a new economic elite that also included Islamists. At security level, Sadat's policies led to the release of Islamists from prisons. Finally, at political level, he introduced a sort of "multiparty system" that opened the door for political participation including for Islamists. Contrary to Nasser who was the leader of the "Arabs" and even managed for a few years to create the "United Arab Republic" with Syria, Sadat did not fail to proclaim that he was "a Muslim (Sunni) president of a Muslim (Sunni) state". Consequently, he amended the constitution in favor of Islamic religious *Shariah*, which favored the re-Islamization of the state and society. By intensifying the Muslim Sunni character of his regime and accepting part of the Islamist agenda, Sadat sought to broaden the bases of support for its regime, and the success of its political and economic liberalization policies.

But as a result, to the Islamization path, Islamists also became a considerable powerful group in the Egyptian society, and the level of harassment and discrimination against Christians increased. Islamization was associated with politicization of Christians, especially when a huge debate concerning the status of Christian citizens (equal citizens or *Dhimmis*) in Egypt arose, Samir Morcos³³⁵ a well-known Coptic figure and Depute President during Mohamad Morsi's era recalled.

After the assassination of Sadat by the Radical Islamists of the *Islamic Jihad*, Mubarak inherited from Sadat era a powerful political and militant Islam groups, discriminatory laws and actions against Christians, along with social/religious unrest represented by the harassment against Christian minority. At the beginning, Christians hoped that President Mubarak would restore back the pre-Sadat constitution and order, a high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman³³⁶ claimed. But Mubarak had not the courage enough to change the

³³⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

³³⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

Christian status and break the tradition Coptic representation in the government and the parliament, Samir Morcos³³⁷ stated in his criticism to Mubarak passive role towards Christians. Within the same context, Ambassador Soad Shalaby³³⁸ criticized the “unwillingness” of Mubarak’s regime neither to control nor to terminate the sectarian tension and Muslim fundamentalist attacks against Christians nor to bring to an end the Christian question in Egypt. While from her end, Laure Guirguis (2017) described the regime position towards this sensitive issue “leaders want to avoid the worst situations and preserve order while maintaining status quo. To this end they simply ensure that excessive violence is carefully managed...they avoid an explosion but also avoid a potentially dangerous attempt at defusing the issue”.

As a result, the use of the Coptic question in Egypt was an essential tactic implemented by Mubarak to maintain his power and sustain his regime. From one hand, as in Syria, Mubarak also used the threat represented by political Islam in order to control and get the support of the Christian minority. But on the other, the regime did not take serious action to end or minimize discrimination and harassment against Christians at least at social level in order to satisfy radical (and militant) Sunni Islam. “The emergence of the Islamic movement was more powerful than President Hosny Mubarak himself and his regime...state security started using the question of Copts in order to justify their authority” Mustapha Kamel al-Sayyid stated in an interview with Jeida Deeb (2015). In fact, Mubarak used the Coptic question in his political maneuvers with Islamists, a high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman³³⁹ claimed. He³⁴⁰ added that in order to manipulate and control Muslim Brotherhood, Muslim fundamentalists, and Salafi, Mubarak’s regime did not fail to position several Islamist fractions in direct confrontation with Copts. Consequently, during peacetime or tension between Islamists and the state, Copts were stuck between either state discrimination or Islamists attacks, Dr. George Fahmi³⁴¹ the researcher in Carnegie Endowment and one of the most leading researchers on Coptic issue explained. He³⁴² analyzed how Mubarak used the positioning tactics to sustain his power from one hand and satisfy “furious” Islamists from the other. In this regard, Mubarak managed neither to contain political Islam nor to minimize harassment and

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in January 2017

³³⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

discrimination against Christians. In fact, Islamists continued to pressure the regime and exercise social harassment and discrimination against Christians.

In order for Mubarak to contain the international pressure, to minimize discrimination and harassment against Christians and to ensure the support of the Christian community, he ensured an entente with all churches and mainly the Coptic one as described by Tadroz, Mariz (2009) and Dina Khawaga³⁴³ throughout the interview. The deal or entente consisted of church support and obedience to the regime in return for protection. According to Amr Hamzawi³⁴⁴, Mubarak revived the deal that was made between Nasser and the Church in which Nasser deals with the state while the Church support the regime and deals with Copts social needs. Hamzawi³⁴⁵ added that Mubarak was not in favor of any Christian opposition to his regime, that's why he resorted to revive the "entente" that was abolished by Sadat. A current ambassador³⁴⁶ clearly reflected the entente articles "the deal or entente between Mubarak and Pope Shenouda was clear and based on a guarantee from the regime to protect Christians from radical Islamists such as the Salafi movement, Islamic Jihad and Al Jamat al Islamiya in return the Pope will be 1) responsible towards Copts, 2) support and does not oppose Mubarak's regime and 3) control the Coptic lobby in the United States". As a result of the entente, Copts were isolated from political participation. The Church controlled them since it was the main social care provider, Passant Salama³⁴⁷ analyzed.

Finally, the pro-regime civilian gang (known in Arabic Egyptian as *Baltajiya*) was another technique used by Mubarak's regime to control and get the support of Christians. From time to time and in order to tighten his hand over Islamists and Christians, those *Baltajiya* used to burn Churches and exercise sudden attacks on Christian neighborhood and properties, Ambassador Souad Shalaby³⁴⁸ recalled in her accusation of the regime security forces. In favor of this argument, Mostapha Kamel al-Sayyid in an interview with Jaida Deeb (2015) explained how the regime indirectly protected those *Baltajiya* "there was impunity of the people who attacked Copt. Normally, for example, people who burnt churches were faced with passivity from the security forces as no interrogation took place, no importance was given to the case thus no one got punished in the end". Finally, a

³⁴³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

³⁴⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

³⁴⁷ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

³⁴⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in January 2017

famous Businessman and Politician³⁴⁹ who accused the regime of smartly and indirectly position both Christians and Islamists in front of each other regarding sensitive matters portrayed the third mean of politicization against Christians. By interfering with its intelligence forces, NDP, religious institutions, governorates, and member of parliaments to mediate and calm down the situation between Islamists and Christians, the regime was seen as a “necessity” for the stability of Egypt and protection of Christians.

On another hand, what have been revealed by many interviewees about the undeclared or “under the table” alliance between some Islamists fractions mainly Salafis and the regime, could also help us understand how Mubarak used political Islam to use the Christian minority. For that reason, George Ishak³⁵⁰ openly criticized the regime of empowering Salafis and radical groups at the expense of the liberals in order to tighten its control over the state and control Christians. While Dina Khawaga³⁵¹ did not fail to point out on the undeclared arrangement made between the state and the Salafi movement. This arrangement consisted of the indirect Salafi support for the state, in return for less control over their religious practices and actions. In this context, both a high-ranking Coptic Orthodox clergyman³⁵² and a political advisor³⁵³ emphasized on the “no opposition and obedience to the current ruler” *fatwas* that were released from Salafi Sheikhs as part of the arrangement made between the state and Salafis. Therefore, Mubarak successfully used Salafis to keep Christians under his wing and counterbalance the political power of Muslim Brotherhood.

- **The combination of factors in Syria**

Unlike the social composition of Egypt, Syria’s social structure is more complex. We have mentioned in the previous sections of this thesis that starting Hafez al-Assad era, the elite in power has a different religious identity (but same ethnic one) in comparison to the majority of the population. When the Baath party took over the power in Syria, a set of secular socialist authoritarian policies was implemented. As a result, Islamists started to exercise some pressures against the established Baath regime. However, the intensity of the Islamic challenge to the regime was intensified when al-Assad reached power. Unlike

³⁴⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

³⁵⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

³⁵³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

Sadat, al-Assad did not initiate any liberation policies to the political, social or economic system. In fact, he strengthened his authoritarian regime, which allowed him to repress all his political opponents including Islamists. As explained before, al-Assad has managed to eradicate by force militant and political Islam. But at the same time he initiated what is known as the coalition of groups that included not only minorities but also the Sunni majority. Unlike Egypt, the demographic structure in Syria along with the religious minority background of al-Assad did not allow the regime of Hafez al-Assad to co-opt or adopt the Islamists agenda, since adopting the Islamists Sunni agenda would have meant not only the end of secularization and Arab nationalism ideology of the Baath party, after all that is what Sadat did with Nasser's heritage, but above all the empowerment of the majority of the population (Sunnis) in the face of the minority in power.

Despite that al-Assad depended heavily on the Alawite community to sustain his regime, as we have argued, he used the coalition of groups in order to legitimize his rule. It is with no doubt that al-Assad resorted to his sect in order to protect the regime and ensure full control over the state (even though the Sunni majority and other sects and groups were represented in the state). For Jaber Zuayyin³⁵⁴, son of the previous Prime Minister (from September till December 1965) Yussef Zuayyin a board member of the Baath party Regional Command who was imprisoned by Hafez al-Assad during the corrective movement in 1970, al-Assad established his regime by depending on loyal Alawite officers whom their army or intelligent units were perfectly trained and possessed heavy weapons. In his turn, Gen. Wadih Moqaabari³⁵⁵ explained that al-Assad full dependency on his sect, tribe, and family was under "raison d'être" reasons. While Ghassan Zakaria³⁵⁶ went further by describing al-Assad trusted group as not only Alawites and member of Baath party but also those who were considered as "Assadi"³⁵⁷.

But later, Hafez al-Assad successfully promoted his regime as a protector of minorities and Sunnis through a "coalition of groups" that includes minorities and groups of the (loyal) Sunni majority. According to most Syrian interviewees, al-Assad feared and used political Islam to fend his existence and legitimized his authoritarian rule. He controlled

³⁵⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

³⁵⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in May 2016

³⁵⁶ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

³⁵⁷ In Arabic language, the letter "i" is added at the end of some noun word, in order to give an identity. For example, someone from Beirut city can refer to himself as Beiruti. In the context of Syria when someone belongs to Baath party he is Baathi.

all minorities and more specifically the Christian minority by using the Sunni radical Islamist threat, both a retired army General³⁵⁸ and a close politician³⁵⁹ to the regime claimed. Hereafter 1970, al-Assad succeeded to detach Sunnis from their historical political domination, while in 1982 he demilitarized them, the retired army General³⁶⁰ explained. Despite their powerless status, he³⁶¹ added, the regime kept on using the potential militant and political Sunni Islam threat as a tool against minorities in general and Christians in particular.

Salam Kawakibi³⁶² added in this context also, that al-Assad cunningly used radical and militant Islam in order to empower his radical authoritarian Baathist approach and strengthen his iron hand over Syria. Within the same context, Nader Jabali³⁶³ did not fail to mention that from one hand al-Assad supported some Islamization signs in the society and expanded Quranic teaching schools, while from the other, he cleverly used the political Islam discourse as a continuous threat to the existence of all minorities. Jabali³⁶⁴ added, al-Assad related the existence, presence, and safety of the Christian minority to his own destiny and survival.

In his part, a former (Christian) senior Civil Servant³⁶⁵ explained the reason behind Christians support for al-Assad regime from a real politic approach when he expressed “there is a decent possibility that Christians did not like neither Hafez al-Assad nor his regime, but the fact that Christians feared political and radical Islam, they had no option other than supporting him”. Finally, it is important to note that almost all Christian interviewees expressed the fear from political and militant Islam.

Based on the above explanation, we can conclude that the relation between the elite-population religious match and the presence of an Islamic challenge can explain why the situation of Christian Arabs deteriorated in both countries and why this deterioration was more intense in Egypt than in Syria. The presence of an Islamic Sunni challenge, which has the same religious and ethnic composition of both the elite in power and the majority, can explain the high level of discrimination against Christians. While in Syria, the presence of an Islamic Sunni challenge that constitute the same religious and ethnic

³⁵⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

³⁵⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

³⁶⁰ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² This interview was conducted by the thesis author in February 2017

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2016

composition of the majority of the population but not the elite in power, can explain the lower level of discrimination against Christians (in comparison to Egypt).

6.4 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the conducted interviews along with the scarce literature available on the reasons behind discrimination against Christians of Syria and Egypt, we can conclude that all the main five hypotheses taken from the available literature were rejected. The historical context of Syria and Egypt along with the nature of the established authoritarian regimes has created an unsteady situation for Christians that varies between direct and indirect discrimination, self-isolation as well as passive integration.

In this regard, we have presented a new interaction hypothesis that is the combination of the elite-population religious match with the existence of an Islamist challenge to the ruling regimes. The new hypothesis gave a clear explanation to the thesis main question about why the level of discrimination varied not only across countries but also across time, and therefore when religion replaces ethnicity as the prime politicized identity.

Chapter 7

The politics of discrimination of Arab Christians

Any human being who believes that the destinies of other human beings depend wholly upon him personally is a petty man, failing to grasp the most elementary facts. Every man is doomed to perish physically. The only way to stay happy while we live is to work, not for ourselves, but for those to come

Mustapha Kamal Atatürk, 1938

Abstract: *in this chapter, we will emphasize more on the interaction between the identity of the population/elite and religious Islamic challenge. We will also shed light on the empirical and theoretical contribution of this thesis. As for the last part of this chapter, it will focus on potential future research.*

7.1 The interaction effect of elite-population identity convergence and the challenge of radical groups

It is with no qualm that the situation of Christians in the Arab region has been under severe challenges and difficulties since the rise of Islam. Their presence under the Islamic rule; mainly the Caliphate, was sustained based on their ability to adapt and mitigate within the parameters of the Islamic jurisprudence from one hand and the personality of the ruler or Caliph from the other.

The situation of Christians in the Arab region started to improve during the Tanzimat period and get intensified with the colonial and to some extent post-colonial eras. Thus, for the first time in their history since the rise of Islam, Christians of the Arab region were not treated as second class citizens or *Dihmmis*. The pro-independence governments sought, to some extent, to build a national identity and reduce the salience of religious one.

After the failure of pan-Arabism of secular dictatorships in the Arab world in general and in Syria and Egypt in particular, the Christian minorities of these countries became subject to another round of discrimination and harassment. The deterioration in the situation of Christians was exercised either from the top level represented by the regime itself or from the mass level represented by Muslim majorities. However, this deterioration of their situation was not at the same degree in all secular regimes.

As we have seen through this thesis discrimination against Christians in Egypt achieved higher levels than in Syria. This comparison, in addition, led to formulate two main

questions: 1) why two similar autocratic regimes have discriminated, and/or politicized differently and at different levels, against their Christian indigenous minorities, and therefore, 2) when and whether ethnic or religious identity matter for autocracies that are generally regarded as secular.

The comparison of these two countries also suggests that a combination of a resurgence of religious fundamentalism, as it is the case of radical Islamism, with a combination of an authoritarian context, as suggested by some scholars (Fox 2013) cannot be the whole answer. There must be something else that explains why the deterioration of the situation of the indigenous Christian population was actually higher in Egypt than in Syria (at least until the beginning of the Syrian Civil War) when the first country was less autocratic according to standard ways of measuring the degree of authoritarianism, and the foundation of its regime had been based on Arab nationalism as in the case of Syria.

In this thesis, we have concluded that the answer to these questions consists to a large extent in the combination of a specific ethno-religious match between the elite in power and the majority of the population with an increasing radical Islamist threat for the existence of the regimes. When the majority of the population and the elite in power share their religious identity that is politicized by the emergence of a radical Islamist group that challenges the existence of the regime (as in the case of Egypt under Sadat and Mubarak), the regime reacts by intensifying the discrimination of their religious minority as a way to buy the support or acquiescence of the majority of the population. But if the population and the elite do not share the same religious identity (and in Syria under the al-Assad family), or if they do, but there is no important Islamist challenge (as in Egypt under Nasser, or Syria before the al-Assad), the regime does not seek the discrimination of religious minorities in the same degree.

7.2 Empirical contribution: same type of religious minority, different degree of discrimination and treatment

The empirical importance of this research stems from its unique comparative perspective that addresses, to some extent, one of the hottest topics in the Arab region. For many years, the question of minorities in general and religious minorities in particular was considered to be a taboo topic for authoritarian regimes and Islamist thinkers. Therefore,

one cannot but ask why this avoidance by social science researchers to this specific problem of religious discrimination in general and in autocratic regimes of the Arab region in particular.

In the special case of Syria few scholars have addressed the question of discrimination against Christians in general and during al-Assad era in particular. In fact, most available literature on the topic of minorities has focused either on discrimination of Kurds or the rising power of the Alawite minority. Similar to Syria, few authors have addressed the question of the Christian minority in Egypt in comparative terms. Therefore, most of the available literature focuses on the relation between militant and political Islam regarding the status of the Copts there. In addition, most of the written literature addressed the question of Christians in Egypt during the era of Nasser and Sadat, while few have focused on Mubarak years in power. In this regard and to the best of my knowledge, few authors (that I have referred to during this thesis) have addressed in a comparative perspective the relation between the regime and Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt, the two countries where most Christian Arabs live. This study has also added valuable qualitative information retrieved from the conducted interviews with people who were very close to the regimes of both al-Assad and Mubarak.

In this context of addressing the questions of minorities in the Arab region, it is important to point that most reliable available qualitative or quantitative knowledge is produced from outside the region, mainly in the West. Apparently, the nature of Arab regimes has either controlled the flow of knowledge or deviated the content of the produced one to fit their agendas and regimes. With a very limited exception, few available books and articles on Syria, Egypt and the Arab region in general have offered concrete information about the real status of Christians in these countries. Most of the research in this area has been biased either towards the regime or the targeted minority. Therefore, this kind of research has ended up being a point of view rather than academic research.

This research has shaded light on some new aspects of the situation and the current history of Christian minorities in Syria and Egypt. It is with no doubt that the indigenous Christian community in the Arab countries is turning out to be the “red Indians³⁶⁶” of the

³⁶⁶ I mean they are the indigenous group that are discriminated and harassed. In some odd cases similar to the red Indians, they are protected.

region. Due to war and insecurity from one hand and the impact of harassment and discrimination from the other, Christians are facing a critical time. They are stuck amid hard choices divided between migration, forced displacement, harassment, discrimination or even death. In Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Syria, the number of Christians has diminished drastically compared to their Muslim counterparts. Therefore, their exodus is leading with no doubts to severe changes to the demographic and social historical structure of the region. The following words of Laure Guirguis about the Christians in Egypt, can summarize the contemporary history, discrimination and harassment against Christians in the Arab region “the persistence of discrimination against Christians, the closure of the political sphere under the July regime (1952-1970), the development of the Coptic Church, and the attacks against Coptic candidates and the electorate in the 1980s and 1990s contributed to the Copts’ retreat from political life.”

Despite that history cannot deny the fact that Arabs, mainly Muslim Arabs, were almost the only group who welcomed Armenian amid 1915 massacre³⁶⁷. Christians have faced critical times in the Arab region. They were subject to suppression even from the Roman Empire up until Islam and the present days. Christians have managed to adapt and survive all these challenges. But the nature of autocratic regimes and the intensity of wars and insecurity have forced many of Christians to flee towards safer countries in Europe, Canada, Australia and the United States.

However, in this thesis we have discovered that the intensity of discrimination against Christians in the modern history of Egypt have increased across time. In fact, many scholars and interviewees described the monarchy era in Egypt as the “golden era” for Christians. The 1952 coup d’état did not only end the Christians golden era, but rather it opened the door for their harassment and discrimination. From 1952 up till this date, the situation of Christians in Egypt started to deteriorate gradually and deficiently. Christians were stuck between the nature of the established authoritarian regimes and the increase power of militant and political Islam. As a result, Christians in Egypt were forced, for the sake of their survival, to rely on the entente concept that isolated them not only from politics but also from all aspects of social integration. The entente enabled Pope Shenouda

³⁶⁷ According to the executive director of the Armenian National Committee in the Middle East Vera Yacoubian “I can't say this enough; if it wasn't for the Arabs, especially in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, we would not have an Armenian diaspora today”.

to isolate Copts from any political participation or express opposition to Mubarak and his regime. As a result, Christians became imprisoned by the Pope inside the church walls as many Egyptian interviewees described. According to George Ishak³⁶⁸, the 25th January 2012 revolution liberated Christians from their long-term political isolation and servitude. Amr Hamazawi³⁶⁹ noted in this direction that Christians were keen to have a political role and active participation, but due to the deal with Mubarak's regime, the church (and not the state) controlled their political ambition. As a result, he³⁷⁰ added, "Christians became totally isolated from the Egyptian society...they were living on an isolated island". Finally, Dina Khawaga³⁷¹ referred to the exercised Church isolation policy as "auto-minorization" or what I can call it "self- isolation".

Therefore, despite that the entente was considered as a mean for Christian's survival, still it did not reflect clearly and openly their point of view concerning Mubarak's regime. Even though Coptic Churches in all over Egypt used to rang their bells³⁷² as a celebration to Mubarak victory in presidential elections (Tadors, 2009), still Christians were considered to be using the "walking rope" technique for their relation with Mubarak's regime. From one hand the Copts did not want to lose the fragile protection that was given by the regime. While from the other, they were giving up their rights at the expense of their dignity.

But hereafter the Arab Spring, Copts became more isolated and threatened by Islamists who succeeded to take over power in Egypt, Amr Hamzawi proclaimed³⁷³. Despite that Christians openly supported General Abdel Fatah el-Sissi that toppled the Islamist government represented by Muslim Brotherhood in 2014, still the level of harassment, attacks and social discrimination against Copts increased. Many terrorist and social attacks were registered against Copts in all over Egypt in the last two years, resulting to high number of casualties.

Unlike Egypt where the first republic experience had drastic and negative consequences on Christians, the situation in Syria was totally the opposite. Almost all interviewees from

³⁶⁸ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

³⁶⁹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in August 2016

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in March 2017

³⁷² Usually churches bells rang for the mass or inauguration of religious rites (Tadors, 2009)

³⁷³ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in July 2016

Syria pointed out on the active role of Christians in leading and building Syria's first democratic republic. In fact, their situation started to deteriorate when the Baath party took over power as of 1963 and on. Christians' isolation and exclusion from active political role increased significantly during Hafez al-Assad years in power. It is important to note that the nature of the Syrian authoritarian regime has pushed Christians away from any political participation and choose to be self-isolated. Unlike the colonization era and the short democratic experience of the 1940's and 1950's in which Christians were integrated but even shaped the political future of Iraq and Syria (even Lebanon) through the ideologue and founder of Baath Party Mishel Aflaq as well as many other figures (refer to chapter 3 and 4), the years of 1960's and on were totally the opposite.

It is with no doubt that Christians decided to retreat from political participation in return for their safety and protection. During the Baath era in general and al-Assad in particular, Christians of Syria have resorted to a "passive political participation", as it was their case during the Caliphate era. Similar to Egypt, the nature of the autocratic regime along with Islamist pressure on the regime (and not Christians) have forced Christians to enter what is known as a "minorities of groups" coalition that was initiated by al-Assad. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, there is a difference between the coalition of minorities and coalition of groups. In the case of Syria, I have mentioned that it was not a coalition of minorities but rather a coalition of groups. Since the coalition of minorities should by default exclude the majority, while the coalition of groups that was established in Syria, included all groups that have benefited from the Baath regime i.e the Sunni majority and different minorities. Therefore, the main aim of the created coalition for Christians is to ensure their security in return for support or isolation. That's why Christians were always supportive to any regime in Syria and never expressed any sign of opposition to any regime, Sam Dalla³⁷⁴ expressed.

7.3 Theoretical contribution: the politics of discrimination

This comparative research on the situation of Christian Arabs in Egypt and Syria has also sought to make a contribution to the academic literature on the relation between minorities and authoritarian regimes in general, and in the Arab region in particular. As we have

³⁷⁴ This interview was conducted by the thesis author in April 2017

seen in chapter 2, the existing literature about regimes and minorities have focused more extensively on the different answers that minorities give to their discrimination and harassment than on the reasons for their regimes to discriminate or harass in the first place. Implicitly discrimination, harassment, and conflict between “communities” seem the “natural” result when one of them, normally the most populous but not always as in the case of Syria, monopolizes the State apparatus. In this thesis we have argued, on the contrary, that discrimination, harassment and finally conflict is not a “natural” result, but the result of the purposely politicization of “ascriptive identities” of individuals.

We have also argued that the existing literature bypasses this issue by its very often confusing labelling of “ethnoreligious” minorities for all types of minorities. We do not deny the existence of people that possess minoritarian ascriptive features no matter the identity (mainly ethnicity or religion) that is politicized. Christian Armenians or Greeks were a “religious” minority under the Ottoman *caliphate*, and they were still an “ethnic” minority under the Ataturk *Turkish Republic*³⁷⁵. The same can be said about the Rohingya people in Myanmar (ex Burma). They are an Indo-Aryan population and predominantly Muslim (Ibrahim, 2016). But many other people just constitute a “minority” depending of what identity trait is politicized. This means is wrong to consider that we always have, first, the existence of minorities, and later the politicization of their existence, goals and rights. It is clear that the ascriptive identity that is politicized is not the same in a regime that called itself the “United Arab Republic” (the union between Egypt and Syria from 1958 to 1961) than in another called the “Islamic State”. In this respect the general literature, very rich in possible reasons for discrimination of minorities, does not offer a clear answer of why in some cases, but not in others (or not at least in the same degree), one identity mark replaces another as subject of politicization, and therefore why some people stop being part of the “majority” to constitute a “minority” that start suffering discrimination and harassment. We have also seen in Chapter 2 that this is especially important in the case of religion, because religious minorities are in general more discriminated than non-religious ones, not only in cultural issues, but economic and political as well.

³⁷⁵ Still some identity traits can be more relevant than the other for suffering discrimination. When Greece and Turkey exchanged their respective “minorities” after the First World War, the population that spoke Greek but was of Muslim religion could stay in Turkey. Equally the people of Crete that spoke Greek but was Muslim had to leave Greece.

We have seen that if there is a place and a group of people where to study such a phenomenon is the Arab region and their Christians Arabs. Therefore, by addressing the thesis main questions in our comparative study, we have offered an explanation of why in some cases but less in others religion replaces ethnicity as politicized identity. By comparing these two countries as well as their cross-time evolution (from early 1950's until 2011) we have learned that minorities can be used or politicized by authoritarian regimes to fend their existence. The common religious identity of the elite in power with the one of the majority of the population of the country plays a major role in explaining the level of discrimination against Christian minorities when the regime faces a religious radical threat (in this case Islamic) that jeopardize its very existence. If one of these two factors is absent, or both are, then we expect a lower degree of discriminatory practices against Christian Arabs by the state. The thesis focuses on a religious threat to the Egyptian and Syrian regimes, but we would equally expect a politicization of ethnicity by the regime if the opposition group that threatens the existence of the regime was based on ethnic grounds. This thesis therefore underlines an “interaction effect” between the (religious or ethnic) identity of the elite in power with the (religious or ethnic) identity of majority of the population when faced by radical ethnic or religious threat. Therefore, the conclusions of this research let us understand better the political games behind the discrepancy in the level of discrimination against similar minorities residing under similar political regimes, in this case authoritarian ones.

Finally, the study of the politics of discrimination has also let us understand the puzzle of why sometimes some regimes that are less autocratic than others discriminate however more their minorities. The comparison of the cases of Egypt and Syria shows that this happens when a non-democratic regime seeks the support of the majority of the population, reducing among the population the support of the opposition groups, and therefore maintain its ruling even if letting the organization and participation of that opposition, by politicizing and contraposing the majoritarian identity of the population against the minoritarian one. Autocratic regimes that base their ruling in the use of force and repression of the majority of the population can however instead to seek the support of their minorities to reinforce the regime. Therefore, if by democracy we simply understand more or less free and competitive elections, more democracy is not a guarantee for the rights of minorities.

7.4 Empirical lessons of the research: free elections are not enough for ending discrimination of minorities

Finally, it is wise to point out on the social relevance of this study. No one can deny the fact that the 2012 revolution against Bashar al-Assad and his Baath regime in Syria that evolved later to a civil war had colossal consequences on Christians. The words of Lour Vidal (2012) could best describe the existing complications of civil war there “Syria’s revolution displays unique characteristics due to the country’s social composition, the nature of its political, economic and military power and the regional context”. As a result, the civil war was internationalized and it got worse when Islamists started to take over the opposition power and regions.

Similar to most of Syrians, Christians were forced to migrate or to resettle for the sake of security and protection from Islamists and/or civil war. But it is with no doubt that the impact of aggression, attacks and insecurity exercised by Islamists against the Christians of Syria was higher compared to the rest of the population. Many Christians were killed, kidnapped or even harassed by different Islamic groups and precisely from ISIS in Syria and even Iraq. Unofficial terrifying numbers about the decrease of Christians’ presence in Syria were recorded. It is estimated that few thousands are still residing in Syria while the majority and up to 1 million have fled since 2012 (BBC, 2015). On another hand, the wave of ISIS terrorism and attacks against Christians was spread to many Arab countries such as Libya, Lebanon and Egypt.

Within the same framework, it is important to note that after and during the Arab Spring, almost all Arab countries (with few exceptions) are at different stages of inter-conflict conditions. The Arab spring has raised again many core subjects such as the integration question of religious and ethnic minorities into the state system; second, the relation between political regimes and minorities; and third, the relation between Islam and minorities. However, the drastic consequences of what is known as Arab Spring on Christians have led many scholars to describe this era as the “Christian Winter”. In fact, what we have learned throughout this thesis is that the Christian winter did not start in 2011 as they proclaimed. If we look deeper to the status of Christian minorities in the Arab countries, we can confidently say that the “Christian Winter” started years ago. It started with the establishment of authoritarian regimes in this region. In the special case of Syria, Christian winter has started when the Baath party took over the power in the early 1960s. While in Egypt, it started with the establishment of the first republic in 1952.

Finally, the Arab spring has revealed many myths about the existence of solid authoritarian regimes in the Arab region. It clearly showed that the state building process in the Arab region is still under construction. It has started in the early 21st century but has not finished yet. In addition, the Arab spring clearly reflects the need to restructure state formation and state building process in the Arab region. In this context, the unity of almost all the existing states in the mean time in the Arab region is at stake. Many questions pertaining the whole process of not only state building, but also peace building process at state level were raised. What could also be an alarming factor to the sensitivity of these states is the national Arab identity that is fading at the expense of the radical Islamic one. Leading with no doubt to an increase in the level of discrimination against non-Muslim groups.

Lastly, it seems that in highly diversified states, liberty and secularization of the state institutions and societal cultures will be the only efficient mean to end the concept of discrimination especially against religious minorities. Therefore, both liberty and secularization cannot be attained without a respectful development plan and a full implementation of the welfare state system in the Arab region.

In this sense, we hope this thesis will be a guideline for minorities in general and Christian in particular. In order to better understand their future, religious minorities living (or might be living) under authoritarian regimes can consider this thesis as a reference on how to mitigate and adapt for the upcoming threat and discrimination. In fact, knowledge sharing is based on the historical accumulation of research and findings. And by nature, we tend to learn from our past and/or mistakes, therefore reading this thesis will help religious minorities in authoritarian regimes to create a road map that contain or even end their politicization, harassment and discrimination. Taking into consideration that the reasons and forms of discrimination and harassment against religious minorities in general and Christians in particular are present in this thesis. Therefore, avoiding such treatment by authoritarian regimes towards minorities could be a real “hope” or goal for these minorities.

In addition, this study will suit the interest of all organizations and scholars who investigate on the questions of minorities, human rights, rule of law etc. It is with no doubt that this thesis will provide them with all necessary information pertaining causes, forms and patterns of discrimination exercised by authoritarian regimes against religious minorities and especially Christians in Syria and Egypt. It will also help them understand at qualitative level how the concept of politicization of religious minorities was exercised

by authoritarian regimes. In addition, social scientists and policy makers might use this study as a tool to understand the main reasons behind discrimination of minorities. The essential needs for such studies in assessing and enhancing the role of the citizen rather than identity in state building process, hence integrating and accepting diversity within state building approach, will be the core social value for future peaceful coexistence.

7.5 Future research agenda

Finally, as said earlier, the social science literature on the question of minorities in general and minorities in the Arab region in particular is very scarce. It would be comparatively valuable to compare patterns of discrimination against other religious minorities in the Arab region such as Ismaelitis, Twelvers, Bahais, Jews, Yazidis, etc... or ethnic minorities such as Armenian, Turkmen, Persian, Circassian, etc... in any upcoming research. In addition, understanding why the level of economic discrimination exercised by the regimes of al-Assad and Mubarak was low in comparison to other forms of discrimination, stands as a good research topic. It would be also of great interest to compare the status of religious minorities in general and Christian ones in particular who are under different authoritarian regimes such as monarchies.

One valuable aspect of this train of thought is to compare the question of religious and/or ethnic minorities between Arab and non-Arab authoritarian regimes. It is also beneficial to tackle the question of Christian religious minorities in non-Arab authoritarian regimes like in China or India or Iran or Turkey (before the democracy era) or other countries.

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List of annexes

Annex 1: Chapter 2

Variable formation explanation of table 2, 3,4 and 5

A. Political discrimination This variable combines two types of component variables:

The **first** component variable measures a list of specific types of political discrimination on the following scale:

0. The activity is not significantly restricted for any.
1. The activity is slightly restricted for most or all group members or sharply restricted for some of them.
2. The activity is prohibited or sharply restricted for most or all group members.

The results are then added. The specific types of discrimination included in this variable are: restrictions on freedom of expression; restrictions on free movement and place of residence; restrictions on rights in judicial proceedings; restrictions on political organization; restrictions on voting; restrictions on recruitment to the police and military; restrictions on access to the civil service; restrictions on attainment of high office; and “other” types of restrictions.

The **second** component variable measures the extent of government involvement in this discrimination on the following scale:

0. None.
1. Substantial under-representation in political office and/or participation due to historical neglect or restrictions. Explicit public policies are designed to protect or improve the group’s political status.
2. Substantial under-representation due to historical neglect or restrictions. No social practice of deliberate exclusion. No formal exclusion. No evidence of protective or remedial public policies.
3. Substantial under-representation due to prevailing social practice by dominant groups. Formal public policies toward the group are neutral or, if positive, inadequate to offset discriminatory practices.
4. Public policies ~formal exclusion and/or recurring repression! Substantially restrict the group’s political participation by comparison with other groups. ~Note: Discount

repression during group rebellions. What is decisive is patterned repression when the group is not openly resisting state authority.

(For more information about the variable calculation, please refer to Fox J. (2000). Religious Causes of Discrimination against Ethno-Religious Minorities, page 444-445, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3014006?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

B. Economic discrimination variable is composed of two component variables:

The **first** component variable measures the extent of official restrictions on the minority's economic activities on the following scale:

0. None.

1. The group is economically advantaged. Public policies are designed to improve the relative economic position of other groups.

2. Significant poverty and under-representation in desirable occupations due to historical marginality, neglect, or restrictions. Public policies are designed to improve the group's material wellbeing.

3. Significant poverty and under-representation due to historical marginality, neglect, or restrictions. No social practice of deliberate exclusion. Few or no public policies aim at improving the group's material wellbeing.

4. Significant poverty and under-representation due to prevailing social practice by dominant groups. Formal public policies toward the group are neutral or, if positive, inadequate to offset active and widespread discrimination.

5. Public policies (formal exclusion and/or recurring repression) substantially restrict the group's economic opportunities by contrast with other groups.

The **second** component variable measures the absolute level of the minority's poverty from 0 (none) to 3 (very poor).

(For more information about the variable calculation, please refer to Fox J. (2000). Religious Causes of Discrimination against Ethno-Religious Minorities, page 445, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3014006?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

C. Cultural discrimination: This variable measures the restrictions that are placed on the pursuit or expression of the group's cultural interests based on a more specific list of restrictions measured on the following scale:

0. No restrictions;
1. Informal restrictions;
2. The activity is 'somewhat' restricted;
3. The activity is 'sharply' restricted.

These restrictions include: restrictions on observance of group religion; restrictions on speaking and publishing in the group's language or dialect; restrictions on instruction in the group's language; restrictions on celebration of group holidays, ceremonies, cultural events; restrictions on dress, appearance, behavior; restrictions on marriage, family life; restrictions on organizations that promote the group's cultural interests; and other types of restriction. The codings are summed and divided by two, creating an indicator that measures from 0 to 12.

Variable formation explanation of table 3: Mean levels of discrimination against religious minorities in democracies, semi-democracies and autocracies

A. Political discrimination This variable combines two types of component variables:

The **first** component variable measures a list of specific types of political discrimination on the following scale:

0. The activity is not significantly restricted for any.
1. The activity is slightly restricted for most or all group members or sharply restricted for some of them.
2. The activity is prohibited or sharply restricted for most or all group members.

The results are then added. The specific types of discrimination included in this variable are: restrictions on freedom of expression; restrictions on free movement and place of residence; restrictions on rights in judicial proceedings; restrictions on political organization; restrictions on voting; restrictions on recruitment to the police and military; restrictions on access to the civil service; restrictions on attainment of high office; and "other" types of restrictions.

The **second** component variable measures the extent of government involvement in this discrimination on the following scale:

0. None.

1. Substantial under-representation in political office and/or participation due to historical neglect or restrictions. Explicit public policies are designed to protect or improve the group's political status.

2. Substantial under-representation due to historical neglect or restrictions. No social practice of deliberate exclusion. No formal exclusion. No evidence of protective or remedial public policies.

3. Substantial under-representation due to prevailing social practice by dominant groups. Formal public policies toward the group are neutral or, if positive, inadequate to offset discriminatory practices.

4. Public policies ~formal exclusion and/or recurring repression! Substantially restrict the group's political participation by comparison with other groups. ~Note: Discount repression during group rebellions. What is decisive is patterned repression when the group is not openly resisting state authority.

(For more information about the variable calculation, please refer to Fox J. (2000). Religious Causes of Discrimination against Ethno-Religious Minorities, page 444-445, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3014006?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

B. Economic discrimination variable is composed of two component variables:

The **first** component variable measures the extent of official restrictions on the minority's economic activities on the following scale:

0. None.

1. The group is economically advantaged. Public policies are designed to improve the relative economic position of other groups.

2. Significant poverty and under-representation in desirable occupations due to historical marginality, neglect, or restrictions. Public policies are designed to improve the group's material wellbeing.

3. Significant poverty and under-representation due to historical marginality, neglect, or restrictions. No social practice of deliberate exclusion. Few or no public policies aim at improving the group's material wellbeing.

4. Significant poverty and under-representation due to prevailing social practice by dominant groups. Formal public policies toward the group are neutral or, if positive, inadequate to offset active and widespread discrimination.

5. Public policies (formal exclusion and/or recurring repression) substantially restrict the group's economic opportunities by contrast with other groups.

The **second** component variable measures the absolute level of the minority's poverty from 0 (none) to 3 (very poor).

(For more information about the variable calculation, please refer to Fox J. (2000). Religious Causes of Discrimination against Ethno-Religious Minorities, page 445, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3014006?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

C. Cultural discrimination: This variable measures the restrictions that are placed on the pursuit or expression of the group's cultural interests based on a more specific list of restrictions measured on the following scale:

0. No restrictions;

1. Informal restrictions;

2. The activity is 'somewhat' restricted;

3. The activity is 'sharply' restricted.

These restrictions include: restrictions on observance of group religion; restrictions on speaking and publishing in the group's language or dialect; restrictions on instruction in the group's language; restrictions on celebration of group holidays, ceremonies, cultural events; restrictions on dress, appearance, behavior; restrictions on marriage, family life; restrictions on organizations that promote the group's cultural interests; and other types of restriction. The codings are summed and divided by two, creating an indicator that measures from 0 to 12.

These three dimensions are combined to form the **nonreligious discrimination** variable.

D. Religious discrimination variable is a composite variable created from two component variables:

The **first** component variable measures a summed list of more specific types of religious discrimination measured on the same scale as the specific types of political discrimination. These restrictions include: restrictions on public observance of religious services, festivals, and/or holidays; restrictions on building, repairing, and/or maintaining places of worship; forced observance of religious laws of other group; restrictions on formal religious organizations; restrictions on the running of religious schools and/or religious education in general; restrictions on the observance of religious laws concerning personal status, including marriage and divorce; restrictions on the ordination of and/or access to clergy; restrictions on other types of observance of religious law.

The **second** component variable measures state involvement in religious discrimination on the following scale:

0. None.

1. Substantial religious discrimination in society due to general prejudice in society. Explicit public policies protect and/or improve the position of the group's ability to practice its religion.

2. Substantial religious discrimination in society due to general prejudice in society. Public policies are neutral, or, if positive, inadequate to offset discriminatory practices.

3. Public policies of formal restrictions on religious observance. Religious activities are somewhat restricted by public policy. This includes religions that are tolerated but given a formal second-class status. (Example: Christian sects in many Muslim states).

4. Public policies of formal restrictions on religious observance. Religious activity is sharply restricted or banned. (Example: Bahais in Iran).

(For more information about the variable calculation, please refer to Fox J. (2000). Religious Causes of Discrimination against Ethno-Religious Minorities, page 444-445, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3014006?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

E. Repression: This variable is a composite variable combining 23 individual measures of repression. Each one is measured on the following scale and the resulting codes are added:

0. tactic not used;
1. tactic used against group members engaged in collective action;
2. tactic used against group members in ambiguous situations;
3. tactic used against group members not engaged in collective action.

The categories so coded are: small scale arrests of group members (rep01); large scale arrests of group members (rep02); the arrest of group leaders (rep03); show trials of group leaders (rep04); torture of group members (rep05); execution of group members (rep06); execution of group leaders (rep07); reprisal killings of civilians (rep08); killings by death squads (rep09); property confiscated or destroyed (rep10); restrictions on movement (rep11); forced resettlement (rep12); interdiction of food supplies (rep13); ethnic cleansing (rep14); systematic domestic spying (rep15); states of emergency (rep16); saturation of police/military (rep17); limited use of force against protestors (rep18); and unrestrained use of force against protestors (rep19); military campaigns against armed rebels (rep20); military targets and destroys rebel areas (rep21); military massacres of suspected rebel supporters (rep22); and other government repression (rep23).

Annex 2: Chapter 4

A- Information regarding Figure 1 and 2 (page 3)

Polity IV explanatory notes (<http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>)

Regime POLITY scores are generally plotted over time using a **SOLID BLUE LINE** (note that the Polity scores are plotted for January 1 of the target year rather than December 31 as they are recorded in the Polity IV data series; e.g., the value recorded for a regime on December 31, 2005 is plotted for the year 2006 on the graph). As our research shows that periods of "factionalism" are particularly problematic for the durability of established regime authority patterns, we plot these special periods of "factionalism" with a **SOLID RED LINE**.

Special Polity IV change events are marked with capital letters at the (initial) point of change in the Polity Trend Graph such as **Autocratic Backsliding Events** are denoted by a BOLD BLACK "X" and **Coup d'état Events** are denoted by a BOLD BLACK "C".

B- Information regarding Table 3 and 4 (page 5-6)

Regime classification variables explanation in the following database codebook:

- **Authoritarian Regime Dataset (ARD)**³⁷⁶

Military: The actual or threatened use of military force, referring to Military regimes, where the armed forces may exercise political power either directly or indirectly (i.e., by controlling civilian leaders behind the scenes). Regimes where persons of military background are chosen in open elections (which have not been controlled by the military) thus should not count as military. "Rebel regimes" form a special subcategory. They include cases where a rebel movement (one not formed out of the regular armed forces) has taken power by military means, and the regime has not as yet been reconstituted as another kind of regime.

One Party: One-Party Regimes, all parties but one is forbidden (formally or de facto) from taking part in elections. A small number of non-party candidates may

³⁷⁶ For more information about variable calculation please refer to the database code book page 6 available at <https://sites.google.com/site/authoritarianregimedata/data>

also be allowed to take part and get elected; there may be satellite parties which are autonomous in name, but which cannot take an independent position; and competition between candidates from the same (ruling) party may also obtain; we still code the regime one-party. It is not enough, moreover, that a regime calls itself a one-party state; elections in such a structure must also be held.

Multiparty: Limited Multiparty regimes as regimes that hold parliamentary or presidential elections in which (at least some) candidates are able to participate who are independent of the ruling regime. This classification holds even when opposition parties refrain voluntarily from taking part in elections. It also embraces cases where parties are absent, but where this is not the result of any prohibition against party activities: the candidates in question have simply chosen to stand for election as individuals. These latter we classify as Party-Less limited multiparty systems. Finally, we have a residual category called others, including a few cases that do not fit under any other regime type, given the definitions applied.

- **Autocratic Regime Code Book³⁷⁷ (ARCB)**

Party: Binary indicator of party regime type (groups party-based, party-personal, party-military, party-personal-military, oligarchy, and Iran 1979-2010)

Personal: Binary indicator of personalist regime type

Military: Binary indicator of military regime type (groups military, military-personal, indirect military)

Monarchy: Binary indicator of monarchy regime type

Indirect military: Competitive elections are held to choose the government, but the military either prevents one or more parties that substantial numbers of citizens would be expected to vote for from competing, or dictates policy choice in important policy areas (e.g., basic economic strategy or foreign policy in the Middle East). We label such regimes indirect military rule.

³⁷⁷ For more information about variable calculation please refer to the database code book page 15 available at <http://sites.psu.edu/dictators/>

- **Democracy-Dictatorship Data (DD)**³⁷⁸

Royal: if the effective head of is hereditary royalty. To qualify as royal the effective head must meet 2 qualifications: 1) rule under a title such as kings, emirs, sultans and 2) have been preceded or succeeded by a relative.

Military: if the nominal head is or ever was a member of the military by profession. Note that retired members of the military are included here since the shedding of a uniform is not necessarily enough to indicate the civilian character of a leader. Also note that head of military guerilla who succeed to take power are not considered military.

Civilian: according to Cheibub et al. all non military dictators are considered to be civilian and are coded accordingly.

C- Information regarding table 6 and 7

Secularization and/or state separation variables explanation in the following database codebook:

- **ARDA - Religion Indexes, Adherent and other data**³⁷⁹

Governmental intervention - Variable referred to in ARDA as **VINTF08** and in table 6 as **Gov. Int.**

Did the government interfere with an individual's right to worship? (2008)

RANGE: 0 to 2 (0 being no – 2 being severe interference)

Freedom of religion - Variable referred to in ARDA as **FREEIR08** and table 6 as **FreeRel**

The explanation of this variable is based on U.S. Department of State's International Religious Freedom (IRF) that is referred to as the “Law/Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the government generally respects this right in practice”.

RANGE: 0 to 3 (0 exist – 3 does not exist)

³⁷⁸ For more information about variable calculation please refer to the database code book available at <https://sites.google.com/site/joseantoniocheibub/datasets/democracy-and-dictatorship-revisited>

³⁷⁹ For more information about variable calculation please refer to the database code book available at http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/INTL2008_CB.asp

Religious freedom- Variable referred to in ARDA as **RFFH2007** and table 6 as **RelFree**
The definition of this variable is found in “Religious Freedom in the World” Book (2007) edited by Paul Marshall

RANGE: 1 to 7. Religious Freedom Scale, lower score indicates higher level of freedom (Marshall 2007)

Religion and state separation - Variable referred to in ARDA as **RSSCORE** and table 6 as **StaRel Sep**

RANGE: 0 to 77.557 (lower means less interaction and greater separation of religion and state)

Laws influenced by religion - Variable referred to in ARDA as **RSLEGIS** and table 6 as **LawRel**

RANGE: 0 to 3 (0 no – 3 yes)

Religious discrimination toward minorities - Variable referred to in ARDA as **RSDISCR** and table 6 as **RelDis**

RANGE: 0 to 38. Religious discrimination toward minorities, 2002 (0-48, lower is less discrimination) (Religion and State Project)

State respect to freedom of religion - Variable referred to in ARDA as **RSDISCR** and table 6 as **StaRes**

RANGE: 0 to 2 (0 yes – 2 no)

- **Association for Religion Data Archives (ARDA) – National profiles**³⁸⁰

Government Regulation of Religion Index (GRI): 0-10, lower means less regulation

Government Favoritism of Religion Index (GFI): 0-10, lower means less favoritism

Social Regulation of Religion Index (SRI): 0-10, lower means less regulation

Religious Persecution (RP): Religious Persecution: Average number of people physically abused or displaced due to their religion according to U.S. Department of

³⁸⁰ For more information about variable calculation please refer to the database code book for Egypt http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_73_3.asp#S_1 and Syria http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_217_3.asp

State's 2005 and 2008 International Religious Freedom Reports (as coded by ARDA researchers). 0 = None; 1 = 1-10; 2 = 11-20; 3 = 21-100; 4 = 101-500; 5 = 501-1000; 6 = 1001-5000; 7 = 5001-10000; 8 = 10001-50000; 9 = 50001-100000; 10 = greater than 100000.

D- Information regarding Tables 10 to 19

- **Minority at Risk (MAR) Project**³⁸¹

Description of discrimination variables in the following database codebook:

Political discrimination Index - Variable referred to in MAR as POLDIS and in tables 10 and 11 as table **Pol.** RANGE: 0 to 4 (0 being no discrimination – 4 being Exclusion/repressive policy)

Economic discrimination Index - Variable referred to in MAR as ECDIS and in the above as table **ECO.** RANGE: 0 to 4 (0 being no discrimination – 4 being Exclusion/repressive policy)

Restrictions on religion - Variable referred to in MAR as CULPO1 and in the above as table **Rel.** RANGE: 0 to 3 (0 being no restrictions – 3 sharply restricted)

Restrictions on use of language or language instruction - Variable referred to in MAR as CULPO2 and in the above as table **Cul.** RANGE: 0 to 3 (0 being no restrictions – 3 sharply restricted)

Group representation in legislative branch of central government - Variable referred to in MAR as LEGISREP and in the above as table **Leg.** 0 to 1 (0 no – 1 yes)

Group representation in executive branch of central government - Variable referred to in MAR as EXECREP and in the above as table **Exe.** 0 to 1 (0 no – 1 yes)

Presence of inter communal conflict - Variable referred to in MAR as INTERCON and in the above as table **Inter conf.** 0 to 1 (0 no – 1 yes)

³⁸¹ For more information about the qualitative description for the Copts of Egypt (MAR code 65101) is found here <http://www.mar.umd.edu/assessment.asp?groupId=65101> and Chronological description <http://www.mar.umd.edu/chronology.asp?groupId=65101> For MAR codebook please refer to http://www.mar.umd.edu/data/mar_codebook_Feb09.pdf

Level of conflict - Variable referred to in MAR as CCGROUP1SEV and in the above as table **Conf lev.** RANGE: 0 to 5 (0 no conflict – 6 Communal warfare)

- **Ethnic Power Relations (EPR)**³⁸²

Access to power coding:

EPR focuses only on executive-level power, that is, representation in the presidency, cabinet, and senior posts in the administration, including the army. The weight given to these institutions depends on the de facto power constellations of the country in question. Experts focused on the most relevant dimension (e.g., in a military dictatorship, power over the army; in presidential systems, the senior cabinet). We were primarily interested in major power shifts, rather than day- to-day reorganizations of cabinets or the promotion of officers in the army. In all cases, coders focused on absolute access to power irrespective of the question of under- or overrepresentation relative to the demographic size of an ethnic category.

We categorized all politically relevant ethnic groups according to the degree of access to central state power by those who claimed to represent them. Some held full control of the executive branch with no meaningful participation by members of any other group, some shared power with members of other groups, and some were excluded altogether from decision-making authority. Within each of these three categories, coders differentiated between further subtypes, including absolute power, power sharing regimes, and exclusion from central power.

ABSOLUTE POWER: in this case, the political elites who claim to represent an ethnic group do not significantly share power with other political leaders. There are two possibilities, monopoly and dominant.

Monopoly: Elite members hold monopoly power in the executive-level at the exclusion of members of other ethnic groups. The Ladino community in Guatemala is a good example. They ruled without any significant participation from the indigenous population until the end of the civil war.

³⁸² For more information please refer to <http://www.epr.ucla.edu>

Dominant: Elite members of the group hold dominant power in the executive-level but there is some limited inclusion of members of other groups. This includes token members of the cabinet coming from other ethnic groups, such as Saddam Hussein's minister of foreign affairs, who was Christian rather than Sunni Arab. Token members do not effectively act as representatives of the nondominant group, nor do they advocate for policies that would correspond to demands voiced by other leaders of the nondominant group.

POWER SHARING REGIMES: by power sharing, they mean any arrangement that divides executive power among leaders who claim to represent particular ethnic groups. Such an arrangement can be either formal, as in Lebanon, or informal, as in Switzerland. Although consociationalism illustrates this type of governance, we do not limit it to this category. The representatives of an ethnic category can play one of two roles in a coalition, either senior or junior partner.

Senior partner: Representatives participate as senior partners in a formal or informal power sharing arrangement

*Junior partner: Representatives participate as junior partners in government*³⁸³

EXCLUSION FROM CENTRAL POWER: when political leaders who claim to represent a particular ethnic category are excluded from participation in central government, we distinguish between those with local autonomy and those who are powerless or discriminated against.

Regional autonomy: Elite members of the group have no central power but have some influence at the subnational level (i.e., the provincial or district level, depending on the vertical organization of the state)³⁸⁴. Georgians under Soviet rule are an example. Local governments controlled by representatives of an ethnic category who have declared their territory independent from central government,

³⁸³ The choice between senior and junior depends on the number and relative importance of the positions controlled by group members. For example, in ethnic party systems such as that of Malaysia, the Malay governing party is the senior partner, while the Chinese party is a junior partner. Even in countries without ethnic party systems, such as Switzerland, it is possible to identify the Swiss Germans as the senior partner and the French and Italian speakers as the junior ones, based on the informally fixed distribution of cabinet seats along ethnolinguistic lines.

³⁸⁴ We do not consider local power below this level. By influence, we mean that group members have a leading position or are coalition partners in a regional government (where such governments exist); or that they participate significantly in the executive branch on the regional level (e.g., where regional governors are appointed by the central government); or there are ethnic quotas in the regional or local administration (such as in India or the FSU).

such as Abkhazians in independent Georgia, are a special case. We mark such situations with an additional coding, “secessionist autonomy.”³⁸⁵

Powerless: Elite representatives hold no political power at the national or regional levels without being explicitly discriminated against.

Discriminated: Group members are subjected to active, intentional, and targeted discrimination with the intent of excluding them from both regional and national power. Examples include African Americans until the civil rights movement and Guatemaltecan Indians until the end of the civil war. Such active discrimination can be either formal or informal. Formal discrimination legally limits access to government positions to citizens who speak a certain mother tongue, display certain phenotypical features, or are members of certain religious groups. Informal discrimination actively and intentionally inhibits individuals with certain ethnic backgrounds from rising within the ranks of government³⁸⁶.

- **Religion and State Project (RAS)**³⁸⁷

Religious discrimination variable³⁸⁸: RANGE: 0 to 38 (Higher scores include higher level of religious discrimination).

- **Global Restriction on Religion Data (GRRD)** ³⁸⁹

Religious freedom index- Variable referred to in GRRD as GRI_Q_1 and in table 16 as **Rel. free**.

RANGE: from 0 to 1 (0 being yes and 1 being no)

Aggression against Christians - Variable referred to in GRRD as GRIQ11CH and in table 16 **Agg. Chri**.

Was there harassment or intimidation of Christians by any level of government?

³⁸⁵ We code local autonomy exclusively for politically relevant groups. We therefore do not consider ethnic communities whose representatives control municipal governments because of a high local population share but never appear in a regional or national political arena (e.g., Albanian speakers in Italy). We exclude such groups from the data and consider them politically irrelevant

³⁸⁶ We do not include in this category (1) groups suffering from indirect discrimination because they are disadvantaged in the economic sphere or the educational sector and thus are unlikely to successfully compete in the political arena; (2) general social discrimination (e.g., on the labor and marriage markets); and (3) the exclusion of noncitizens from power, as long as they hold passports of other states and can effectively return to their country of origin. This notion of discrimination does not rely on representation compared with population size. A large group may be underrepresented in government without being actively and intentionally discriminated against

³⁸⁷ For more information please refer to <http://www.thearda.com/archive/files/descriptions/RAS2012.asp>

³⁸⁸ Please refer to the end of RAS codebook available on this link

http://www.thearda.com/download/download.aspx?file=Religion%20and%20State--Minorities%20cb_data.TXT

³⁸⁹ For more information please refer to http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/GRELREST_CB.asp

RANGE: 0 and 1 (0 being yes - 1 being no)

Governmental intervention - Variable referred to in GRRD as GRI_Q_13 and in table 16 as **Gov. Int.**

When the national government did not intervene in cases of discrimination or abuses against religious groups

RANGE: 0 and 1 (0 being yes - 1 being no)

Constitution favoritism for special religion - Variable referred to in GRRD as GRIQ201 and table 16 as

Does the country's constitution or basic law recognize a favored religion or religions?

Cons. Fav. RANGE: 0 and 1 (0 being yes - 1 being no)

Religious education – Variable referred to in GRRD as GRIQ204 and table 16 **Rel. Edu.**

Is religious education required in public schools?

RANGE: from 0 to 1 (0 being yes and 1 being no)

Apostasy - Variable referred to in GRRD as GRX22AP and in table 16 as **Apo.**

RANGE: from 0 to 1 (0 being yes and 1 being no)

According to PEW Research center that produces GRRD, apostasy is the act of abandoning one's faith — including by converting to another religion.

Hate speech - Variable referred to in GRRD as GRX22HS and in Table 16 as **Hat.**

Does any level of government penalize hate speech?

RANGE: 0 and 1 (0 being yes - 1 being no)

