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The Salafist Da'wa in Alexandria: Between Sheikhism and Party Politics

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NAWAT (North Africa and West Asia in Transformation)

Many countries in the NAWA region underwent fundamental transformations following the so-called "Arab Spring" in 2011. The first phase of NAWAT coincided with this watershed and it subsequently operated in a regional context that ranged from peaceful steps towards democratic change to extremely violent conflicts. In this volatile context, NAWAT maintained that the polarization occurring at the intersection of religion and politics is a common obstacle to peaceful transitions in the region. This is because disputes around religious and secular worldviews in politics as well as religious-secular or religious-religious polarizations increased with the establishment and growth of new political movements.

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I. Introduction

The Salafist *daʿwa* (predication movement) in Alexandria – sometimes translated as Salafi Call Society – together with the party that has emanated from it, the Al-Nour Party, is considered the outstanding political force within the Salafist currents after the revolution of January 25, 2011. At first, it had rejected the invitation to participate in the demonstrations of January 25, and its sheikhs had issued fatwas (formal legal opinions) in favour of boycotting them. After the revolution, a gradual rapprochement between the daʿwa and the Muslim Brotherhood occurred, as Salafist sheikhs announced that the Muslim Brothers were the closest to them in any upcoming election. They considered them the worthiest and the most knowledgeable in politics. Subsequently, the Salafist *daʿwa* decided to found a party of its own. The Al-Nour Party (Party of The Light) emerged as a major competitor to the Freedom and Justice Party that had come out of the Muslim Brotherhood. The alliance it formed with other Salafist and Islamist parties won about a quarter of the seats in the People's Assembly in the first elections after the revolution. In the political discourse of party activists, not in the daʿwa though, a marked development toward moderation and rapprochement with the other, non-Islamist forces could be observed.

This paper aims to study this transformation of the Salafist daʿwa's position from the rejection of political activities to political participation and the realization of unexpected results in the elections. Besides, it tries to give an outlook on the future of the Salafist daʿwa's political activity. To reach this aim, the study relies methodologically on an observation of the discourse and behaviour of sheikhs and activists of the Al-Nour Party in the period stretching from January 25, 2011 until the party's entry into parliament. It relies on various sources for data and information collection; most importantly, personal interviews with a number of sheikhs, party leaders and activists. Moreover, published press interviews with party leaders and parliamentary deputies; different forms of media coverage; as well as the books, studies, and declarations that were published by party and daʿwa. Undoubtedly, the paper's topic requires a brief historical presentation of the Islamic Group (*Djama Islamiya*) in the 1970s, to follow the emergence and development of the Salafist daʿwa and its relation to the other groups and parties with an Islamist reference. The topic demands some attention to the intellectual side of the Salafist daʿwa and the ideological dimension of the Al-Nour Party as well. This would help to understand the main actors' views of political work and its relation to daʿwa (missionary) work, and to what extent these positions have changed after the revolution. We will also examine the rationale for creating a political party, discuss the sheikhs' position and role in its political activity, and study the evolution of the Al-Nour Party's political performance. The study concludes with an analysis of the implications of the Salafists' political participation and an outlook on its future.

II. The Salafist Daʿwa: Thinking, Emergence, and Organization

This section focuses on the roots of Islamist student activism in the 1970s, the appearance of the Islamic Group, and the formation of the Salafist daʿwa in terms of thinking and organization.

1. The Beginnings of Islamist Work in the 1970s: The Islamic Group

The political and economic situation in Egypt in the 1970s compelled President Anwar Sadat's to open the door to action for the Islamist daʿwa. Facing a legitimacy crisis for his new regime, Sadat did not possess the charismatic personality that Abdel Nasser had enjoyed. He also faced fierce opposition from Nasserists and leftists and was challenged by the rising role of the church and its attempts to expand its influence. Therefore, Sadat wanted to bring about a certain degree of balance among the

forces opposing him. He used a religious base to legitimize his rule. In 1971, he introduced an expression into the constitution that defined the principles of the shariʿa as one of the sources of legislation. He also worked toward a rapprochement with Al-Azhar, the official Islamic institution. More importantly, Sadat released many Islamist detainees, especially from the Muslim Brothers, and allowed them to work freely in social services and especially in the universities. This confronted the Islamists with their Nasserist and nationalist rivals. The Islamists plunged into elections for student unions, and within a few years, they were able to pull the rug from under the Nasserists and nationalists, until ʿAbd al-Munʿim Abu al-Futuh, one of the sons of what was at the time known as the Islamic Group (Al-Jamaʿa al-Islamiyya), became the head of the General Egyptian Student Union.[1]

The official activity of the university youth, characterised by observance of religious behaviour and the insistence on the veil (hijab), as a part of general student activities in the schools, was known as "Religious Awareness Committee" and "Religious Family" in the 1970s, then "Religious Group" and "Religious Association," then "Islamic Group." The expression "Islamic Group" represented, as Kamal Habib writes, "the general umbrella for Islamist activity within the university."[2] Of course, there were other factors and preludes that prepared the rise of the Islamist current, among them the thinking of Sayyid Qutb, the writings of Abu al-Aʿla al-Mawdudi, the effects of the 1967 defeat, and others.[3]

Despite this, the Islamic Group did not develop into a new Islamist movement. It was dispersed quickly after its student leadership in some faculties of Cairo University joined the Muslim Brothers movement. They extended it, forming the second rank on the shoulders of which this movement was revived, while other leaders in the universities of Upper Egypt preferred to form new organizations with different names such as "Islamic Group," "Al-Jihad," "Islamic Liberation," "Takfir wal-Hijra" (Excommunication and Exodus), and others. Many of them entered into armed conflict with the Sadat regime after his rapprochement with the West, the hastily adopted economic policies of infitah (opening up), and his reconciliation with the Israelis. Their conflict with the authorities persisted until 1997.[4] At the same time, many preachers in Alexandria chose a new trajectory that was called the "Salafist daʿwa." It was a part of what would become known as the Salafist current.

2. The Salafist Current

It could be important to point out here that the "Salafist current" or what some call the "Salafist entity" includes – apart from the Salafist daʿwa in Alexandria, the topic of this paper that we will discuss in detail – several orientations and associations with an origin in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). According to their followers, they all belong to this current, despite their disagreement on some issues.[5] Among these associations is "Al-Jamʿiyya al-Sharʿiyya li-Taʿawun al-ʿAmilin bi-l-Kitab wa-l-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya" (Legal Association for the Cooperation of Adherents of the Book and the Mohammedan Sunna). Its statutes include the principle of not interfering into "political affairs, which is the ruler's competence," and a warning against any contact with non-believing foreigners and foreign missions. Its semi-official magazines however, first "Adherence" (Al-Iʿtisam) and later "Demonstration" (Al-Tibyan), persisted in publishing political pieces that criticized the political and economic situation, without offering a comprehensive reformist vision.[6] There is also the association "Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya" (Adherents of the Mohammedan Sunna) whose members preach, but without carrying out any political work the obligation to rule by shariʿa. They believe that democracy is an unbelieving system but running for elections is permissible in order to lessen the evils of democracy. Equally, participating in unions and student organizations hinges on the advantages and disadvantages, according to the general rules of the shariʿa. Nevertheless, the group edits a magazine called "Al-Tawhid" that does not pay attention to political issues, unlike the magazines that belong to Al-Jamʿiyya al-Sharʿiyya. Many Ansar al-Sunna leaders come forth from the scholars of the venerable Al-Azhar, and it has branches in different governorates.[7] Some believe that the Muslim Brotherhood

has gained a considerable dominance over Al-Jamʿiyya al-Sharʿiyya, paralleling the dominance of so-called scientific Salafism and movement Salafism over Ansar al-Sunna.[8]

Apart from these two organizations, there is a wide spectrum of Salafism that includes several other orientations, among them movement Salafism and Madkhaliyya (interventionist) Salafism. Movement Salafism is concentrated mainly in the Shubra neighbourhood of Cairo. Its most eminent sheikhs are Fawzi al-Saʿid, Muhammad ʿAbd al-Maqsud and Nashʾat Ibrahim. This current accuses the ruler of infidelity if he does not rule according to God's revelation. They voice this opinion of theirs, and they believe that any deviation from shariʿa, by addition or omission, is infidelity; they prohibit participation in the parliament because it does not rule by God's law. With Ansar al-Sunna and the Salafist daʿwa, they share the rejection of party politics.[9] However, they participated actively in the revolution, given their view of the ruler and their agreement on revolting against him.

Madkhaliyya Salafism is an extension of the Madkhaliyya Salafist current in Saudi Arabia. The latter appeared in the 1990s to counter those who opposed the intervention of foreign forces. It permitted calling for their help and declared itself the enemy of anyone prohibiting it. This cell does not only believe in revolting against the ruler like the rest of the non-jihadist Salafist currents, but also confirms that any opposition to the ruler is not permissible at all. It does not even allow giving any advice publicly, for this is – in their view – one of the principles of the Sunni faith. Therefore, revolting against the ruler or the decisions of the state's different institutions is impossible. Whoever violates this is considered a dissident. Madkhaliyya Salafism regards the Muslim community as consisting of the state and the sultan, and anything else as dissidence and heresy. They also reject party politics. Governing by God's revelation is not one of the principles of faith, and whoever rules based on something else and issues laws that contradict the shariʿa does not invalidate Islam in their view. The Madkhaliyya followers are marked by their sharp criticism of their opponents. Among their sheikhs in Egypt are Muhammad Saʿid Raslan, Mahmud Lutfi ʿAmir, Usama al-Qusi, Talʿat Zahran and ʿAbd al-ʿAzim Badawi.[10]

3. The Salafist Daʿwa in Alexandria

The Salafist daʿwa in Alexandria, like the Salafist currents in general, is intellectually linked to the writings of several sheikhs. Sheikh Ahmad Farid, for example, defines the rules of the Salafist method as giving preference to rationality over text, rejecting theological interpretation, and being guided by Qur'anic verses and the traditions of the Sunna.[11] On the whole, most of the writings of the daʿwa sheikhs deal with matters such as compliance with the venerable predecessors' (al-salaf al-salih) ways; commitment to Qur'an and Sunna according to the predecessors' understanding; paying attention to the issues of tawhid (belief in the unity of God). Doctrine and faith; fighting polytheism in its different forms; fighting heresy in all its forms; compliance with the Sunna in faith.) Work and worship, and behaviour; learning and teaching others about it; paying attention to an individual's inner edification and chastening of the soul; learning from the community's scholars, adhering to them and studying the law. Obedience to the rulers in that which is good; the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice; the necessity of ijtihad (independent judgement); and preaching to people about Qur'an and Sunna.[12]

As a matter of fact, the Salafist daʿwa in Alexandria appeared as a reaction to the Muslim Brotherhood's approach that, some considered, did not pay attention to teaching jurisprudence and was negligent in matters of doctrine (ʿaqida) and tawhid. These issues have been at the centre of attention for the Salafist daʿwa's followers up to this day and have founded the notion of following the venerable predecessors.[13] The daʿwa appeared, like other Salafist currents, as a "disciplined"[14] scientific school, as some have described it, or as a "religious" movement that merely aims at conserving the doctrine. Thus, it did not develop as a comprehensive reformist movement with political or economic programmes.

The emergence of the Salafist daʿwa goes back – according to sheikh Yasir Burhami – to the year 1972 when the Salafists worked within the Islamic Group in Egyptian universities, whose method Burhami calls Salafist.[15] At the end of the seventies, the Salafist school was established to work first in mosques and then in Alexandria University, spreading later to a number of governorates. When Sadat was killed, some Salafist figureheads were arrested, but months after his assassination the Salafists took up their work again.

In 1980, ʿImad al-Din ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, current head of the Al-Nour Party and at the time a student of the medical school at Alexandria University, proposed to carry out Salafist daʿwa work on campus. After a clash with the competing Muslim Brotherhood about the affiliation of students and the control over mosques, and after a confusion that became evident in the ranks of those who would later become leaders and preachers of the Salafist daʿwa, they agreed on electing sheikh Muhammad ʿAbd al-Fattah (Abu Idris) as a custodian (and not as a commander) of what they called the Salafist school (influenced by the scientific schools that had existed at the heyday of Islamic rule). This was so because they considered authority as belonging exclusively to the state It was also agreed that they would work in mosques as well as universities. The school included, beside ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, Burhami and Abu Idris, other sheikhs and figureheads such as Ahmad Hutayba, Muhammad Ismaʿil al-Muqaddam, Ahmad Farid (those three were arrested in the events of 1980, as well as other events), and Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim.[16] According to Burhami's testimony, the daʿwa was affected by the clash with the Brotherhood, but resumed its activities in the universities in 1984 when it formed four "families" in the schools of medicine, engineering, agriculture, and education.[17] In 1986, the Preachers' Institute was founded. The Salafist daʿwa had a publication called "Nashrat al-Sabil" (The Way), another weekly one, "Akhbar al-ʿAlam al-Islami" (News of the Muslim World), and a monthly magazine, "Sawt al-daʿwa" (The Voice of the Daʿwa) that was banned by the security apparatus in 1994. It also formed several committees, such as the committee of governorates, the social work committee, and the *zakat* (almsgiving) committee.[18]

In 1994, there was an attempt to create an organizational structure for the Salafist daʿwa by establishing its first executive council. However, it was dissolved due to pressures from the state's security apparatus in the wake of an affair in which the Salafist daʿwa was incriminated, and many of its sheikhs were sent to prison. Salafist activity was then restricted to the universities until 2002, when several sheikhs were accused of founding a secret organization that tried to overthrow the government. Among them were Burhami, Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim, Ashraf Thabit (currently a deputy in the People's Assembly), Mahmud ʿAbd al-Hamid and others. At that point, all daʿwa activities were suspended.[19] When they were released from prison about a year later, the room for daʿwa was very limited and the sheikhs were forbidden to give lessons. Many mosques were annexed to the *awqaf* (religious endowments), and security ordered that the sheikhs dissolve the organization. They were not to have any administrative structure. This remained the case until 2011.[20]

In the aftermath of the revolution of January 25, more precisely on June 29, 2011, the General Advisory Council of the Salafist daʿwa assembled. It is a council of trustworthy preachers that are selected by mutual vouching and nomination. 179 out of 203 members were present. The temporary administrative board that had been established immediately after the revolution presented its resignation, and a board of trustees was formed by six founding sheikhs: Muhammad Ismaʿil al-Muqaddam, Abu Idris, Ahmad Farid, Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim, Yasir Burhami, and Ahmad Hutayba. The council's task is to guide the daʿwa work intellectually. The General Advisory Council elected a new administrative board for the association that was in the end made known as "Preachers' Association" (Jamʿiyyat al-Duʿat).[21] It consists of sheikh Abu Idris as General President of the Salafist daʿwa, sheikh Yasir Burhami as first deputy, and sheikh Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim as second deputy, in addition to ten other members such as ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, the current head of the Al-Nour Party, and sheikh ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Shahhat, the official spokesman of the daʿwa. The board of trustees chose Muhammad Yusri Ibrahim, vice-president of the American Open University and of Al-Madinah International

University, as head of the General Advisory Council. Its communication with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces seems to have benefited the Salafist daʿwa, since Burhami stated in a press meeting that "the effective cooperation with the Armed Forces, in turn, highly boosted trust levels, and the name of the Salafist daʿwa started carrying weight in every area."[22]

The Salafist sheikhs recognize the merit and importance of the Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya group in their intellectual formation phase. They relied on the group's sheikhs, especially on Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqqi and Ahmad Shakir. The daʿwa sheikhs, however, believe that Ansar al-Sunna underwent changes during Abdel Nasser's reign that led to the Madkhaliyya current dominating them. Some Ansar al-Sunna sheikhs ended up talking about Husni Mubarak as the commander of the faithful, the legitimate ruler and custodian.[23] The Ansar al-Sunna themselves, on the other hand, believe that they truly reflect the Salafist method. According to ʿAbd Allah Shakir al-Junaydi, the movement "carries the Salafist daʿwa, and whoever adheres to this method or is looking for it, should refer to Ansar al-Sunna. We do not say that we are infallible, but we have a clear approach. The "Al-Tawhid" magazine explains our opinions and statements and disseminates our news to the public. We have a physical presence thanks to the official sides' approval of our different activities."[24]

The Salafist approach was also affected by prominent Saudi sheikhs like Ibn Baz, Ibn ʿUthaymin, and al-Albani through their writings and fatwas. In their view, they expand on the insights of Ibn Taymiyya and Muhammad bin ʿAbd al-Wahhab. The daʿwa sheikhs stress, however, that they do not blindly follow the Saudi sheikhs as they have different views and legal opinions. This happened during the Gulf war, the question being whether to seek help from foreign forces or not. The Salafist sheikhs in Egypt answered this question in the negative. Those sheikhs also emphasize that they have long been Salafists, having investigated the writings of Rashid Rida and Muhyi al-Din al-Khatib, and that they had been influenced by those writings before travelling to Saudi Arabia in the context of hajj and ʿumra (pilgrimage). They deny getting any financial support or special facilities from the Saudi embassy.[25]

Mosques have remained the vital space for the Salafist daʿwa in Alexandria. Through them, the sheikhs give their lessons and Friday sermons, and around them, tapes of prominent sheikhs and preachers are sold. These mosques and activities were not spared restrictions by the security forces. In the few years before the revolution, however, the Salafist daʿwa started spreading to more mosques in Alexandria, among them several university mosques. Their activity now also included the organization of festive prayers in public places.[26] Some think that the security forces encouraged this expansion and handed over mosques that had been controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood to the Salafist daʿwa sheikhs to fight the Brotherhood's influence in the street.[27]

The last decade witnessed a proliferation in the tools of daʿwa work. Its sphere now includes internet sites, benefiting from the unlimited possibilities of these new instruments. This has led to an expansion of the publications' reach. Books about heritage, preachers and sheikhs have found a larger audience. This also proves the Salafists' ability to combine their principles and constants with the mechanisms of our time. The important websites here include "Ana Salafy" (I am Salafist), "Sawt al-Salafi" (Salafi Voice) which is supervised by sheikh Burhami, and "Shabakat al-Fath al-Islami" (Islamic Conquest Network) which is the personal website of sheikh Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim. Some of these websites regularly offer live streams of the daʿwa sheikhs' lectures. Other websites also offer audiovisual recordings of most of the daʿwa sheikhs. This topic might deserve a detailed study in order to examine how these new tools influence the contents of the Salafist discourse itself. The question is whether the changed form has led to a development of contents as well. Some argue that even though these new tools have helped to get rid of the security restrictions, the absence of institutionalization and the dominance of the sheikhs supervising them has prevailed. Hence, they have in some cases turned into a forum for attacking others, be they Salafists or not.[28]

The presence of Salafist daʿwa sheikhs on satellite channels – that are described as Islamist and have spread in Egypt in the past decade – used to be prohibited by the security apparatus. Nevertheless, several Salafist sheikhs external to the Salafist daʿwa in Alexandria did appear on channels owned by businessmen from the Gulf states. This situation changed after the revolution. The security obstacles disappeared, and the Salafist daʿwa sheikhs began appearing on satellite television.[29]

In the following section, we will deal with the nature and development of the Salafist daʿwa's position concerning political activity, and its justifications for not engaging in it directly from its emergence until the revolution happened. At that point, the political file was entrusted to ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur. We will later discuss how a political party was eventually formed.

III. The Salafist Daʿwa: Strategies for Change and Reasons for Political Non-Participation Before the Revolution

The Salafist daʿwa consistently prohibited, from its emergence until the revolution of January 25, the participation in political work within the state's institutions. It issued fatwas forbidding its followers to take part in political life. In the aftermath of the revolution, the daʿwa added party and parliamentary work to its older styles of action. It founded a political party that entered the first parliamentary elections after the revolution and gained, along with other Salafist allies, about one quarter of the seats in the People's Assembly. We shall now turn to this development through a discussion of the approaches to change of the Salafist daʿwa school in Alexandria, that focused on education and did not include political and party affairs. We will also discuss the reasons for their choice not to take part in political life. There are three groups of reasons: the first one is related to security restrictions and the price of political participation; the second one is linked to local, regional, and global power balances; and the third one has to do with their stance toward democracy. After that, we will give an account of the justifications for the daʿwa's changed position on political participation. We will thus introduce the study of the fledgling political experience of the Al-Nour Party that forms the last part of this paper.

1. Changes in the Salafist Daʿwa Method

Among the writings that occupy an influential position in the Salafist daʿwa school on the topic of change is an article published by sheikh Yasir Burhami in the Sawt al-Daʿwa magazine, titled "Salafism and Methods of Change" (Al-salafiyya wa manahij al-taghyir). In this article, he rejects change through parliamentary elections as well as transformation through violent means and presents what he calls the Salafist daʿwa method of change. It rests on three foundations; the first one is "the call (daʿwa) to faith, with all its meanings, basic elements, and universal notions." This includes the belief in the unity of Lordship and divinity; infidelity towards idols; fighting against all forms of polytheism; the belief in angels, the holy books, the prophets, the Last Day, judgement, and destiny; applying the Sunna and fighting heresy; and this should be done in every way, by preaching, teaching, writing, publishing, daʿwa campaigns etc. It is followed by the second foundation: "creating the believing community" according to the Sunni method. This community "strives to obtain the means to realize what is presently impossible." It incorporates learning (ʿilm) on every level, accounting for advantages and disadvantages in terms of the shariʿa's values. This concerns social obligations; striving for the establishment of an Islamic monetary system that excludes usury; educating the nation in a spirit of community; leading "the fight (jihad) for God as long as its prerequisites and conditions are met; and striving for the means to realize that which is not yet realized." Moreover, the believing community should "teach people about the necessity to resolve legal conflicts through the shariʿa. They should refer disputes to scholars, who ought to be present. The community should try to establish their presence everywhere, so they can

resolve disputes according to Qur'an and Sunna, rather than the idolatrous common laws." The third foundation is the "manner of consolidation," i.e. the manner of establishing an Islamic state. This is a divine matter, and Muslim history has shown that there are different ways. Consolidation is "a grace and a promise given by God. It aims to implement the worshipping of God, for the individual and the community. Hence, seeking to obtain the means that are destined to us is an obligation. Yet, victory comes from God, not from our own devices."[30] This strategy appears to neglect the idea of struggling for a gradual reform of the authority itself or changing it through revolution. It also ignores the discussion about fighting injustice and resisting oppression, as well as social developments that may lead to change. It sees things in black and white and believes that society can be accurately divided into two segments.

At any rate, in June 2009, about a year and a half before the revolution, the Salafist daʿwa sheikh Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim started a reform initiative. It was based on a pure religious vision where Islam is present in every aspect of the community, small and big; this was presented as a non-negotiable constant of the doctrine.[31] In this initiative, reform is derived from "God's method." It has recourse to Qur'an and Sunna and the understanding of the venerable predecessors: the jurists and founders of the legal schools who were "the most knowledgeable people about Qur'an and Sunna," as the sheikh said. He also stressed that the Salafists were followers (muttabiʿun), i.e. bound by the same method that the prophets, jurists and imams had chosen. The initiative rejected the imitation of others who were calling for patriotism, nationalism, socialism, democracy, liberalism, and secularism, because their appeals were seen as "reactionary and unjust." They would do more harm than good since they contradicted Qur'an and Sunna; and those people had, according to the initiative, no authenticity or principle, and only took their words from the "insolent unbelievers." The initiative attacked the proponents of ostentation, moral depravity, promiscuity, disintegration, debauchery, immorality, usury, and bribery for being the reason of corruption in the country. It also criticized going out to the streets to demonstrate.[32]

ʿAbd al-ʿAzim's initiative blamed non-Islamic political initiatives because there was "no religion in them," regarded opposition to the heritability of rule as a "meaningless cause," and refused asking for a civil state and alternation of power, without addressing in detail the core issue of government in Islam. It criticized Islamist movements that had adopted these calls, since the Islamist view does not give much importance to the question of heritability. What counts is that the ruler is a Muslim who governs by the word of God, even if he reigns for the rest of his life. The sheikh wondered about the value of power alternation and ballot boxes if they brought to power a non-believer, a woman, a Jew, a communist, or someone who does not govern by God's law. He saw no value in the opinion of the electoral majority if it contradicts the terms of Islam. The majority, he argued, "is not allowed to change God's law," and quoted verses from the noble Qur'an as evidence.[33]

The alternative envisioned by ʿAbd al-ʿAzim's initiative is to rebuild this world with God's religion only. A "caliphate according to the way of prophethood" should be erected, based on "the method of worshipping" God. Reform (islah) is a form of worship and a means of getting closer to God; therefore, those who call for reform are required to display piety (salah) themselves. The essence of real reform lies in the community's eagerness to apply the Islamic commandments, small and big. People should restore what is between them and their creator, so that "our lives in this world and in the world to come" are reconciled and "we will eat from above our heads and from below our feet." Reform includes believing in the invisible, consigning all matters to God, trusting in Him for subsistence, and remembering death, the tomb, and the tortures of the hereafter.[34]

This initiative, for sure, does not engage with problems of reality, nor does it start from them. It refuses other solutions without providing true justifications and offers no tangible treatment for social problems; nor does it ask people to make use of all available means and to exert efforts in analyzing reality and finding possible solutions. Moreover, the initiative blocks any possibility of opening towards others, interacting with them, and benefiting from the achievements of other cultures in the fields of

government, reform, and state administration. We imagine that this sort of Salafist discourse, in the end, achieves nothing but continuation of the status quo. It ruins the efforts of a national grouping that had the potential to support other forces in their push for reform and change.

2. The Reasons for Non-Participation Before the Revolution

The adherents of the Salafist daʿwa school believed in organized and open community work. However, they refused working from within official state institutions and preferred setting up a daʿwa organization unsupervised by the state. Their fear was that they would be subjected to security surveillance and governmental directives in carrying out their missionary work. This is due to their view of the state institutions as un-Islamic. Working from within them equals an acceptance of entering the political game and participating in it. This school's rejection of political activities remained in place until the revolution of January 25.

(1) Reasons Related to Security Restrictions and the Price of Participation

In contrast to the Ansar al-Sunna group that does not see any objection to political participation in a non-Islamic political system, as we have seen before, the Salafist daʿwa had kept issuing fatwas prohibiting such participation for decades. The sheikhs gave many reasons, among them the security restrictions and the price of participation from their point of view. The strong security restrictions that the previous regime imposed on Islamist currents in general were undoubtedly the principal reason that pushed the Salafist current, and especially the Salafist daʿwa movement, away from direct political work. Sheikhs and activists of the daʿwa were subject to recurring arrests. Any literature, in audio or written formats, that called for attacking the rulers was forbidden, and many sheikhs were prevented from appearing on satellite channels.[35] The previous regime's security apparatus saw the Salafist currents as a main source for the production of violent elements and movements. Some Salafist preachers therefore estimate that the majority of those who were arrested in relation to jihad were Salafists that nobody asked about, and that their repression exceeded that which the Muslim Brothers were exposed to.[36]

In addition, the daʿwa sheikhs announced their refusal to pay the price some Islamist movements had paid for participating in political life. This price was expressed, in their view, by the blood and freedom of many of their followers – along with the damage the daʿwa suffered while being targeted by the regime. Therefore, Burhami says: "God the Sublime only charges us with what we are able to do ("God burdens not a person beyond his scope," Qur'an, Surat al-Baqara: 286). What is impossible becomes possible with time, if we are sincere in doing what we are able to. A collision with ill-conceived consequences, which leads to the spilling of innocent blood and the committing of sacrileges rather than to a change of reality or to reform, and leads to further degradation, is the path of sin rather than divine guidance."[37] From these words, it can certainly be understood that a change in circumstances could lead to a changed position of the daʿwa vis-à-vis political participation. This is what happened after the revolution.

ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Shahhat criticizes the Islamists' entry into politics and believes that the Islamist current pays a heavy price for accepting "the game of democracy" that is, according to him, "un-Islamic" and includes a "tacit acknowledgement of American tutelage for the democratic experiment in Egypt."[38] The heavy price al-Shahhat talks about is the violation of elementary shariʿa regulations in his view. Al-Shahhat criticizes the Muslim Brothers for accepting participation. This has made them, he opines, commit many mistakes such as the alliance with secular parties that contradict Islamic law. He concludes that his position toward the entire political process will be one of silence, i.e. refusing the entire democratic process and the idea of a civil state that he sees as "separating religion from state, and actually from life. This thought is imposed on us by the West, which, at the same time, is not ashamed of announcing a crusade against the Muslim countries."[39] The alternative for al-Shahhat,

however, is not a religious or theocratic state in the Western sense, in which religious figures wield the power as representatives of God on earth.[40]

There is no doubt that the Salafist daʿwa has departed from many of the issues al-Shahhat warns against. It has accepted entering "the game of democracy," and the activists of the party that emanated from the daʿwa have found common ground with non-Islamic parties.

These objections to political activity were met with criticism from the Muslim Brothers, who believe that conserving the purity of the doctrine does not mean isolating oneself from reality. Rather, it means getting closer to people and taking part in solving their problems by becoming politically active and entering parliaments to fight corruption, change the circumstances, achieve what is in people's interest and avert what is bad for them. Within the Salafist current, on the other hand, there are those who think – like sheikh Mahmud Lutfi ʿAmir, head of the Salafist Ansar al-Sunna group in Damanhur, who is attributed to Madkhaliyya Salafism – that Salafists should not move in politics unless told to by the ruler, "to prevent a clash with the state or the instigation of unrest."[41]

(2) Disturbance of Local, Regional, and Global Power Balances

There is another reason for staying away from politics. It is related to what the Salafists regard as a disturbed power balance, internally and externally, that does not permit participation and reform. According to sheikh Burhami, global, regional, and local power balances do not allow the Salafist current to take part in politics and reform unless it renounced its doctrines, principles, and values. Burhami considers it impossible for Sunnites to renounce them in exchange for a participation that "does not know a virtue or reject a vice except that which is in the interest of these powers (the contemporary global, regional and domestic powers). Nor does it even observe the invented principles and the alleged sacred values such as freedom, equality, and democracy, or respect the people's will and human rights."[42] Sheikh ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Shahhat considers participating under these circumstances as an attrition of energies and a gradual development toward violence. The related renunciations only lead to "subjecting Islam to Western culture in the name of renewing religion." Al-Shahhat relates the situation in Egypt to the one of Islamists in countries like Turkey, Algeria, and Palestine, and calls democracy and elections "a trap that gradually makes peaceful Islamists slip into violence, so their missionary efforts are dispersed or lost, while the West and its servants continue playing the tune of extremism and terrorism." He concludes that it is better to persevere in daʿwa "with wisdom and good advice which is indispensable, while changing that which is bad remains possible. Fighting (jihad) against unbelievers with the sword is a prescription of Islamic law that needs to fulfil conditions and to select constraints..."[43] Both sheikhs here confound democracy as a system of government with certain international issues, especially international double standards and the nature of the foreign policies of some major countries. We will come back to this issue later.[44]

Burhami believes that participation requires the premises of "freedom, equality, and democracy" that come from outside, whereas it should be based, for him, on "worshipping God the Almighty" and not refraining from having recourse to the revelation in doctrine, work, and behaviour. He also argues that participation requires accepting that "the authority for lawmaking is with the people, not with God" and the possibility that the people might abolish the second article of the constitution. This would imply accepting the equality of Muslims and non-Muslims and deleting the words "unbelief" and "hypocrisy" from the dictionaries to replace them with "the other."[45]

Internally, Burhami contends that non-participation was unrelated to the reason that there is no religion in politics and no politics in religion. He asserts that the Salafists and other Islamist currents were in fact expressing their opposition. Their members were subject to repression, exemplary punishments, and discrimination for decades.[46] In an indirect allusion to the Muslim Brotherhood, Burhami criticizes people's imagination that their economic, social, and political problems would be

solved simply by raising the slogan: "Islam is the solution," and calls this a big and dangerous illusion. He wonders about "the intended understanding of Islam in which it is offered as the solution? Is it the one that accepts secularization and does not see it as opposing Islam, like the Turks say? Or is it the democratic, emancipated one, like some of them say?" He calls for the redaction of "clear characteristics of this understanding, taken from Qur'an and true Sunna, in doctrine, work, and behaviour, and all issues of the nation."[47]

From the above, it becomes clear that a changed power balance was an important topic for the Salafists' entry into politics and the practice of legislation. However, "changing the balance of powers" is a religious work that relies on divine power and requires individuals to be religious. The political struggle is not part of this, nor is confrontation with tyrannical rulers or revolt against them. Therefore, Burhami writes: "Working toward the return of shariʿa and the appearance of the authority of religion in all aspects of life does not happen through participation in the political game, its illusions, its dreams and declarations, but through striving to change the balance of powers on earth. They are convinced that those power balances are not entirely in the hands of human beings, and that all powers held by humans, as individuals and groups, as states and organizations, are in the end nothing but distractions and games."[48] What he means here is that God is the one who arranges the universe and who is able to change those balances. The condition to make this real is "faith (iman), submission (islam), and charity (ihsan) in our doctrine, worship, conduct, and morals; our tenacity and coherence; the integrity of our hearts; our love of one another; and the purging of our souls." Through faith, "states disappear, hearts are turned around, balances are changed, what is together becomes divided and what is divided grows together, the weak becomes strong and the strong becomes weak, the master vanishes and the oppressed becomes empowered, the high becomes low and the humiliated rises up."[49] Burhami stipulates "the achievement of worship in home, family, mosque, and work" and "learning" (ʿilm) until consolidation is possible.[50]

Despite the disturbed power balance that the daʿwa sheikhs point out, they do not think that daʿwa used to be detached from politics. They were engaging in political issues, without being overly preoccupied by them. This claim is supported by the fact that they took specific stances about major issues such as the first and second Gulf war, the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Palestinian cause.[51] They also believe that the Salafists' non-participation in political life does not mean they were politically indifferent. Islam does not separate between religion and politics. This separation, according to them, amounts to "apostasy, atheism, hypocrisy, and denial of the obvious. The Qur'an was sent down with all-encompassing rules. They are related to politics and economy, war and peace, friendship and hostility, systems of government and jurisdiction, legal punishments and castigation, and others."[52] Moreover, they think that their discourse deals with politics in laying a legal and doctrinal foundation and in seeking to reform politics and government. It is intertwined with issues of daily life, unlike the discourse of Ansar al-Sunna. The Salafists do not see their abstinence from political work as an abstinence from sweeping reform. Their websites feature articles that deal with issues of unemployment, economy, health, and others. Staying away from politics merely serves to preserve the purity of the Salafist method.[53]

In any case, after the revolution some Salafists came to think that the balance of power had changed, making their participation necessary. Those who had cited shariʿa obstacles against it, on the other hand, did not have the courage to admit their mistake, as sheikh Abu Fihr remarked.[54] In reality, the Salafists participated on the base of democracy; the revolution's basic goal had been the establishment of a democratic system. In matters of jurisprudence, the Salafists' positions did not change fundamentally, as we will show below.

(3) Reasons Related to the View of Democracy

One of the reasons for the Salafists' boycott of political activities had been their jurisprudential position towards democracy. First, we should point to a book titled "Democracy in Balance" (Al-dimuqratiyya fi al-mizan) by sheikh Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim. It is one of the books that shaped many Salafists' awareness of democracy and reflects the Salafist daʿwa's position towards it in many ways. In this book, the sheikh readily mixes terms like liberalism, secularism, irreligion, and democracy. He regards democracy – which is a way of governing with reason, an instrument of choosing rulers, and a mechanism for decision-making rather than a political doctrine or school of thought – as a blasphemous, pagan method. Those who "talk about and call for it" are described as ignoring the reality of democracy. In this respect, those who pray, fast, and call for implementing God's reign are on the same level as those who think that democracy consists of consultation and heretics! The sheikh concludes that the principles democracy is based on are blasphemous and pagan, and that idolatry (shirk) is the same thing.[55]

The author confounds democracy and the situation in Western countries with the results he imagines if it were to be implemented in Egypt. He argues that among the principles of democracy and secularism are the dissemination of libertinism and moral chaos as well as the destruction of the family. In the countries of the Arab and Muslim world, he thinks the focus lies on discrediting the truth of Islam, Qur'an, and Sunna; the claim that Islam does not go well with civilization and promotes backwardness; the call for a Western-style liberation of women; slandering the Islamic civilization and reviving the ancient ones, such as the pharaonic civilization; taking over irreligious methods from the West; and educating generations in a godless way.[56] Moreover, the sheikh confounds democracy and the foreign policies of some Western countries, which do indeed apply double standards to the Arab countries. ʿAbd al-ʿAzim believes that democracy has given the West power over the Muslim countries. The alternative would be, in his mind, an Islamic system.[57] And here again, he confuses the foundations and principles of government in Islam, one of which is consultation (shura), with what he considers an Islamic political system.

Burhami, for his part, rejects "dividing Islam" into "political Islam and non-political Islam." Islam is a comprehensive religion, and the purpose of human existence is to worship, as individuals and as a nation. The purpose of government in Islam and in the Islamic state system is to worship God, and to elevate and protect the status of religion. Furthermore, this world is to be guided by religion, the arrangements of societal life need to be moulded according to Islam, and political objectives must conform to the shariʿa. They must serve one single purpose: worshipping God.[58] This is why Burhami writes in his article "Salafism and Methods of Change" that the judgement of participation in parliaments depends on the purpose of this participation. When the purpose is "to achieve democracy by allowing godless legislation, if decided by the majority," this participation is opposed "to tawhid; except if the one who calls for it is ignorant or someone who interprets, whom evidence did not reach. He is not considered a disbeliever until written evidence is established on his case." And if the purpose of participation is "to apply the shariʿa," under Burhami's condition "to announce one's denial of legislative councils established on bases other than that of the shariʿa," then this participation is an issue of contemporary ijtihad on which scholars may differ. There are those who think that participation "with the purpose of applying shariʿa is obedience (taʿa) if this is in the best interest," and those who opine that this participation "is not permissible and is considered a matter of misdeed and wrongdoing, but not disbelief and apostasy, since the participator acquitted himself in belief and did not apply it on the ground."[59]

Burhami defines the position of the daʿwa as strict political non-participation, acknowledging however the existing discord on this issue. He rejects participation in political parties that "are established on secular, democratic, socialist, communist, or other man-made principles that violate the core of faith and Islam, call for the separation of religion from state and the systems of society, seek equality between all confessions, and accept and respect disbelief and apostasy." He criticizes those who say that "the multiplicity of legislation does not spoil relationships" and sees this as an expression of "tribalism and allegiance to disbelievers and hypocrites. This commands disapproval, abandonment,

opposition and denial from the part of the Muslims."[60] Therefore, if democracy is disbelief, then what comes out of it – including legislative elections – is unlawful and participating in it is prohibited. This position towards democracy was precisely the source of a deep disagreement with the Muslim Brotherhood, whose leaders think that the reason behind accepting democracy is their certainty that the people in Egypt are Muslims and will not accept anything but the implementation of the shariʿa.

In reference to Salafist political activities in Kuwait, Burhami refuses to compare them with the situation in Egypt before the revolution. Kuwait is among "the countries whose impact is limited. Maybe it was colonized by foreign forces and the level of liberty is large, given that the country is at the core of the New World Order. This is not even slightly true in Egypt."[61]

ʿAbd al-ʿAzim's book, like the overall position of the Salafists on democracy, reveals some points of confusion regarding the understanding of democracy on the part of the sheikhs.[62] In our opinion, the major problem confronting this movement is the lack of understanding and awareness of some Salafists for the truth and essence of democracy as a system of governance rather than a political doctrine or philosophy. Moreover, the vast majority of the current's constituency adopt the understanding of the sheikhs. These understand democracy as a single coherent system to be applied to all states, and as a Western method that assigns legislation to humans without control or supreme reference. Some sheikhs imagine democracy as "the legislation of the unbelievers and a pagan method" where "the godless, the sinful, unbelievers, women, and those who fight God's religion" are in control.[63] As a result, there is confusion about democracy and at least three other concepts. The first confusion concerns democracy and secularism, which means to them one and the same thing: the fight against religion and the spreading of immorality. They think that the democratic system is necessarily secular and will inevitably lead to the dissemination of vices in Egypt. This understanding of democracy skips or denies its fundamental traits, most importantly: the rule of law, citizens' selection and control of the ruler, the opportunity of political participation, and equality in rights and duties. Secularism, on the other hand, is a purely Western solution to a Western issue: the authority of the clerics in the Middle Ages led to their exclusion from politics. Secularism emerged in different forms, ranging from outspoken enmity to full tolerance of religion. What concerns us in Egypt is that the great majority among the public and the political forces are not hostile towards religion or calling for its exclusion. There is a consensus on article two of the constitution, and on not introducing regulations contrary to the shariʿa.

Besides, some sheikhs believe that American democracy produced the colonization of Palestine, support for the Israelis, and the invasion of Iraq. In reality, there is an ambivalent American foreign policy in favour of Israel due, first and foremost, to the weakness of the Arabs, and secondly to the power of the Jewish lobby in the United States – but not as a result of American democracy.

The sheikhs' inaccurate understanding of democracy would not present a danger, were it not for the consequences. The constituency of the Salafist current relies on the sheikhs in its understanding of politics. People follow the thoughts of their sheikhs, and they still have a strong influence on the political parties that were born from this current. Due to the lack of standards for party activities in Egypt, this situation persists, and sheikhs appear at the head of the political scene (although they are not members in these parties). Open-minded politicians are on the retreat; this is compounded by the lack of recourse to experts and specialists, and the weakness of cultural programmes. The success of the Salafist political current will depend to a great deal on the ability of party officials to separate between religious and political discourses, in addition to a gradual liberation of the political process from the power of the sheikhs.

3. The Changed Position of the Salafist Daʿwa after the Revolution

The reaction of the Salafist daʿwa when calls for the January 25 demonstration came out was that of non-participation. Many sheikhs (al-Muqaddam, Burhami, Abu Idris and ʿAbd al-ʿAzim) agreed about the difficulty of turning demonstrations into a real popular revolution. They decided not to participate even if the rallies might turn into a revolution, wanting to avoid an eventual oppression and annihilation of the participants. This had happened in the Swat region in Pakistan. Their position was compatible, they supposed, with the ones of the Islamic Group, the Muslim Brotherhood, and other parties.[64] Burhami issued a fatwa stating that the reason for non-participation was the idea to rob the enemy of an opportunity to stir unrest, and that the situation in Egypt was different from Tunisia. He urged the youth not to take individual initiatives without referring to the sheikhs of the daʿwa.[65] But after the success of the revolution, Burhami argued that the Salafists had actually participated in the revolution – through setting up popular committees to protect property and people as well as churches after the breakdown of the police force on January 28.

The revolution changed many things and so the daʿwa came to accept participation in political life. It established a political party under the legal regulations in vigour; we will come back to this later. Sheikh al-Muqaddam justified the change in the Salafists' position towards participation by saying that they did not know the invisible. Had they known that the demonstrations would lead to change, they would have supported them from the very beginning. He added that those followers who did take part did so individually. The daʿwa thus avoided any Islamist label being attached to the demonstrations, so they would not be repressed like it had happened in Hama in Syria or the Swat valley in Pakistan.[66]

To justify this change, Burhami argues that his essay "Salafism and Methods of Change" was written in the early 1990s when article two of the constitution was allowing the existence of legislative sources other than the shariʿa. This means it was possible for legislative councils to pass laws opposed to shariʿa in theory and practice. This interpretation, as Burhami explained, changed after the verdict by the Supreme Constitutional Court in 1996, which confirmed that secondary sources of law should not oppose the primary source. The People's Assembly was thus obliged by the constitution not to issue legislation contrary to the primary source of legislation. Burhami stressed that the People's Assembly did not commit an act of disbelief, theoretically at that time, after the issuance of that verdict – contrary to its Tunisian and Turkish counterparts. From a scholarly viewpoint, he supposed that the deputies' ignorance and their allegiance to the governing party was the reason why some legislation was inconsistent with the shariʿa.[67]

Another justification advanced by Burhami is that the pre-revolution parties were secular parties. It was not allowed for the adherents of the Islamist current to establish a political party with a religious reference nor based on article two, apart from the fact that the existing parties were cartoonish parties not to be taken seriously. The revolution, Burhami thinks, changed these circumstances and rendered parties with a religious reference possible. It also allowed for the organization of fair elections. This justifies the campaign to preserve article two organized by the Salafist daʿwa after the revolution. Its slogan was "Judgement is only for God; do not touch the second article," and it was launched after some voices demanded to delete article two or to go back to the original constitutions of 1923 or 1971.

ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, chairman of the Al-Nour Party, who had an important role in convincing the Salafist daʿwa to create a political party and plunge into the hazard of political affairs, thinks that any popular faction must practice policies that affect the movement of societies. He declared that the fall of the regime and the National Party was a distinguished moment in the history of Egypt and was characterized by a substantial vacuum in authority, as had happened with the Baʿth Party in Iraq.[68] Moreover, Bassam Al-Zarqa, Secretary General of the Al-Nour Party in Alexandria, openly announced that the reasons behind this political participation included the preservation of the Islamic identity of the country, embodied by article two of the constitution. He argues that, had this identity not been menaced after the revolution, the daʿwa would have contented itself with missionary work. But there was what Al-Zarqa calls a "power vacuum," which some forces tried to exploit to delete article two from the constitution. Moreover, the Salafists entered political life and introduced their programmes

without being obliged to give up their principles. They gave people the freedom to choose.[69] Yusri Hammad, one of the party's spokesmen, thinks that opening the opportunity for political activity enabled the followers of the missionary Salafist daʿwa to profit from the existing human resources inside the daʿwa to serve public issues.[70]

In fact, the Salafists started their political activities with the "raid of the ballot boxes," as it became known in the media. This term was coined by one of the most prominent Salafist preachers, sheikh Muhammad Husayn Yaʿqub, about the result of the referendum on constitutional amendments. It was won by those in favour, which the Salafists regarded as guaranteeing the preservation of article two of the constitution. The Salafist current, as well as other Islamist currents like the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Group, treated the referendum on constitutional amendments as if it was a referendum on whether article two should be preserved or deleted. They considered its preservation a matter of life or death. This position contributed, along with other factors, to the deepening of political and ideological divisions between the entire spectrum of Islamist currents on the one hand and the liberal, leftist and nationalist currents on the other.

IV. The Al-Nour Party: The Political Arm of the Political Daʿwa

We will now turn to the emergence of the Al-Nour Party as a political arm of the Salafist daʿwa, its relationship with the daʿwa sheikhs, its party platform, and its relation to other Islamist forces. Furthermore, we will discuss the party's political performance and the future of this activity.

1. The Emergence of the Al-Nour Party and its Relation to Other Islamist Experiences

The idea of founding a party for the Salafist daʿwa in Egypt goes back, according to a number of sources inside the party, to ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur who returned from Turkey just months before the revolution. The vision he presented to the Salafist sheikhs can be summed up in the need to plunge into the hazard of politics by creating a party, now that the conditions were favourable. The daʿwa would thus be able to pursue its missionary path and to provide the party with ideas and personnel. This issue was largely debated inside the temporary administrative council which concluded, by the end of February 2011, that political participation via party work was necessary. ʿAbd al-Ghaffur was charged with founding the party. He set out putting together a strong basis of cadres as well as implementing education and intensive training programmes before the party legally appeared, and even before the law related to the organization of political parties was promulgated.[71] At the same time, tours in the governorates began with the objective to gain supporters and open interim branch offices.[72]

The party officials, notably, deny that the original goal behind the establishment of a party and the participation in elections was the practice of democracy only to attack it as soon as they were in power. The Salafists believe that they brought a moral dimension and an Islamic reference into politics. Since they accepted the rules of the democratic game, they are not allowed by shariʿa to recant this commitment.[73] Furthermore, the party leaders said that the purpose behind participation in politics is the establishment of a constitutional state where institutions protect freedom, justice, and equality without violating Islamic law. "The lawful should not become unlawful or the unlawful lawful," as Yusri Hammad says. He emphasizes that the party does not mention the idea of a caliphate and considers talk about it unrealistic, given the need to establish Islam in the hearts of people first and only then move to the state institutions.[74]

The debate on the establishment of a political party took place around the way of this participation in politics: should it happen through supporting the closest Islamist parties, or by the creation of a new party from the womb of the Salafist daʿwa itself? The debate was concerned with procedural

dimensions of democracy like the founding of a political party, participation in elections and accepting political pluralism. There was no discussion about a deep change in the political jurisprudence accompanying this party, nor about anything beyond the political party and parliamentary elections or the party's requirements in terms of entitlements, treatises, and staff. No new strategies of political action, with clear and precise objectives and instruments, appeared. More importantly, the nature of the relationship between the Salafist daʿwa and the party was not defined. The Egyptian revolution had surprised everyone, and the newly born party entered the political arena in a hurry.

With the emergence of this party, the situation of the Salafist daʿwa and the Al-Nour Party became similar to the experience of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, as well as the Islamic Action Front Party and the Muslim Brothers in Jordan. The party is, in all three cases, the political arm of the movement. It is never separated from it despite of the organic and functional distinction which was displayed in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, when the party officials gave up their positions within the Brotherhood. This is also different from the Moroccan case where missionary and political work were to a large extent divided into two separate entities.

It may be interesting to note the similarities between the experiences of the Salafist daʿwa in Alexandria and that in Kuwait, which began with the efforts of a group of sheikhs linked intellectually to the Wahhabi Salafist thought in Saudi Arabia. It operated under the label of "Islamic Heritage Revival Association," which emerged in the 1980s, in the fields of education, daʿwa, and charitable work, until a number of factors combined, and it moved into politics. The interpretations of sheikh ʿAbd al-Khaliq ʿAbd Allah,[75] which offered an intellectual basis for this transformation in the late eighties, preceded the political developments brought about by the occupation of Kuwait and the ensuing debates about the legitimacy of recourse to foreign forces. This led to diverging developments and divisions within the Salafist ranks. Our concern, here, is the emergence of the "Salafi Assembly," in 1991, as a political arm of the Islamic Heritage Revival Association. It called for the application of shariʿa and was convinced, like the supporters of the Salafist daʿwa and Al-Nour Party, that the practice of politics is a part of daʿwa.

This participation ended up with the Salafists of Kuwait entering parliament and participating in government. The Ommah Party emerged in January 2005 as the first political party in Kuwait and in the Gulf region in general. It was founded by a group of Salafists and conservatives as a clear and explicit challenge to constitution and common law. At the time of its creation, the Umma Party had three deputies in the National Assembly. While the Al-Nour Party platform was considered, to some extent, a qualitative change in the political discourse of Salafists in Egypt after the revolution, the Umma Party in Kuwait had introduced advanced theses in 2005. They dealt with political pluralism, freedoms, and supporting the political rights of all social classes without exception. The party called on the government to amend the constitution, to allow the establishment of political parties and to make "shariʿa the source of legislation."[76] As we will point out later, ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur adopted the latter phrase when giving his personal opinion about the second article of the Egyptian constitution.

To sum it up, in the case of Al-Nour, the Salafist daʿwa did not transform itself into a party. Rather, it employed the method of party politics to serve the objectives of the daʿwa after circumstances had changed, security restrictions were lifted, and the political scene became crowded with different parties and groups. The Salafists did not introduce any new strategies for change, nor did they develop new goals and objectives measuring up to the significant change that Egypt was witnessing. The relation between the daʿwa sheikhs and the party is the most important issue in the course of the Salafist daʿwa's political activity and its future; we will discuss it in the next section.

2. The Relationship Between the Daʿwa Sheikhs and the Party

The sheikhs of the daʿwa did not deny, as we have pointed out, that the political participation through their party is one of the means that can be used to achieve the movement's objectives in calling to Islam and reforming society. Sheikh Burhami makes this point, confirming that the party is to the daʿwa movement like a son who may not disobey his father. The party officials, not the sheikhs, are those who manage its political affairs. There is a distinction between those who serve the daʿwa and those working for the party, notwithstanding a slight overlap, as he puts it.[77] Furthermore, there are some shared activities between daʿwa and party, such as charitable work and provision of services to citizens.[78] On his part, ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur sees in the daʿwa "the popular backbone and mass reserve of constituents for the party."[79] He rejects the idea of a legal body which reviews the party's decisions, and states that he, as a party responsible, is careful: the basis feels strongly about a legal foundation in shariʿa; hence, he does not adopt positions that would clash with this constituency.[80]

Therefore, many party leaders deny the intervention of sheikhs in organizational and administrative matters of the party,[81] yet assert that they have recourse to them in legal issues in order to clarify the juridical regulations.[82] Burhami thus thinks that the Salafists present a pure Egyptian Salafist model which is different from other countries, given the different circumstances and also given the lack of political action in these countries, which he deems possible only after the totalitarian regimes have gone.[83] The same opinion was confirmed by a spokesperson of the party.[84]

Despite the complete reliance of the party on the Salafist daʿwa, whether in terms of general shariʿa rules or in supplying the party with staff, there are party leaders who have advanced, from the outset, the following idea: the party – even though it emerged from the womb of the Salafist daʿwa – is an Egyptian party open to all Egyptians, including the Copts. The only condition is that they do not clash with the second article of the constitution.[85] Even if officials operating in the party secretariats still keep their positions within the daʿwa, some believe that the party will, gradually, integrate members external to the daʿwa – non-bearded men and Copts. They see it as unwise to establish a political party that depends exclusively on a Salafist constituency.[86]

By observing the conduct of the party, we can see that it has witnessed, from the first months of its existence, an obvious interference by the daʿwa sheikhs in party affairs. Some of the conferences the party held during the election campaigns were organized under the auspices of daʿwa sheikhs and the presence of at least one of them. Equally, propaganda campaigns of party candidates received contributions and support from some sheikhs. At other social activities, such as sales outlets for consumer goods in poor neighbourhoods, advertisements inform us that these activities were organized by the Salafist daʿwa in cooperation with the party. Party activists justify this by stating that the party does not have the necessary means in some places, so it is compelled to coordinate with other associations and forces such as the Salafist daʿwa and others.[87]

Sheikh Burhami argued that there needs to be a juridical committee to review the articles published in the party newspaper, "Al-Nur" (The Light). This occurred when he criticized an article on democracy and Islam, sharply attacking its author and threatening that such incidents would not happen again. In fact, no more articles of this author were published after the incident.[88] In the same lecture, the sheikh's words were clear in emphasizing the structural relationship between the daʿwa, the party, and the newspaper. He said, addressing his audience: "You are the guardians of our method, in the newspaper and the party. Unfortunately, there are those who try to bypass the issue of a legal review. There is a review committee, but this article passed despite them. This will never happen again. After the third issue, we abide by the review committee. The party is supposed to have been founded by the sons of the daʿwa, so the party is a son of the daʿwa too. And the paper belongs to the party; therefore, it should express the party's view."[89]

The sheikhs' intervention was equally obvious in their support of a presidential candidate. The daʿwa's most prominent sheikhs (al-Muqaddam, Burhami, and ʿAbd al-ʿAzim) eagerly held meetings with presidential candidates from the Islamist current at the time that the supreme body of the party was looking into the same issue. On March 10, 2012, Burhami publicly announced that the choice of a presidential candidate was the affair of the sheikhs. He suggested in the ʿAmr bin al-ʿAs mosque that the youth should know: "The choice of a candidate to support in the presidency is not their issue. It is the responsibility of the scholars."

It is not surprising that the sheikhs' interference with the party's affairs led to several crises. When Muhammad Yusri, former spokesman of the party, expressed a positive opinion about the works of the famous Egyptian writer, Naguib Mahfouz, he was criticized by several sheikhs and was finally expelled. The incident was explained as a matter of internal criticism and a violation of the shariʿa which necessitated his departure, according to Burhami. Bassam Al-Zarqa justifies the expulsion as a way of maintaining the party's constituency and its popular basis, which was negatively affected by Yusri's statements.[90]

Another severe crisis arose within the party, nearly toppling its chairman. This happened after he signed the final declaration of a meeting with the army chief of staff and representatives of other parties on October 1, 2011. An emergency meeting of the supreme body was summoned to revoke ʿAbd al-Ghaffur's signature who had signed without consulting the body first.[91] Strong objections were heard from some sheikhs. Some members set up a Facebook page calling for the withdrawal of confidence in the chairman, and he was aggressively attacked on his official website. ʿAbd al-Ghaffur denied the double accusation of having signed a document of supra-constitutional principles and of having consented to postpone the presidential elections until after the referendum on the constitution. He wrote on his Facebook page, in response to the sharp criticism he had received, that no document was discussed and that the issue would be up for debate in the meetings to come. He had only agreed to the document if there would be further discussion.[92]

The nomination of 15 female candidates on the party lists in the parliamentary elections raised a lot of criticism from within, for it contradicted the party's view that rejected women's participation in politics as well as any form of mixing between men and women. The daʿwa's sheikhs justified this nomination as something imposed by necessity and the interest of the nation, and not because the election regulations required at least one female candidate on each list.

We conclude from the above that, notwithstanding the strong influence of the sheikhs, their political activities helped party personnel to rid themselves of the legal discourse and get involved in issues of citizens' daily lives. In addition, new channels of dialogue were opened with intellectual and political orientations that were completely different. In fact, these introduced people to the Salafists and their positions on various issues and eased the ideological character of the discourse on the one hand; on the other, the distance between them and the rest of the political and ideological currents became shorter.[93] This is an achievement for the Salafists given their short period of political practice. Its continuation depends on the ability of party cadres to develop their performance and turn it into a new model for political action in which the influence of the sheikhs will gradually decrease, but without losing the party's popular base. We will elaborate on this at the end of this paper.

3. The Party Platform

The party's platform starts from two main points: one related to identity and the other to Islam and shariʿa. The first concern of the party is to "strengthen the cultural identity that gives the community the ingredients of its national identity,"[94] and to work on "anchoring the presence of this identity in all aspects of life and human activity." It also adheres to the terms set forth in the constitution of 1971

that relate to Islam: the reliance on Islam as state religion, Arabic as its official language, and the principles of shariʿa as the main source of legislation. The shariʿa is considered "a supreme reference for the political system of the Egyptian state, and a general system and regulatory framework for all political, social, economic, and legal endeavours." There are other details in the platform about the need to "review the penal code in accordance with article two of the Egyptian constitution." This undoubtedly classifies the Al-Nour Party as an ideological party. Correlating democracy to a supreme reference, however, is a practice adopted in other democracies as well.

The months that followed the establishment of the party witnessed somewhat divergent positions. The chairman himself declared in an interview that he personally would prefer changing the second article so it would read: "The state religion is Islam, the state language is Arabic, and the shariʿa is the source of legislation."[95] On the eve of the constitutional review committee's formation, some voices from Al-Nour Party leaders and parliamentary deputies started calling for substituting the phrase "principles of the shariʿa" with "rules of the shariʿa" or simply "the shariʿa." It is inconceivable, however, that the party would have adhered to this idea to the extent of blocking the new constitution altogether. Rather, it may have been a political manoeuvre to obtain other advantages.

The word "democracy" is mentioned five times in the platform. First, the party confirms that it aims at "achieving democracy," but "in the framework of the shariʿa." Then, the platform defines democracy procedurally: it is "a necessity" so that the people may exercise its "right to the freedom of creating political parties and guarantees those parties the freedom to exercise their activities in the light of their commitment to the constitution, the fundamentals of the nation, and public order." This means "peaceful alternation of power through free, direct, and fair elections," and also "the people's freedom to elect its representatives, rulers, and administrators; government oversight and accountability; and its removal if its deviation is confirmed." The party platform skips the expression "sovereignty of the people" and talks directly about its contents: the people's choice of its rulers, which is a good starting point. But the definition does not include the topic of citizenship as one of the requirements of democracy. Nor does the platform offer any definition of the values and principles that usually go with a democratic system, such as political tolerance, political pluralism, and others. Although some party cadres emphasize the need to judge by capability in the choice of ministers and officials and to be neutral toward political or ideological belonging, this does not allow a woman or a Copt to be chosen as head of state – there is an objection from the shariʿa.[96]

While the platform talks about preserving basic rights and public freedoms, it underlines the necessity of doing so "within the framework of the shariʿa." At the top of these rights and freedoms, the platform places an expression that affirms "the right of society to decide upon the form and contents of its contract with those who rule it and administer its general affairs, within the framework of consultation and democracy and far from authoritarianism and despotism." The platform emphasizes that the call for defining the principles of shariʿa as the main source of legislation includes "the insurance of religious freedom for the Copts and their right to appeal to their religion in matters of civil status. In all other aspects of life, public order, and rules of conduct, the state law applies to all citizens and nobody may violate it. It guarantees the achievement of the principles of social justice and represents the highest maxims of truth, justice, and equity among all citizens."

In the platform, there is a concern for morality, as it calls for integrating cultural and moral dimensions in all aspects of the process of development, politically as well as economically, legislatively, culturally and socially. It also calls for the advancement of the Arabic language, its preservation and flourishing; and for an independent Al-Azhar with a restored role in the awakening (nahda). The party demands the establishment of "a contemporary state on a modern basis which respects the rights of peaceful coexistence among all citizens, far from the theocratic model which calls for a state that claims a divine right to rule and a monopoly to the right opinion. It is also far from the irreligious model which wants to sever the nation from its roots and its cultural identity. Instead, the party calls for a state based on institutional plurality and the separation of legislative, judicial and executive powers. It works

in a balanced and integrated way, protects freedoms and brings justice among all the sons of the country, is bent on equal opportunities and the preservation of rights, and respects standards of transparency and integrity."

The platform summarizes the features of this state as: the importance of preserving basic rights and public freedoms in the context of the shariʿa;[97] complete independence of the judiciary from the executive; respect for the people's will in the election of legislative, judicial, and executive authorities; adoption of a mechanism for the election of officials in all sectors; the need to implement democracy within the framework of the shariʿa; the need to launch large media and cultural campaigns to create political awareness among the different classes; elimination of the phenomenon of "falsifying the people's will and taking away the nation's awareness of political deception;" eradication of the culture of marginalization and exclusion, tyranny and arrogance; and the existence of independent and fair regulatory bodies.

In the section on economy, the platform treats the issue of fighting corruption. Here, democracy is once more mentioned as a necessary condition for the achievement of the desired economic objectives within the system of consultation (shura). The platform states: "The practice of consultation and democracy in the framework of shariʿa" is a "necessary condition to achieve economic integration, to increase capabilities in the exploitation of economic resources, to fight poverty, and to raise the level of economic well-being for all children of society. Economic freedom cannot emerge and develop in a society that suffers political tyranny." The platform recognizes that the experiences of other countries reinforce the notion according to which "economic growth is more sustainable and persistent in democratic societies compared to those dominated by political tyranny and dictatorship."

The party's economic programme is characterized by the important role the government plays in the general scheme as well as in health, education, and research. Moreover, achieving social justice in income and wealth distribution is seen as important, and the institutions of almsgiving, endowment, and partnership (musharaka) should be promoted by the government. Attention should also be paid to research and technology in civil and military industries; the expansion of Islamic finance products based on partnership in profit and production, rather than the usurious interest-based system; anti-trust legislation; encouraging the production of strategic food commodities; opening up to Sudan; economic integration with Arab and Muslim countries; investment in human capital; fighting against the waste of public money; the retrieval of enormous amounts of stolen assets; and reform of the entire wage system.

In terms of foreign policy, the platform includes several general principles. It emphasizes that relations with other countries must be based on complementarity rather than the clash of civilizations, acknowledging the importance of the preservation of identity and culture and the criminalization of attacking and abusing others' rights by force. According to the platform, the Egyptian political decision will not be completely independent until economic independence and internal stability in politics and security are realized. As a signal of reassurance to foreign countries, the platform stresses that "foreign policy must support Egypt's national security, respect treaties and conventions, and not push the country into destructive conflicts." It should be noted here that the platform does not address the Palestinian problem or the repeated Israeli aggressions. The reference to respecting treaties and conventions, however, suggests that the party will abide by the Egyptian-Israeli agreement. This is very different from the traditional forces and parties which had, in the past, fought against the previous regime. Being opposed to Zionism and the state of Israel had been a cornerstone of their opposition. The Al-Nour Party began its trajectory free from this political commitment, ensuring political flexibility for its future.

In terms of social policy, the platform addresses the issue of women. It stresses that the party's view regarding the status of women in society is based on "full equality in human dignity between man and woman. It is important to preserve the distinction between them in their social and human roles, but

this should not affect the status of either of them." The platform also indicates that the woman is "an important component, even a fundamental pillar in the activity of the Al-Nour Party in particular and Egyptian society in general. She is free to exercise her effective, active role, and the rights bestowed upon her by the constitution." The platform considers it necessary to "activate the societal, humanitarian and political participation of women sufficiently so they can contribute to setting in motion the wheels of society as a whole." There is no doubt that these statements are broad and unconnected to the issues raised in the public sphere. The party is obviously pragmatic. In fact, it did not object to the legal stipulation to put a female candidate on every party list; it simply ranked them at the very end of the list. It did not even include pictures of its female candidates in its campaign leaflets.

4. The Al-Nour Party's Relation to other Islamist Forces and its Electoral Power

It is worthwhile observing the relation of the new-born Al-Nour Party to other parties and political forces. Although it is difficult to observe this relationship accurately in such a short time period, it is possible to point to some significant issues. Regarding the relationship between Al-Nour and the Freedom and Justice Party, we should first mention that the relation between the Salafist daʿwa and what may be called the second foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood goes back to a common origin: the Islamic Group. It emerged in the 1970s within Egyptian universities, as we have indicated above. There are some Salafist sheikhs who had pledged allegiance to the Brotherhood and later withdrew, like sheikh Muhammad Ismaʿil al-Muqaddam, and some who had been on the verge of joining the Brotherhood but refrained from it.

As we have noted, the Salafist sheikhs saw the difference between the two groups, before the January 25 revolution, as basically doctrinal. This is what drove sheikh Burhami to reply, on his website, to a question about his opinion toward the Muslim Brotherhood, and his assessment of working in their ranks. He said that the group was characterized by its distance from the Sunna, its hateful fanaticism, invalid fatwas, blind emulation, political hypocrisy, and recognition of heresies, advising the questioner to look for the people of the Sunna and to follow the community's predecessors.[98] Despite of this, some sheikhs of the daʿwa believed that the Muslim Brothers were the closest to them when they were asked, at the time of the elections, for whom they would vote; but not in the parliamentary elections, due to their prohibition of democracy. In student and labour union elections, the Muslim Brotherhood received the support of the Salafists "because they are non-legislative bodies, and those who enter them are not required to approve of something false or reprehensible," as some said.[99]

Immediately after the revolution, some Salafist sheikhs started speaking positively of the Muslim Brotherhood. Sheikh al-Muqaddam, for example, talked about them when he made clear that in times of need, we need to overcome our old animosities, that it was not a time to settle scores, and that everyone was in the same boat.[100] Similarly, some sheikhs tried to build bridges for cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood in political and electoral matters. Sheikh Muhammad Hassan spoke out about the need to communicate with the Brotherhood since they, in his opinion, were not excessively religious and were more qualified to enter political life, given their political experience.[101]

But the Salafist daʿwa's entry into political life via the Al-Nour Party posed a big challenge for the Muslim Brothers and their newly born Freedom and Justice Party. It became clear that Salafist support of the Brotherhood was on the decline, although this was not declared openly. The Brotherhood's reactions to this entry varied between understanding for the nature of the time, the easing of restrictions and the expectable entry of those who had been deprived from political action – like the Salafists – on the one hand,[102] and disapproval of their entry into politics on the other. They called to mind that they had not participated in the revolution and had even stood up against it, seeing it as sedition and as an attack on the ruler. These critics also stressed the danger of the Salafists' political participation because they, presumably, only move if there is a fatwa that tells them to.[103]

The chairman of the Al-Nour Party, ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, for his part, believes that both parties are similar in that they came out of a daʿwa group with an Islamist reference. He thinks, however, that the Al-Nour Party will reach larger segments of the Egyptian society and will build up a stronger and clearer political credibility with the people, because its popular Salafist base is more ingrained from a social point of view. ʿAbd al-Ghaffur expected, months before the elections, that there would not be a significant margin in results between Freedom and Justice and Al-Nour.[104]

At any rate, when the Al-Nour Party withdrew from the Democratic Alliance that the Muslim Brotherhood had established in preparation for the legislative elections, it became clear that it saw in the Freedom and Justice Party somewhat of a rival. The reason behind this withdrawal was a dispute about the number of seats allocated to Al-Nour and the order of the candidates' names on the electoral lists, along with the presence of non-Islamic forces in the Alliance. The latter reason may seem realistic as Al-Nour subsequently only formed coalitions with Salafist and Islamist parties, most importantly the Authenticity (Al-Asala) and Building and Development (Al-Binaʾ wa-l-Tanmiya) parties.

This rivalry and competition with the Muslim Brotherhood were confirmed by an exchange on the "Ana Salafy" website, which is supervised by sheikh Burhami. The sheikh was asked: "If you saw that a candidate of the Freedom and Justice Party was more competent and more skilled than his Salafist counterpart, would you possibly withdraw the Salafist candidate, so the more competent Brother could gain the votes, or would the competition be maintained?" Burhami responded: "It is not a matter of individual against individual, but bloc against bloc. We have a specific vision which others do not express, and every member of the Al-Nour Party will support this vision. Even if individual competences differ, or if the candidate of the Al-Nour Party is less competent, he will be part of the influential bloc; therefore, the party will not withdraw him."[105]

In fact, it is impossible to understand the relationship between the two parties during this short period. Recently, sheikh Ahmad Farid sharply criticized the performance of the Muslim Brotherhood in parliament. He stated that the Muslim Brotherhood formed a bloc with secular and liberal parties against the implementation of the shariʿa and against fixing the implementation of shariʿa regulations in the new constitution. These were the demands that the Al-Nour Party advocated in the People's Assembly. Farid criticized the statements of sheikh ʿIsam al-ʿAryan, a Brotherhood leader who had talked about a democratic civil state, underscoring that the voters had not chosen Freedom and Justice and Al-Nour to establish a democratic civil state, but to establish shariʿa.[106]

Some Brotherhood activists downplay the importance of this rivalry. They cite various reasons for it, as well as for the Salafists' unexpected election results. Khalid Hamza explains that "the organizational structure of the Muslim Brotherhood is based on a powerful organization, whereas the present situation of the Salafists as a school is based on non-organization. Salafists had never entered politics out of an organization; they had come out of the mosques, out of crowds that were under the influence of a sheikh's speech. Yet, they turned into a strong electoral force and a surprise winner in the elections because they understood the logic of elections. They were able to take off from a foundation based on identity, to mobilize supporters, and to make them feel that they, the Salafists, were on a rescue mission to protect Islam and "the Salafists" in Egypt. As a result, they achieved victory in the elections."[107]

As presidential elections drew near, there seemed to be attempts of coordination between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafist daʿwa. Meetings were held between the chairman of the party and leaders of the Brotherhood. Sheikh al-Muqaddam even called for the creation of a committee of arbitration between the two parties to avoid any conflict in the face of extreme crises, provided that the two parties would abide by the rulings of this committee. The sheikh justified his proposal by what he called "the heavy legacy" in Egypt, a responsibility which no entity could carry by itself.[108]

In Al-Nour's alliance with the "Authenticity" and "Building and Development" parties, the former played the major role. According to some Al-Nour leaders, the two smaller parties would not have

passed the 0.5 percent election threshold required from a list to enter the Assembly. Moreover, the Al-Nour Party helped Authenticity in the collection of five thousand founding members required for the creation of a party. Ashraf Thabit at least, member of the party's supreme body and currently a deputy in the People's Assembly, claims this is true, while some Authenticity leaders deny it.[109] Thabit also thinks that the Islamic Group did not have any credit in Upper Egypt. The Al-Nour Party required from the Islamic Group not to nominate anyone who had previously been accused of bloodshed or violence, and that any nominee had to enjoy a good reputation. The alliance with Building and Development, according to Thabit, aimed at the containment of this cell so they would not return to violence once again.[110]

This Salafist alliance nominated 460 candidates. The Al-Nour Party (whose membership, according to its chairman, exceeds one hundred thousand members[111]) represented the largest faction, while Building and Development ran around 70 candidates, mostly in the governorates of Upper Egypt. Authenticity nominated another 30 candidates. In the elections, this alliance obtained slightly more than 7.5 million votes, i.e. 24 percent of the seats in parliament (123 seats total: 108 for the Al-Nour Party, 12 for Building and Development, and 3 for Authenticity).[112]

In fact, ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, the party's chairman, makes no secret of the party's objective. Since its founding conference, it has planned to become Egypt's largest party within two or three years. Upon the results of the first and second phase of the 2011/2012 elections, it expected to become the first party within three years and obtain the majority of votes in the next elections.[113] Therefore, ʿAbd al-Ghaffur announced his dissatisfaction with the results which fell short of his expectations. However, he declared that they reflected the great efforts the party had made from the first moment of its inception. These efforts became apparent in the number of branch offices the party opened (more than 200), the election campaigns that reached deep into villages and cities, the diversity of activities held by the party, and the absence of other parties from the street except for the Freedom and Justice Party. ʿAbd al-Ghaffur points out that the election campaigns were self-funded, and that all contributions Salafists made to the party were unpaid. Furthermore, he denies receiving funds from the Gulf to finance the campaigns, and underscores that the party's expenditures were much lower than those of the parties in the Egyptian Bloc. Bank accounts and phones can easily be monitored.[114]

These results undoubtedly surprised many observers; they can be explained by several factors. First, the party benefited from the experience and support of the Salafist daʿwa in social work, and from its guidance to obtaining votes in the elections. Even though the party's activists had not worked in party politics before, they were able to acquire knowledge and skills in a short period of time. This happened through training sessions and intensive workshops offered by experts and specialists as well as various scientific and research centres in Alexandria and Cairo. They enabled the activists to turn their societal experience in charitable and daʿwa work into political gains in the election campaigns. What is more, the party used the factor of religion and identity to mobilize the crowds, gain votes and the support of sheikhs for its candidates, thus presenting a religious discourse overall, even if these sheikhs were not organizationally affiliated to the party.

All these factors are missing in the other, non-Islamic parties. The question is: to what extent can the party continue relying on these factors to garner votes? What if the religious motivation recedes for one reason or another – such as the increasing importance of economic and social priorities, or the failure of Islamist parties to provide effective programmes and policies? Will the law, in the future, regulate the relation between parties and "groups above parties" like the Salafist daʿwa and the Muslim Brotherhood? Will the use of religion in elections be regulated?

5. The Future of the Salafist Daʿwa's Political Activity

In the light of the above, it is likely that the party's further development will witness internal interactions and diverging opinions – especially between the sheikhs, led by Burhami, al-Shahhat, and ʿAbd al-ʿAzim, and the party's chairman and chief officials. This particularly concerns the upcoming key events for the country, such as the appointment of a founding committee to draft the new constitution and the Al-Nour Party's entry into government and executive authorities. There are, of course, concerns that the influence of the sheikhs will continue and lead to rifts within the party, which may result in the resignation of moderate members. This has happened in the past two decades within the Muslim Brotherhood. The matter will depend on the balance of powers within the daʿwa and the party, and the ability of party cadres and activists to challenge the demands of the sheikhs. If they move forward to produce a political discourse for the party's constituency, the sheikhs' influence on the party leadership and its popular basis might be gradually reduced. A push in this direction may be supported by the environment of freedom and openness the country is experiencing after the revolution. Given the absence of a Salafist organization as influential as the Muslim Brotherhood, and the fact that political activity became, after the revolution, open to all segments of society, the question will be the following: will the party officials be able to present an advanced political model that is more influential in the political sphere, far from the domination of the sheikhs and more suitable to attract a popular base, including the youth?

At this point, we can raise the following questions about the political future of the Salafist daʿwa and its new-born party:[115] will the performance of the Al-Nour Party develop to keep pace with the changes that occur on the political scene? What kind of development does the party need to change the deep-seated images about and fear of the Salafists? In our opinion, the future of political Salafism depends on its ability to develop a new political discourse that addresses priority issues in post-revolution Egypt. It should be circulated and promoted within the current in a serious way. Perhaps the first dimension of this desired political discourse consists of its general features. There are seven areas that the party leaders and officials should treat with attention and from a new perspective:

* Is their discourse constitutive? In other words, is it interested in constituting the desired systems in terms of institutional and legal arrangements, value-related references, and considering the components of cultural and national identity in all sectors – in politics, economy, the social sector, media, education, health, technology and other sectors? Or is this discourse only trying to offer quick answers to the current challenges and problems?

* Is the discourse consensual? Does it avoid going into controversial issues that will likely involve different points of view or doctrinal differences? Can this discourse offer programmes and visions rather than confine itself to criticizing the others and hunting for their mistakes?

* Is the discourse realistic? Does it focus on practical solutions to current problems that affect the citizens, and does it offer programmes that can be implemented? Or does it invoke the glories and stories of the past, addressing only the emotions of its followers? Is it more interested in documenting positions and declaring principles and values? Or is it based on a correct reading of reality, an understanding of the available opportunities, and a comprehension of what can be done considering internal and external conditions?

* Is it open? What is the discourse's position towards other Islamist forces? What is its position towards non-Islamic intellectual and political currents? What are the areas of agreement and disagreement between the party and those forces?
* Is it a forward-looking discourse? Is it interested in issues of the future that all nations try to address, such as development, justice, equality, and environmental issues? And what about countering the drawbacks of globalization and Western hegemony?

* Is it humane? That is, does the discourse emphasize the human character of the programmes and visions presented by the party? Does it see these visions as reflecting a human understanding of Islam, or as reflecting Islam itself? Will this discourse open to ideas and programmes of others? And if it does, how will it communicate with the others? What are the possible areas of joint action?

And finally, is the discourse scientific? Does it, for the presentation of its visions and programmes, rely on study, research, and expertise – from within the current or the party as well as from without? What are its sources in the understanding of politics? Are books of legacy the source? Has this discourse benefited from the literature of contemporary political science in terms of institution building, the drafting of constitutions, the administration of states, public policy making, political communication and negotiation, national security, international relations, etc.? Are there any sources in foreign languages and by non-Arab authors?

The second dimension deals with issues of priority that must be addressed by this political Salafist discourse. Here, the discourse must deal with the following questions:

* What are the reasons behind the Salafist daʿwa's entry into politics after years of keeping their distance? What are the justifications for its political positions before the January 25 revolution? How was the view in favour of party politics formulated?

* What is the relationship between the missionary Salafist current and the party-political one? What exactly is the role of the daʿwa sheikhs in the current party activities?

* What objectives do daʿwa and party target through the practice of politics and the engagement in party work? And what about the talk of foreign funding?

* How do daʿwa and party see the territorial national state? And how do they understand the main components of the contemporary state such as citizenship, nationality, and national borders?

* How do daʿwa and party view democracy as a system of governance? How do consultation (shura) and divine rule (hakimiyya) relate to democracy?

* How do the Salafist daʿwa and the Al-Nour Party view the rest of the Salafist currents? What is the relation between daʿwa and party on the one hand and between them and the other movements of political Islam, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, on the other? What are the areas of agreement and disagreement between them?

* What is the party's political position on the issues that have been raised to all Islamist currents for some decades now, such as the role of women in society and politics, the Copts and their place in the Egyptian state, ancient monuments, and all forms of art?

* How do daʿwa and party view the West? Are there ways to interact? Are there areas of cooperation? In which areas will the Salafist current resist the West?

* What does the political Salafist current think about phenomena raised in international relations, such as globalization, the dialogue of civilizations, peaceful coexistence, religious and cultural pluralism, human rights, multinational corporations, issues of development and poverty, issues of armament, free trade, terrorism, and discrimination? Is there any space for joint humanitarian action with other nations and states?

The third and final dimension relates to the wording of the discourse and the role of party leaders in disseminating and promoting it within the party's constituency. In this regard, the following

questions should be answered: Will the features of this discourse be confirmed in a written document within the party's literature? Are the party leaders genuinely convinced of the features of this discourse, or was it produced to confront others? Is there harmony and consistency among the leaders of the party regarding the use of this discourse's vocabulary, or are there multiple speakers with multiple discourses? Will this new discourse's elementary facts and features be circulated and instilled into all the individuals and classes belonging to the current or the party? Are there means of communication between current and new members, and between the party's headquarters and its branch offices in the governorates?

V. Conclusion

In this paper, we have reviewed the Salafist daʿwa in Alexandria and the evolution of its position on political activity, concluding with the experience of the Al-Nour Party after the revolution of January 25. To sum up, the Salafist daʿwa in Alexandria emerged in the 1970s after an intellectual and organizational disagreement between its sheikhs and the Muslim Brotherhood. The movement basically focused on educational and missionary work. While their views of change revolved around education and the formation of faithful individuals and communities, far from the struggle for reforming or changing the existing authority, the sheikhs of the Salafist daʿwa believe that Salafists were never detached from politics. They were engaging in political issues, without being overly preoccupied by them. Moreover, they cared about issues of legislative policy. The daʿwa continues to believe that a changing balance of powers is an important factor for Salafists to become politically active. Such a change, according to them, is a religious work that relies on divine power and requires individuals to be religious. The political struggle is not part of this, nor is confrontation with tyrannical rulers or revolt against them, given the powerful systems of repression. Furthermore, there was the legal objection that political participation seemed to require a renunciation of shariʿa principles.

Through the revolution, the balance of powers changed (although differently from what the daʿwa had called for) and so the legal objection became void. The daʿwa became politically active based on democracy, the same democracy that its sheikhs had criticized for so long. They have not provided a jurisprudential review of this transformation. The change in political circumstances surrounding the Egyptian Salafist scene – and particularly the Salafist school in Alexandria – led to a development in the practice of Salafist politics only in terms of style, without any clear and definitive development in its strategies, purposes, and objectives. Regarding the style of political practice, the followers of the Salafist daʿwa ended their boycott of politics and added party and parliamentary work to their traditional styles of daʿwa.

The collapse of the previous regime, the lifting of security restrictions, and the opening of the political field to all political currents enabled the followers of the Salafist daʿwa to integrate into political life and practice through the available mechanisms, serving the goals mentioned earlier: to build an Islamic community and individuals, and to let God's law rule. The fear of a meddling with article two of the constitution and the country's Muslim identity, which implied leaving the field to non-Islamists, as the Salafist daʿwa followers believed, strongly motivated the movement to change its position and mobilize its supporters into political action – along with other political currents which were, according to the daʿwa, opposed to the Islamist reference and the Salafist method. Since the Salafist approach to change was not consistent with these major transformations, the intellectual development (or vindication) of the Salafist daʿwa came after the political development. Justifications were offered for the use of party and parliamentary work in the post-revolution period without, evidently, addressing its purposes, objectives, and strategies. These justifications were put forward hastily but were not based on an in-depth intellectual review; nor did they depart, in general, from the

points that have been made for decades by other Islamists, in Egypt and elsewhere, to justify their political activity.

In fact, the party platform is only concerned with some procedural dimensions of democracy like the founding of a political party, participation in elections, and accepting political pluralism. It does not address anything beyond the political party and parliamentary elections or the party's requirements in terms of entitlements, treatises, and staff. Although the party platform and the political discourse of its officials were somewhat broadened to include issues like the foundations of a modern state, the protection of rights and freedoms, building a state of law and institutions, and the priority of economic development, the party does not pay the necessary attention, and maybe does not have sufficient time, to develop a new strategy allowing it to work under rapidly changing circumstances. The party needs time to read the new Egyptian reality and to understand its new equations, locally, regionally, and internationally.

We should note, in this concluding section, that the Salafist political practice in Egypt is different from that in Kuwait. The latter had first undergone an intellectual development, led basically by sheikh ʿAbd al-Khaliq ʿAbd Allah, before the occupation of Kuwait brought new political developments to the Gulf region. Nevertheless, there are some similarities between the Egyptian and Kuwaiti Salafist experiences. The political activity of the Salafists in the Al-Nour Party as well as the Salafists of Kuwait have shown that the practice of parliamentary and party work leads to a toning down of the ideological discourse, an increased preoccupation with daily life issues, and a moderation in political attitudes in general. In addition, this practice required the Salafists to cooperate with others. Many points of intersection with other politically active Islamist factions appeared. In Kuwait, despite some points of contention and disagreement between the Salafists and the Muslim Brothers, many positions of the Umma Party and the Islamic Constitutional Movement (the Brotherhood's political arm in Kuwait) converged. This concerned local and regional issues inside and outside the National Assembly. Moreover, the electoral campaigns included various aspects of coordination and cooperation.

The study of the Al-Nour Party's trajectory during the last year, and its competition with the Freedom and Justice Party and other political parties, undoubtedly reveals an evolution of the party itself and a toning down of the ideological discourse. The party has gradually moved from the far right to a conservative position. Its political positions have, in fact, become closer to those of the Muslim Brothers and the Freedom and Justice Party. This includes the demise of the theory that prohibited democracy and party activism for all the reasons we have presented above; the realism and compromise that characterizes the performance of the party's spokesmen and its deputies in parliament; and the possibility of coordination between the two sides regarding the appointment of a presidential candidate. Furthermore, the evolution of the Al-Nour Party's performance became evident in the friendly relations that unite Salafist, liberal, and leftist activists inside and outside the parliament. It also showed in the moderate declarations about the Egyptian-Israeli agreement and, most importantly, the Salafist involvement in the daily issues raised in the public sphere and in parliamentary sessions, which has led to a toning down of the ideological fierceness in their discourse in general. All this does not preclude, however, diverging points of view between the two parties in parliament and in drafting the constitution, especially in relation to identity, article two, and legal punishments. There is no doubt that this subject needs further study given the party's short experience in the practice of politics.

Notes

[1] Regarding the rise of the Islamist current in the 1970s, see: ʿAbd al-Munʿim Abu al-Futuh: Shahid ʿala tarikh al-haraka al-islamiyya fi misr(1984-1970), ed. by Husam Tammam (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2010), pp. 39-51; Gilles Kepel, Al-nabiy wa-l-farʿun, transl. by Ahmad Khidr (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 1988), ch. 5; Kamal Al-Saʿid Habib, Al-haraka al-islamiyya min al-muwajaha ila al-murajaʿa (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 2002), pp. 11-12; Richard Hrair Dekmejian, Al-usuliyya fi al-ʿalam al-ʿarabi, transl. by ʿAbd al-Warith Saʿid (Al-Mansura: Dar al-Wafaʾ, 1992), pp. 127-129; Gilles Kepel, Yawm Allah: Al-harakat al-usuliyya al-muʿasara fi al-diyanat al-thalath, transl. by Nasir Marwa (Dar Qurtuba li-l-nashr wa-l-tawthiq wa-l-abhath, Limassol, 1992), pp. 33-36; Burhan Ghalyun, Al-ijtimaʿ al-siyasi li-l-haraka al-islamiyya: muhawala li-l-fahm wa-l-tafsir, Kitab qadaya fikriyya series, 13th and 14th book, October, Cairo 1993, pp. 356-370.

[2] Habib, loc.cit., p.12. In Alexandria specifically, according to the testimony of Khalid Dawud, Islamist student activism took place under a single banner, headed by Hamid al-Dafrawi and his deputy Khalid Dawud. According to Dawud, al-Dafrawi was "the founder of Salafist, quasi-jihadist thinking" that was later lead by Muhammad Husayn ʿIsa. Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Khalid Dawud, Alexandria, Jan. 5, 2012.

[3] For more details, see: Rifʾat Sayyid Ahmad, Al-nabiy al-musallah (1): Al-Rafidun (London: Dar Riyad al-Rayyis, 1991), and Gilles Kepel, Al-nabiy wa-l-farʿun, transl. by Ahmad Khidr (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 1988).

[4] Cf. Dekmejian, loc.cit., pp. 134-159, and see also for broader details: Gilles Kepel, Al-nabiy wa-l-farʿun, transl. by Ahmad Khidr (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 1988).

[5] Some believe that the Salafist current regards many legal choices as constant, unchangeable principles, even though they are matters of ijtihad (independent judgement) that may be subject to disagreement. Therefore, those people see the Salafists' positions as characterized by a certain inertia, especially in dealing with economic, political, and social variables, which leads to battles about eliminating the opponents in the name of conserving the constants. Some have referred to this as "constantophobia." Cf. Hisham Mustafa ʿAbd al-ʿAziz, Nahdat umma (Alexandria, Dar al-Huda, 2008), pp. 106-110.

[6] The association was founded in 1912 by sheikh Mahmud Muhammad Khattab al-Sabki to revive the Sunna, to fight bidʿa (heresy), to spread the true teachings of religion and Islamic culture, and to carry out many social activities. Seven imams have succeeded one another in leading this group. The last one is the current imam, Muhammad al-Mukhtar Muhammad al-Mahdi, Professor of Higher Studies at the Men's Faculty of Islamic and Arabic Studies, Al-Azhar University, and a member of the Islamic Research Academy. Cf. the association's presentation on its website (http://alshareyah.com), last access: Feb. 7, 2012.

[7] The association was founded by sheikh Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqqi in 1926. Its goals include calling the people to pure tawhid (belief in the unity of God), following the Sunna, fighting heresy, modernization and superstition, fighting shrines and Sufi behaviour, a pure religious upbringing of the youth, reviving the Islamic heritage, establishing a Muslim society and ruling by God's revelation. Cf. the association's presentation on its website (http://www.elsonna.com, last access: Mar. 17, 2012), and the Simplified Encyclopedia of Contemporary Religions, Legal Schools, and Parties, World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Electronic encyclopedia available at the Al-Kashif (http://www.alkashf.net) and Sayd al-Fawaʾid (http://www.saaid.net) websites. Website of the encyclopedia (http://www.saaid.net/feraq/mthahb/index.htm), last access: Feb. 7, 2012.

[8] Cf. ʿAbd al-Munʿim Munib, Kharitat al-harakat al-islamiyya fi misr, Electronic book published on the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information website (http://www.anhri.net/reports/islamic-map/), last access: Feb. 7, 2012.

[9] Mamduh al-Shaykh, Al-salafiyyun min al-zill ila qalb al-mashhad (Cairo: Dar Akhbar al-Yawm, Qitaʿ al-Thaqafa, 2011), pp. 81-82. See also Rafiq Habib, Tahawwulat al-salafiyya al-muʿasara bayn al-islahiyya wa-l-ihyaʾiyya, Salafiyyun section, Islamyun.net website, May 4, 2009.

[10] Al-Shaykh, loc.cit., pp. 81-82.

[11] Cf. Ahmad Farid, Al-salafiyya qawaʿid wa usul (Alexandria: Dar al-Khulafaʾ al-Rashidin, 2011).

[12] This is true according to the writings of many sheikhs, such as Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim, Yasir Burhami, ʿAlaʾ Bakr and others.

[13] Cf. Hisham Mustafa ʿAbd al-ʿAziz, loc.cit., p.105.

[14] Loc.cit., p.105.

[15] Cf. the testimony of sheikh Yasir Burhami at the Islamyun.net website, Salafiyyun section, Oct. 5, 2009. http://islamyun.net.

[16] Testimony of sheikh Yasir Burhami, Islamyun.net website, Sep. 28, 2009 (last access: Feb. 1, 2012). See also the Salaf Voice website's interview with the sheikh, July 5, 2006, http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=156 (last access: Feb. 2, 2012). See also the testimony of sheikh Ahmad Farid, Islamyun.net website, Aug. 23-25, 2009. http://islamyun.net/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=245&Itemid=157 (last access: Feb. 8, 2012).

[17] Testimony of sheikh Yasir Burhami, Islamyun.net website, Sep. 28, 2009. (last access: Feb. 1, 2012).

[18] Interview with Yasir Burhami in Al-Fath newspaper, 2nd edition, Nov. 4, 2011.

[19] Testimony of Yasir Burhami, Islamiyun.net website, Oct. 1, 2009. (last access: Feb. 1, 2012).

[20] Interview with Yasir Burhami in Al-Fath newspaper, 2nd edition, Nov. 4, 2011.

[21] The association was made known under this name after the Ministry of Social Affairs refused to acknowledge the name "The Salafist Daʿwa."

[22] The formation of these different bodies is published on the Ana Salafy website (http://www.anasalafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=27328), last access: Feb. 2, 2012.

[23] Interview with Burhami in Al-Fath newspaper.

[24] Interview with ʿAbd Allah Shakir, Islamyun.net website, http://www.islamyun.net/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=778&Itemid=157 (last access: Feb. 7, 2012).

[25] Cf. Yasir Burhami, Shahid ʿala ʿasr al-jamaʿat al-islamiyya, loc.cit.

[26] The most important of these mosques in Alexandria are: Al-Fath al-Islami mosque in the Mustafa Kamil neighbourhood, Abu Hanifa mosque on Lavison Street in Bulkeley, Al-Imam Muslim mosque on Al-Idhaʿa Street in Bacchus, Nur al-Islam mosque in Bacchus, Ibn Kathir mosque in Fleming, Taqwa mosque in Sidi Bishr, and Al-Khulafaʾ al-Rashidin mosque in Abu Sulayman.

[27] Cf. "Al-salafiyyun yusaytirun ʿala akthar min 300 masjidan bi-l-Iskandariyya," Al-Dustur, Jan. 26, 2010.

[28] Cf. Mustafa Shafiq ʿAllam, "Silfat al-internet: Al-salafiyya wa tajalliyat al-tamaddud bi-l-fadaʾ al-raqmi," Salafiyyun section, Islamyun.net website, Sep. 26, 2009.

[29] The late Husam Tammam notes that the expansion of Salafist sheikhs to satellite television channels is a kind of "Islamization of modernity," i.e. employing the tools of modernity for Islamic mission (daʿwa). The latter was limited to issues of admonition and doctrine, since it was broadcast via the Egyptian NileSat with its well-known regulations and restrictions. Tammam remarks that the Salafists invested into satellite channels "as a means of transporting the Salafist discourse" and not as a factor influencing it. In a way, it leads to control over the audience's role and the transmission of information from one side only: that of the sheikhs. Tammam also observes that these satellite channels focussed on the so-called new religiosity, staying away from politics. This includes Arab causes that the Salafist daʿwa's discourse took into consideration, such as Palestine and Iraq. They also kept away from identity issues such as Christian missionaries or the conflicts about doctrine and jurisprudence that the Salafist sheikhs deal with outside of the satellite channels. The main reason was the desire to pursue the daʿwa aspect, and to avoid being targeted and shut down by the authorities. Cf. Husam Tammam, Al-fidaʾiyyat al-salafiyya: Hal tuqawim al-salafiyya ʿalmanat al-fidaʾiyyat?, Salafiyyun section, Islamyun.net website, May 18, 2009.

[30] All quotes in this section are from: Yasir Burhami, Al-salafiyya wa manahij al-taghyir, Sawt al-Daʿwa magazine, Electronic version, n.d., available at the Tariq al-Islam website, http://ar.islamway.com/book/672 (last access: Feb. 17, 2012).

[31] The initiative was presented during a Friday sermon. It is available on sheikh Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim's website, http://www.al-fath.net/vedio.php?request=80 (last access: Jan. 11, 2012).

[32] Loc.cit.

[33] Loc.cit.

[34] Loc.cit.

[35]In some cases, the security apparatus gave sheikhs the choice between either appearing on satellite TV channels or remaining in the mosques. They chose the mosques. Among them is sheikh Muhammad ʿAbd al-Maqsud who was banned from giving any kind of lecture for ten years.

[36] Loc.cit.

[37] Interview with sheikh Yasir Burhami by Liwaʾ al-Shariʿa website, June 12, 2008, available on the Salaf Voice website, http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=2483 (last access: March 5, 2012).

[38] ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Shahhat, Al-salafiyyun wa-l-siyasa: Asbab al-muqataʿa, Islamyun.net website, Nov. 21, 2009.

[39] Loc.cit.

[40] Loc.cit.

[41] Al-Sayyid Zayid, Luʿbat al-siyasa: Sijal bayn al-ikhwan wa-l-salafiyyin, Salafiyyun section, Islamyun.net website, Dec. 1, 2009.

[42] Yasir Burhami, Al-musharaka al-siyasiyya wa mawazin al-qiwa, Salaf Voice website, March 20, 2007.

[43] ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Shahhat, Al-siyasa manzaliq al-islamiyyun li-l-ʿunf, Salaf Voice website, Feb. 20, 2007.

[44] Yasir Burhami, Al-musharaka al-siyasiyya wa mawazin al-qiwa, loc.cit.

[45] Interview with sheikh Yasir Burhami by Liwaʾ al-Shariʿa website, loc.cit.

[46] Yasir Burhami, Li-madha taghayyara mawqif al-salafiyyin min al-musharaka al-siyasiyya?, Salaf Voice website, April 2, 2011 (last access: March 6, 2012).

[47] Interview with sheikh Yasir Burhami by Liwaʾ al-Shariʿa website, loc.cit.

[48] Yasir Burhami, Li-madha taghayyara mawqif al-salafiyyin min al-musharaka al-siyasiyya?, loc.cit.

[49] Yasir Burhami, Li-madha taghayyara mawqif al-salafiyyin min al-musharaka al-siyasiyya?, loc.cit.

[50] Interview with sheikh Yasir Burhami by Liwaʾ al-Shariʿa website, loc.cit.

[51] Cf. the interview with sheikh Yasir Burhami, Al-salafiyyun min al muqataʿa al-siyasiyya ila al-musharaka, Islam Online website, Apr. 20, 2011, available on the Salaf Voice website, http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=5290 (last access: March 17, 2012).

[52] Yasir Burhami, Al-musharaka al-siyasiyya wa mawazin al-qiwa, loc.cit.

[53] ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Shahhat, Al-salafiyyun wa-l-siyasa: Asbab al-muqataʿa, loc.cit.

[54] Abu Fihr al-Salafi, Shuyukh al-salafiyya akhtaʾu ʿandama kaffaru al-dimuqratiyya, loc.cit.

[55] Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim, Al-dimuqratiyya fi al-mizan (Alexandria: Dar al-Furqan li-Nashr al-Turath al-Islami, 1990), p. 93.

[56] Loc.cit., p. 39.

[57] Loc.cit., pp. 16-30.

[58] Yasir Burhami, Li-madha taghayyara mawqif al-salafiyyin min al-musharaka al-siyasiyya?, loc.cit.

[59] Yasir Burhami, Al-salafiyya wa manahij al-taghyir, loc.cit.

[60] Burhami writes: "The daʿwa does not accept participation in these councils called legislative either by nomination, election, or cooperation with any of the participating currents. This is due to the great possibility that it would do more harm than good given the past practices, although we admit that the disagreement among scholars on this issue is valid. They vary between obedience and disobedience, because both parties want to serve Islam and acknowledge what is evident and granted, as I mentioned in the beginning. What we see in Algeria today happened in Turkey yesterday. Democracy is like an idol made of pressed dates, made by the pagan who turns to eat it once he feels hungry. Secular rulers, once they feel threatened of losing their positions and once the Islamists are close to ruling, will rush to dissolve parliaments and parties. The army is always ready for immediate intervention to abort this democracy they invented. For these and other reasons, we believe that the parliamentary solution is not the path to take." Yasir Burhami, Al-salafiyya wa manahij al-taghyir, loc.cit.

[61] Yasir Burhami, Al-salafiyya wa-l-ʿamal al-siyasi (Alexandria: Dar al-Majd li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawziʿ, n.d.), p. 41.

[62] Abdelfattah Mady, Al-islamiyyun wa-l-thawra al-misriyya, Analyses section, Aljazeera.net website, Jan. 11, 2012.

[63] Saʿid ʿAbd al-ʿAzim, Tanbihat la budd minha hawla wilayat amr al-muslimin, Al-Fath al-Islami website, Dec. 19, 2012, http://www.al-fath.net/artical.php?request=209 (last access: Nov. 11, 2012).

[64]Interview with Burhami in Al-Fath newspaper, loc.cit.

[65] The fatwa's text is available on the Ana Salafy website, http://www.anasalafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=23685, Jan. 21, 2011 (last access: Feb. 11, 2012).

[66] Interview with sheikh Muhammad Ismaʿil al-Muqaddam, titled "Khawatir hawla al-thawra," March 6, 2011 in the Al-Fath al-Islami mosque in Alexandria.

[67] Interview with sheikh Yasir Burhami by Islamyun.net website, loc.cit.

[68] Ahmad Murad's interview with ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, Akhbar al-Yawm newspaper, Dec. 31, 2011.

[69] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Bassam al-Zarqa, Alexandria, Sep. 20, 2011.

[70] From an interview with Yusri Hammad in which he stated that the daʿwa includes dozens of experts and university professors who could not serve public affairs just through the daʿwa structures. The establishment of a political party enabled them, according to Hammad, to participate in public action. From Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Yusri Hammad, Alexandria, Dec. 7, 2011.

[71] It should be mentioned that ʿImad al-Din ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, chairman of the party, is very experienced in Islamist activism, going back to 1975. He was involved in numerous Egyptian experiences inside and outside the country. In addition, he lived and worked in Turkey for several years. From Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with ʿImad al-Din ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, Alexandria, Aug. 18, 2011. See also, about the party's emergence, Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Bassam al-Zarqa, loc.cit.

[72] As soon as the Parties Act was issued, opening the door for obtaining legal permission, party officials began to collect signatures by supporters. They finished in less than a month and submitted their papers on May 24, then obtained the legal authorization on May 12, 2011.

[73] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Bassam al-Zarqa, loc.cit. Maybe the Al-Nour party's declaration that it would dismiss its deputy Anwar Al-Balkimi from the People's Assembly, during the incident in which he falsely claimed having been assaulted, is evidence that the party abided by this moral commitment in a first test. This declaration was received with satisfaction in the public, political, and media sphere.

[74] From Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Yusri Hammad, loc.cit.

[75] In his books "Al-muslimun wa-l-ʿamal al-siyasi," "Fusul min al-siyasa al-sharʿiyya fi al-daʿwa ila Allah," and "Al-shura fi zill nizam al-hukm al-islami."

[76] Cf. the presentation of the party and its core principles on the official party website: http://www.ommahparty.com (last access: March 17, 2012).

[77] Islam Online interview with Burhami, loc.cit.

[78] Some party leaders argue that its early staff came out of the daʿwa. With time, however, sympathizers and devotees from outside this narrow circle joined in. Bassam al-Zarqa stresses that he, as the party's secretary in Alexandria, does not receive orders from the sheikhs regarding the administration of the local secretariat. Source: interview with Bassam al-Zarqa by Ahmed Zaghloul.

[79] ʿAbd al-Rahman Yusuf's interview with ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, Al-Yawm al-Sabiʿ, Nov. 17, 2011.

[80] Loc.cit.

[81] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Bassam al-Zarqa.

[82] In an interview with Ahmed Zaghloul, Yusri Hammad states: "The Salafist youth was educated in a specific manner, mostly according to shariʿa. One side of it was righteous, the other erroneous. The first is that you become very interested in change, and the words you use are warranted by Qur'an and Sunna. The second aspect is that we always look at the writings of others with skepticism. It pushes us to scrutinize them because we try to detect their errors. This point, I think, will disappear or diminish with increasing routine and opening up to society." He adds: "Our party has a legal adviser and the two cannot be separated from each other. If this ever happened, both would be lost. The party is at the forefront and the daʿwa is its legal adviser. It guides the work of the party and its members, given its belonging to and familiarity with the Salafist method. This distinguishes us from the other existing politicians who are either a university professor or a sheikh, but never both at the same time. I, for example, am a professor at the faculty of medicine, have studied Islamic law for ten years, and give lessons in mosques. Many of us combine both." Source: Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Hammad.

[83] Interview with sheikh Yasir Burhami by Islamyun.net website, loc.cit.

[84] "The party has a supreme body that meets to make decisions. In political matters that do not concern legal questions, the party decides, but when the decision has to do with shariʿa regulations, or when we need to ask the daʿwa for help, we certainly refer to them." Interview with Yusri Hammad, loc.cit.

[85] Interview with Bassam al-Zarqa, secretary of the Al-Nour Party in Alexandria.

[86] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Bassam al-Zarqa, loc.cit. Concerning the Salafists' lack of experience in the practice of politics, some Salafist authors do not see it as given. The Salafists founded parties and associations, held congresses, flocked to the "marches of a million," published newspapers, influenced the street during the referendum, and introduced official spokesmen to the public. On the other hand, the skills that their opponents talk about are related to the policies of lying, fraud, evasion and mass deception. Cf. Walid Shukr, Al-khibra al-siyasiyya wa-l-wahm al-kabir, Ana Salafy website, http://www.anasalafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=31331 (last access: March 2, 2012). Burhami also thinks that "politics and administration belong to the humanities. People invented them through practice and not through diplomas and studies. Study and research come later and are dependent on the practice of political leaders who did not obtain any diploma – yet their practice becomes the reference for diplomas and studies." Cf. Burhami, Al-salafiyyun wa-l-hadatha al-siyasiyya, Ana Salafy website, Nov. 18, 2011, http://www.anasalafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=31001 (last access: Feb. 15, 2012).

[87] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with ʿImad al-Din ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, Alexandria, Aug. 18, 2011.

[88] The article that caused this crisis is available on its author's website (http://www.abdelfattahmady.net).

[89] Link to the sheikh's lecture on the Ana Salafy website, http://www.anasalafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=30118 (last access: March 7, 2012).

[90] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Bassam al-Zarqa, loc.cit.

[91] The supreme body of the party consists of 17 individuals who take decisions based on the majority (of those present or of the total number). The party's chairman only has one vote. It should be mentioned that its members' ages range between 28 and 53. This is of course unusual for an Egyptian party. Source: Interview with Yusri Hammad, loc.cit.

[92] Source: ʿImad al-Din ʿAbd al-Ghaffur's official Facebook page (comment from Oct. 1, 2011), http://www.facebook.com/dr.emad.official (last access: March 7, 2012).

[93] This issue may be better understood from an interview with Yusri Hammad, spokesman of the party. He called the Salafist cadres who entered the political field "daily life personnel," as opposed to daʿwa personnel. They benefited from the atmosphere of freedom and openness in the media after the revolution and entered into dialogue with other currents. Source: Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Hammad.

[94] All passages quoted in this section are from the party platform. The source is a private copy of the platform presented by its chairman.

[95] Interview by Nashwa al-Hawfi with ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, Al-Misri al-Yawm, March 15, 2012.

[96] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Yusri Hammad, loc.cit.

[97] These rights include:

1. The right of society to decide upon the form and contents of its contract with those who rule it and administer its general affairs, within the framework of consultation and democracy and far from authoritarianism and despotism.

2. The right of society to determine the political, economic, cultural and social choices of the state through institutions representing it that are responsible, transparent, and are formed with full credibility, freedom, and integrity.

3. The right of society to elect those who will manage and organize its general affairs.

4. The right of society to assess, monitor, and hold accountable those who manage and organize its general affairs.

5. The right of society to organize itself and express diverse choices.

6. The right of society to protect itself against all kinds of abuse, excess of power, and tyranny.

7. The right of society to maintain the human dignity of all its members in its economic, cultural, and social manifestations. This includes work, a decent life, a good livelihood, sufficient purchasing power, free health services, free primary education, and adequate housing at appropriate prices for the general public's means.

8. The right of citizens and society to uphold the collective respect of individual's private property and homes.

9. The right of society to maintain private property and honest, free, transparent, and responsible economic competition that does not hurt the interests of society as a whole, or of its segments.

[98]The text of the response to the question is available on the Salaf Voice website, dated Feb. 5, 2007, at the following link: http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=525 (last access: March 11, 2012).

[99] Interview by ʿAli ʿAbd al-ʿAl with ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Shahhat, On Islam website, Nov. 21, 2010, http://www.onislam.net/arabic/newsanalysis/newsreports/islamic-world/126668-salafia.html (last access: March 17, 2012).

[100] Interview with sheikh Muhammad Ismaʿil al-Muqaddam, titled "Khawatir hawla al-thawra," March 6, 2011 in the Al-Fath al-Islami mosque in Alexandria, published on the Salaf Voice website.

[101] Episode titled "Al-daʿwa al-salafiyya fi misr baʿd thawrat 25 yanayir," Al Jazeera Mubasher channel, March 11, 2011.

[102] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Khalid Hamza, Chief editor of the Ikhwan Wiki website, Al-Mansura, Dec. 31, 2011.

[103] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Midhat al-Haddad, head of the administrative bureau in Alexandria, Jan. 5, 2012.

[104] Interview with ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur in Akhbar al-Yawm, loc.cit.

[105] The text of the sheikh's response is available on the Salaf Voice website, dated Dec. 6, 2011, http://www.salafvoice.com/article.php?a=5850 (last access: Feb. 15, 2012).

[106] El-Gornal website, March 12, 2012, http://elgornal.net/news/news.aspx?id=528937 (last access: March 15, 2012).

[107] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Khalid Hamza, loc.cit.

[108] Al-Misriyyun, March 11, 2012.

[109] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Ashraf Thabit, Alexandria, Jan. 4, 2012.

[110] Ahmed Zaghloul's interview with Ashraf Thabit, loc.cit.

[111] Akhbar al-Yawm interview with ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, loc.cit.

[112] Election results are from the State Information Service website, http://www.sis.gov.eg/VR/election2011/html/ress.htm (last access: March 12, 2012).

[113] Akhbar al-Yawm interview with ʿImad ʿAbd al-Ghaffur, loc.cit.

[114] Loc.cit.

[115] See for this matter: Abdelfattah Mady, Asʾilat al-khitab al-salafi al-jadid, Al-Shuruq newspaper, Dec. 19, 2011, and Abdelfattah Mady, Al-salafiyyun wa-l-siyasa fi misr, Aljazeera.net website, March 1, 2012.