

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS INSTITUTE**

MASTER THESIS



**CONTESTED SOVEREIGNTY: THE RELATION
BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE RELIGIOUS FIELD
IN EGYPT DURING THE PANDEMIC 2020/2021**

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**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. HEBA RAOUF EZZAT**

ISTANBUL, 2021

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by

ALYAA ALI SAYED

**The Thesis submitted to the Alliance of Civilizations Institute in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Civilization
Studies**

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ISTANBUL, 2021

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Civilization Studies.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ÖZ

MISIR'DA DEVLET İLE DİNİ ALAN ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ 2020/2021 PANDEMİSİ
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Coronavirüs krizinin ilk kıvılcımı ile bu yeni virüs, bilim, sağlık, insan, din ve devlet arasındaki ilişki hakkında birçok soruyu beraberinde getirdi. Pandemi, virüsün varoluşsal bir güvenlik tehdidi oluşturması nedeniyle dini hatırlamayı gerekli kıldı. Ancak, modern devletin dine başvurması, yalnızca tarihsel olarak dini kontrol etmek ve kapsamını belirlemek için kurulan dini kurumları aracılığıyla. Bu tez, pandeminin patlak vermesi sırasında Mısır'daki dini kurumların geri çağrılmasını ve dini kurumlar ile devlet arasındaki iktidar mücadelesinin dinamiklerini tartışmaktadır. Nazih Ayubi'ye (1996) göre Mısır'daki devlet, dini kurumların pandemiye kontrol altına alması için daha fazla alan sağlama konusunda bir ikileme karşı karşıya kaldı; ancak bu durum, devletin genişleyen hâkimiyeti nedeniyledir. Bu tez Bourdieu'nun dini alan teorisine başvurularak pandemi sırasında devlet, toplum ve dini kurumlar arasındaki bu etkileşimi üç rekabet düzeyinde analiz etmektedir. Bu üç rekabet düzeyi şunlardır: 1) Dini alanı ve resmi din kurumlarını tekelleştiren devlet, 2) resmi dini kurumlar ve 3) resmi dini kurumlar ve resmi olmayan dini aktörler. Bu analiz, devletin toplumsal egemenliğine yaptığı vurguyu dikkate alsa da, devleti tartışılabilir bir nesne ve bir mücadele alanı olarak görmektedir. Bu sebeple mücadelenin analizi çeşitli düzeyleri içerir: 1) fetvalar, zekat ve toplumun ahlaki liderliği açısından sosyal düzey (2) camiler açısından mekansal düzey, (3) anayasa açısından yasal düzey ve (4) uluslararası düzey ve medya düzeyi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dini Kurumlar, Salgın,

ABSTRACT

CONTESTED SOVEREIGNTY: THE RELATION BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE RELIGIOUS FIELD IN EGYPT DURING THE PANDEMIC 2020/2021

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With the first spark of the Coronavirus crisis, the novel virus opened many questions about the relationship between science, health, people, religion, and the state. The pandemic made it necessary to recall religion because the virus posed an existential security threat. According to Norris and Engelhardt (2004), religion flourishes where people lack existential security. However, the invocation of religion by the modern state is only through its religious institutions, which were established historically to control religion and define its scope. The thesis discusses the recall of religious institutions in Egypt during the outbreak of the pandemic according to maps and the dynamics of the struggle for power between religious institutions and the state. According to Nazih Ayubi (1996), the overstating State in Egypt faces a dilemma to provide more space for religious institutions to participate in controlling the pandemic; however, this will be on the account of the extending domination of the state. By applying Bourdieu's theory of the religious field, the thesis analyzes these maps of interactions between the state, society, and religious institutions during the pandemic on three levels of competition between (1) the State that monopolizes the religious field and official religious institutions, (2) among official religious institutions, and (3) official religious institutions and non-official religious actors. Although the analysis considers the state's emphasis on its social dominance, it views the state as a contested object and an arena of struggle. Therefore,

the analysis of struggle includes various levels; (1) social level, in terms of fatwas, zakat, and the moral leadership of society, (2) spatial level, in terms of the mosques, (3) legal level, in terms of the constitution, and (4) international level and media level.


Keywords: Religious institutions, overstating, Pandemic.



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INTRODUCTION

With the Coronavirus crisis, humanity felt confused and panicked. The small virus caused an enormous shock to humanity's confidence in its epistemological visions and social, political, and economic patterns. The Pandemic has opened many questions to rethink about the self and the other and questions about nature and man, health and religion, State, citizenship, and globalization. The virus seemed to be a test of humanity in all existential and cognitive spaces. The Pandemic has coincided with a change in maps and power relations at global, international, and local levels. With the increasing complexities of the new situation imposed by Coronavirus and the State of uncertainty and panic that prevailed in the world, alternative mechanisms and new prospective were necessary to be adopted to confront the repercussions of the Pandemic.

The Coronavirus represented a "new reality"¹ that necessitated new theories to explain what is happening and devise methods for adaptation, containment, and crisis management and predict and control the phenomenon in the future. This epistemological interaction with the Coronavirus phenomenon considered the crises as a driving force for knowledge development. According to Thomas Kuhn's theory about the structure of scientific revolutions,² the change in science occurs when the prevailing theories fail to explain the phenomena. The need for new interpretations happened when the movement of the world is faster than the ability of science to explain, which is what happened in the Coronavirus crisis. Thus, Coronavirus is considered a paradigm shift where economics, politics, religion, and communication intertwine and interact with a health problem.³ Therefore, the post-Corona world will be different at all levels, beginning with individuals and society to the State and institutions, then the international relations and globalization.

¹ Alessandro Figus, "Coronavirus COVID - 19, a Complex Issue between Health, Economy, Politics, and Communication," *Geopolitical, Social Security and Freedom Journal* 3, no. 1 (2020): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.2478/gssfj-2020-0001>.

² Thomas S Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Princeton University Press, 2021.

³ Figus, "Coronavirus COVID - 19, a Complex Issue between Health, Economy, Politics, and Communication."

At the global level the Coronavirus called for talking about the global risk community according to Ulrich Beck's theory which argues about increasing the risks to which societies are exposed due to the rapid modernization and globalization process.⁴ According to Beck, new global threats have emerged due to globalization, such as environmental pollution, global warming, global terrorism, and finally, pandemics. The pandemic also imposed a state of war worldwide where the virus was considered a non-invisible global enemy because it is highly contagious; consequently, the world witnessed a rise in securitization where the definition of security threats expanded to include pandemics.⁵

At the state level, the securitization response to the Coronavirus was accompanied by the imposition of the state of exception. Many countries declared a state of emergency due to the pandemic, which "gave additional powers to the authorities and led to the militarization of the response in some countries".⁶ The military engagement in health-related activities was obvious in imposing curfew and quarantine, carrying out disinfection work, building hospitals and isolation places, and producing health supplies.⁷ At the same state level, the pandemic revealed the State's capabilities in dealing with crises locally, in light of uncertainty and the absence of information, and determined the position of science and experts from the State and society. The virus showed how the State gives priority to human life during its imposition of precautionary decisions such as closing the borders and suspending travel, study, and religious gatherings at the expense of other political, religious, and economic considerations. The pandemic has also revealed the extent to which the State could adhere to ethical standards during difficult

⁴ Ulrich Beck, "Cosmopolitanism as Imagined Communities of Global Risk," *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 10 (2011): 1346–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211409739>.

⁵ Dionysios Stivas and Krzysztof Sliwinski, "Securitizing Coronavirus: Global Risks, Responses, and Consequences," *Global-e: A Global Studies Journal* 13, no. 61 (2020): 1–6, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=145735980&site=ehost-live>.

⁶ Nunes, "The COVID-19 Pandemic: Securitization, Neoliberal Crisis, and Global Vulnerabilization." p1-2

⁷ Fawzia Gibson-Fall, "Military Responses to COVID-19, Emerging Trends in Global Civil-Military Engagements," *Review of International Studies* 47, no. 2 (2021): 155–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210521000048>.

circumstances in adopting harsh policies such as "herd immunity"⁸ and "the right to try"⁹ policies that met some social rejection.

On the other hand, the pandemic presented a challenge to secularism in the modern State. All social thinkers of the nineteenth century believed that religion would gradually diminish, and its significance would decrease with the industrial society.¹⁰ However, the religion decline theory has been criticized, as the reality has proven that secularization theory is experiencing sustainable challenges during history.¹¹ One of these challenges to the secularization theory is revealed with the pandemic. Although one of the explanations for the Pandemic is that it is a punishment from God because people have turned away from religion, the scientist Engelhardt and Pippa Norris, in their book "The Sacred and the Secular: Religion and Politics in the World", suggest the opposite.

Norris and Englehart argue that the greater the level of existential security a society can offer, the less likely its members are to be religious. They explain that religion assures people that the universe follows a plan, and if they follow the rules, everything will be good, in this world or the next.¹² This belief reduces stress and lets people let go of anxiety and focus on dealing with their immediate problems. According to Norris and Engelhardt, the existential security theory is based on the idea that religion arises where people lack existential security, which explains the decline in religiosity in most wealthy societies where social welfare is available. However, Coronavirus as a global threat was accompanied by the confusion and inability of states and governments to provide decisive reassurances. Even though the Coronavirus has led to social distancing and prevention of religious gatherings and collective prayers, which appears to reduce the religious space, religious institutions have been active in other areas. Religious institutions presented an open religious discourse in interpreting the pandemic and deny the narrative that pandemic is a

⁸ "Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Herd Immunity, Lockdowns and COVID-19," accessed August 10, 2021, https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/herd-immunity-lockdowns-and-covid-19?gclid=CjwKCAjwx8iIBhBwEiwA2quaq-vSjAkSi_lydeY6xnugDMbqjr2yLJKer23iY3IVcb7y2AskiDXJ0BoCgq0QAvD_BwE#.

⁹ "Right to Try | FDA," accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.fda.gov/patients/learn-about-expanded-access-and-other-treatment-options/right-try>.

¹⁰ Pippa Inglehart and Ronald Norris, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

¹¹ Inglehart and Norris, *Sacred and Secular*, 3.

¹² Inglehart and Norris, 231.

punishment from God and provided the necessary fatwas for precautionary and mitigating measures. The religious institution was present strongly to organize attendance mechanisms at mosques and collective religious ceremonies. The religious institutions also provided financial and moral support at the local and international levels. Accordingly, official religious institutions gained a new floor in their power's struggle with the State. Therefore, the pandemic imposed a reconfiguration of the State's dominance over the religious field and society.

On the other hand, we can see that the Corona crisis imposed a return of the State and governments that intervene and extends its dominance over society, health, and the economy through exceptional measures to control the pandemic.¹³ Moreover, the state's surveillance, coercion, and militarization can be exacerbated through the exceptional State necessitated due to the pandemic. The expansion of the State's dominance due to the exceptional situation of the pandemic coincides with the rise of religion as a transcendent force that imposed itself forcefully in moments of existential threat and panic that occurred during the pandemic. At the same time, it seems that when the pandemic put people's lives at stake, trust in science was restored therefore the state was forced somehow to adhere to the recommendations of the World Health Organization and presented experts to manage the crisis at the expense of the state's extending dominance.

1.1. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

My research question is, how does the relationship between the State and religious institutions in Egypt reflect the conflict over the power relations, and how does the response of these religious institutions during the Covid-19 Pandemic reflect these power struggles.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

The thesis started with the discussion of power relations and the intersection of fields between the state and religious institutions on one side, and society on the other side. The thesis considers

¹³ | Krastev, "Seven Early Lessons from the Coronavirus," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 2020, http://www.afaemme.org/sites/default/files/commentary_seven_early_lessons_from_the_coronavirus.pdf.

the realistic view of power as the main dynamic driver of human history.¹⁴ As Michael Mann (1986) explains, humans are rational creators, therefore, a sufficient number of them seek to advance their interests through power struggles, which represent the basis of social interaction.¹⁵ The thesis builds on the idea of the power relations between the state and religious institutions according to Nazih Ayubi's insights on the nature of the overstating state, and Michael Mann's ideas on the power relations in sociology and the differentiated types of state power as well as Bourdieu's concepts of power and field.

1.3. FRAMING THE EXPRESSIONS

1.3.1. The Concept of the Field

Bourdieu agrees with realism in assuming that there is a permanent struggle of power in social life, "people who hold power or capital act, whether they are aware of it or not, in such a way as to perpetuate or increase their power and their capital."¹⁶ Bourdieu uses the term "capital" to refer to various sources of power like political, economic, religious capital. Fields according to Bourdieu are "structured spaces of dominant and subordinate positions organized around one type of capital".¹⁷ The sum of these intertwined fields constitutes society. Thus, Bourdieu assumes that power struggles penetrate the entire social body.¹⁸ Consequently, the struggle of power is what actually binds the society together where "actors take up positions relationally, in opposition to others, and it is the system of oppositions that gives unity."¹⁹

1.3.2. Institutions

However, Bourdieu believes that in complex societies, relations of power are not "established directly between individuals; they are set up, in objectivity, among institutions".²⁰ From here, institutions gain their position in this struggle of power. Bourdieu explains the mechanism of the

¹⁴ Hazem Kandil, *The Power Triangle: Military, Security, and Politics in Regime Change* (U.S.A: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016).p,1.

¹⁵ Michael Mann, *The Source of Social Power, Volume1, A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*, vol. 148 (n: Cambridge University Press, 1986).p.4.

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State. Lectures at the College de France, 1989-1992* (polity press, 2014).p,266.

¹⁷ Kandil, *The Power Triangle: Military, Security, and Politics in Regime Change*.p,2.

¹⁸ Kandil, P,4.

¹⁹ David L, Swartz. *Symbolic power, politics, and intellectuals: The political sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. University of Chicago Press, 2013.p,59.

²⁰ Bourdieu, *On the State. Lectures at the College de France, 1989-1992*.p,132.

institution's work, although it is hierarchical and is managed from the top, it is not possible to control its performance completely because "an institution exists twice, both in ... the objectivity of regulations and in the subjectivity of mental structures in tune with these regulations."²¹

Where religious leaders and workers in religious institutions acquire a "set of taken-for-granted beliefs (Doxa) and practical dispositions (habitus) that orient them toward advancing their interests without much reflection".²² From this institutional level, power relations become bolder for those who "admit that the game is worth playing and that the stakes created in and through the fact of playing are worth pursuing".²³ Therefore, these institutions and their officials are seen as "agents who have made the state, and have made themselves into state agents in order to make themselves the holders of state power".²⁴

1.3.3. State

State according to Bourdieu 'overshadows all fields'²⁵ as the state performs three simultaneous roles: player, referee, and goalpost".²⁶ As a player, the state is the "field of high public office",²⁷ where in the case of religious institutions the ruling regime is the one who appointed the officials and Ulama. The state is also a referee who made the rules of the game power and manipulates competitors.²⁸ The state appears as a goalpost in the religious field "the space of play in which holders of various forms of capital struggle in particular for power over the state, that is, over the statist capital that grants power over the different species of capital".²⁹ Although Bourdieu tends to emphasize the state social dominance, he agrees with Mann's view about the state as a contested object and an arena of struggle.³⁰ Mann conceives the state as a "polymorphous power network" "that crystallizes in different forms according to the reactions between " power

²¹ Bourdieup,115.

²² Kandil.P,3.

²³ Bourdieu, p,77.

²⁴ Bourdieu.p,38.

²⁵ Bourdieu.p,367.

²⁶ Kandil.p,4.

²⁷ Bourdieu.p,91.

²⁸ Bourdieu. P,137.

²⁹ Bourdieu.P,114-115.

³⁰ Kandil.p,5.

holders."³¹ Timothy Mitchell also has the same idea as he explains that “the boundary between the state with society appears elusive, porous, and mobile.”³²

The conflicted relationship between religious institutions and the state could be described by Bourdieu's phrase as an “armed peace between ‘hostile brothers’” marked by constant strife over “the dominant principle of domination”.³³ Therefore, the relation between the state and religious institutions is fluctuating between cooperation and competition where the official religious institutions are considered “both accomplices and opponents—accomplices in the use of power, and opponents in competition for ... the monopoly of a particular form of power which claims to be the only legitimate one”.³⁴ The power struggle creates a kind of negotiation in which religious institutions make attempts to expand their influence when possible, and retreat, when necessary, intending to maximize their influence on society.

1.3.4. Overstating State

The thesis argues that the existential security threat caused by Coronavirus has enforced the Egyptian state to give more space for socially influential power during the pandemic, whether religion and its official institutions or science, by calling experts to lead the scene. This participatory situation for spaces is unfamiliar with the Arab State, which Nazih Ayoub described as the over-stating State, that tends to expand its hegemony over all spaces with its authoritarian power. However, the state realizes that it needs extra power above its despotic one to control the pandemic; therefore, the state sought to combine its two types of power, according to Michael Mann, the despotic and infrastructural power. The state's activation of the infrastructural power was through calling the socially influential actors who can penetrate social spaces during the pandemic. The fact that religious institutions invaded many spaces in Egyptian society as it deals with many spaces of mosques, sermons, imams, religious guidance, religious education, zakat networks, and charitable works, and it also has an international and media presence. These make them an influential element in the state's infrastructural power.

³¹ Mann, *The Source of Social Power, Volume1, A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*.p,18-20.

³² Timothy Mitchell, “THE LIMITS OF THE STATE: BEYOND STATIST APPROACHES AND THEIR CRITICS Why the State Was Abandoned: Seeking a " Total Science "" 85, no. 1 (1991).p,77.

³³ Bourdieu.P,22-25.

³⁴ Bourdieu. P,289.

I argue that the urgent Coronavirus crisis put the Egyptian State in a real dilemma; between providing independent space for socially influential actors, such as religious institutions, to enhance the state infrastructural power to control the Pandemic; however, this will be at the expense of the State's space and its expanded hegemony. The State is worried about providing independent space to influential actors which means more opportunities for these new actors, and these can be used later in the mobilization against the State.

1.3.5. Institutionalization of Religion

Religion in Arab societies is considered a central force in society. Therefore, the modern state sought to institutionalize religion in official institutions, and then control these religious institutions administratively and economically to ensure their loyalty and support the legitimacy of the regime.³⁵ Moreover, the state uses religious institutions as an element of its infrastructural power that enables it to penetrate religious and social spaces that cannot be reached by its despotic power. Official religious institutions in Egypt include Dar Al-Ifta, Al-Azhar, and the Ministry of Endowments. According to the historical background of each institution and the degree of autonomy from the State, cooperation and confrontational relationship with the State are configured. The response of these official religious institutions during the Pandemic is shaped according to the same map of interactions with the state and society.

1.3.6. Religious Market

Bourdieu's religious market theory suggests that the religious capital is like the economic one, where religious actors produce religious goods to meet the needs of consumers from society.³⁶ The theory explains that religious participation in society is primarily influenced by the institutionalization and regulation of religion by the state.³⁷ The theory predicts an increase in religious participation with increased religious pluralism and less state regulation of religious institutions. Through the religious field and power struggles, a kind of competition over the religious field has appeared at three levels. First, competition in the religious field between

³⁵ Mohamed, Sirelkhatim. "Authority in Islam: The Institutionalization of Islam and the Elusive Transfer of Authority from Society to State," *Journal of Georgetown University-Qatar Middle Eastern Studies Student Association* 2015, no. 1 (2015): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.5339/messa.2015.2>.

³⁶ Pierre, Bourdieu. "Genesis and structure of the religious field." *Comparative social research* 13, no. 1 (1991): 1-44.

³⁷ Bradford, Verter. "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu," *American Sociological Association* 21, no. 2 (2003).

religious institutions and the State, second, between religious institutions and each other, and third, between official religious institutions and non-official religious actors. This competition over the religious field has extensively intersected with the response of these actors to the Coronavirus pandemic.

My central hypothesis depends on the assumption that the relationship between the State and official religious institutions fluctuates between cooperation and competition over space. I attribute this situation to the nature of the "over-stating" state, as Nazih Ayub described, in terms of the state extending its hegemony on all social, economic, and religious spaces. My second assumption is according to Bourdieu's theory. I suggest that there are three levels of competition in the religious field between the overstating State that monopolizes the religious field and official religious institutions including Al-Azhar, Dar al-Ifta, Endowments, and non-official religious actors. The analysis will be in four variables: (1) at the social level, in terms of the religious discourse, fatwas, zakat fund, and the moral leadership of society, (2) at the spatial level, in terms of the mosques and religious gatherings space, (3) at the legal level, in terms of acquisition of constitutional powers, and (4) at the international level.

1.4. METHOD

In chapter I, the thesis analyses the power struggles between religious institutions and the state in the religious field in five domains; (1) the religious discourse level, in terms of, fatwas, and the moral leadership of society, (2) the spatial level, in terms of the mosques and religious gatherings space, (3) the financial level zakat and charitable work, (4) the international level, and (5) the media level. In chapter II, it reassesses these competitive levels again after adding the Covid-19 factor, considering time, speed, and health threat factors. The study relied on previous research, official statements, interviews, media reports, and official online platforms.

CHAPTER I

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND THE STATE: BETWEEN EXTENDING SOVEREIGNTY AND MAXIMIZING INFLUENCE IN SOCIETY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the modern Arab State and its societies is seemingly ambiguous since the borders between the state and society spaces are very complex and intertwined. The modern Arab State is described by Nazih Ayoubi as an "over-stating" state, in the sense of being over-extended. This kind of expansion covers both "the size of the state machine and the role of the State in the economy and society".³⁸ The ambiguity between the space of the State and society is mainly due to the historical growth of the Arab State as an imported western product. According to Ayoubi, the state is a "European phenomenon"³⁹ that developed between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries. The western perception of the State concentrated on power and hegemony.

According to Max Weber, "state is the form of human community that (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a particular territory."⁴⁰ However, Weber

³⁸ Nazih N. Ayoubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, Paperback (I. B. Tauris, 1996).

³⁹ Ayoubi.p3

⁴⁰ Max Weber, *Max Weber: The Vocation Lectures*, ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong and Translation, *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2004).p33.

restricted the state monopoly of power by the concept of legitimacy. Weber mentioned three inner justifications for legitimacy; traditional, charismatic, and legal.⁴¹ In the case of the Arab State, the Western model of the State was taken out of its context and reconfigured on the Arab societies with different cultural environments and radically different historical and intellectual backgrounds.⁴² Therefore the Arab State fundamentally lacks the justification for its legitimacy, which is necessary for its permanence. Moreover, according to the Gramscian perception of the state, the state requires a "collective will" that emerges from a solid ideology that forms a "historical block".⁴³ This organized historical ideology is embodied in state institutions and administration. The modern Arab State does not have this solid historical ideology that creates a solid social mass to support it.

The modern state tries to make up for the deficiency and justify its hegemony by adhering to different ideologies and mobilize society to rally around it. In Egypt, ironically, these ideologies are not fixed but are radically changed by historical circumstances. For instance, President Jamal Abd Al-Nasser (1918 – 1970) advocated Arab nationalism, while the current regime (2013-2021) called for reviving the ancient Pharaonic heritage as an authentic Egyptian ideology, refusing adherence to the Arabic or Islamic ideology.⁴⁴

In terms of legitimacy, the Egyptian regime always surrounds itself with institutions that have influence and historical presence in the Egyptian society to support the regime legitimacy. One of the most influential institutions in Egyptian society is the religious institution.⁴⁵ For instance, at the moment of broadcasting the statement of July 3, 2013, in which Al-Sisi announced the isolation of the first elected civilian president Mohamed Morsi and declared the suspension of the constitution, in this critical moment, Sheikh of Al-Azhar was present as a representative of a long-standing religious institution, Al- Azhar and the Pope of the Copts the Orthodox 11, Tawadros representing the church and other political and social figures.

⁴¹ Weber.p34.

⁴² Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*.p4.

⁴³Ercan, Gündoğan. "Conceptions of Hegemony in Antonio Gramsci's Southern Question and the Prison Notebooks." *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry* 2, no. 1 (2008): 45-60.

⁴⁴ Ofir Winter and Assaf Shiloah, "Egypt's Identity during the El-Sisi Era: Profile of the 'New Egyptian,'" *Strategic Assessment* / 21, no. 4 (2019).

⁴⁵ Nathan J. Brown, "Contention in Religion and State in Postrevolutionary Egypt," *Social Research* 79, no. 2 (2012): 531–50.

On the other side, in contrast to the expression of the "over-stating" which means the expansion of the State, Nazih Ayubi also explains that the over-stating of the modern Arab State indicates an overestimation of the actual strength of the State and its effectiveness.⁴⁶ Therefore, the modern Arab State is expanding but flaccid State; it is not as strong or effective as it seemed. According to that, the Arab states tend to be a "fierce state that often resorts to crude coercion to preserve itself, but it is not a strong state".⁴⁷

Michael Mann differentiates between two types of state power; the despotic power imposed by the state "without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups",⁴⁸ and infrastructural power which is "the capacity of the state to penetrate civil society and to implement logistically political decisions".⁴⁹ In the social domain, the Egyptian state is trying hard to combine these two types of power to dominate society by adopting two strategies: (1) containment strategy; the state resorts to containing and adapting the social power and colonizing it, and (2) the strategy of exclusion, as the state resorts to rejecting and marginalizing any external social power.⁵⁰ The modern Egyptian State has been aware of the symbolic and influencing power in the society, on top of it, religion, so it restricts the religious power in an official religious institution and uses them as an element of its infrastructural power. The modern State does not recognize the non-institutional bodies, and if any competing social power appears, the State tries to contain it, accordingly, any understanding of the nature and role of the religious institution should be through the modern Arab State because it is an entirely modern product produced by the State to dominate the religion field and frame it.

This institutionalization of religion by the modern Egyptian State restricts religion into official bodies such as Al-Azhar and Dar al-Ifta, which makes those religious institutions possess double sovereignty; one is derived from the sovereignty of the modern State and other is driven by seeing itself the embodiment of Islam.⁵¹ On that basis, Egypt's religious institutions could be

⁴⁶ Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*.p3

⁴⁷ Ayubi.p4

⁴⁸48 Michael, Mann, "The autonomous power of the state: its origins, mechanisms and results." *European Journal of Sociology/Archives européennes de sociologie* 25, no. 2 (1984): 185-213.

⁴⁹ Mann. P189.

⁵⁰ Holger Albrecht and Eva Wegner, "Autocrats and Islamists: Contenders and Containment in Egypt and Morocco," *Journal of North African Studies* 11, no. 2 (2006): 123–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629380600704688>.

⁵¹ Mohamed, "Authority in Islam: The Institutionalization of Islam and the Elusive Transfer of Authority from Society to State."p,1.

considered authoritarian-made institutions established to create a framework for religion in society by presenting the official Islamic without any competing reading on the State.

On the other side, Arab society is a religious society in which politics and religion intersect closely.⁵² In Egypt, religion enters into governance space as the Ministry of Education develops religious textbooks, and the constitution stipulates compliance with the provisions of Sharia. The mufti of the State provides interpretations of Sharia in the personal status and permits execution of judgments. Consequently, religion is a vast and fertile space in the modern Egyptian State subjected to many interactions at many levels. However, the general orientation of the modern Egyptian State is secular; it tends to activate religion to serve its purpose.

1.2. RELIGIOUS FIELD AND THE MODERN ARAB STATE: HISTORICAL VIEW.

With the historical process of building the modern State in the Arab world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the relationship between religion and the State has been reshaped in different contexts in each country.⁵³ Therefore, we cannot understand the changes in the religious field "independently of the wider processes of change in society as secularization is one such historical process".⁵⁴ Colonialism was also a fundamental factor in reshaping the religious field by restricting religion in official institutions in the modern State. The Western imperialist powers wanted to rationalize the administration of the occupied countries; therefore, they sought to organize religion and determine its scope and domain.

Egypt in the nineteenth century was following the Ottoman Empire, the Sharia courts were the main judicial body for Muslims in Egypt in the Ottoman era, and there were the Milliyya courts for the Christian and Jewish sects in Egypt. These Sharia courts were, in the beginning, looking into all types of civil, commercial, criminal, and personal status disputes. Egypt followed the

⁵² I. M. Lapidus, "State and Religion in Islamic Societies," *Oxford Journals, the Past and Present Society* 151, no. 1 (1996): 3–27, <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/151.1.3.p4>.

⁵³ N. J. Brown, "Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, no. May (2017), http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP306_Brown_Religious_Institutions_Final_Web1.pdf, p.4.

⁵⁴ J.A. Beckford. "Secularization and its discontents." *Scriptura: Journal for Biblical, Theological and Contextual Hermeneutics* 12 (1993): 1-18.

system of judges of the four madhabs of Sharia, but the Hanafi judge had the presidency because the Hanafi madhab was the official madhab of the Ottoman state.⁵⁵ With the escalation of the modernization process of the Egyptian State and the colonialist situation, mixed courts based on the French Napoleon law were established in 1876. The sharia courts were deprived of their jurisdiction over criminal and commercial cases and limited to family law and endowments. However, family laws such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance were closely related to what is mentioned in the Quran and Sharia law, and it also is linked to the culture that cannot be dismantled.

Consequently, during the nineteenth century, colonial rulers separated the law into mixed courts in the French modernist style and courts for families linked to Sharia law. This situation was very strange because "there is no doctrinal reason to claim that conducting marital relations in an Islamic manner is more important to God than trading goods in an Islamic way."⁵⁶ Finally, with the July Revolution against the monarchy, the Revolutionary Council in 1955 issued a decision to abolish the Sharia courts and combined them with the mixed courts. However, Talal al Assad sees this transformation "not as a kind of liberalization, nor as a failure to modernize properly" but as a dimension of secularization, "in particular, of how secularization reflects changing connections between state power, legal institutions, moral norms, and religious authority".⁵⁷

Currently, in modern Egypt, there are three leading religious institutions, all of which have a historical connection and intersection with the processes of building the modern Egyptian State, and all of them are followed by powerful religious bureaucracies.⁵⁸ It includes the institution of Dar Al Ifta and its associated bodies, Al-Azhar institution, which include the office of Sheikh Al-Azhar, Al-Azhar University, the Supreme Council of Al-Azhar, the Council of Senior Scholars, the Islamic Research Academy, and the Fatwa Committee, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments which is affiliated to the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs.

Each of these institutions has a history that intersects with the development of the modern State. Al-Azhar was established in the tenth century during the Fatimid era to spread the Shiite

⁵⁵ Talal Asad, "Thinking about Secularism and Law in Egypt," *LEIDEN ISIM*, 2001.p2.

⁵⁶ Brown, "Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority."p,5.

⁵⁷ Asad, "Thinking about Secularism and Law in Egypt."p2.

⁵⁸ Frederic Wehrey, "Islamic Institutions in Arab States : Islamic Institutions in Arab States :Mapping the Dynamics of Control, Co-Option, and Contention," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2021, 169. P, 91.

doctrine. During the age of the Ayyubids, Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi closed the Al-Azhar mosque to prevent the spread of the Shiite doctrine and support the Sunni one. The sermon was banned in the mosque and remained idle for a hundred years until restored during the Mamluk Sultan al-Zaher Baybars. After the victory of the Ottomans over the Mamluks, Turks showed great respect for the mosque, despite the cessation of direct royal patronage to the mosque.⁵⁹

During the era of Muhammad Ali Pasha and the establishment of the modern State of Egypt, Muhammad Ali sought to control the country by building an army, education, and religious institutions. He tried to limit the powers of Al-Azhar scholars by supporting non-Azhar scholars who had received their education in Europe. Muhammad Ali deducted a large part of the endowment lands affiliated to the mosque and annexed them to state property. During the era of King Fuad the First, he issued a law to regulate the educational structure of Al-Azhar in 1930, whereby the school was divided into three departments: Arabic Language, Sharia, and Fundamentals of Religion. After the July Revolution in 1952, Jamal Abdel Nasser worked to limit the authority of Al-Azhar scholars and used their influence to his advantage.⁶⁰ In 1952, the endowments were nationalized and placed under the authority of the Ministry of Endowments. This step broke the economic pillar that was making Al-Azhar scholars financially independent and which used to guarantee their independence from the government. The Sharia courts were abolished and merged with the State's judicial system in 1955, which severely limits the influence of scholars.⁶¹ In 1961, the Reform Law for al-Azhar was issued, which provided for the revocation of the Independence Law of Al-Azhar in 1936, and gave the President of Egypt the authority to appoint the Sheikh of Al-Azhar. The university also was separated from the mosque, and formal colleges were established for the university.⁶²

Likewise, the Egyptian Dar al-Ifta was established by Khedive Abbas Helmy II on November 12, 1895, to limit and institutionalize the fatwa and stress independence from the Ottoman Empire. The establishment of the Endowments Authority also dates back to 1835 AD, when Muhammad Ali Pasha issued an order to establish a "public office for endowments," and in 1913 AD, the

⁵⁹ Tamir Moustafa, "CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE STATE AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY EGYPT," *Int. J. Middle East Stud.* 32 (2000): 3–22.

⁶⁰ Moustafa.p3.

⁶¹ Moustafa.p4.

⁶² Nasser, Rabbat. Al-Azhar mosque: an architectural chronicle of Cairo's history. *Muqarnas Online* 13, No. 1 (1996): 45-67.

office was transformed into a "ministry." In 1953 AD, Law No. 247 was issued to transfer the supervision of mosques' charitable endowments to the Ministry of Endowments. Then Law No. 157 of 1960 AD was issued and it stipulated the annexation of all private mosques to the Ministry.⁶³

These huge institutional entities with their vast and expanding bureaucracies in different areas, but paradoxically are not that effective or influential as it appears from their name.⁶⁴ The bureaucratic manifestations of these religious institutions intersected with the space of the State and the space of society. The State's involvement in the religious field has created a status of institutional complexity. It is true that the official religious institutions, in return, obtained ample space. However, the complexity of these institutions and the enlargement of their bureaucracies resulted in overlapping, competing, and sometimes conflicting power.

1.3.THE RELIGIOUS MARKET

Using Bourdieu's theory on the religious market and the relationship between religious choices, social demands, and authority, we can explain the conflict over the religious field between the trilogy of religious institutions, society, and the state. Bourdieu sees "religious knowledge, competencies, and preferences as positional goods within a competitive symbolic economy".⁶⁵ According to Bourdieu, the religious capital is distributed between the producers of religious discourse, represented in this study as religious institutions, and the consumers, the ordinary people in society. Authoritarian State intervenes to control the religious market just as it does in the economic market and monopolizes religious options in official institutions; therefore, any other religious choice is considered outside the State and religion. The state guarantees controlling the religious market through economic control over the religious institutions.

⁶³ Ibrahim Al-Bayoumi Ghanem, Series of Egyptian Ministries, Ministry of Endowments, Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Al-Ahram, pp. 7-9

⁶⁴ Ahmed M. Amin, "Analyzing Al-Azhar's Role in Egyptian Politics," *SIYASAL: Journal of Political Sciences* 29, no. 1 (2020): 189–205, <https://doi.org/10.26650/siyasal.2020.29.1.0058>.

⁶⁵ BRADFORD VERTER, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu," *American Sociological Association* 21, no. 2 (2003). p150; Bourdieu P (1991) Genesis and structure of the religious field. *Comparative Social Research* 13:1–44

In this context, Adam Smith, in his book *The Wealth of Nations*, explains that the consequences of the state monopoly of the religious market are similar to the state monopoly of other economic sectors.⁶⁶ Accordingly, we cannot understand the State's relationship with the religious market separated from its project that depends on the concentration of power in the hands of the State alone. Therefore, although the State adopts a secular approach in separating religion from politics, it seeks at the same time to monopolize religion to emphasize its legitimacy, hegemony, and power.⁶⁷ Through this linkage between the political and religious space, the State can create an ideological and moral cover for its policies and appears as the defender and representative of religion.

This religiosity of the State gives it legitimacy as the state works for national and religious goals. In this context, Hibbard Scott W.,⁶⁸ in his book *Religious Politics and Secular Countries: Egypt, India, and the United States*, traces the transformation in the performance of the Egyptian State from excluding and suppressing religion in the 1950s and 1960s to inviting the religious actors in the 1970s and 1980s as a new base that could provide support for the authority. Hibbard calls this process "reciprocal validation" to describe the interaction between political actors and religious actors through a win-win situation.⁶⁹

On the other hand, the State realizes the danger of the informal religion, as a blind spot in the domain of the State's hegemony. The solution adopted by the State was establishing "an ecclesia, whether in the form of a national church, a civil religion, a communist ideology, to ensure unified secondary socialization and the smooth regulation of biopolitics".⁷⁰ The State here does not support religious institutions for promoting religiosity in society, but it does that to impose a chosen and unified religious vision.

⁶⁶ LAURENCE R. IANNACONE, "The Consequences of Religious Market Structure: Adam Smith and The Economics of Religion," *Rationality and Society* 3, no. 2 (1991): 156–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043463191003002002>.

⁶⁷ Heba Raouf Ezzat, (*The Political Imagination of Islamists*) Beirut: The Arab Network for Research and Publishing, (2015). p,130.

⁶⁸ Scott W., Hibbard. "*Religion, and its political functions, Egypt - India - America*", translated by Fatima Nasr, Cairo: The Egyptian General Book Organization, (2013), p47-48.

⁶⁹ Harry Eli Kashdan, "Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States, Hibbard, Scott W.," *Cultural Geography*, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873631.2012.653187>.

⁷⁰ Saran Ghatak and Andrew Stuart Abel, "Power/Faith: Governmentality, Religion, and Post-Secular Societies," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 26, no. 3 (2013): 217–35, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-013-9141-z.p228>.

The State's control over the religious field can be measured by two indicators mentioned by Fink and Grimm (2006). The first indicator is "religious favoritism",⁷¹ which means the governmental support and privileges granted from the State to the official religious institutions. The governmental support could be a direct financial fund to the religious institutions or indirect logistic support⁷² like establishing schools, buildings, or the supporting service institutions that are affiliated to the religious institutions, such as the case of Al-Azhar. The second indicator is that the government regulation of religion includes "administrative sanctions and open hostilities toward selected groups",⁷³ which appears clearly in the hostility between the official religious institutions, headed by Al-Azhar, towards the Muslim Brotherhood. According to these two previous indicators, Egypt was considered one of the countries categorized as the most organized and monopolistic countries for their religious market.⁷⁴

In addition to the State's monopoly on religious space, it uses competition within this official religious field by manipulating the three official religious institutions: Al-Azhar, Dar al-Ifta, and the Endowments. The interaction space between the State and these three institutions is different; while Al-Azhar enjoys some independence, Dar al-Ifta and Endowments could be considered the state arm within the religious field. Therefore, the thesis defines three levels of competition within the religious field; between the State and religious institutions, between official religious institutions with each other, and between official religious institutions and non-official religious actors.

1.4.THE COMPETITION OVER THE RELIGIOUS FIELD

⁷¹ Giuseppina Autiero and Concetto Paolo Vinci, "Government Regulation of Religion and Investments in Human and Physical Capital: Religion versus Secularism," *International Journal of Social Economics* 37, no. 2 (2010): 119–35, <https://doi.org/10.1108/03068291011007246>.

⁷² Autiero and Vinci.p,120.

⁷³ Brian J Grim and Roger Finke, "International Religion Indexes: Government Regulation, Government Favoritism, and Social Regulation of Religion.," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 2 (2006), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25484633>0Ahttp://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=PMC4254791.p5.

⁷⁴ Autiero and Vinci, "Government Regulation of Religion and Investments in Human and Physical Capital: Religion versus Secularism."p,121.

The Egyptian over-stating state has three demands from the religious field; 1) the support for the regime's policy and ideologies, 2) prevent political Islam movements from using the sacred space to mobilize society to achieve their agendas, and 3) in global terrorism where the state can invest in its religious institutions internationally as middle Islamic institutions.

On the other hand, the State grants religious institutions the seat to be the only official and accredited body for Islam. Religious institutions have distinct institutional interests, although they all depend on the state for legitimacy and existence, and the result is a constant and dynamic tension. The State allows the establishment of enormous bureaucracies for these religious institutions to cover all religious fields, including the Fatwa sector, endowments and charity work, mosques, sermons, religious learning, and media. In this win-win situation, the State uses official religious institutions with its bureaucracies as effective "policy tools" to impose its infrastructural power, however, these vast bureaucracies enable them some autonomy.⁷⁵

The State's ability to subjugate these religious institutions varies according to its bureaucracies' size and historical legitimacy. For instance, the Al-Azhar institution has a historical legacy that precedes the modern State itself,⁷⁶ and consequently, it enjoys more autonomy than other religious institutions. Dar al Ifta and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments are considered modern institutions; therefore, their factor of autonomy is low. At the level of the size of bureaucracies, the Al-Azhar institution is considered the bigger. It covers many sectors such as al-Azhar University, Al-Azhar institutes, Al-Azhar Sheikhdome, Research Complex, institutions for external missions, the Council of Senior Scholars, and Fatwa Complex. Therefore Al-Azhar institution is more complex than the bureaucracies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments and Dar Al Ifta.

Official religious institutions play multiple social roles at the local level, and internationally, they are influential in fitting extremism. Consequently, religious institutions acquire an increasing internal and external space every day. However, the State's authoritarian behavior in exploiting religious institutions leads to undermining the social credibility of these institutions and then reducing their effectiveness. Here, the State was forced to allow official religious institutions more autonomy to increase their creditability and, consequently, increase social

⁷⁵ Brown, "Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority." p,1.

⁷⁶ Brown.p5.

penetration and reduce extremism. Therefore, "It is not liberalism or piety that induces regimes to give official institutions a longer leash, but knowledge of the problems that an overabundance of control can bring with it."⁷⁷ As well, the fact that religious institutions are vast bureaucracies present on the ground allows them to circumvent the State's hegemony over the religious field.⁷⁸ Therefore, despite being initially loyal to the state, religious institutions show autonomous tendencies. The religious audiences also put pressure on these religious institutions to be at a level of honesty in their religious discourse. Likewise, the emergence of non-official religious actors, especially on social media, disrupted the monopoly of the religious authority that religious institutions enjoyed. Thus, official religious institutions need to show more independence to improve their appearance and credibility with the religious audience. According to this map of interactions between state, religious institution, and society, I will analyze the spaces of competition on four levels: (1) at the social level, in terms of the religious discourse, fatwas, zakat, and the moral leadership of society, (2) at the spatial level, in terms of the mosques and religious gatherings space, (3) at the legal level, in terms of acquisition of constitutional powers, and (4) at the international level.

1.4.1. The Space of Endowments and Charitable Work

This sector reflects the competition for the religious field in the zakat funds between three parties; (1) the State that wants to acquire this flowing financial resource and (2) the religious institutions that see that this money is God's right and considered themselves responsible for this duty, and (3) civil society organizations that want to deduct part of this money to serve their projects.

Zakat as private funds from society intersects with the State's desire to control it for three purposes; Firstly, using this money to improve social welfare, and thus lift the burden on the State and improve its image in front of the people.⁷⁹ Second, controlling and supervising the

⁷⁷ Brown, p.25-26.

⁷⁸ NATHAN J. BROWN, INTISSAR FAKIR, and YASMINE FAROUK, "Here to Stay? - Carnegie Middle East Center - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace," accessed August 14, 2021, <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/81611>.

⁷⁹ محمد خلف أمين, "محافظ بني سويف: لن أدخر جهدا لتطوير المحافظة.. ومساعدات مالية لـ52 حالة إنسانية - المحافظات - الوطن," بوابة الوطن الإلكترونية, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/210545/>.

zakat fund provides the State with a significant database that the State needs in digitalization. Third, drying the financial resources of the political Islam and preventing it from using this money, whether in charitable work to improve its image and gain election base, or to use this money to support terrorism. Therefore, the State intends to tighten the screws on the zakat funds by using religious institutions as a governmental arm in controlling this space.

At the level of religious institutions, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments is the official religious institution responsible for organizing and managing the sector of local donation and charitable work, and endowments. In this context, the Minister of Endowments issued harsh instructions to prevent collecting donations inside mosques to ensure that these funds are not used for political employment and the minister threatened to punish anyone who would violate these directions.⁸⁰

In light of the independence of each religious institution, their reactions varied. In a clear step on cooperation with the state, the religious discourse of the Minister in this context focused on the necessity of Zakat, the importance of paying it, and the grave sin of those who do not do it. He also emphasizes the necessity to pay zakat to one of the state's institutions.⁸¹ Dar Al Ifta took a bolder step in this context by issuing a fatwa stating that zakat must be given directly to the “Long Live Egypt Fund” which is one of the regime’s sovereign funds.⁸²

Tahya Misr Fund was established in 2014 and subjected to the direct supervision of President Sisi. The fund has an advisory council including the Sheikh of Al-Azhar, the Pope of Copts, some businessmen, and ministers.⁸³ However, according to a decision issued by Al-Sisi and approved by the Egyptian parliament in July 2015, the Fund's activities would not be subjected to financial and legislative oversight and it would be independent of the State's general budget.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ رئيس التحرير اكرم القصاص, “حتى لا تتحول إلى دار للتسول.. مديريات الأوقاف في المحافظات تمنع جمع التبرعات داخل المساجد.. وكلاء السابغ الوزارة يتوعدون أئمة المساجد المخالفين بتوقيع عقوبات صارمة.. ويؤكدون: شراء الصكوك بدل التبرع يخدم الفقراء - اليوم السابع”, accessed June 11, 2021, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2019/5/29/حتى-لا-تتحول-إلى-دار-للتسول-مديريات-الأوقاف-في-المحافظات/4264175>.

⁸¹ دنيا-ودين/573503-الأوقاف-تطالب-بوضع-أموال-الزكاة-تحت-رقابة-الدولة | الوفد, accessed June 3, 2021, <https://alwafd.news/دنيا-ودين/573503-الأوقاف-تطالب-بوضع-أموال-الزكاة-تحت-رقابة-الدولة>.

⁸² نرمين عفيفي, “مستشار المفتي: تحيا مصر الأولى بتوزيع الزكاة لامتلاكه قاعدة بيانات - مصر - الوطن”, accessed March 14, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4770755>.

⁸³ “Tahya Misr Fund, من نحن – صندوق تحيا مصر”, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://tahyamisrfund.org/about-us/>.

⁸⁴ منشورات قانونية, “خضوع صندوق تحيا مصر لرقابة الجهاز المركزي للمحاسبات”, accessed June 21, 2017, <https://manshurat.org/node/26564>.

This mysterious nature of the Tahya Misr Fund has sparked widespread controversy in the fatwas calling for the payment of zakat to it. Non-official Muslim scholars responded to these fatwas from official religious institutions with contradictory fatwas. A member of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, Wasif Abu Zaid sees that the turbulent political situation in Egypt with decomposing social and economic conditions is due to the political regime that turned against the Egyptian will. Abu Zaid gave a fatwa that it is not permissible for a Muslim to give the zakat to such authority because God says “do not give the fools your money”.⁸⁵ Another fatwa of Sheikh Abd al-Khaleq al-Sharif, a member of the Brotherhood's Shura Council, considered the donation of zakat directly to the poor or to a donor's relatives or neighbors as more appropriate and better than giving it to the State.⁸⁶ He refers here that zakat is a space for interaction at the social and religious level without state intervention.

The regime was aware of the possibility that many Egyptians would not trust paying zakat to a fund directly affiliated with the political authority, and there is no transparency over it. Therefore, a more credible and independent alternative was presented which is the Egyptian Zakat and Charity House, affiliated to Al-Azhar. Egyptian Zakat and Charity House was established in 2014 and affiliated with the Sheikhdom of Al-Azhar and supervised by the Sheikh of Al-Azhar. The administrative board for the Zakat house includes religious and military personalities, Judges, ministers, and businessmen.⁸⁷ Zakat House was promoted as an independent and reliable place for paying zakat. Consequently, the State exploits the legitimacy and reliability of Al-Azhar and the Sheikh of Al-Azhar in this space to ensure that Zakat funds do not leak outside the framework of state institutions. The Zakat House also serves as a central method for collecting zakat from religious donors instead of the decentralized process through local mosques, which is problematic to monitor and control by the State. The institutionalization of the zakat sector also intersects with the civil organizations that are trying hard to deduct part of the zakat money away from state institutions to serve their projects.

1.4.2. The Space of Ifta and Religious Guidance

⁸⁵ لماذا أوجبت الإفتاء المصرية الزكاة لصندوق "تحيا مصر"؟, عربي 21, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://arabi21.com/story/1271294/لماذا-أوجبت-الإفتاء-المصرية-الزكاة-لصندوق-تحيا-مصر>.

⁸⁶ مغاور.

⁸⁷ رئيس الجمهورية, "قانون بيت الزكاة والصدقات | منشورات قانونية, 2014, <https://manshurat.org/node/3597>

Fatwa is the interpretation of Sharia scholars regarding a specific issue. There is no obligation to adhere to a specific fatwa; therefore, it is ultimately an ethical process whereby ordinary people voluntarily apply for asking fatwas from trusted Sharia scholars. Fatwa is a reciprocal ethical process, as there is an ethical sense among the individual asking the fatwa, and ethical responsibility to the mufti who must use his moral authority to issue the fatwa regardless of any personal or political considerations. Consequently, any defect in the fatwa process will undermine the fatwa's credibility and reliability and thus weaken the reliance on it. In this context, the overstating State with authoritarian control over the religious market intersects with the space of religious institutions as the producers of fatwas and society as the consumer of it.

The Egyptian State is trying to control the fatwa sector through its official religious institutions. However, the State faces a problem that there is no way to force people to seek the fatwa from specific persons or bodies affiliated with the State. Therefore, the State is trying to manage the fatwa as a matter that needs specialization and experts from its official religious institutions. The responsibility for the fatwa is distributed between the three official religious institutions; Al-Azhar, Dar Al Ifta, and Endowments. Al-Azhar has a fatwa committee, and it is constitutionally the institution responsible for the entire process of interpreting Sharia according to Article 7 of the Egyptian constitution. Al-Azhar has historical heritage and relative independence that enhance its credibility in the fatwa sector.

There is also Dar al Ifta, which in the past was affiliated with Al-Azhar, and the Sheikh of Al-Azhar was the Mufti of the Republic at the same time. However, with time, Dar al-Ifta became independent from Al-Azhar and is now affiliated with the Ministry of Justice.⁸⁸ The legal mission of Dar al Ifta is the ratification of executions which seems to undermine the institution's credibility and worsen its reputation socially regarding fatwas.

The right for fatwa sparked a conflict for influence between the religious institutions. Al-Azhar rejected a draft law in parliament that gave the right of Ifta to the imams of the Ministry of Endowments. In return, the Ministry of Endowments insisted on what it considers an original and

⁸⁸ محمد يوسف, "البرلمان يوافق على نقل تبعية دار الإفتاء لمجلس الوزراء بدلا من وزارة العدل - مصر - الوطن", *الوطن*, accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4911212>.

historically right for it because it had a Fatwa department since 1988. The Ministry of Endowments justified that the imams and preachers in the endowments are aware of the jurisprudence and they know the people's problems well because they are in contact with them in mosques.⁸⁹

On the other side, the crisis of confidence between the society and religious official institutions led to the flourish of informal fatwas. Non-official scholars from all orientations and backgrounds are present in the fatwa sector and gaining popularity over time. Non-official scholars engage with a fatwa in spaces outside the state control like TV shows, and social media like Twitter, and Facebook, and they are not obliged to any restrictions on their discourse, unlike official religious institutions. With such a competitive environment, official muftis resorted to establishing websites, providing telephone hotlines, appearing on TV shows, and exerting more efforts to preserve their sites in Ifta and to remain in direct contact with the public.

The other issue that severely undermines the credibility of fatwas of official religious institutions is political fatwas. Since the military coup in 2013, political fatwas flourished in Egypt. Political fatwas were directed mainly against opponents of the regime and to support the political regime. During the 2015 parliamentary elections, Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar, issued a fatwa to encourage people to vote during the election and he compared those who boycott the elections to those who disobey their parents.⁹⁰ Political opinions about participation in this election varied as it was after the military coup in 2013 and the subsequent dissolution of the elected parliament. The fatwa of the Sheikh of Al-Azhar was opposed by many non-official scholars; Sheikh Khaled Khalifa, one of the scholars of Al-Azhar described the fatwa of the Sheikh of Al-Azhar as a politicization of religion and considered this fatwa as incorrect.⁹¹

Another political fatwa was from the Professor of Jurisprudence at Al-Azhar University, Dr. Saad al-Din al-Hilali who described Sisi and the former Minister of Interior, Muhammad Ibrahim

⁸⁹ بوابة الشروق, احمد العيسوي, "فيديو.. «الأوقاف» ترد على اعتراض الأزهر منح علمائها حق الفتوى", accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=03072018&id=4af4dad8-f424-4e60-9833-2bfc38ea9637>.

⁹⁰ YouTube, "شيخ الأزهر : مقاطعة الانتخابات مثل عقوق الوالدين", accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3V8xCJZEuig>.

⁹¹ تقارير, "عالم أزهري لـ"رصد": فتوى 'الطيب' عن الانتخابات 'حرام' وتسييس للدين -", شبكة رصد الإخبارية, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://rassd.com/166330.htm>.

as two messengers sent by God to protect the religion.⁹² Sheikh Ali Bashari, the Ministry of Awqaf and Al-Azhar representative, called on President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to get a second presidential period because that would ensure the Egypt remains a moderate Islamic country.⁹³ Khaled Al-Jendi, an imam and a preacher in the Egyptian Ministry of Endowments, declared that he was proud to be the Sheikh of the Sultan and he prayed to God to be with President Sisi in the day of judgment.⁹⁴

In the context of incitement against political opponents, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Religious Endowments, Sheikh Salem Abdel-Jalil, described opponents as outlaws who must be killed.⁹⁵ The former Mufti, Ali Gomaa, publicly incited the killing of the protesters in Rabaa and al-Nahda squares by saying that those who would kill the protesters will be blessed. Moreover, the former Mufti claimed that protesters did not deserve to be considered as Egyptians⁹⁶ The Current Mufti Shawqi Allam issued a fatwa that prohibited participation with or becoming a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and this was justified as such acts would destabilize the country's political stability.⁹⁷ Moreover, the Minister of Awqaf called for exclusion of Muslim Brotherhood members in state institutions.⁹⁸

In the context of social polarization, the imam and preacher of the Omar Makram Mosque, Mazhar Shaheen, issued a fatwa stating that the husband should divorce his wife if she belongs to the Brotherhood.⁹⁹ In the same line, Dr. Suad Saleh, the former Dean of the College of Islamic Studies for Girls at Al-Azhar University and a member of the Policy Committee of the ruling

⁹² YouTube, "تشبيه السيسي وإبراهيم بالرسول - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FBaYkxvDsc>.

⁹³ YouTube, "ممثل الأوقاف والأزهر: ترشح السيسي لفترة ثانية يبقى مصر بلد الإسلام الوسطى - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2MX9EbDtu4>.

⁹⁴ YouTube, "خالد الجندي.. أسأل الله ان يحشرني مع السيسي"...انا شيخ السلطان - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BP3Ciq3_s8.

⁹⁵ YouTube, "3D فتوى قتل المتظاهرين من الشيخ سالم عبد الجليل وعمرو خالد 720 - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YAUIQzmSI>.

⁹⁶ YouTube, "اقوى فضيحة للمفتي علي جمعه اقتلو الإخوان ولايهمكم الإخوان خوارج - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFKLLa3qOTU&t=41s>.

⁹⁷ YouTube, "المفتي يكشف أسباب تحريم الإنضمام إلى جماعة الإخوان الإرهابية - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4b6NRdNfZU&t=2s>.

⁹⁸ YouTube, "وزير الأوقاف المصري ل"العين الإخبارية": الإخوان لا تصلح معهم إلا سياسة البتر - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2fkt9JrTlo>.

⁹⁹ YouTube, "شاهين: الإخوان كفار ولازم الزوج يطلق زوجته الاخوانية لمصلحة البلد - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30NadLy9eNs>.

National Party which was dissolved after the 2011 revolution, presented a fatwa for a man to annul his marriage engagement if his fiancée belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁰⁰

The spread of such fatwas angered many Egyptians, whether they supported or opposed the Muslim Brotherhood, especially after one of the husbands reported his wife and accused her of being a terrorist because she was supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁰¹ This situation prompted the Dar Al Ifta to contain the situation by declaring that such fatwas cause confusion, controversy, and division in Egyptian society and spread disagreement among families.¹⁰² The Secretary of the Dar Al Ifta, Sheikh Mahmoud Ashour, confirmed that the fatwa issued to divorce the wife if she belongs to a group or political party is not correct according to the Sharia which warns against unnecessary divorce.¹⁰³ Al-Azhar from its side considered this chaos in the fatwa sector as due to the reduction of the role of Al-Azhar in the past period and that state religious institutions should coordinate with it to counter the extremist fatwas that offend religion.¹⁰⁴ For its part, the Salafi Nour Party, which supports the current authority and opposes Brotherhood, considered the fatwa allowing a husband to divorce a wife who belonged to the Brotherhood as a manipulation of religion and promotion of division in society.¹⁰⁵

This kind of controversy and chaos in the issuance of fatwas called for the State to intervene to control the fatwa sector. The parliament issued a law for organizing public fatwa and it was approved by the Religious Affairs Committee.¹⁰⁶ Just fifty scholars from Al-Azhar were allowed to issue fatwas in the media.¹⁰⁷ These fifty scholars were chosen by the Al-Azhar Foundation and

¹⁰⁰ 2014/2/2, " | جريدة الأنباء", Kuwait, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://www.alanba.com.kw/ar/last/442212/02-02-2014-الافتاء-الشباب-خطبة-فسخ-خطبة-الشباب-الافتاء-الاخوانية-2014>.

¹⁰¹ "مصري يبلغ النيابة عن زوجته بتهمة الانتماء لـ"الإخوان" accessed June 21, 2021, <https://al-sharq.com/article/30/01/2014/مصري-يبلغ-النيابة-عن-زوجته-بتهمة-الانتماء-للالإخوان>.

¹⁰² عبد الوهاب عيسى, "الإفتاء: فتوى وجوب تطليق الزوجة 'الإخوانية' غير شرعية وتعتبر عن مزيدة سياسية - مصر, " الوطن accessed April 5, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/409495>.

¹⁰³ عصام هاشم ومروة البشير, "دار الإفتاء: فتوى تطليق الزوجة بسبب الخلاف السياسي باطله - الأهرام اليومي, " بوابة الأهرام, 2014 <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/daily/News/1084/41/256788/-الافتاء-تطليق-الزوجة-بسبب-الخلاف-السياس>.aspx.

¹⁰⁴ أمل مهدي, "البوابة نيوز: فوضى الفتاوى الدينية تهدد بخراب البيوت المصرية, " البوابة نيوز accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.albawabhnews.com/378714>.

¹⁰⁵ " - فتوى شاهين بتطليق الزوجة الإخوانية تغضب 'النور' و'الوسط' CNN Arabic, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2014/02/02/shaheen-divorce-muslim-brotherhood>.

¹⁰⁶ محمود العمري, "أمين 'دينية البرلمان': قانون الفتوى أصبح ضرورة لمواجهة الفتاوى الضالة, " اليوم السابع accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2018/11/30/4050346/الافتاء-الضالة-للمواجهة-الفتاوى-الضالة-أصبح-ضرورة-لمواجهة-الفتاوى-الضالة>.

¹⁰⁷ حازم عادل و محمد السيد, "ننشر قائمة الـ50 النهائية لعلماء 'الإفتاء' في الفضائيات, " اليوم السابع accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2017/11/16/3512113/الافتاء-للعلماء-الإفتاء-في-الفضائيات>.

Dar al-Ifta according to specific criteria set by the Al-Azhar. However, the allocation of this list of scholars entitled to issue fatwas in media provoked widespread anger among those scholars who are close to the regime because they were excluded from those who were allowed to issue fatwas in the media.¹⁰⁸ On the other side, scholars who oppose the regime view the allocation of permits to issue fatwa as further increment in the state's monopoly and dominance over the religious field.¹⁰⁹

Political fatwas were present to defend the reputation of the political regime internationally. On the second anniversary of the coup against President Mohamed Morsi on July 3, 2013, 159 scholars, preachers, teachers in Islamic universities, and ten organizations signed what they called "The Call of al-Kananah". Scholars considered the consequences of the military coup as legally and religiously null.¹¹⁰ Al-Azhar responded to the Kananah statement with the Al-Mahrousa statement it issued. Al-Azhar considered what was included in the al-Kananah statement as a fabrication and falsification of the facts.¹¹¹ In the same context, Dar al Ifta established what was called "The Observatory for Takfiri and Extreme Fatwas".¹¹² The Observatory have issued political fatwas to attack foreign reports talk about the violations of human rights in Egypt considering all these as plans of the Brotherhood. British writer David Hearst, an editor for Middle East Eye, wrote about a letter that reached him, in which a statement issued by the Observatory for Takfiri and extreme Fatwas. Hearst commented that the Observatory does not complain about religious views of the Middle East website but rather about a political report published by the site. Hearst wondered what makes an entity whose field of work is religious issues commenting on a website on the Internet whose field of work is political news.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ سعاد صالح-استبعادي-من-قائمة-علماء-، accessed June 21, 2021, https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_egypt/details/2017/11/15/1191823/ سعاد صالح-استبعادي-من-قائمة-علماء-، accessed June 21, 2021, https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_egypt/details/2017/11/15/1191823/ الفضايات-ضد-الإسلام-والدساتير.

¹⁰⁹ قائمة-الخمسين-تأميم-الفتوى، عبد الله حامد، "قائمة الخمسين... تأميم الفتوى بالفضائيات المصرية"، مصر أخبار، الجزيرة نت، accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2017/11/17/تأميم-الفتوى>.

¹¹⁰ انضمام-عشرات-العلماء-لنداء-الكنانة، "انضمام عشرات العلماء لنداء الكنانة" وزير الأوقاف المصري ينتقد، الجزيرة نت، accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2015/5/29/انضمام-عشرات-العلماء-لنداء-الكنانة>.

¹¹¹ الأزهر يصدر «بيان المحروسة» ردا على «أرض الكنانة» -، بوابة الشروق، خالد موسى، "الأزهر يصدر «بيان المحروسة» ردا على «أرض الكنانة» -، بوابة الشروق"، accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=11082015&id=7e353cd1-06cd-4761-a00d-f99c2b002f52>.

¹¹² |، دار الإفتاء المصرية - مرصد الفتاوى التكفيرية والآراء المتشددة (7) "، Facebook، accessed June 11, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/InfedilizingFatwas/>.

¹¹³ David Hearst, "The Fatwa of 'Ayatollah' Al-Sisi | Middle East Eye," Middle East Eye, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/fatwa-ayatollah-al-sisi>.

Finally, the State of confusion that the religious institution suffered due to the state's dominance over the religious space undermined its independence and credibility and made it floundering in the fatwa sector. The market theory was reflected on the conflict over the religious space for the fatwa between official religious institutions and non-official religious actors to produce fatwas to meet the needs of the consumer society in light of the State's monopoly over the religious market. "Fatwas from competing sources may appear to be a collection of disruptive religious sayings about sensitive points in religious teachings, but in reality, they are part of a political struggle over who should speak in the name of Islam."¹¹⁴

1.4.3. The Mosque and Sermons Sector

The spatial space of mosques is important in the struggle between the state, religious institutions, and society. Mosques can be hotbeds of mobilization both geographically and politically. Therefore, the state seeks to reform this space according to its geographical imagination. This appears when the state demolished some mosques in the countryside¹¹⁵ and built new large mosques in the new urban capital,¹¹⁶ which shows "how sovereignty is manifested in urban planning".¹¹⁷

Moreover, mosques are considered central points of contact in the religious market: (1) the state affirms its monopoly of the religious market, (2) religious institutions as the producer of the religious discourse and had material control of mosques, and (3) society as the consumer for mosques as a religious product. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments is the institution that is responsible completely for regulating the five daily prayers, the Friday prayer, imams, and sermons in mosques all over the state. The mosques are regulated, licensed, and

¹¹⁴ Brown, "Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority." p8.

¹¹⁵ إزاي تحطوا جوامع ربنا في مكان مخالف».. السيسي يعلق على إزالة مساجد بمحيط ترعة المحمودية, "اليوم, المصري" accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1979943>.

¹¹⁶ شيماء عبد الهادي, "أسامة الأزهرى يلقي أول خطبة من مسجد الفتاح العليم بالعاصمة الإدارية," بوابة الأهرام accessed June 22, 2021, <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2096096.aspx>.

¹¹⁷ Heba Raouf, Ezzat. "The state of war." *The Routledge International Handbook of Contemporary Muslim Socio-Political Thought* (2021).p26.

monitored by the ministry of Endowments which act as the arm of the state's despotic and infrastructural power in controlling this sector.

A study entitled "To Whom Do Minbars Belong Today"¹¹⁸ analyzes the Egyptian state policy in mosque management and it outlines an analytical framework for the Egyptian State's policies in mosques management. The analysis is based on three assumptions: First, assuming the religious unity of Muslims, second, the State as the representative of the religion, and third, the State as the observer for the borders of the religious activity. These assumptions faced different realities; (1) Religious diversity within Islam itself, including political Islam, Sufi groups, official Islam, and populist Islam, and each Islamic faction has different political visions and positions from the existing authority, (2) These Islamic groups do not accept the state's role as the representative of Islam by monopolizing the administration of the religious field, and (3) The limits of the religious field permitted by the state is a changeable space; the regime could negotiate this space according to what it sees. The religious activity could be useful for the state or considered a political threat according to the historical moment.¹¹⁹

Historically, with the establishment of the modern state, the state has tried to organize endowment mosques. Muhammad Ali Pasha issued an order to establish a "public office for endowments" in 1835, and the office was transferred to be the Ministry of Endowments to manage endowment mosques in 1913. With the modernization process, the administrative and financial organization for endowment mosques moved to the state. With the July Revolution and the establishment of the republic, the legal framework developed to nationalize endowments to give exclusive centralization of the state over endowments. The Ministry of Endowments was given the right to annex all mosques in the country, appoint imams and preachers and grant preaching licenses.¹²⁰In this context, we can understand the historical transformation in the space of the mosque from being socio-religious spaces to state-controlling spaces.

The revolution in January 2011 affected the space of the mosque dramatically. The state's grip on mosques diminished with the temporary discontinuation of the security apparatus. Mosques were

¹¹⁸ Amr Ezzat, "To Whom Do Minbars Belong Today," *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Freedoms* 1 (2014): 181.

¹¹⁹ Ezzat.P,11.

¹²⁰ Masooda Bano and Hanane Benadi, "Regulating Religious Authority for Political Gains: Al-Sisi's Manipulation of Al-Azhar in Egypt," *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 8 (2017): 1604–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1369031>.

turned to be a center for religious and political activity and the demonstrations were emanating from mosques. However, during the transitional period, the military council tried to maintain the minimum state control over mosques and criminalized the practice of religious activity without a license from the Ministry of Endowments.¹²¹

The arrival of Mohamed Morsi, who belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood which was the most prominent group of political Islam in Egypt, to the presidency in 2012 was the manifestation of the failure of state policies in dominating the religious field. Within a year of the Brotherhood's rule, the Ministry of Religious Endowments witnessed great controversy and intense conflict. The conflict expanded to include choosing the Minister of Endowments, and the debate over his intellectual and political affiliation to the Muslim brotherhood and the choice of the administrative staff in the ministry and the appointment of imams, which was known in the media as "Akhwanah",¹²² meant invading the administrative system of the state with members of Brotherhood. On the other hand, voices had risen accusing members in the Ministry with affiliation to the old regime and there was a demand to exclude the appointees of the old regime.¹²³ At the end of the Morsi period, the political climate was polarized, and mosques were used to charge and inflame the situation from all sides.¹²⁴ After the military coup against Morsi on the 3rd of July and eventual exclusion of Islamic currents outside the political process, the state used maximum authoritarian tools to control the religious field by tightened monitoring mosques. The Ministry of Endowments took many administrative decisions to exclude, separate, and punish many imams for their political affiliation to the Brotherhood.¹²⁵ In a clear step to mingle the mosque space with politics, the Ministry of Endowments restored the Rabea' al-

¹²¹ "بوابة مصر للقانون والقضاء | الحكم رقم 906 لسنة 32 ق" accessed June 21, 2021, <http://www.laweg.net/Default.aspx?action=LawEg&Type=16&JID=47515>.

¹²² "YouTube - الشيخ صبرى عبادة : تم اخونة وزارة الاوقاف بالكامل" accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLqbCH0wjcl>.

¹²³ "وزير الأوقاف: لأول مرة في عهد مرسي يتم تعيين عن طريق الكفاءة," مصرأوى" accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_egypt/details/2012/10/9/77922/-وزير-الأوقاف-لأول-مرة-في-عهد-مرسي-يتم-تعيين-عن-طريق-الكفاءة-العلمية.

¹²⁴ "أرشيف," "خطيب «رابعة العدوية» يخالف الشرع بـ«دعاء القنوت» في صلاة الجمعة," المصري اليوم" accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1733770>.

¹²⁵ Tarek Radwan, "Egypt's Ministry of Endowments and the Fight Against Extremism -," Atlantic Council, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/egypt-s-ministry-of-endowments-and-the-fight-against-extremism/>.

the Minister of Endowment that the unified sermon does not aim to impose restrictions on religious freedoms, and it is an attempt to keep the mosques away from political and partisan conflicts,¹³¹ the Minister also stated that addressing national issues in the sermons is from religion, not politics.¹³² However, the unified written sermon sparked a wave of anger among the imams and preachers in the Ministry of Endowments, who considered this step would reduce their prestige and credibility in front of the public and turns them into "parrots on the pulpits".¹³³

Although the unified sermon may be understood in terms of the hegemony of the state over religious institutions, it also sparked a conflict among religious institutions themselves. The conflict may appear as a disagreement about some religious issues; however, in deep, it reflects a conflict about who has the supreme word in the religious field.¹³⁴ The disagreement appeared publicly between the Ministry of Endowments and Al-Azhar regarding Al-Azhar's rejection of the written sermon, while the ministry insisted on its position to oblige imams to follow the written unified sermons. The Minister of Endowments, Mukhtar Jomaa, himself read a Friday prayer sermon from a paper at the Amr bin Al-Aase Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in Egypt, in the presence of the Prime Minister and several officials. Al-Azhar, from his side, insisted on rejecting the written unified sermon and announced a different topic for Friday sermons entitled "National Unity and the Rights of Christians in Islam" which contradicted the Ministry of Endowments sermon titled "Cleanliness is a civilized human behavior."¹³⁵

The Minister of Endowments obtains a ruling from the Court in Alexandria which stated that the Minister's decision on written sermon is legal and valid in accordance to the constitution and the rule of law. However, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar met with President Sisi and informed him of the council's rejection of the written sermon. After that, a meeting took place between the Sheikh of Al-Azhar and the Minister of Endowments, and they reached a decision to make written sermons not compulsory.

¹³¹ وزير الأوقاف : توحيد الخطبة المكتوبة ليس سياسيًا على الإطلاق وإنما هدفه صياغة الفكر المستنير بصورة علمية ومنهجية وسأكون أول من " بوابة الأوقاف الإلكترونية, accessed June 22, 2021, <http://ar.awkafonline.com/?p=31454>.

¹³² "من صحيفة الأهرام عدد الخميس ٢٣-٨-٢٠١٨ م ندوة وزير الأوقاف | بوابة الأوقاف الإلكترونية" accessed June 22, 2021, <http://ar.awkafonline.com/?p=60091>.

¹³³ "مي شمس الدين, "خطبة الجمعة تأتيكم من 'الأوقاف' موحدة ومكتوبة", مدى مصر <https://www.madamasr.com/ar/2016/07/12/feature/سياسة/خطبة-الجمعة-تأتيكم-من-الأوقاف-موحدة-و>

¹³⁴ Brown, "Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority." p18.

¹³⁵ "البوابة" الأوقاف-وزير-ويتحدى-وزير-الأوقاف-لن-نطبق-الخطبة-المكتوبة, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.albawaba.com/ar/867322-أخبار/الأزهر-يتحدى-وزير-الأوقاف-لن-نطبق-الخطبة-المكتوبة>.

For more authoritarian control over mosques, a decision was issued by the Minister of Endowments to install cameras in all mosques of the Republic to protect the mosques from extremism.¹³⁶ This decision was met with widespread attack and rejection from human rights activists as for them it violated the freedom of belief and practice of religious rites.¹³⁷ The human rights activist Ahmed Bahaa El-Din refers to the difference in the state's position towards mosques and churches that contradicts what is in the constitution as there must be no discrimination between citizens based on religion or belief. Bahaa sees such decisions will lead to racism and discrimination between Egyptians.¹³⁸ Wasif Abu Zaid, a professor of the Purposes of Islamic Law, considered the installation of monitoring devices as within the framework of the state's policy in militarizing mosques.¹³⁹

In Ramadan which is a great religious occasion, the ministry of Endowments increases its security grip over the mosque because the density of worshipers increases, and the state fears using this space against it. In this context, the ministry put many restrictions on the Tarawih prayer, the i'tikaf,¹⁴⁰ and the congratulatory prayer of Eid.¹⁴¹ Ministry prohibited external loudspeakers in the Fajr and Maghrib prayers as well as during the Tarawih prayers, contrary to what usually happened with broadcasting Tarawih during Ramadan.¹⁴² The ministry even put restrictions on the Qunoot supplication as it should be according to the prophet's sayings, and its duration should be short. The ministry punished an imam for his supplication against corrupt

¹³⁶ محمد فتحي عبد العال, "وزارة الأوقاف: تركيب كاميرات مراقبة في جميع مساجد الجمهورية", المصري اليوم ¹³⁶, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/792021>.

¹³⁷ عبد الرحمن محمد, "مساجد مصر تحت الرقابة", الجزيرة نت ¹³⁷, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2015/8/14/الرقابة-تحت-مساجد-مصر>.

¹³⁸ محمد.

¹³⁹ محمد.

نادر ابو الفتوح, "الأوقاف تحدد ضوابط وشروط الاعتكاف بالمساجد في رمضان", الأهرام اليومي ¹⁴⁰, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/daily/News/31213/41/296465/-في-الأوقاف-تحدد-ضوابط-وشروط-الاعتكاف-بالمساجد>.aspx.

محمود مصطفى, "إنهاء خدمة وتحرير محضر.. ما عقوبة إقامة صلاة العيد خارج المساجد المعتمدة من الأوقاف", مصرراوي ¹⁴¹, accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_egypt/details/2021/5/10/2020672/-ما-محضر-تحرير-محضر-مصرراوي.aspx.

محمود مصطفى, "الأوقاف: منع بث صلاة التراويح عبر مكبرات الصوت.. والمساجد للصلاة فقط", مصرراوي ¹⁴², accessed March 5, 2021, https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_egypt/details/2019/4/24/1556669/--مكبرات-عبر-مكبرات-مصرراوي.aspx.

people during the revival of Laylat al-Qadr as it considered it as a kind of transgression against the right of the state.¹⁴³

The space of mosques and sermons seems to be under the monopoly of the state through the official religious institution, specifically, the Ministry of Endowments. It seems that there is no margin or space for independent initiatives, whether in the ownership of mosques or even enjoying sufficient religious freedom while performing worship inside these mosques. On a different level, mosques and sermons' spaces also reflect the conflict among contesting religious institutions. The ministry of endowments monopolizes the right to manage all mosques including Al-Azhar Mosque until 2014. The Minister of Endowments issued a decision in 2014 to transfer the administrative supervision of the Al-Azhar Mosque to the al-Azhar institution.¹⁴⁴ Al-Azhar from his part considered Al-Azhar Mosque as an essential part of the Al-Azhar institution as the Ministry of Endowments itself is considered an extension of the Al-Azhar institution.¹⁴⁵

Al-Azhar in this conflict with the ministry of endowments could extract the administration of Al-Azhar mosque as well as impose its oversight during the conflict over the written sermon. Consequently, this conflict reveals that official religious institutions are not just tools in the regime's hands but also a space for disputes over their institutional interests which may differ among themselves, but all agree with the general line of the state.¹⁴⁶

1.4.4. Who Owns the Religious Field?

After the success of the regime to displace the Muslim Brotherhood, al Sisi appeared bolder in his speech with religious institutions and spoke as an expert on religious matters. This encroachment on the specialization of the religious institutions made it upset and created a kind of conflict about who had the upper hand in speaking in the name of Islam. Al-Azhar and the

YouTube, "وزير الاوقاف: محمد جبريل 'متلون' وحررنا محضر ضده وتم منعه من الخطابة أو الإمامة في مساجد مصر"¹⁴³ accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3qQRsSO4x4>.

وزارة الأوقاف تقرر نقل تبعية الجامع الأزهر إلي مشيخة الأزهر في اجتماع القطاع الديني يوم الاثنين 6 / 1 / 2014 م, "بوابة الأوقاف" الإلكترونية, accessed June 3, 2021, <http://ar.awkafonline.com/?p=6380>.

مرودة البشير, "بعد 22 عاما من تبعيته للأوقاف: مشيخة الأزهر تسترد الجامع.. ودروس يومية لأعضاء هيئة العلماء -", "الأهرام اليومي"¹⁴⁵ accessed June 22, 2021, <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/daily/NewsPrint/253601.aspx>.

¹⁴⁶ Brown, "Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority." p,20.

Sheikh of Al-Azhar with their responsibility as the protector of Islam in the country led the struggle against the presidency. Al-Sisi used several scenarios to pressure Sheikh al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb, but the latter was able to evade Sisi's grip every time. Al-Sisi has used the media, parliament, and the Minister of Endowments to confront the Sheikh. For his part, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar has used the Council of Senior Scholars, the Islamic Research Complex, and Al-Azhar University to set pitfalls in front of Sisi's desires to embarrass the Sheikh. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar sought to transfer the conflict from his person to the institution.

Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Ahmed Al-Tayeb, was close to the regime as he was a member of the Politics Secretariat of the National Party during the period of Mubarak. After January 2011, Sheikh Al-Azhar took a stance against the revolution at the beginning. However, the January revolution strengthened the independence of the Al-Azhar institution through a series of privileges the institution had acquired. Al-Azhar became the reference entity for interpreting religious aspects in the 2012 constitution that was drawn up during the period of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar returned to the Council of Senior Scholars in 2021, which was established first in 1911 and dissolved in 1961. The council's jurisdiction includes the election of the Sheikh of Al-Azhar and the nomination of the Grand Mufti of Egypt. The most significant achievement after the January 2011 revolution was the passage of a law by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which was ruling the country during the transitional period after Mubarak, to elect the Sheikh of Al-Azhar by secret ballot through the Council of Senior Scholars in Al-Azhar. The law stipulated that Sheikh Al-Azhar could not be isolated, which granted him unprecedented independent status. Ironically, this step taken by the Military Council was aimed at strengthening the independence of Al-Azhar as one of the deep state institutions as to counter the Brotherhood and Salafists who control parliament; however, the result became the opposite later.

There are four spaces in the conflict between al-Azhar headed by Sheikh Al-Azhar and the regime headed by al-Sisi, the minister of endowments, and Dar al-Ifta as the arm of the state. The first conflict was on the bureaucratic space; the second was on the moral leadership for the society; the third was on constitutional and legal space; the fourth was on the media and social media; and the fifth was on the international space.

1.4.4.1. The Conflict on The Bureaucratic Space

According to the fact that religious institutions have a vast bureaucracy, they can penetrate many spaces of society which has made them an influential element for the state infrastructural power. However, these huge bureaucracies enable each religious institution to have a free independent space that can circumvent the state hegemony. In addition, the bureaucracies of these religious institutions intersect with each other according to the struggle for influence and interests.

There was a struggle about arranging seats inside the institution and distributing the men of each party to ensure the balance of powers. In February 2015, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar removed the Minister of Endowments, Mukhtar Jomaa, who is close to the Presidency, from membership in the Technical Office of Al-Azhar Sheikhdom.¹⁴⁷ Al-Azhar, from its side, denied that the exclusion of the Minister of Endowments was due to a dispute between Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Endowments¹⁴⁸.

The presidency responded to that by excluding two strong men close to Sheikh Al-Azhar from the sheikhdom. President Sisi refused to renew to the deputy of Al-Azhar and the most reliable assistant of Al-Tayyib, Dr. Abbas Showman. All mediation efforts from Sheikh Al-Azhar with the president for the extension to Showman had failed, and Al-Tayyib was forced to exclude his man from the sheikhdom; however, he kept him in the Senior Scholars Council in Al-Azhar.¹⁴⁹ The second man was Muhammad Abd al-Salam, the legal advisor to the Grand Imam, whose pressured departure from the sheikhdom was accepted by al-Tayyib.¹⁵⁰

In another opposition move on the bureaucratic level against Al-Azhar, the Minister of Endowments excluded some scholars closed to the Sheikh of Al-Azhar from the Supreme

¹⁴⁷ الأزهر يوضح أسباب استبعاد وزير الأوقاف من التشكيل الجديد للمكتب الفني، "الدستور" ¹⁴⁷ accessed May 10, 2021, <https://www.dostor.org/765195>.

شيماء عبد الهادي، "الأزهر: لا خلاف مع الأوقاف حول تشكيل المكتب الفني... ومصر لا تستحق إشعال معارك وهمية"، بوابة الأهرام ¹⁴⁸ accessed June 2, 2021, <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/593431.aspx>.

محمود مصطفى، "الإمام الأكبر يطلب التجديد لـ"شومان" وكيلاً للأزهر و"عفيفي"، "مصرأوى" ¹⁴⁹ accessed March 1, 2021, https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_egypt/details/2018/8/28/1417682/-/الإمام-الأكبر-يطلب-التجديد-ل-شومان-وكيل-والأزهر-و-عفيفي-البديل.

حسن المنياوي، "استقالة مستشار شيخ الأزهر من منصبه"، "الوفد" ¹⁵⁰ accessed June 22, 2021, <https://alwafd.news/دنيا-2169348-استقالة-مستشار-شيخ-الأزهر-من-منصبه>.

Council of Islamic Affairs of the Endowments,¹⁵¹ and Al-Azhar responded to this step by boycotting all the activities of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs.¹⁵²

1.4.4.2. The Conflict on The Moral Leadership of The Egyptian Society

This conflict includes three aspects of confrontation: verbal divorce, renewing the religious discourse, and personal status law.

Verbal Divorce

In January 2017, during President Sisi's speech at the Egyptian Police Day celebrations, Sisi surprised the attendees by talking about the high divorce rates in Egypt and demanded religious institutions, in the presence of Sheikh Al-Azhar, to modify the divorce law and to consider verbal divorce invalid.¹⁵³ The Sheikh of Al-Azhar did not respond directly to this encroachment on Al-Azhar's jurisdiction; however, two weeks later the Council of Senior Scholars in Al-Azhar issued a statement with the signature of Sheikh Al-Azhar rejecting the modifications on verbal divorce on the grounds that it was contrary to Sharia. The statement was not only rejecting Sisi's proposal but was also concluded with a short paragraph which says “Those who are tolerant in divorce fatwas should spend their efforts on what benefits people and solving their problems on the ground, as people are not now in need of change the law of divorce, insofar as they need policies to facilitate their life.”¹⁵⁴ The Sheikh of Al-Azhar was exposed to severe attacks from the media due to his position towards the verbal divorce, and in response to this, Sheikh Al-Azhar said “we wished everyone to speak about what he knows and leave Al-Azhar to talk about its specialization.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ سعيد حجازي وعبدالوهاب عيسى, “وزير الأوقاف يطيح بقيادات الأزهر من «الشئون الإسلامية» - مصر, ” الوطن, accessed June 4, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/1599765>.

¹⁵² محمود مصطفى, “مؤتمرات الأزهر والأوقاف تؤكد توتر العلاقة بين الطيب وجمعة, ” مصر اوي, accessed June 9, 2021, https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_reports/details/2017/4/23/1065413/-العلاقة-توتر-الأوقاف-تؤكد-توتر-العلاقة -بين-الطيب-وجمعة-تقرير.

¹⁵³ “السيسي يداعب شيخ الأزهر «تعبتني يا فضيلة الأمام» - YouTube, ” accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEWNq5OVxnU>.

¹⁵⁴ بيان هيئة كبار العلماء بالأزهر الشريف حول وقوع الطلاق الشفوي, “هيئة كبار العلماء - الأزهر الشريف” accessed June 1, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/2123919237924833/photos/a.2146764778973612/2789348201381930/>.

¹⁵⁵ “شيخ الأزهر: المزايدة في الطلاق الشفوي تجاوزت للحد وللحق” CNN Arabic, accessed June 12, 2020, <https://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2017/02/17/azhar-sisi-divorce>.

Renewing the Religious Discourse

The presidency seemed to have the intention advance more steps in the context of dominating the religious field and its conflict with Al-Azhar was renewing religious discourse. Al-Sisi with the parliament and media held Al-Azhar responsible for the spread of violence and extremism due to the stagnation of its religious discourse. Sheikh Al-Azhar strongly opposed that accusation and replied that extremism and violence have different causes, referring to the political responsibility of the regime. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar refused to use Al-Azhar to hang political mistakes on it instead of admitting political responsibility and wrong security decisions. Therefore, the direct clash between Sisi and Sheikh Al-Azhar was once again renewed during the official celebration of the Prophet's birthday, which was entitled "Defending the Prophet's Sunnah". The Sheikh of Al-Azhar defended the importance of the Sunnah and its role and warned those who underestimate it or demand to neglect it.¹⁵⁶ Al Sisi replied outside his written speech that those who deny the Sunnah are not more dangerous to Islam than those who misinterpret it, referring to Sheikh Al-Azhar as he did not sufficiently do his role to counter-radicalization.¹⁵⁷ In the same context, The President of Cairo University, Muhammad Al-Khasht, called for the renewal of the fundamentals of religion by returning to the Qur'an and "al-Mutawater" from al-Sunnah. Sheikh Al-Azhar responded by explaining that the heritage, which today is underestimated, has created a great nation that extended from Andalusia to China.¹⁵⁸ For his part, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar presented a model for renewing religious discourse when he issued liberal fatwas for women, however, that did not fall into the regime's interest, which seemed to be interested in renewing the religious discourse in one aspect only, which is extremism.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ احمد البهنساوي, "شيخ الأزهر يرد على المشككين في السنة: المصدر الثاني للتشريع في الإسلام - مصر, " الوطن", accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/5052365?t=push>.

¹⁵⁷ "كلمة الرئيس السيسي خلال الاحتفال بذكرى المولد النبوي الشريف - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggY2NtuEzjA>.

¹⁵⁸ "معركة كلامية بين د. أحمد الطيب شيخ الأزهر الشريف ود. محمد الخشت رئيس جامعة القاهرة - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6ObpvukhrY>.

¹⁵⁹ "يجوز للمرأة تولي الوظائف العليا والقضاء والإفتاء، والسفر دون محرم متى كان آمناً، والطلاق التعسفي بغير سبب" on Twitter: "أحمد الطيب" accessed June 1, 2021, https://twitter.com/alimamaltayeb/status/1390684551832383491?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetem%7Ctwterm%5E1390684551832383491%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bb.c.com%2Farabic%2Fmiddleeast-57062869.

Personal Status Law

The other round was the draft personal status law crisis that flamed the conflict between Al-Azhar and the Parliament. The Parliament referred the draft personal status law to Al-Azhar to express its opinion about it. However, Al-Azhar ignored the response to the Parliament's draft law and announced that it was preparing a draft personal status law, and Al-Azhar would present it to Parliament.¹⁶⁰ From their side, the deputies considered that Al-Azhar's position was to ignore the parliament. In this context, a media campaign was launched to attack the Sheikh of Al-Azhar considering the Sheikh was waging battles with the state that is not present on the ground, and these battles depicted the state was fighting against Islam in Egypt and that the Sheikh of Al-Azhar was the one who stood guard to defend Islam.¹⁶¹

However, this ferocious campaign began to subside, which may be attributed to external mediation. The situation about the personal status law changed from attack to acceptance, and the head of the Parliament's Religious Committee announced that if Al-Azhar sends a draft personal status law, Parliament will consider this law; perhaps it will be of interest, calling for not underestimating the Al-Azhar institution because it has excellent value internally or externally.¹⁶² For his part, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi thanked the Sheikh of Al-Azhar for preparing the draft personal status law, and Sisi stressed that the Personal Status Law would come out in a way that serves everyone's interests.¹⁶³

1.4.4.3. The Conflict on The Constitutional and Legal Power

¹⁶⁰ محمد شحته, "مشروع قانون الأحوال الشخصية المقدم من الأزهر للنواب.. تعرف على مواده", صدى البلد accessed June 9, 2021, <https://www.elbalad.news/4745362>.

¹⁶¹ "دقيقة' يكشف تفاصيل الجدل الدائر بين أعضاء البرلمان والأزهر حول 'قانون الأحوال الشخصية' - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZbziVgvs48>.

¹⁶² مصطفى الخطيب, "دينية البرلمان' من حق الأزهر أن يرسل مشروع قانون الأحوال الشخصية للبرلمان", بلدنا اليوم accessed January 22, 2021, <https://www.baladnaelyoum.com/news/5c72fcdea243217cb4376340/>-من-حق-الأحوال-الشخصية-للبرلمان-الأزهر-أن-يرسل-مشروع-قانون-تغطيات-ومتابعات/دينية-البرلمان-من-حق-

¹⁶³ "بعد حديث الرئيس السيسي عنه.. تفاصيل مشروع قانون الأزهر للأحوال الشخصية - مصر", الوطن accessed June 20, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/5387177>.

The battle between the regime and Al-Azhar moved from a physical struggle on the ground to a struggle on the constitution. Parliament looked at two significant laws, both of which undermine the authority of Al-Azhar in one way or another. The first is the law of Dar Ifta which aims to transfer the affiliation of Dar al Ifta to the government instead of Al-Azhar and the Council of Senior Scholars. Al-Azhar considered the law of Dar al Ifta has been aimed to create a "parallel entity" to Al-Azhar institution that shares the same constitutional role.¹⁶⁴ Sheikh Al-Azhar explained that the constitution made Al-Azhar the primary reference in religious issues and Islamic affairs and responsible for advocacy and spreading religious sciences and the Arabic language in Egypt and the world. From its side, the government says that Dar al-Ifta was established as an independent body, and there is a confusion between Al-Azhar and Dar al-Ifta, because the Mufti is a scholar of Al-Azhar, although Dar Al Ifta is entirely independent of Al-Azhar. The new law gives the president the absolute power to choose the mufti among the three candidates nominated by the Council of Senior Scholars and gives him the right to extend the mufti after the end of the legal period.

Al-Azhar sent a letter to the head of Parliament containing the opinion of the Senior Scholars Council of Al-Azhar on the draft law regulating the Dar al-Ifta, affirming that the articles of this project violate the Egyptian constitution and violate the independence of Al-Azhar¹⁶⁵; however, on the 7th of July 2020, the Parliament voted on the Law of Dar al-Ifta, and approved it.¹⁶⁶ Despite this result, the Council of Senior Scholars in Al-Azhar issued a statement saying that there is no truth to a disagreement between the presidency and Al-Azhar, and Al-Azhar's objection to the law of Dar al Ifta was in the context of the national interest.¹⁶⁷

The second law undermining Al-Azhar's independence was regarding the reorganization of Al-Azhar and its affiliated bodies.¹⁶⁸ The draft law was submitted by MP Muhammad Abu Hamed

¹⁶⁴ "تصاعد أزمة قانون دار الإفتاء والإمام الأكبر يطلب حضور جلسة البرلمان", "الوطن", accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4960684>.

¹⁶⁵ "نص خطاب رفض الأزهر لقانون تنظيم دار الإفتاء قبل مناقشته بالبرلمان - مصر", "الوطن", accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4909832>.

¹⁶⁶ "يوسف", "البرلمان يوافق على نقل تبعية دار الإفتاء لمجلس الوزراء بدلا من وزارة العدل - مصر - الوطن".

¹⁶⁷ "بيان هيئة كبار العلماء حول الإختلاف مع نواب البرلمان حول قانون دار الإفتاء الجديد", "هيئة كبار العلماء - الأزهر الشريف", accessed February 22, 2021,

<https://www.facebook.com/2123919237924833/photos/a.2146764778973612/2643130799337005/>.

¹⁶⁸ هشام عبد الجليل, "عمامة الأزهر تحت قبة البرلمان.. ننشر مشروع قانون 'أبو حامد' لتنظيم المشيخة.. تحديد مدة الإمام الأكبر بـ12 سنة كحد أقصى.. فصل الكليات العلمية ودخولها دون تمييز ديني.. ووقف إنشاء المعاهد والإبقاء على 3000 فقط", "اليوم السابع", accessed June 22,

who is an ally of the regime. The draft law reduces and limits the role of the Al-Azhar institution and suggested limiting the period of Sheikh Al-Azhar to six years only, and he may be reelected after the end of his period for only one time. The new draft law also states that if Sheikh Al-Azhar breaches the duties of his position, he is referred to an investigation committee consisting of the oldest seven members of the Council of Senior Scholars who can isolate the Sheikh al-Azhar; however, this proposed mechanism for accounting the Sheikh al-Azhar contradicts the constitutional status of Sheikh al-Azhar as an independent and cannot be dismissed.¹⁶⁹

1.4.4.4. The Conflict on The Media Space

The media space is a fertile space that can mobilize opponents and exploit the masses to win in political competition. In light of the overstating state, the Egyptian regime controls the media space, whether through security control or by monopolizing the media tools. The official Islam has a strong presence in the official media, whether the media is directly owned by the government or other media managed by bodies affiliated with the regime. However, with the spread of social media, the official media has become crowded with non-official religious actors, all of whom claim the right to speak in the name of religion. This situation creates a competitive religious field, and “the line between official and non-official religion is sometimes difficult to draw.”¹⁷⁰

Another level of internal competition emerged between the official religious institutions to carve out a larger space in the media. The divergence of political orientations and the intertwining of authorities, personal and institutional interests were reflected. This situation has led recently to the use of the media as an arena of war and the exchange of accusations between religious actors close to the regime and Al-Azhar on the other side, which presents itself as the most independent religious institution.

2021, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2017/4/25/عمامة-الأزهر-تحت-قبة-البرلمان-نشر-مشروع-قانون-أبو-حامد-لتنظيم>

¹⁶⁹ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Egypt_2014.pdf,p13,article7

¹⁷⁰ Brown, “Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority.” p12.

After the conflict between the Sheikh of Al-Azhar and Al-Sisi emerged, a huge media campaign was launched to attack the Sheikh of Al-Azhar. Al-Azhar considered this media campaign as directly intended against it, and claimed that there is a state of blackout over Al-Azhar's response to the accusations against it. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar commented during an interview broadcast by Channel 1 affiliated with the government that if Al-Azhar wants to respond to an article insulting Al-Azhar with a counter article, this is not allowed to be published.¹⁷¹ In response to that, al-Azhar tended to extend its media presence on social media. In April 2020, the Media Center of Al-Azhar announced the launch of an official page in the name of the Grand Imam, Professor Ahmed Al-Tayeb, Sheikh Al-Azhar, on Facebook. The Al-Azhar Media Center stated that the launch of this official page comes within the wish of Sheikh Al-Azhar to communicate with all segments of society.¹⁷² The Council of Senior Scholars also published its statements on the official Facebook page to break the media blackout imposed on Al-Azhar.

1.4.4.5. The Conflict on the International Space

At the international level, terrorism and extremism had become the greatest global threats since September 11, 2001, until the emergence of ISIS in 2014. The Western vision assumes that official Islamic institutions could be helpful to contain extremism. In this context, US Secretary of State John Kerry visited Cairo in 2014 and talked about the roles the official religious institutions can play in the war against ISIS. He stressed that eliminating ISIS is not by the military only, but rather requires a coalition of official religious institutions to confront ISIS's claims about Islam.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ YouTube, "شيخ الأزهر يفضح هجوم إعلام السيسي عليه.. والشيخ #عبدالله_رشدي يتحدث لأول مرة عن الجيش المصري", accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38sx7C1c3Bk>.

¹⁷² أعلن المركز الإعلامي للأزهر الشريف، اليوم الأحد، تدشين صفحة رسمية باسم فضيلة #الإمام_الأكبر_أ.د/ أحمد ' الأزهر الشريف" on Twitter: "الطيب #شيخ_الأزهر على موقع التواصل الاجتماعي «فيس بوك» رابط الصفحة الرسمية لفضيلة الإمام الأكبر على فيس بوك: <https://t.co/4HCwTqLhPq> / Twitter," accessed June 22, 2021, <https://twitter.com/alazhar/status/1246860633582297090?lang=en>.

¹⁷³ "BBC News عربي، دور مصر 'أساسي' في مواجهة تنظيم 'الدولة الإسلامية'" accessed April 22, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2014/09/140913_usa_kerry_is_arab.

However, the dependence of Western governments on the role of official religious institutions in combating extremism appears to be limited because Western governments understand the relationship between religious actors and states through the European perspective.¹⁷⁴ Western governments cannot provide a specific vision about the appropriate interpretations of Islam, or determine the nature of the relationship between the state and official religious institutions, or judge individuals or institutions attitudes in terms of their religious and political performance, especially since the area of political Islam and official Islam has many intersections. “The similarities among adversaries remain: in 2016 as in 1989, state institutions and Islamist organizations are both political opponents and ideological cousins.”¹⁷⁵

Despite this blurring situation, the Western vision seemingly cannot take the risk to open the door for non-official religious actors, even if they do not pursue armed violence directly, because it does not guarantee their discipline. For instance, Sheikh Al-Qaradawi, who belongs to the Brotherhood, and studied in al-Azhar, presented a fatwa which allows a person to blow himself up to target the Zionist soldiers.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, the West cannot crystallize a defined mechanism for the effective use of religious institutions to combat terrorism. In addition, the priority of the political regime in Egypt appears to be different from the international agenda as the regime seeks firstly to eradicate extremism internally. Therefore, the Egyptian regime is using religious institutions in internal battles as practical tools that are used locally; to impose a specific religious reading, facilitate the penetration of society and counter the regime opponents from political Islam; after that, the regime will think of using religious institutions in the global war on terrorism.

On the other hand, religious institutions are eager to increase their influence locally and internationally, to protect their gains and earn respect. Due to its essential historical position, Al-Azhar institution is considered as one of the most influential religious power in the world. The Egyptian state exploits the international influences of Al-Azhar to enhance its image and reputation globally; however, Al-Azhar does not follow the line of the state completely. The

¹⁷⁴ Brown, “Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority.”p27

¹⁷⁵ Aaron, Rock-Singer. "Censoring the Kishkophone: religion and state power in Mubarak's Egypt." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 3 (2017): 437-456.

¹⁷⁶ “العمليات الاستشهادية.. بين الإباحة والحظر | موقع الشيخ يوسف القرضاوي” accessed August 15, 2021, <https://www.al-qaradawi.net/node/2194>.

clash happened when Al-Azhar refused to issue an official fatwa to disbelieve ISIS.¹⁷⁷The regime considered this a rebellion and backwardness of Al-Azhar to fight terrorism and extremism. The state started to replace Al-Azhar internationally with alternatives religious actors as President Sisi began to use his Adviser for Religious Affairs who was presented in several diplomatic forums.¹⁷⁸Dar al-Ifta also established the global observatory for fatwas to respond to extremism.¹⁷⁹



¹⁷⁷ YouTube, "شيخ الأزهر: 'لا أستطيع تكفير داعش لأنهم يؤمنون بالله'" accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSGTDGwvzac>.

¹⁷⁸ علي موسى محمد الغريب, "بالصور.. أسامة الأزهرى يستقبل السفير الأفغانى بالقاهرة," البوابة نيوز, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.albawabhnews.com/4237782>.

¹⁷⁹ " | دار الإفتاء المصرية - مرصد الفتاوى التكفيرية والآراء المتشددة (7) "

CHAPTER II

THE PANDEMIC AS A CATALYST FOR THE POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE STATE AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.

2.1. INTRODUCTION

With the spread of the Coronavirus in the Chinese city of Wuhan and the inclusion of the virus by the World Health Organization as a global pandemic,¹⁸⁰ panic and confusion have spread at all local and international levels. Countries' policies were reflected during the crisis, and the virus revealed the extent of political trust between the state and society. In Egypt, the Coronavirus has met with the usual authoritarian policies in terms of denial, delay in response, misinformation, in addition to conspiracy theories. The virus exacerbated the challenges that already existed in the country, especially after the January 25 revolution regarding governmental weakness, lack of transparency, and the decline in the health care sector. During containing the pandemic, the state realized the importance of the moral mobilization of the society to adhere to the preventive measures.

The urgent goal was to limit the spread of the virus by closing potential infection sites, including religious spaces like mosques, religious schools, and enormous religious seasons such as Ramadan, Hajj, and religious aggregations. The regime relies on religious institutions as an element of its infrastructural power to ensure compliance of people with social distancing and other precautionary measures because religious institutions and clergy enjoy the confidence of citizens in their religious fatwas and social roles. For the regime, the participation of Islamic

¹⁸⁰ "Archived: WHO Timeline - COVID-19," accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.who.int/news/item/27-04-2020-who-timeline---covid-19>.

religious institutions in managing the spread of coronavirus is crucial to compensate for the weak public confidence in the political regime which leads to severe consequences for public health.

In Egypt, the pandemic arrived when the overstating state consolidated its control over religious institutions following the overthrow of the Morsi regime and Muslim Brothers. The entire public sphere was mobilized under the pretext of combating extremism. This counter-terrorism operation included extensive transformation within the religious field; new fatwas and legislation, increased security supervillains of mosques and sermons, and restructuring of official religious bodies and institutions. Under the excuse of the exceptional state, the regime may see the coronavirus outbreak as an opportunity for the state to exercise more control over the religious field. In this context, temporary emergency measures issued due to the pandemic can become permanent. The emergent decisions to close mosques, suspend Friday prayers, and prevent the Tahajjud and i'tikaf in Ramadan can be extended for a longer period. However, religious institutions during their fight against the pandemic may gain more space of independence and social influence.

In Egypt, religious institutions do not show a unified response to full adherence to the regime's line. This is because different personal and bureaucratic rivalries have risen into the theater. Although the long-term repercussions of this crisis are difficult to predict, it may affect relations between religious institutions and the state regarding state dominance, and the diversity of the religious field. In this chapter, I focus on the response of official religious institutions to the Coronavirus pandemic and the extent to which religious institutions have advanced to new spaces in terms of discourse, flexibility, fatwas, and presence on the ground in the local and at the international space. The same interactions in terms of competition and conflict over the religious market and the overstating nature of the Egyptian state have been reflected in the case of Coronavirus. The response of religious institutions to the Coronavirus pandemic reflects the three levels of intersecting spaces, whether (1) between the overstating state and official religious institutions, (2) among official institutions: Al-Azhar, Dar Al-Ifta and endowments, and (3) between official religious institutions and non-official religious actors.

2.2. The Response of the State to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Khaled Fahmy historically explains how the pandemic enabled the modern state during the Muhammad Ali era to exercise greater control over society, and how the state treated the body as “a secular object, almost as state property, not as sacred territory; as an individual entity, not as an integral part of a wider community”.¹⁸¹ This situation was repeated now by the exceptional state imposed by the state during the Coronavirus pandemic.

However, the fight against coronavirus requires the state to give more space for new actors, which is an unfamiliar situation with the state which used to extend its hegemony overall political and societal aspects. The response of religious institutions to coronavirus reflects the state dilemma about the space conflict. If the state allows the religious institution more space to enhance its infrastructural power and social penetration and thus increase efficiency in combating the coronavirus, however, it will be in the account of state monopolization on the religious field. The pandemic also shaped an existential threat that necessitated the demand for religion as the savior and to seek fatwas and consolation from religious institutions exclusively. Therefore, the state was forced to let space for religious institutions; however, it seems that the Egyptian state’s dealings with the Coronavirus have changed at different stages. In the beginning, the state took the lead as the savior and protector of individuals, and with increasing the clarity about the size of threat posed by the pandemic, the state took backward steps and presented experts in its place as the most capable of managing the crisis.

2.2.1. State of Exception

The Human Rights Document states that "health as a human right creates a legal obligation on states to ensure access to timely acceptable, and affordable health care of appropriate quality as well as to providing for the underlying determinants of health, such as safe and potable water, sanitation, food, housing, health-related information, and education, and gender equality."¹⁸² Out

¹⁸¹ Khaled, Fahmy. "The anatomy of justice: forensic medicine and criminal law in nineteenth-century Egypt." *Islamic Law and Society* 6, no. 2 (1999): 224-271.p270.

¹⁸² "Human Rights and Health," accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-rights-and-health>.

of this legal duty, many countries have launched emergency and exceptional laws to protect their people and prevent the spread of infection during the pandemic. Many "lockdown" policies have been imposed to limit public gatherings, restrict people's movement, preventing mass religious celebration, monitoring streets to ensure people stay in their homes, closing borders, and suspending travel to prevent people from spreading the virus.

On the other hand, these precautions and preventive measures may have severe implications in terms of human rights, the right to religious freedom and practicing rituals, and the freedom of assembly and movement. Therefore, the UN Secretary-General warned that “we must ensure that any emergency measures — including states of emergency — are legal, proportionate, necessary and non-discriminatory, have a specific focus and duration, and take the least intrusive approach possible to protect public health.”¹⁸³ Therefore, the exceptional state is permissible during health crises to the extent required by the situation, since the state of emergency can be used as an excuse for violations such as arbitrary detention or other authoritarian measures. Therefore, things such as intellectual freedom and human dignity should not be relinquished and should be stated as non-derogable rights.¹⁸⁴

Carl Schmidt explains in his book *Political Theology* that the state of exception determines the norm.¹⁸⁵ This is what is happening in Egypt, where the state of emergency is extended as it is the original state. The emergency law in Egypt has a long history and has always been linked to the war on terrorism. In the case of Coronavirus, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi issued Decision No. 168 of 2020, declaring a state of emergency throughout the country for three months, starting from April 28, 2020, which is the twelfth extension of the emergency that was issued in April 2017. The justification for the decision was due to the security and health conditions that the country is going through.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ “We Are All in This Together: Human Rights and COVID-19 Response and Recovery | United Nations,” accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/we-are-all-together-human-rights-and-covid-19-response-and>.

¹⁸⁴ Adina Ponta, “Human Rights Law in the Time of the Coronavirus | ASIL,” Issue: 5 Volume: 24, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/24/issue/5/human-rights-law-time-coronavirus>.

¹⁸⁵ Carl, Schmitt. *Political theology: Four chapters on the concept of sovereignty*. University of Chicago Press, 2005.p6.

¹⁸⁶ فاطمة محمد, “السياسي يعلن حالة الطوارئ في جميع أنحاء البلاد لمدة 3 أشهر تبدأ اليوم (التفاصيل),” *المصري اليوم*, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2318080>.

The state of exception imposed by the regime before the Coronavirus was for fighting terrorism, in this context President Sisi uses the phrase ‘people of evil’ over recent years, and at first, he meant terrorist groups, until he generalized the expression in 2016 when he said “the people of evil are all those who seek to offend Egyptians and state and try to obstruct Egypt’s progress”.¹⁸⁷

It seems there is not much difference in the case of coronavirus as the regime dealt with the pandemic as a political opponent in a biological dress. In that context of the exceptional state, the media attack everyone who questioned the credibility of the governmental information about the number of infections or criticized a decision regarding the preventive measures taken by the government. The scarecrow of the "people of evil" was restored to describe those using the virus to question the regime's efficiency in facing the crises. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi reuses the description of "people of evil" when he was attending a meeting with the Minister of Health and some government and army leaders, in which he urged Egyptians not to be drawn into rumors about the numbers of covid-19 infections.¹⁸⁸ The media and officials have used the same phrase of the president to attack those who questioned the credibility of the Ministry of Health for the announced number of Covid-19 infections.¹⁸⁹

At the level of religious institutions, the Minister of Endowments stated that the Brotherhood seeks to spread the Coronavirus in Egypt, especially among the army and police.¹⁹⁰ Dar Al Ifta also warned of the exploitation of the Corona crisis by the terrorist groups.¹⁹¹ Covid-19 could be considered as a gift for the authoritarian regime.¹⁹² The Egyptian regime began to use the stick of exception by expanding the arrest of activists, journalists, and citizens on charges of spreading rumors. Among the arrested was the Egyptian journalist Mostafa Saqr, owner of “Al Borsa” newspaper and “Daily News Egypt” website through which he was accused of spreading rumors

¹⁸⁷ YouTube, “الرئيس السيسي يوضح من المقصود بهم أهل الشر” accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLSHkVUxoA>.

¹⁸⁸ YouTube, “تغطية خاصة - كلمة الرئيس السيسي عن الدور الكبير الذي قامت به الدولة المصرية لمواجهة تفشي كورونا” accessed September 8, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yfn4UC_49k.

¹⁸⁹ احمد عرفة, “أستاذ إعلام: أهل الشر يصدرون الشائعات لمحاولة طعن مصر من الخلف”, “اليوم السابع” accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/4/8/4713437/من-مصر-طعن-مصر-من-أهل-الشر-يصدرون-الشائعات-لمحاولة-طعن-مصر-من-اليوم-السابع>.

¹⁹⁰ اسماعيل رفعت, “وزير الأوقاف: الإخوان تدعو لنشر كورونا بين الأبرياء والجماعة خطر يهدد العالم”, “اليوم السابع” accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/3/10/4665957/خطر-الجماعة-والأبرياء-بين-الأبرياء-والجماعة-خطر-يهدد-العالم-اليوم-السابع>.

¹⁹¹ سعيد حجازي, “قنابل بشرية.. حيلة الإرهابيين للإضرار بمصر”, “الوطن” accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4651676>.

¹⁹² MARIA ARENA AND PIER ANTONIO PANZERI, “Covid-19 Is a Gift for Authoritarians and Dictators,” euobserver, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://euobserver.com/opinion/148007>.

that harm Egyptian national security regarding the Coronavirus.¹⁹³ The regime also closed the office of the British Guardian newspaper in Cairo after it published an article on March 17 in which they expected about 19,000 infections of Covid-19 in Egypt.¹⁹⁴

Arbitrary measures and detentions expanded to affect the medical staff themselves when videos spread on social media showing the lack of necessary equipments and tools in hospitals. Doctors were called for investigations by the Ministry of Health on charges of violating the laws of medical professions and the Medical Syndicate demanded in a statement the release of the imprisoned medical staff and denounced their detention.¹⁹⁵ After the spread of pictures on social media of a nurse sitting desperately on the floor after finishing out the oxygen masks in the hospital, security instructions were issued to all hospital workers that the use of camera is not allowed anymore in the hospital. The instructions also included that talking on social networks about the lack of medical equipments and tools will subject the person to the emergency law for spreading rumors that harm Egyptian national security. Indeed, a person was arrested because he filmed the running out of oxygen at Al-Husseini Hospital. The Minister of Health replied to this video by stating that there is no shortage of oxygen inside the ministry's hospitals, and those who claim otherwise are members of the (terrorist) Brotherhood.¹⁹⁶ Thus, the Coronavirus turned from being a biological enemy to a political enemy. The state of emergency surrounded it completely similar in its security measures and media incitements to the war against the power of evil and terrorism.

2.2.2. Presenting Technocrats

¹⁹³ "Mostafa Sakr - Committee to Protect Journalists," April 21, 2020, <https://cpj.org/data/people/mostafa-sakr/>.

¹⁹⁴ Michael Safi, "Egypt Forces Guardian Journalist to Leave after Coronavirus Story | Egypt | The Guardian," the Guardian, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/26/egypt-forces-guardian-journalist-leave-coronavirus-story-ruth-michaelson>.

¹⁹⁵ نقابة أطباء مصر - الصفحة الرسمية، دار الأفتاء: الإعتداء على الأطقم الطبية حرام شرعاً، " نقابة اطباء مصر الصفحة الرسمية" accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Egyptian.Medical.Syndicate/photos/a.318736581481090/3149047881783265/?type=3>.

¹⁹⁶ "أول رد من الصحة المصرية بشأن ما أثير حول وفاة مرضى كورونا بسبب نقص الأكسجين" CNN Arabic, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://arabic.cnn.com/health/article/2021/01/03/egyptian-health-death-covid-19-patients-due-lack-oxygen>.

In Egypt, the first case of Coronavirus infection was officially announced in February 2020. The initial response from the regime was presenting the Coronavirus problem to the citizens as a security challenge that will be faced by the military. Indeed, the role of the military in combating the pandemic was highlighted as it implemented disinfection measures in the Parliament, the Council of Ministers, and some essential public squares as well as the sterilization of subway stations, buses, and trains.¹⁹⁷ The army also carried out sterilization measures against the virus for religious institutions such as Al-Azhar Al-Sharif's sheikhdom, the Egyptian Dar Al-Ifta, and the St. Mark's Cathedral in Abbasiya.¹⁹⁸ On the economic side, the armed forces provided disinfectants and essential food commodities to citizens, and on the media level, the army screened a documentary film reviewing the armed forces' efforts against Coronavirus entitled "The Armed Forces, the Fortress and Support."¹⁹⁹ The military has always played this role in crisis management as the leading player above the government. There is no single problem that the army cannot solve; even in technical and economic issues, the army appears to have a military solution.²⁰⁰ The message has always been that the president and the military can act decisively and effectively while civilians hesitated and failed during crises management. After realizing the extent of the threat of the Coronavirus pandemic, the regime seemed to retreat from the scene gradually, and the president in public statements praised the solidarity of all the Egyptians' efforts, either civil or military ones.²⁰¹

Coronavirus forced states to mobilize all their forces and devices to combat its high penetration. Hence, the state tries to activate its infrastructural power by calling actors who can access interspaces that the state cannot access. The state began to retreat from the "conspiracy hypotheses" and present a mobilizing discourse for all effective state institutions, starting with the media and its governmental institutions, especially health and religious institutions.

¹⁹⁷ جهود القوات المسلحة لمجابهة خطر فيروس (كورونا)-الهيئة العامة للإستعلامات, " الهيئة العامة للإستعلامات " accessed June 22, 2021, [https://sis.gov.eg/Story/201451/\(-كورونا-\)/?lang=ar](https://sis.gov.eg/Story/201451/(-كورونا-)/?lang=ar).

¹⁹⁸ YouTube, " القوات المسلحة تنفذ عمليات التطهير والتعقيم لكل من مشيخة الأزهر ودار الإفتاء والكاتدرائية المرقسية " accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XO3rvXWxnA>.

¹⁹⁹ YouTube, " القوات المسلحة تقوم بأعمال التطهير والتعقيم لمجمع التحرير وعدد من الميادين والشوارع الرئيسية " accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yB5BB9X8TJA>.

²⁰⁰ زكي القاضي, "بالصور.. القوات المسلحة تنفذ وعد الرئيس.. توزيع مليون كرتونة مواد غذائية جديدة بالمحافظات بنصف ثمن التكلفة..الجيش يخفف الأعباء عن المواطنين ويوفر الاحتياجات الأساسية من السلع التموينية لمواجهة الغلاء, " - اليوم السابع accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2016/11/16/2969838/مواد-كرتونة-مليون-توزيع-الرئيس-توزيع-مليون-كرتونة-مواد>.

²⁰¹ YouTube, " كلمة الرئيس السيسي حول جهود الدولة ومؤسستها ودورالمواطنين في مكافحة فيروس كورونا المستجد " accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThdbD0UPa0o>.

Presenting these new civil actors has enhanced the dilemma of the overstating state that wants to remain at the forefront and take the lead in all scenes, however, it is forced to give away to the experts to solve the problem. Thus, it can be said that the virus has led to a transformation, not in the "degree of authoritarianism but its nature".²⁰²

According to the third article of the emergency,²⁰³ the decree states that the president delegates his powers to the prime minister in a state of emergency. This article was seen as a mere formality, but with the development of the Corona crisis, the prime minister was empowered to take massive measures and issue detailed decisions during the pandemic. The prime minister announced various regulations for curfew,²⁰⁴ suspending study, limiting the working hours of restaurants and cafes, and imposing fixed prices on medical supplies and services in private hospitals.²⁰⁵ The Prime Minister formed specialized bodies to coordinate the crisis management and spoke regularly to the media, providing assessments about the government's response.²⁰⁶ Other ministers were also active during the crisis, for example, the Minister of Health and Population Hala Zayed had a significant presence locally and internationally.

The Coronavirus pandemic also highlighted the role of religious institutions. Al-Azhar has a remarkable role through its health and community fatwas, awareness-raising roles, and its management of Al-Azhar Mosque, Al-Azhar University, and other Al-Azhar institutes during the crisis, and Al-Azhar had direct interaction with the health sectors through its hospitals during the crisis.²⁰⁷ The Ministry of Endowments controlled mosques during the pandemic through its decisions to close and suspend prayers, shorten the duration of the sermon, and a package

²⁰² INTISSAR FAKIR NATHAN J. BROWN, "Here to Stay? - Carnegie Middle East Center - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace," CRRNEGIE MIDDLE EAST CENTER, April 2020, <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/81611>.

²⁰³ "Egypt's Sisi Renews State of Emergency for Three Months - Politics - Egypt -," Ahram Online, accessed June 3, 2021, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/389193/Egypt/Politics-/Egypts-Sisi-renews-state-of-emergency-for-three-mo.aspx>.

²⁰⁴ Aidan Lewis Mahmoud Mourad, "Egypt Declares Two-Week Curfew to Counter Coronavirus | Reuters," Reuters, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-egypt/egypt-declares-two-week-curfew-to-counter-coronavirus-idUKKBN21B1MR?edition-redirect=uk>.

²⁰⁵ رئيس الوزراء يصدر قرارا بشأن الإجراءات الاحترازية لمواجهة كورونا-الهيئة العامة للإستعلامات, "الهيئة العامة للإستعلامات" accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/214396/-للمواجهة-الإجراءات-الاحترازية-لمواجهة-كورونا?lang=ar>.

²⁰⁶ محمد عبد العاطي, "بدء اجتماع اللجنة العليا لإدارة أزمة كورونا برئاسة رئيس الوزراء," المصري اليوم accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2256471>.

²⁰⁷ ... أحمد الطيب الصفحة الرسمية, "أحمد الطيب - الإمام الأكبر يوجه بتجهيز مستشفى الأزهر" accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=110471317263511&id=108368050807171.

containing items needed for health precautions during the month of Ramadan.²⁰⁸ Dar Al-Ifta was also presented fatwas that prohibit Covid-infected patient's contact with other healthy individuals, and the necessity of responding to the related instructions and preventive measures.²⁰⁹ Coronavirus has also motivated new participants from civil society, NGOs, and charities to come forward and fill the vacuum by providing services, distributing subsidies, and providing information and general guidelines to combat the virus.²¹⁰

The acceptance of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the army to remain in the backbenches and leave the command to civilians in response to the Corona pandemic is striking.²¹¹ Perhaps the state took a step backward due to the dilemma that being in the front line during the crises puts leaders at risk and at the same time it also presents them with better opportunities. Controlling the crises may help to improve the regime's image as a savior hero and supports its legitimacy, but on the other hand, if the crisis has terrible implications, the regime will place itself under social and political accountability. Despite this, the military did not withdraw from the scene completely, however, they no longer act as leaders of the stage. The social metaphor of "the white army" referring to the medical staff is being reflected as if Egyptians were replacing the military uniform with those who wear lab coats.²¹²

2.3. THE RESPONSE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS TO CORONAVIRUS

The Coronavirus crisis has required adherence to unprecedented measures in the public health field. The application of these preventive measures by society requires a high degree of political confidence and a certain degree of culture in terms of personal hygiene. Even if the state thinks of using its coercive tools to ensure that the people adhere to these precautionary and hygienic

²⁰⁸ «الأوقاف» تصدر 9 ضوابط و5 التزامات و4 ملاحظات لفتح المساجد (تفاصيل كاملة) | المصري اليوم» June 23, 2020, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1991000>.

²⁰⁹ سعيد حجازي, "الدين يقول إيه.. حكم تعدد مصاب كورونا مخالطة الناس ومزاحمتهم -", الوطن <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/5260018>, accessed June 22, 2021.

²¹⁰ عربي BBC News - "احمد يحيي, "فيروس كورونا: ما دور الجمعيات الأهلية في مكافحة الوباء في مصر وأبرز الصعوبات التي تواجهها؟", accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-55633202>.

²¹¹ NATHAN J. BROWN, "Here to Stay? - Carnegie Middle East Center - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace."

²¹² Frederic Wehrey et al., "Islamic Authority and Arab States in a Time of Pandemic," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, no. April (2020), https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Wehrey_etal_Islamic_response.pdf.

measures, it cannot do so because it is essentially a personal decision that is difficult to control or monitor all the time. The credibility of the regime during the response to the pandemic was undermined because the regime insisted at the beginning on the narrative that there were no cases of coronavirus in Egypt, even after the announcement of the first case, the state continued in its reassurances that the army can contain the pandemic. The decision for the closure of airports and tourist trips from countries with high infection rates were delayed,²¹³ and economic, social, and religious activities continued to be held.

On the other hand, through the age of information, people can realize the actual size of the health threat of the pandemic in all countries of the world. A study about Egyptians' attitude towards the novel Coronavirus showed that the mean information score on Covid-19 was gained mainly through social media (66.9%) and the internet (58.3%).²¹⁴ When the regime's political trust was at stake, it was necessary to find alternatives that enjoy social credibility that can deliver their voice to the community to activate precautionary measures. Thus, official religious institutions can play a central role during the pandemic as they enjoy a degree of reliability. Despite those religious institutions affiliated with the state, they speak in the name of Islam and provide legal fatwas, preaching, and religious guidance. Al-Azhar, with its historical legitimacy and autonomy, is considered the most reliable religious institution in Egypt. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar is highly respected by society due to his great independence as he is constitutionally immune from dismissal.

At the Ministry of Endowment level, the institution appears to be the arm of the regime in the religious field in implementing the regime's instructions in controlling central spaces like mosques. The ministry's attitude is connected directly with the security system as the ministry monitors imams and worshipers and ensures that mosques are closed after prayers; therefore, the social credibility of the ministry is decreased. Although the ministry enjoys excellent power in the religious field, it has less moral authority over Egyptian society.²¹⁵ When praying in the mosque was suspended during the first wave of Coronavirus, the Minister of Endowment issued

²¹³ "مصر تعلق حركة الطيران من وإلى أراضيتها بداية من الخميس المقبل حتى 31 مارس" - CNN Arabic, March 2020, <https://arabic.cnn.com/health/article/2020/03/16/egypt-suspends-all-flights-two-weeks-starting-thursday>.

²¹⁴ Ahmed Samir Abdel hafiz et al., "Knowledge, Perceptions, and Attitude of Egyptians Towards the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)," *Journal of Community Health* 45, no. 5 (2020): 881–90, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-020-00827-7>.

²¹⁵ Wehrey et al., "Islamic Authority and Arab States in a Time of Pandemic." p,95.

a decision banning the broadcasting of the Qur'an before the Maghreb during the month of Ramadan. This was met by widespread anger and a demand for the minister's dismissal.²¹⁶ At the local level, the imams of mosques enjoy a degree of reliability, although they are affiliated with the ministry of endowments. They are present on the ground and have a social role in preaching, guiding, resolving, and mediating community conflicts.

The space of influence and credibility of these official religious institutions vary in their response to the pandemic. Therefore, the pandemic also reflects the second hypothesis of the paper regarding the competition in the religious field between the state these religious institutions in light of the state's monopoly on the religious market. Official religious institutions compete with non-official religious actors for influence in society who constantly need religion. According to the theory of existential security, these religious needs were doubled during the pandemic. Therefore, I will analyze the same level of competition over the religious field in the context of the response of religious institutions to the Coronavirus. These responses were through (1) Charity and Zakat space, (2) the moral leadership of society, including the fatwa and religious discourse, (3) the space of mosques and sermons, (4) Media space, and (5) international space.

2.3.1. The Competition on The Leadership of The Religious Field during Coronavirus

The ongoing struggle between President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Sheikh Al-Azhar over the leadership of the religious field cast a shadow on the Coronavirus crisis. President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi ended his speech to the Egyptian people regarding Coronavirus by reciting a supplication.²¹⁷ The president's supplication was promoted in the official media until the supplication with the president's voice became a call tone for mobile. This supplication may be understood to portray the president as a religious person. However, the president has a precedent in speaking in the name of religion as in the issue of verbal divorce and the renewal of religious

²¹⁶ "BBC News عربي، accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/trending-52416014>.

²¹⁷ أحمد عرفة، "السيسي ينهى كلمته للشعب بشأن مواجهة كورونا بالدعاء: اللهم أنت ربي لا إله إلا أنت عليك توكلت وأنت رب العرش العظيم.. اللهم إني أعوذ بك من شر نفسي ومن شر كل دابة أنت آخذ بناصيتها إن ربي على صراط مستقيم" (فيديو) - اليوم السابع، November 2020, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/11/24/السيسي-ينهى-كلمته-للشعب-بشأن-مواجهة-كورونا-بالدعاء-اللهم-أنت-رأنت/5082873>.

discourse. A few days after Al-Sisi's supplication, during the message from the Sheikh Al-Azhar to the world regarding the Coronavirus, Al-Tayeb also concluded his speech with a supplication to God,²¹⁸ and the sheikhdom of Al-Azhar published the Sheikh's supplication on its official page.²¹⁹ We could understand the supplications from both men in the same line of the conflict over the leadership in the religious discourse.

In the same context, after the World Health Organization announced the inclusion of the Coronavirus as a global pandemic on March 11, the state continued in obfuscation over the number of infections and slowed down in taking preventive measures. While Al-Azhar preceded the state in response to the virus when the Council of Senior Scholars announced a statement on the 15th of March, named it "A statement for the People," in which it says it is permissible to suspend Friday and congregational prayers to protect people from the virus.²²⁰ The council stated that this statement is based on its religious responsibility, and to inform officials that it is legally permissible to stop collective prayers to prevent the spread of the virus in the country. This early step by Al-Azhar caused a kind of embarrassment for the state, which was sponsoring the narrative of reassurances and controlling matters. As well, it was difficult for the state to cancel Friday prayers in mosques while Christians go to churches for mass and communion rites. This movement by Al-Azhar had thrown the ball into the state's court, which did not prefer to be in the position of reacting. The state ignored the fatwa of Al-Azhar's Council of Senior Scholars and held Friday prayers in all mosques. For his part, The Minister of Endowments, Muhammad Mukhtar Gomaa, stressed the need to follow the instructions of state institutions regarding the pandemic and obey the rules and the experts.²²¹ The Egyptian television broadcast Friday prayers from the mosque and the Minister of Endowments delivered a sermon on the topic of the apparent and inward reasons for lifting the pandemic and the importance to obey the ruler.²²²

²¹⁸ الأزهر الشريف الصفحة الرسمية , رسالة شيخ الأزهر للعالم بشأن الكورونا, "الأزهر الشريف" March 29, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3361435017203901&id=978594902154603.

²¹⁹ سعيد حجازي, "الأزهر" ينشر دعاء الدكتور أحمد الطيب لرفع وباء كورونا «فيديو» - مصر - الوطن, "الوطن" January 1, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/5191948>.

²²⁰ هيئة كبار العلماء, "بيان للناس جواز إيقاف صلوات الجمع والجماعات حماية للناس من فيروس #كورونا", "الأزهر الشريف الصفحة الرسمية", accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3325171640830239&id=978594902154603.

²²¹ وزير الأوقاف: «فلنعقلها ونتوكل», "المصري اليوم" March 20, 2020, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1628583>.

²²² بتاريخ 20 مارس: الأسباب الظاهرة والباطنة لرفع البلاء، ووجوب طاعة ولي الأمر - صوت الدعوة Pdf, Word صوت الدعوة, "خطبة الجمعة" بتاريخ-20-مارس-الأسباب-الظ-word-pdf-خطبة-الجمعة, March 20, 2020, <https://www.doaah.com/>, -, "صوت الدعوة

Fatwas at The Individuals and Social Level

Official religious institutions have collectively urged citizens to adhere to preventive measures and raise public health awareness. Al-Azhar has taken essential steps in this field, as the Al-Azhar International Center for Electronic Fatwas issued a comprehensive legal guide during the Coronavirus pandemic.²³⁴ Al-Azhar's guide deals with many provisions related to the Coronavirus and how a Muslim should perform his worship and dealings in light of the pandemic and matters related to those infected and the deceased due to the virus. The Council of Senior Scholars in Al-Azhar issued a comprehensive statement explaining that adherence to preventive measures is a legal duty. The council stressed the obligation to wear a mask in public space to reduce the infection, explaining that the obligation to wear a mask is a legal duty that needs to be followed in all the movements that an individual would do when he is in contact with others, and this is more obligatory in performing congregational prayers.²³⁵

The council advises avoiding handshakes, hugs, and kisses to prevent the viral transmission; according to the Sharia rule, there is neither harm nor necessary benefit. Concerning worshipers in mosques, the Council of Senior Scholars urged worshippers to prepare at their homes before going to mosques by performing prior ablution or washing, as it is one of the essential preventive measures that reduce the chances of spreading infection and stated that the prophet urged the performance of ablution at home. It also stressed the necessity of adhering to social distance while performing prayers because it is a necessary precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the pandemic and it explained that social distance does not interfere with the necessity of regulating the row of worshipers. It also emphasized that performing supererogatory prayers at home is better than performing it in the mosque, especially during the pandemic. The Council of Senior Scholars also recommended avoiding gatherings for weddings or funerals and instead extend their greeting or condolences over the phones or through social media as this is in accordance to the Islamic principle which asserts that the group's interest takes precedence over the interest of the individual. In the context of community awareness, Al-Azhar also published a

²³⁴ Facebook, "جريدة صوت الأزهر, «صوت الأزهر, *«الأزهر العالمي للفتوى» يُصدر دليله الشرعيّ الشّامِل للتّعامل مع «كورونا» 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/soutelazhar/posts/1359112490955759>.

²³⁵ محمد قادوس, "كبار علماء الأزهر: الالتزام بالإجراءات والتدابير الوقائية وا | مصراوي, 2020" <https://www.masrawy.com/islamayat/fatawa-other/details/2020/12/27/1939752/>.

video on its official page explaining ways to prevent the virus while shopping²³⁶ and another video on the proper way to wash and rub hands to prevent spread of the virus.²³⁷

Dr. Shawky Allam, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, said that adhering to the government's measures to confront the Coronavirus, such as wearing a mask, hygiene, and sterilization of venues, and social distancing, is considered obedience to the rulers as well as obedience to God.²³⁸ In the context of preventing infection, the Al-Azhar International Center for Electronic Fatwa in a post on its official Facebook page stressed that crowded places should be avoided. Those who have been confirmed to be infected with the Coronavirus or suspected of being infected, or even those who suffer from similar symptoms should isolate themselves and stay at home according to the hadith of the prophet that a sick person must not mix with a healthy person. Another hadith about the plague is that the sick person has to stay in his house patiently and not leave his place.²³⁹ Moreover, the center permitted those with chronic diseases, the elderly, or have weak immunity to miss the Friday prayer in the mosque until the end of this pandemic because God removed the hardship for the patient. Because of the possibility of causing harm to others, the fatwa permits the person with an excuse to pray the Friday prayer as Zuhr prayer in his house alone until the pandemic is over.²⁴⁰

The fatwas also dealt with social problems that emerged with the pandemic, such as bullying on the Corona patients and making fun of the infected people, and some immoral acts in rejecting patients or refusing to bury them.²⁴¹ For his part, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar denounced the stigmatization of those infected by the coronavirus. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar criticized refusing to bury a doctor who died due to infection with Coronavirus. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar stressed that these acts are forbidden at all religious, moral, and humanitarian levels.

²³⁶ "طرق الوقاية من الكورونا أثناء التسوق , Facebook الازهر الشريف" accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3396641120349957&id=978594902154603.

²³⁷ "الأزهر الشريف, الطريقة الصحيحة لغسل اليدين للوقاية من فيروس كورونا", Facebook, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3343208352359901&id=978594902154603.

²³⁸ "سمح محمد, "بالفيديو | المفتي: ارتداء الكمامة والتعقيم والتباعد الاجتماعي | مصرأوى"

²³⁹ "الأزهر للفتوى يحذر المشتبته بكورونا: يحرم التساهل ويجب مراعاة | مصرأوى, " 2020, <https://www.masrawy.com/islamayat/fatawa-other/details/2020/12/18/1933726/>.

²⁴⁰ "بعد قرار عودة صلاة الجمعة في المساجد.. مركز الأزهر يوضح متى | مصرأوى, " 2020, <https://www.masrawy.com/islamayat/fatawa-3badat/details/2020/8/20/1857195/>.

²⁴¹ "كلمة فضيلة الإمام الأكبر بشأن دفن الموتي بفيروس كورونا والتنمر والسخرية من المصابين", Facebook الصفحة الرسمية لشيخ الأزهر " 2020, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=125129709131005&id=108368050807171.

Dar Al-Ifta also issued an urgent statement from the Mufti²⁴² to respond to the fact that some citizens refused to bury a nurse who died of the coronavirus by clarifying that it is not permissible under any circumstances to commit disgraceful acts of bullying patients with Corona or to follow such methods for objecting the burial of the martyrs of the Coronavirus. The Mufti stressed that this act is not related to our religion, values, or morals. The Mufti affirmed that the deceased was affected by the Coronavirus, is a martyr for pain and suffering he had to endure. The Mufti stressed the role of the medical teams who face death at every moment and sacrifice their lives for the safety and survival of others. The Mufti declared that Muslims must bury the deceased with Coronavirus in the usual legal manner while following all health procedures and standards set by the competent authorities to ensure the attendees' security and safety and ensure that the virus does not spread to the burial area and neighboring areas. Further, the Secretary-General of Dar Al-Ifta indicated that it is not permissible to refuse the burial of the dead, and whoever does this is a sinner because there already are security measures from the Ministry of Health and the State.²⁴³

At the level of personal fatwas for individuals, the Fatwa Committee of Al-Azhar stated that the Coronavirus was a catastrophe, and it requires the generalization of Qunoot in all prayers by individuals to God to lift this pandemic.²⁴⁴ The Fatwa Committee of the Islamic Research Academy confirmed that whoever died of the Coronavirus is considered a martyr.²⁴⁵ A member of the Fatwa Committee at Al-Azhar, Hisham Islam,²⁴⁶ confirmed that suicide due to Coronavirus infection is shrouded, and the deceased must be prayed over and buried in Muslim cemeteries because he is still a Muslim. Though, he has committed a major sin, and his account is in the hands of God. He urged every patient to be more steadfast, adhere to reasons, draw closer to God and pray to Him.

²⁴² مفتي الجمهورية: لا يجوز بحال من الأحوال التمر ضد مرضى كورونا أو التجمهر لمنع دفنهم، "2020" https://www.dar-alifta.org/ar/Viewstatement.aspx?sec=media&ID=7084&...من_الأحوال.

²⁴³ دار الإفتاء بيان عاجل من مفتي الجمهورية بشأن تعدد واقعة رفض بعض المواطنين دفن شهداء فيروس، Facebook، جريدة صوت الأزهر "2020 كورونا"، <https://www.facebook.com/soutelazhar/photos/a.287465881453764/1350453175155024/>.

²⁴⁴ Posts | جريدة صوت الأزهر، لجنة الفتوى بالأزهر: فيروس 'كورونا'.. نازلة تستدعي المحافظة على القنوات في كل الصلوات المكتوبة" Facebook، "2020، <https://www.facebook.com/soutelazhar/posts/1351380798395595>.

²⁴⁵ محمد قادوس، "البحوث الإسلامية: من مات بفيروس كورونا يدخل في نطاق الشهداء | مصراوي، "2020" <https://www.masrawy.com/islameyat/fatawa-other/details/2020/6/11/1807066/>.

²⁴⁶ محمد قادوس، "المنتحر المصاب بكورونا هل هو شهيد؟.. عضو لجنة الفتوى بالأزهر | مصراوي، "2020" <https://www.masrawy.com/islameyat/fatawa-other/details/2020/6/14/1809295/>.

In the context of explaining the causes of the pandemic as a punishment from God to humans for their evil deeds, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar denied this proposition.²⁴⁷ The Sheikh of Al-Azhar stressed that the pandemic is one of the signs of God and mentioned that the pandemic happened during the era of Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, the plague of Emmaus, and many of the companions of the Messenger died because of it. Also, in the context of individuals' effectiveness and social responsibility, the Egyptian Dar Al-Ifta received a complaint saying that some employees resort to forging positive coronavirus test results to take leave from their workplace even though they were not actually ill. The answer was via the official Dar Al-Ifta page, where Shawky Allam, the Grand Mufti of the Republic, said that an employee who resorts to false tricks in proving his illness to obtain leave from work; legally sinful because it is a lie and a denial of the blessing of health, which is one of the greatest blessings.²⁴⁸

On another personal level, a question came to the Islamic Research Academy about the legal opinion of postponing pregnancy in light of the spread of the Coronavirus because of the harmful effects that affect the mother and the fetus.²⁴⁹ In its response, the Fatwa Committee of the Council affirmed that Islam legislated marriage for the sake of reproduction and the preservation of offspring. The committee said that it went back to the medical people to clarify whether the virus affected the fetus's health or the mother, and the committee found that the harm is probable and doubtful and did not reach certainty. Hence, if the goal of delaying pregnancy at the time of the spread of the Coronavirus is fear for the woman or the fetus at birth, then there is no legal objection to that, with three conditions: first, the prevention is not by a means that is physically or psychologically harmful, second, the goal is to postpone pregnancy until the pandemic ends and not to prevent pregnancy completely, and the third, postponing pregnancy should not be a general social view, but rather consider it as individual cases for each woman according to her health conditions and whether she suffers from chronic diseases that increase her risk if she is infected with the virus. There is a contrast between the fatwa of Al-Azhar and the fatwa of the

²⁴⁷ الأزهري الشريف، " Facebook2020 هل فيروس كورونا عقاب من الله " https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3458275460853189&id=978594902154603.

²⁴⁸ "محمد قادوس، "آثم شرعاً" .. المفتي يوضح حكم تزوير شهادات طبية بفيروس كورونا | مصراوى <https://www.masrawy.com/islameyat/fatawa-other/details/2020/10/13/1892141/>.

²⁴⁹ "محمد قادوس، "خوفا من كورونا.. البحوث الإسلامية يوضح الرأي الشرعي في تأجيل | مصراوى <https://www.masrawy.com/islameyat/fatawa-other/details/2020/6/29/1820393/>.

Al-Azhar International Center for Electronic Fatwa confirmed that if the doctor finds a patient who needs to be treated, and the doctor can treat him, the doctor will be sinning if he does not treat him.²⁵⁷

At the level of equipment, Ahmed Al-Tayeb, Sheikh of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, directed the Al-Azhar University Hospitals Sector in coordination with the Ministry of Health to equip Al-Azhar University Specialized Hospital to receive cases suspected of being infected with the Coronavirus, to isolate them and to take all necessary preventive and remedial measures regarding them.²⁵⁸ In the context of medical awareness, early on February 24, 2020, the Faculty of Fundamentals of Religion at Al-Azhar University organized an awareness seminar on Coronavirus, intending to educate students, staff, and faculty members on how to confront and ways to prevent the virus.²⁵⁹

Sawt Al-Azhar newspaper presented an interview with Dr. Amani Abdullah Al-Sharif, Professor of Microbiology and Immunology, Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy for Girls, Al-Azhar University, to learn about the validity of rumors about the spread of disease or methods of prevention and treatment.²⁶⁰ Al-Azhar also promoted the vaccine, and the Sheikh of Al-Azhar called in his speech to provide the vaccine to all the people and to not forget the poor and vulnerable groups.²⁶¹ The deputy of Al-Azhar also explained that underestimating the effect of vaccination against pandemics is contrary to Sharia.²⁶² Al-Azhar also issued a fatwa regarding the content of some vaccines as the forbidden pig fat. Al-Azhar emphasized that the basic principle in Sharia is the permissibility of benefiting from every pure and harmless thing in food and medicine, and the Sharia principle in it is also the prohibition of benefiting from everything harmful and disgusted by Sharia from things as food or medicine, except in cases of necessity or

²⁵⁷ "سعيد حجازي," December 14, 2020, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/5134813>.

²⁵⁸ "Facebook أحمد الطيب الصفحة الرسمية," #الإمام_الأكبر يوجه بتجهيز مستشفى الأزهر... |

²⁵⁹ "علي موسى," February 24, 2020, <https://www.albawabhnews.com/3915011>.

²⁶⁰ "جريدة صوت الأزهر | Facebook," April 10, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/soutelazhar/posts/1349515935248748>.

²⁶¹ أحمد الطيب, "ما يبذله العلماء والباحثون من جهود في سبيل تقديم لقاح كورونا للعالم عطاءً سخياً ومقدراً," أحمد الطيب, الصفحة الرسمية, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/GrandImam/posts/211459977204902>.

²⁶² "محمد شحته," December 7, 2020, <https://www.elbalad.news/4603079>.

dire need, with specific controls.²⁶³ The Electronic Fatwa Committee at Al-Azhar Center explained that the necessity is to prevent the coronavirus pandemic; therefore, it is permissible to take this vaccine, but with conditions: First, that it should be taken as a means of preventing or combating the epidemic, and that no other vaccine is available that is free of pig fat, and secondly, that the use of the vaccine does not result in any other harm equal to it, or more than it.²⁶⁴

The Al-Azhar International Fatwa Center also clarified the methods of conducting swab tests to diagnose infection with the Coronavirus, detailing each process and indicating its effect on fasting.²⁶⁵ Al-Azhar also dealt with the issue of the donation of blood plasma from those recovering from corona, where the Al-Azhar International Center for Electronic Fatwa confirmed that donating plasma from “Corona” recoveries is an obligation, and refraining from doing so without an excuse is not permissible according to Sharia and the abstainer is committing a sin.²⁶⁶ Regarding the permissibility of a person who recovered from Coronavirus to sell his blood plasma, the committee replied that it is not permitted according to Islamic law. Because the human body, including its flesh and blood, belongs to the Creator, not to the servant, and no one has the right to sell what he does not own, then the price of blood is forbidden and not permissible.²⁶⁷

The Al-Azhar International Center for Electronic Fatwas also issued an official fatwa that the vaccine does not break the fast of the fasting person in Ramadan as long as the vaccine used in the vaccination enters his body through the skin by injection. Al-Azhar University also had a role in confronting the pandemic, as it began conducting training courses for doctors to encounter the virus and prepare qualified cadres for that, so more than 1,400 doctors and 300 nurses were

²⁶³ “فتوى الأزهر توضح حكم استخدام لقاح كورونا إذا ثبت احتواؤه على مشتقات الخنزير - اليوم السابع” December 27, 2020, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/12/27/5131704-احتواؤه-إذا-ثبت-استخدام-لقاح-كورونا-إذا-ثبت-احتواؤه>.

²⁶⁴ لؤي علي.

²⁶⁵ “خمسة اختبارات... | مركز الأزهر العالمي للفتوى الإلكترونية” May 2, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/fatwacenter/posts/4183547175030878>.

²⁶⁶ “تبرع المتعافين... | مركز الأزهر العالمي للفتوى الإلكترونية” June 5, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/fatwacenter/posts/3240975185954753>.

²⁶⁷ “بيع المتعافين من... | مركز الأزهر العالمي للفتوى الإلكترونية” June 7, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/fatwacenter/posts/3246647602054178>.

Allam to call for donating Umrah funds to confront pandemic.²⁷² The Al-Azhar International Center for Fatwa also announced charity's priority in light of the Corona crisis, considering that helping the injured and those affected by the epidemic is the duty of time.²⁷³ As for the priority of sacrifice or giving its value to the needy, the Fatwa Committee of Al-Azhar clarified that in normal circumstances, the sacrifice is better than the charity because the sacrifice is one of the rituals of Islam. However, under unusual circumstances such as Coronavirus, Charity is presented over the sacrifice, according to the jurisprudence of priorities.²⁷⁴

Fatwa Committee of the Islamic Research Academy also answered a question asking; is it permissible for me to give zakat on my money to a man who used to work daily, and now his work is interrupted due to the outbreak of the Corona epidemic, and if I had a debt with him, is it permissible for me to drop it on him and count this from my zakat? The Fatwa Committee answered that it is permissible because, in this way, the benefit for the poor is achieved. The committee also cautioned that one of the most incredible doors of goodness is to help the needy and relieve distress of the afflicted.²⁷⁵

In the context of Al-Azhar's social role, the Egyptian House of Zakat and Charities, an authority affiliated with Al-Azhar under the supervision of the Grand Imam, announced that it works to support social solidarity and help disadvantaged families, announcing a form of support to daily workers who are eligible for support as a result of damage from precautionary and preventive measures to prevent the spread of Coronavirus infection. The Grand Imam had decided to double the value of the monthly subsidy disbursed by the Egyptian House of Zakat and Charities to its beneficiaries during April and May 2020, and the Imam stressed that doubling the monthly subsidy during that period comes to help the deserving people meet their needs in light of the challenges the country is facing in combating the spread of the Coronavirus.²⁷⁶ On a personal

²⁷² "سعيد حجازي وعبد الوهاب عيسى," البحوث الإسلامية تدعم مبادرة المفتي للتبرع بأموال العمرة لمواجهة كورونا - مصر - الوطن 2020, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4698357>.

²⁷³ "سعيد حجازي وعبد الوهاب عيسى," الأزهر: مساعدة المحتاج واجب.. والصدقة في ظل كورونا من أعظم الأعمال - مصر - الوطن 2020, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4677795>.

²⁷⁴ "محمد قادوس," الصدقة لمواجهة كورونا أفضل أم الأضحية؟.. تعرف على رد البحوث | مصرأوى 2020, <https://www.masrawy.com/islameyat/fatawa-other/details/2020/7/11/1829089/>.

²⁷⁵ "محمد عيسى," هل يجوز سقوط الدين لدى الغير بركة المال | الوفد دنيا-ودين/2891666, April 2, 2020, <https://alwafd.news/-2891666>.

²⁷⁶ "استمارة إعانة من بيت الزكاة والصدقات... - جريدة صوت الأزهر *", April 1, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/soutelazhar/posts/1342441639289511>.

level, Dr. Ahmed El-Tayeb, Sheikh of Al-Azhar, donated an amount of 5 million pounds to the Tahya Misr fund, the Disaster and Crisis Response Branch, and this was described as a contribution from the Sheikh of Al-Azhar in support of the efforts of the state to combat the outbreak of the Coronavirus inside the country.²⁷⁷ The Sheikh of Al-Azhar also donated to provide some necessary equipment for hospitals, such as oxygen tanks,²⁷⁸ to preserve the health of citizens.²⁷⁹

2.3.3. Mosque Sector During Coronavirus

As I mentioned earlier, this sector is under the control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments, and the Ministry enjoys vast powers to control and monitor mosques, sermons, preachers, and all religious activities that take place in mosques, whether during Friday, Ramadan, Eid, funeral prayers, or seminars and lessons of Islamic science that take place in mosques. The Corona pandemic has led to more strict control measures for mosques, starting with the closure decisions issued on March 21, 2020, and reopening in the first phase on the 23rd of June 2020.²⁸⁰

The position on the closure of mosques was mixed; on its part, Al-Azhar rushed to announce the permissibility of suspending prayers on March 15, 2020. However, the Ministry of Endowments delayed deciding until March 21 in conjunction with the church decision. The Minister of the Endowments refused even to broadcast the Friday prayer until May 29, 2020.²⁸¹ The Salafis met this matter with much indignation. One of the Salafist leaders said that eliminating the pandemic

²⁷⁷ احمد بدرأوي, "March 27, 2020, <https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=27032020&id=b52069dc-e621-418d-8587-20a6dcc36b3c>, بوابة الشروق

²⁷⁸ محمد السمكوري, "March 28, 2021, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2298448>, شيخ الأزهر يتبرع بـ100 أسطوانة أكسجين لمستشفى حميات الأقصر | المصري اليوم

²⁷⁹ سهام فودة, "January 6, 2021, <https://m.akhbarelyom.com/news/newdetails/3218741/1/>, صحة المنوفية: بدء العمل في تانك الأكسجين الذي تبرع به شيخ الأزهر | بوابة أخبار اليوم الإلكترونية

²⁸⁰ علي عبد الرحمن, "June 24, 2020, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/6/24/4841261/>, تبدأ فجر السبت المقبل.. تعرف على شروط وضوابط فتح المساجد - اليوم السابع

²⁸¹ عبد الرحمن علي, "May 29, 2020, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/5/29/4796537/>, أول صلاة-جمعة-من-مسجد-السيدة-نفسية-منذ-إغلاق-المساجد

must occur in mosques, not closing it.²⁸² For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood did not oppose the prudent decisions to suspend prayer in mosques; however, it condemned the intransigence of the Minister of Endowments in continuing to close mosques and pursue anyone who tries to do congregational prayers despite the state allowing much larger gatherings in markets, streets, transportation and workplaces, and during filming Ramadan series.²⁸³

However, the restrictions for the reopening of mosque by the ministry of the endowment were several, as it was only limited to the opening of mosques that the ministry specifies for the five daily prayers, with the continued suspension of Friday prayers until further notice.²⁸⁴ It was also emphasized by the Ministry that toilets in the mosques are not be closed completely, as well as not to open the events hall permanently, not allowing funerals or funeral prayers, holding marriage ceremony or any social events, and not opening any shrines permanently or open the doors to it, and not to open the places of prayer for women, and the minister also banned the holding of any lessons, seminars or activities except for performing the five daily prayers.²⁸⁵

The ministry stressed the presence of the imam or the person responsible for the mosque in all prayers and stressed not to leave the keys of the mosque to anyone who is not working with the Endowment. The mosque opens only ten minutes before the call to prayer, and the iqamat is immediately after the call to prayer, and the mosque is closed ten minutes after the prayer and its duration must not exceed half an hour after the call to prayer.²⁸⁶ At this stage, it is limited to opening only large mosques, without corners or chapels, and if there is a necessity that there is no mosque at all in a certain area, the opening is carried out as necessary after a written approval from the Endowments Directorate.²⁸⁷ The Ministry stressed strict health instructions regarding the obligation for worshipers to wear a mask, bring a personal prayer carpet, follow social distancing requirements among worshipers, and follow up on continuous disinfection and

²⁸² "Egypt's Salafists Exploit Mosques Shutdown to Expand Influence | AW," March 29, 2020, <https://thearabweekly.com/egypts-salafists-exploit-mosques-shutdown-expand-influence>.

²⁸³ "كورونا" ليس السبب الوحيد... لماذا تمنع أوقاف العسكر الصلاة في المساجد وتتغاضى عن غيرها؟ | Ikhwan Wiki | الموسوعة التاريخية الرسمية لجماعة الإخوان المسلمين, April 15, 2020, http://www.ikhwan.wiki/index.php?title=لماذا_تمنع_أوقاف_العسكر_الصلاة_في_المساجد_وتتغاضى_عن_غيرها؟

²⁸⁴ "الأوقاف" تصدر 9 ضوابط و5 التزامات و4 ملاحظات لفتح المساجد (تفاصيل كاملة) | المصري اليوم

²⁸⁵ "كريمة حسن احمد البحيري," وزير الأوقاف يعلن ضوابط إعادة فتح المساجد: «ممنوع صلاة الجنازة وعقد القران» | المصري اليوم 23, 2020, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1991011>.

²⁸⁶ "علي عبد الرحمن," تبدأ فجر السبت المقبل.. تعرف على شروط وضوابط فتح المساجد - اليوم السابع

²⁸⁷ "الأوقاف" تصدر 9 ضوابط و5 التزامات و4 ملاحظات لفتح المساجد (تفاصيل كاملة) | المصري اليوم

sterilization.²⁸⁸ Although these health instructions aim to protect worshipers from infection, these have always been accompanied by security threats and moral penalties to the society in terms of depriving it of places of worship, as the ministry confirmed that if worshipers do not adhere to these measures, the mosque will be closed immediately and would not be opened until the end of the coronavirus pandemic.²⁸⁹

On the other hand, Al-Azhar's discourse on mosques was palliative and considered the weight of the matter on the religious community. Al-Azhar calmed the feelings of Muslims by emphasizing the validity of their prayers with the precautionary measures for the pandemic. Al-Azhar International Center for Fatwa mentioned ten rulings that concern Muslims after reopening mosques, including; the social distance between worshipers in congregational prayer is permissible, and with it, the rows are straightened and wearing a mask during prayer is acceptable, and the prayer is valid.²⁹⁰ Also, the center emphasizes the permissibility of sterilizing mosques with alcoholic materials before or after prayer, and the prayer is valid if the person's body, clothes, or place of prayer is contaminated with an alcoholic disinfectant. In the context of closing the toilets in mosques, the Center stated that the Muslim leaving his home to perform prayer in the mosque, performing ablution in his home, is not only a precaution against Coronavirus; Rather, it is a Sunnah from the Prophet. The center also mentioned that women and children should not attend the mosque, and their prayers at home are better than in the mosque. Before mosques were opened, the center for fatwa also provided a guide for prayer at home and urged that man prays with his family.²⁹¹

The decisions to close mosques by the Ministry of Endowments seemed far from social negotiation and the concerns of worshipers about the fate of places of worship in light of the continuing pandemic. In that context of the social blackout by the ministry about the fate of the mosques, before its decision to reopen, on April 20, 2020, the Egyptian Ministry of Endowments announced the removal of its official spokesman from his place. This was after he gave

²⁸⁸ "الأوقاف" تصدر 9 ضوابط و5 التزامات و4 ملاحظات لفتح المساجد (تفاصيل كاملة) | المصري اليوم

²⁸⁹ "شيماء عبد الهادي", "إغلاق بعض المساجد مؤقتًا ليس آخر الإجراءات.. الأوقاف تحذر من مخالفة إجراءات مواجهة كورونا - بوابة الأهرام", January 12, 2021, <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2558174.aspx>.

²⁹⁰ "عشرة أحكام لهم... - مركز الأزهر العالمي للفتوى الإلكترونية" | Facebook, June 26, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/fatwacenter/posts/3296151183770486>.

²⁹¹ "عشرة إرشادات... - مركز الأزهر العالمي للفتوى الإلكترونية" | Facebook, March 21, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/fatwacenter/posts/3059903760728564>.

statements to the media that the ministry is studying the possibility of opening of mosques, and performing Tarawih prayers in Ramadan. Minister Mokhtar Goma said that the spokesman was relieved of his position because he did not have the necessary permission from the ministry before making the press statement.²⁹²

The decisions of the ministry of Endowments for the month of Ramadan also came frustrating for the Egyptian religious community, which is accustomed to certain rituals during the holy month. The Ministry has taken tough decisions to prevent the Tahajjud, i'tikaf, or the charitable tables "Mawaed al Rahman," even if they were held in open places like mosque squares or streets.²⁹³ Likewise, the ministry declared banning any advocacy lessons before or after prayer or during Tarawih prayers or otherwise, and committing to opening the mosque 15 minutes before prayer and closing it within ten minutes after prayer. The Ministry of Endowments warned imams and mosque workers against allowing or participating in the Tahajjud prayer in mosques, stressing that the ministry will end the service of any imam or worker whose participation is proven or who has allowed the performance of Tahajjud prayer inside the mosque.²⁹⁴ Muslims reluctantly accepted these decisions; however, the crisis between the Ministry of Endowments and Society erupted when the Minister of Endowments decided to prevent the broadcast of the Qur'an before Maghrib in Ramadan through the loudspeakers of the mosques, which aroused intense social resentment and on social media, there was a hashtag calling for the minister's dismissal.²⁹⁵

Dar Al-Ifta entered the line and considered these calls against the prevention of broadcasting the Quran, arose from the Brotherhood, which seeks to spread rumors in Egypt, taking advantage of the Coronavirus crisis, and incites people to breach the preventive measures established by the state to limit the spread of the pandemic. Dar Al-Ifta accused the Brotherhood of inciting people

²⁹² أحمد عبد الرحمن على عبد الرحمن, "تصريحات غير مسئولة للمتحدث باسم الأوقاف تطيح به من منصبه.. 'أحمد القاضي' للإعلامي أحمد موسى: ندرس فتح المساجد للأئمة فقط لإقامة صلاة التراويح.. والوزير يقرر إقالته.. ويؤكد: لا مجال لفتحها.. وجابر طابع: غير وارد - اليوم تصريحات-غير-مسئولة-للمتحدث-باسم-الأوقاف-تطيح-به-," April 20, 2020, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2020/4/20/> من-منصبه/4733973.

²⁹³ علاء رضوان, "غلق المساجد الأبرز.. عقوبة المخالفين لضوابط صلاة التراويح في رمضان.. 5 إجراءات احترازية لمواجهة تفشي وباء كورونا بين المصلين.. الكمامة و"المصلية" أهم المرافقين وعدم السماح بالاعتكاف.. ومنع لعب الكرة بالشوارع - اليوم السابع غلق-المساجد-الأبرز-عقوبة-المخالفين-لضوابط-صلاة-التراويح-في-رمضان," April 13, 2021, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2021/4/13/5279086/>

²⁹⁴ علي عبد الرحمن, "الأوقاف تقرر إلغاء الإجازات للعاملين وأئمة المساجد حتى نهاية شهر رمضان - اليوم السابع الأوقاف-تقرر-إلغاء-الإجازات-للعاملين-وأئمة-المساجد-حتى-نهاية-شهر/5/3/5303053," May 3, 2021, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2021/5/3/5303053/>

²⁹⁵ "-. فيروس كورونا: لماذا طالب رواد مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي في مصر بإقالة وزير الأوقاف؟"

to perform Friday prayers in the streets and at the doors of mosques after issuing the Ministry of Endowments' decision to suspend Friday and congregational prayers in mosques to preserve people's lives. Dar Al-Ifta insists again that broadcast the Qur'an continuously through mosque loudspeakers will harm people and it disturbs their comfort, and warned that the Brotherhood wants to exploit the issue of closing mosques and loudspeakers politically and warned the society not to follow those whom it called "traffickers in the name of religion."²⁹⁶

For its part, the Ministry of Endowments implemented punitive decisions on mosques that violate the precautionary measures.²⁹⁷ The decision of the Ministry of Endowments to monitor mosques was decentralized by authorizing the endowment directorates in the governorates to take measures to close any mosque where worshipers do not adhere to the preventive measures approved by the Ministry and to take the necessary action towards any imams or mosque workers. However, this situation did not last long when the governorates witnessed chaos in the partial closure of mosques,²⁹⁸ and the Minister of Endowments decided to cancel the delegation of the Endowment Directorates and to form a central committee to manage a crisis at the Ministry's general office, to take what it deems appropriate in any violation related to the failure to implement the precautionary measures related to the Coronavirus.²⁹⁹

With time, the ministry gradually eased its decisions on mosques as it allowed the establishment of Taraweeh prayers in Ramadan with reduced duration, but with all the conditions approved by the ministry.³⁰⁰ The ministry also allowed the establishment of Eid prayers in the squares it designated, which can be considered a positive step by the society.³⁰¹ The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments in Ismailia Governorate stated that the worshipers received the decision to allow Eid prayers with great joy, appreciating the ministry's decision and the government's

²⁹⁶ شيماء عبد الهادي, "دار الإفتاء تحذر من الدعوات الهدامة لاستغلال المساجد والقرآن الكريم لإثارة البلبلة ومخالفة قرارات الحظر - بوابة الأهرام," April 1, 2020, <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2390863.aspx>.

²⁹⁷ "دينا عبد الخالق, "أبرز قرارات الأوقاف بإغلاق المساجد بسبب كورونا: آخرها مجمع الطاروطي - مصر - الوطن

²⁹⁸ "سعيد حجازي, "المساجد في أسبوع: غلق 60 مسجدا وإعادة فتح 16 وفوضى بالمحافظات - مصر - الوطن," January 8, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/5209735>.

²⁹⁹ "سعيد حجازي, "قرارات جديدة من الأوقاف لغلق المساجد المخالفة ولجنة لمتابعة التزام المصلين - مصر - الوطن," January 7, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/5207407>.

³⁰⁰ "استعدادات المساجد لشهر رمضان والتراويح والإجراءات.. وزير الأوقاف د. محمد مختار جمعة يوضح - YouTube," accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLEYHnChv0k>.

³⁰¹ "محمود طولان, "التفاصيل الكاملة لإجراءات الحكومة بشأن المساجد في رمضان - مصر - الوطن," April 1, 2021, <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/5411069>.

keenness on the health of citizens and not depriving them of performing rituals.³⁰² Despite these mitigating decisions, for its part, the Ministry of Endowments alerted the directorates to write a report for any person or association that prepares places for performing Eid prayers, other than those approved by the Ministry, and Mobile patrols will be organized to follow up on compliance with the precautionary measures inside mosques where Eid al-Fitr prayers are performed.³⁰³

On the other hand, the Ministry of Endowments opened a new mosque in record time during the Coronavirus outbreak and the ministry stressed that opening new mosques is an excellent response to the "advocates of sedition and falsification of facts" from the Muslim Brotherhood, which accuses the ministry of restricting mosques.³⁰⁴

In the context of competition between religious institutions about privileges and religious authority, the Ministry of Endowments decided to hold the first Friday after a suspension that lasted for more than two months due to pandemic on Friday 29/5/2020 AD at the Sayeda Nafisa Mosque in Cairo, not from Al-Azhar Mosque, in the presence of 20 worshipers from the mosque's workers and Endowment employees. The ministry declared that Friday prayers would be held, taking into account all precautionary and preventive measures and social distancing measures, and the Friday prayer rituals were transmitted via Egyptian radio and television. The official spokesman for the Ministry of Endowments confirmed that coordination had been made with Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, Sheikh of Al-Azhar, and that the following Friday prayer will be held on 5/6/2020 AD from Al-Azhar Mosque, in the presence of twenty worshipers from the mosque workers and Al-Azhar employees, with its broadcast on radio and television.³⁰⁵

2.3.4. Global and International Space

³⁰² " رواد المساجد يشيدون بقرار الحكومة بشأن صلاة عيد الفطر, بوابة اخبار اليوم " May 5, 2021, <http://6060news.com/eg/Story/Details/66386689>.

³⁰³ "محمود مصطفى, "إنهاء خدمة وتحرير محضر.. ما عقوبة إقامة صلاة العيد خارج المس | مصرأوى | https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_egypt/details/2021/5/10/2020672/-إقامة-ما-عقوبة-إقامة- إنهاء-خدمة-وتحرير-محضر-ما-عقوبة-إقامة- إقامة- صلاة-العيد-خارج-المساجد-المعتمدة-من-الأوقاف

بالصور: افتتاح (٤٢٧) مسجدًا في شهرين عمل غير مسبوق ولا نظير له في عمارة المساجد وهو أبلغ رد عملي على جماعات وأبواق الفتنة " ³⁰⁴ "وتزييف وقلب الحقائق | بوابة الأوقاف الإلكترونية June 24, 2021, <http://ar.awkafonline.com/?p=109330>.

³⁰⁵ كريمة حسن احمد البحيري, " بالتنسيق مع شيخ الأزهر.. الأوقاف تعلن عن عودة تدريجية بإقامة صلاة الجمعة القادمة بمسجد السيدة نفيسة " ³⁰⁵ | المصري اليوم May 24, 2020, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1980584>.

Al-Azhar has captured an ample space of global attention and international appreciation for the role of Al-Azhar during the pandemic. In the context of responding to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar presented a message to the world in which he said that all countries, peoples, individuals, and institutions must assume the responsibility to play their roles in combating the pandemic and protecting humanity from its dangers.³⁰⁶ The Sheikh of Al-Azhar also emphasized the fatwas suspending prayers and religious gatherings in Egypt and called for the generalization of these fatwas in all Islamic countries. He also sent a message to those infected with Coronavirus worldwide, praying for them to recover, and he called on believers in the world to pray to God to lift the pandemic. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar also expressed Al-Azhar's solidarity with all countries fighting the pandemic and that providing aid among countries in this pandemic is a duty and a measure of true solidarity among nations. In response to this message, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, praised the meanings contained in the message of the Grand Imam to the world about the Coronavirus and stressed the importance of global solidarity and cooperation in facing the spread of the Coronavirus.³⁰⁷

For his part, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar wrote on his official page that he had received a phone call from Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi with whom he discussed the importance of human brotherhood and global solidarity in facing the pandemic. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar valued the initiative of the Crown Prince to establish and equip an integrated humanitarian city to receive several Coronavirus-infected patients from different countries.³⁰⁸ Also on his official page, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar said that he had received a call from Pope Francis of the Catholic Church, in which he expressed his good wishes on the occasion of the blessed month of Ramadan, wishing these happy occasions would return with the free of pandemics and wars, and that humanity would enjoy more security and stability.³⁰⁹ Sheikh Al-Azhar and the Pope discussed the importance of strengthening global solidarity in light of the Coronavirus pandemic and the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and

³⁰⁶ "الأزهر الشريف الصفحة الرسمية , رسالة شيخ الأزهر للعالم بشأن الكورونا"

³⁰⁷ "صاحب السمو الشيخ محمد بن زايد وشيخ الأزهر يؤكدان أهمية التضامن والتعاون العالمي في مواجهة انتشار فيروس كورونا" March 31, 2020, <https://www.mofaic.gov.ae/ar-ae/mediahub/news/2020/3/31/31-03-2020-uae-review>.

³⁰⁸ "أحمد الطيب - تلقيت قبل قليل اتصالا هاتفيا عزيزا من أخي" | Facebook," March 30, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=117177133259596&id=108368050807171.

³⁰⁹ "أحمد الطيب - تلقيت اليوم اتصالاً كريماً من أخي وصديقي" | Facebook," April 24, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=131102248533751&id=108368050807171.

Living Together.³¹⁰ In the same context, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar welcomed the initiative of the Higher Committee for Human Fraternity to call people around the world to pray, supplicate and do good for God to lift the Coronavirus pandemic from humanity.³¹¹ The Sheikh of Al-Azhar invited everyone in the world to participate in this call and sincerely pray to God to lift this pandemic.

Moreover, based on its religious responsibility Sheikh of Al-Azhar called the world to pay attention to the suffering of the Rohingya Muslims during the pandemic. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar said that in light of the international calls for human solidarity to overcome the Corona crisis, it is shameful that the silence continues towards the tragedy of the Rohingya Muslims, the victims of religious persecution and forced displacement.³¹² At the Arabic solidarity level, The Sheikh of Al-Azhar also sent his condolences to the Iraqi people for the accident victims in a hospital designated for Coronavirus-infected patients. He affirmed the solidarity of Al-Azhar and its scholars with the Iraqis in their great affliction and the readiness of Al-Azhar with all its medical sectors to contribute in alleviating the suffering of the injured in this tragic accident.³¹³

At the level of global fatwas, The Pakistani President, Arif Alvi, thanked the Sheikh of Al-Azhar, and the Council of Senior Scholars, for their quick response in the face of the threat of the spread of the Coronavirus by issuing a fatwa on March 15, 2020, authorizing the suspension of Friday prayers in mosques, to confront and limit the spread of the virus among Muslims, and President Alvi demanded that the scholars of Pakistan to work with that fatwa.³¹⁴ In the same context, Sheikh of Al-Azhar commented on the decision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to organize the Hajj for citizens and residents inside the Kingdom only, by considering that decision is a "right and wise decision" that takes into account the public interest and the

³¹⁰ "Document on 'Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together' Signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahamad Al-Tayyib (Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019) | Francis," 2019, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html.

³¹¹ ...أحمد الطيب - أرحبُ بالنداء الإنساني النبيل الذي أطلقته | Facebook," May 3, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=135266108117365&id=108368050807171.

³¹² ...أحمد الطيب - في ظل دعوات المؤسسات الأممية ودول العالم إلى | Facebook," April 19, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=128604205450222&id=108368050807171.

³¹³ ...أحمد الطيب - خالص العزاء للشعب العراقي الشقيق في ضحايا | Facebook," April 25, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/GrandImam/posts/328055982211967>.

³¹⁴ "شيماء عبد الهادي, "رئيس باكستان يشكر شيخ الأزهر لإصدار فتوى جواز تعليق صلاة الجماعة للحد من خطر كورونا - بوابة الأهرام 28, 2020, <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2389406.aspx>.

preservation of the human being. Al-Tayeb also expressed Al-Azhar's appreciation for the Kingdom's keenness on the safety of pilgrims, considering the most crucial purpose of the sharia, which is "self-preservation" in light of the repercussions of the pandemic. He also thanked King Salman bin Abdulaziz, his Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and the Saudi people for their efforts in serving the pilgrims and ensuring their safety.³¹⁵

The Egyptian Dar Al Ifta adopted the same response towards the decision of the pilgrimage, as it stated that the decision of the Saudi authorities is following the provisions and purposes of Sharia to preserve the lives of pilgrims, and appreciated the efforts of the Kingdom in serving pilgrims.³¹⁶ The Sheikh of Al-Azhar also thanked scientists and researchers around the world for their efforts to provide the Coronavirus vaccine to humanity, calling the vaccine-producing companies to adopt a fair policy in distributing vaccines by putting the poor, refugees, and the neediest groups at the top of the priority list of vaccine recipients.³¹⁷

2.3.5. Media Space During Coronavirus

According to the degree of their independence from the state's media orientation, the response to the Coronavirus pandemic varied among religious institutions in the media spaces. The Ministry of Endowments, for example, adopted the state's narrative in terms of delaying the announcement of the permissibility of suspending prayers in mosques until the state obtains the church's approval to suspend mass in churches and then the unified official position of the state was announced to suspend all prayers in mosques and churches on March 21, 2020.³¹⁸ For its part, the statement of the Council of Senior Scholars in announcing the permissibility of

³¹⁵ احمد البحيري, "شيخ الأزهر يعلق على قرار السعودية بشأن تنظيم الحج هذا العام | المصري اليوم" June 15, 2021, <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2354059>.

³¹⁶ "Dar al-Ifta: قرار السلطات السعودية باقامة الحج باعداد محدودة يتفق مع احكام ومقاصد الشريعة. - دار الإفتاء المصرية" June 22, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3634786829884406&id=200895559940234.

³¹⁷ "محمد شحته, "كيف تعامل الأزهر مع جائحة كورونا منذ انتشارها؟" December 13, 2020, <https://www.elbalad.news/4611579>.

³¹⁸ "Egypt: All Mosques and Churches Closed from March 21 /Update 9," March 22, 2020, <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/325381/egypt-all-mosques-and-churches-closed-from-march-21-update-9>.

suspending voices came early in an official statement on the Al-Azhar page on March 15.³¹⁹ At this time, the Ministry of Endowments was adopting the official state narrative to spread assurances that prayers would be held, and the matter was limited to some precautions such as closing toilets in mosques while continuing to open mosques for prayer. A Friday prayer was held on March 20, 2020, under the title of taking reasons to alleviate the consequences of the pandemic and the obligation to obey the rule.³²⁰

In mixing the Corona pandemic and the attack on the Muslim Brotherhood, the Ministry of Endowments and Dar Al Ifta followed the same line as the state. Dar Al-Ifta stated that the Muslim Brotherhood wants to spread Corona among Egyptians, and they are exploiting the decisions to close mosques and loudspeakers politically, to incite public opinion through social media. The Minister of Endowments has also stated more than once in the media that the Brotherhood is a terrorist group calling for premeditated killing by spreading rumors about the Coronavirus on social media.³²¹ For its part, Al-Azhar adhered to a neutral media speech calling for the rejection of rumors and the obligation to adhere to the precautionary measures imposed by specialists.

During the Coronavirus crisis, religious institutions also strengthened their media presence on social media spaces and television programs. In this context, the Ministry of Endowments decided to intensify its programs for electronic advocacy and television and radio programs through Ramadan. At the level of Al-Azhar, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar opened an official page for him on Facebook. The official page of the Sheikh of Al-Azhar began its work by publishing the message of the Sheikh of Al-Azhar to the Egyptian people from his home in Luxor. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar stressed that “adhering to the teachings and medical guidelines and all the precautionary measures approved by the state, foremost of which is social distancing, is an obligatory imposition, in the interest of our lives and our societies, calling on God Almighty to reveal this pandemic and to write salvation for all of humanity.”³²² The Sheikh of Al-Azhar also

³¹⁹ “العلماء, “بيان للناس جواز إيقاف صلوات الجُمع والجماعات حمايةً للناس من فيروس #كورونا

- بتاريخ 20 مارس: الأسباب الظاهرة والباطنة لرفع البلاء، ووجوب طاعة ولي الأمر - صوت الدعاة Pdf , Word صوت الدعاة, “خطبة الجمعة

”

³²¹ March 11, 2020, “بليغ حمدي, “البوابة نيوز: بالفيديو.. وزير الأوقاف: جماعة الإخوان ‘فاجرة’ ويجب فضحها”
<https://www.albawabhnews.com/3934986>.

³²² أعلن المركز الإعلامي للأزهر الشريف، اليوم الأحد، تدشين صفحة رسمية باسم فضيلة #الإمام_الأكبر_أ.د/ أحمد ‘ الأزهر الشريف” on Twitter: “#الطيب_#شيخ_الأزهر على موقع التواصل الاجتماعي «فيس بوك» رابط الصفحة الرسمية لفضيلة الإمام الأكبر على فيس بوك
<https://t.co/4HCwTqLhPq> / Twitter.”

presented a TV program during the month of Ramadan called Imam Al-Tayyib, broadcast on the Egyptian Channel One and discussed in some of its episodes the repercussions of the Coronavirus crisis to talking about the importance of heritage and how to renew religious discourse.³²³ Al-Azhar also dealt with media rumors circulating about the Coronavirus.³²⁴

Al-Azhar also responded to the videos spread on social media in terms of bullying, stigmatizing the virus, or preventing the burial of the victims.³²⁵ The Al-Azhar newspaper, Sawt Al-Azhar, published interviews and training courses to raise awareness of the pandemic.³²⁶ The Al-Azhar International Center for Electronic Fatwa has also been active in providing fatwas and awareness data on the pandemic³²⁷ as well as the official page of Al-Azhar Sheikhdom,³²⁸ which promoted the role of Al-Azhar during the response to the Corona pandemic, as well as the official page of the Council of Senior Scholars, which published fatwas, questions, and data regarding Corona.³²⁹

For its part, Dar Al-Ifta published a file on the fatwas of the Ifta Council on its official website related to Corona. The fatwas of Dar al Ifta included; fatwa about washing the deceased infected with the Coronavirus, fatwa on fasting Ramadan for those infected with the Coronavirus, fatwa for those who transmit the infection to others, fatwa on how to pray funerals and condolences in light of the precautionary measures, fatwa for the ruling on citing Quranic verses on Coronavirus, fatwa on the prohibition of mockery, ridicule, and stigmatization of those afflicted with Coronavirus, fatwa on Coronavirus examination does not invalidate the fast, fatwa of the groups that drop Friday prayers in light of the spread of the Corona pandemic and a fatwa on combining prayers due to the curfew.

³²³ "القناة الأولى المصرية - الأمام الطيب | مع فضيلة الدكتور - أحمد الطيب شيخ الأزهر وحلقة عن الكورونا | Facebook", May 6, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/Channel1/videos/239218120652762/>.

³²⁴ "شيخ الأزهر عن كورونا: اختلاق الشائعات وإفقاد الناس الثقة بإجراءات الدولة حرام شرعا-الهيئة العامة للإستعلامات", March 20, 2020, <https://sis.gov.eg/Story/201393?lang=ar>.

³²⁵ "كلمة فضيلة الإمام الأكبر بشأن دفن الموتى بفيروس كورونا والتنمر والسخرية من المصابين", الصفحة الرسمية لشيخ الأزهر", April 13, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=274862896844893>.

³²⁶ "جريدة صوت الأزهر (6)", accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/page/283679035165782/search/?q=كورونا>.

³²⁷ "مركز الأزهر العالمي للفتوى الإلكترونية (6)", accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/page/1474686135917009/search/?q=كورونا>.

³²⁸ "الأزهر الشريف (6)", accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100044235709016/search/?q=كورونا>.

³²⁹ "هيئة كبار العلماء - الأزهر الشريف (6)", accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/هيئة-كبار-العلماء-الأزهر-الشريف-2123919237924833/>.

The Dar Al-Ifta website also contained all the statements and articles issued by Dar Al-Ifta regarding the Coronavirus.³³⁰ The Mufti of the Republic presented a TV program on the DMC channel affiliated with the regime in the name of the "Friday meeting".³³¹ The Mufti had presented with the same journalist Hamdi Rizk another program called "Nazra", which was broadcast on pro-regime Sada Al-Balad channel, where the mufti declared that standing with the political leadership is a legitimate duty. He explained that Dar al-Ifta is the most professional body in the field of fatwas because it is based on institutionalization and not on the presence of a specific person.³³²

CONCLUSION

The map of relationships and power between state, society, and religion has been reshaped during the pandemic. COVID-19 as an existential security threat has brought religion to the scene. Social needs increased from religion as a transcendent power in exchange for the failure of the state and science. In such an urgent context of the pandemic, religious institutions gained a new floor in their power struggles with the state, and the state was forced to step back. This was an uncomfortable situation for the over-stating state that sought to extend its hegemony overall space.

By using the division of Michael Mann about the state power, we can find that the state used both despotic power and infrastructural power in combating the pandemic. The state uses its despotic power to impose curfew and quarantine to people. However, the state's despotic power was not sufficient in such public health situation which needs adherence to personal preventive measures. Therefore, the state sought to activate its infrastructural power by calling the socially influential power that can penetrate the society and encourage people to adhere to the preventive measures. One of the most effective power was the religious institutions because they invaded

³³⁰ "دار الإفتاء - فتاوى ومنشورات دائرة الإفتاء حول كورونا" accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.aliftaa.jo/ShowContent.aspx?Id=249#.YNSRu-gzblV>.

³³¹ dmc TV, "د. شوقي علام مفتي الجمهورية: اتباع تدابير الوقاية من كورونا عبادة طاعة لل", dmc TV, May 29, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2518797768434296>.

³³² "مصطفى طاهر, "مفتي الجمهورية: الوقوف مع الدولة والقيادة السياسية «واجب شرعي» | فيديو - بوابة الأهرام" February 20, 2021, <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2611063.aspx>.

many spaces in Egyptian society, which makes them an influential element in the state's infrastructural power, as it deals with many spaces of mosques, sermons, imams, religious guidance, religious education, zakat networks, and charitable works, and it also has an international and media presence.

The pandemic has shown that religious institutions have an influential role in mobilizing citizens to adhere to government measures related to public health. It appears that society's trust in religious institutions is greater than its political trust in the state. However, the social trust in religious institutions depends on the degree of independence of each religious institution. The response of each of the three religious' institutions, Al-Azhar, Dar Al-Ifta, and the Ministry of Endowments to the Coronavirus reflects the extent to which each institution is independent of the state. The state wants to extend its hegemony over the religious field and control the space of society, but it finds a real dilemma during the Coronavirus crisis, as it is obliged to activate more space for the religious institution to play an effective role during the fight against the pandemic; however, the state fears that religious institutions will exploit these spaces against it.

The presence of the Coronavirus revealed the conflict and competition in the religious field. There is a fact that religious institutions have distinct institutional interests, although they all depend on the state for legitimacy and existence; therefore, the result is a constant and dynamic tension. The state wants to monopolize the religious field and speak by the name of Islam, on the other side, the religious institution considered that the state violates its specialization. Al-Azhar as the most independent institution was the most in conflict with the state, but on the other hand, it was the most influential and has early initiative to respond to the pandemic when it decided to suspend the prayer before the state did. The response of the Ministry of Endowment to Covid-19 was in the frame of its relation with the state as it is considered as the state's arm in the religious field. The Ministry's response during the pandemic was saturated with the state's vision and its discourse. Dar Al Ifta also adhered to the same line of the state in terms of discourse and fatwas. The pandemic also reflects another level of competition among official religious institutions themselves, and their competition with non-official religious actors in relation to the degree of confidence that the Egyptian society grants to them.

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