From Salafi preaching to political preaching: women's turnout and the evolution of Salafi movements in Egypt
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Zusammenfassung

Von der Salafiyya zur Politik: die politische Partizipation von Frauen und die Entwicklung der Salafiyya-Bewegungen in Ägypten

Der Beitrag beleuchtet das Engagement von Frauen im Umfeld der Salafiyya. Dazu wird gefragt, auf welche Weise Frauen an der Politisierung der Salafiyya-Strömungen teilhaben. Um dieser Frage nachzugehen, werden in einem induktiven Vorgehen zentrale Beiträge von Frauen zur Verbreitung der Salafiyya-Ideologie analysiert. Zudem wird die Teilnahme der Frauen – durch soziale Netzwerke wie Facebook oder ägyptischen Medien – am Prozess der Politisierung der Salafiyya nach dem Aufstand von 2011 untersucht.

Schlüsselwörter
Ägypten, Salafismus, Politisierung, Revolution, Frauen, Empowerment

Summary

This article investigates women's involvement in the Salafi milieu. We ask how women follow and participate in the politicization of Salafi trends. To answer this question, we analyze, through an inductive approach, their important contributions in spreading Salafi ideology. Then, we investigate their participation – through social networks (e.g., Facebook, Egyptian media) – in the process of Salafi politicization in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising.

Keywords
Egypt, Salafism, politicization, revolution, women's empowerment

1   Introduction

The Salafi appeal to take part in the January 2011 demonstrations brought out numerous Salafi movement supporters to Tahrir Square, among them women dressed in *khimâr*[1] and *niqâb*. Their sudden appearance on the public scene and then on the political stage brought them into the spotlight and helped them gain legitimacy in some Salafi spheres. This shift, along with the decision of some Salafi movements to enter the political arena, was in contradiction with traditional Salafi stances. To justify them, these movements were eventually led to operate a rhetorical shift.

After the revolutionary uprisings, a new face of *salafiyya*[2] became visible, operating mostly within the civil society as well as in the realm of politics, raising the question of

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1   The *khimâr* is a long veil which covers the head and the body with the face being visible, contrary to the *niqâb* which covers the entire body and even the face.

2   *"Salafiyât"* is the female form of "Salafi". The majority of women in this religious current identified themselves as such. By this label, they connect to the lineage of the first Muslims. They also use a

women's role in the Salafi movements and the impact of the Arab Spring in their agency. In several Arab countries, the 2011 revolutionary uprisings have propelled Salafis (Rougier and Lacroix 2015: 4)[3] – hitherto confined to preaching field – into the political and media scene. In Egypt, this phenomenon took a particular turn. Over decades, these Salafis managed to enroot a strong local base of support, which enabled them to win an important share of seats in the parliament in the following elections[4]. Some Salafi movements hence entered politics determined to play the game: they expressed their will to abide by democratic rules and by the new electoral set of laws introduced prior to the 2011–2012 parliamentary elections. These new regulations included a compulsory nomination quota for women in all political parties. To stay in the race, the Salafi party was compelled to make women run for elections for the first time in history and hence to allow them to enter the political arena alongside men.

This analysis aims to plug the gaps stemming from the lack of information on the place and role of women within the Salafi movements in Egypt. Gender-related issues within Salafi movements in the Arab world have not attracted much attention amongst social science's scholars. Sabâh Mahmoud for example undertakes an ethnographic study about women operating in what she phrases as the "mosques movement" (Mahmoud 2005: 14) in the late 1990s in Cairo. She refers – without distinction – to a large variety of movements, religious trends and aims to highlight the role of *dâ'iyât* (female preachers) in the *da'wa* (the preach) practice. Although she addresses the issue it is difficult to get a holistic view of the matter through Mahmoud's work as she barely mentions *dâ'iyât* and does not differentiate between the various Salafi groups they identify with. Hence, this work attempts to fill this gap.

To do so, we need to break free from mainstream essentialist discourses that victimize these women (Dayan-Herzbrun 2005: 118), or subjugate them to manipulation. This article aims at emphasizing women's contribution to the build-up of a community that still retains its own identity. We will see how the fight against the first feminist movement in Egypt (Badran 1995: 178) enabled Salafi women access to a higher social status, writing for famous Salafi reviews, practicing *da'wa*, which ensures them even a key status within Salafi movements. Then, within the framework of a logic of "differentiation" between men and women – considering women in their "sexual role" (Mead 1963: 256) – we will look into the new Salafi discourse that emerged during the immediate aftermath of the uprisings. Thereafter, I will analyse the impact of Salafi women's participation to the 2011 uprising in their empowerment.

This study is part of a larger anthropological project about women's impact in Salafi movements in Egypt, undertaken in the frame of my ongoing PhD thesis. This article's findings are part of the first results. It provides a first look at this new feminine exposure through the reconfiguration lens of the Salafi ideology, and the profound turmoil it has experienced since the 2011 uprisings. I approached a dozen of women, from January to June 2016 in Cairo and Alexandria, who follow or used to follow the Salafi doc-

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second word which is *al-multazima*, it is translated as "the one who is committed in God's path".

3   In the introduction on the book *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?* Rougier identifies three kinds of Salafism: quietist or pacifist, reformist and jihadist. The pacifist Salafism "stresses on the necessity of obeying the political authorities" (2013: 15).

4   The Salafi bloc – headed by the al-Nûr party – won over a quarter of the ballots on the 2011–2012 parliamentary elections (Steuer 2013a).

trine, doing a participative observation and learning from their individual and collective empowerment (Zimmerman: 2000: 44). Through an inductive approach, I led direct and semi-direct interviews to understand their lifestyle and the way they entered and affiliated with the Salafi movement. This study will then expose the participation of women in the process of Salafi politicisation. To do so, I have followed some candidates on Facebook to understand how they participate in the political game as members of the Salafi al-Nûr party. In the following, the impact of their participation in demonstrations will be approached as a way of "agentivity" and "gender performativity" (Butler 1990: 47), through new voices which appeared in the public and on the political scene.

2   *Da'wa Salafiyya*[5] and Women's Participation in Building Up Salafi Communities

The revolutionary uprisings gave the *salafiyât* an exposure they did not have before. Media took up the phenomenon, criticising their conservatism and accusing them of all the Egyptian society's diseases[6]. However, the *salafiyât* have been present since the outset of Salafism in Egypt in the 1930s and have played key roles within Salafism. In the following, I will elaborate how women participated in establishing these communities with a distinct identity and I show how they gradually gained legitimacy inside the first Salafi movement – for instance through their fight against the early feminist movements – while remaining in their "gender role" (Mead 1963: 356).

2.1   The Birth of Salafism in Egypt

There is no doubt that women have been present and active in the Salafi Egyptian milieu since its outset. Accounts of women's involvement in Salafi movements can be traced back as far as the 1930s, when the first Salafi school in Egypt was founded, called *Jamâ'a Ansâr as-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyya*, which means the "Association of the Proponents of the Prophetic Sunnah". This first Salafi school was created in 1926 in Cairo by an Azhari graduate: Muhammad Ahmad al-Fiqqî (1892–1958). He was born in the Beheira governorate. His father was a student at Al-Azhar University[7] and shared Muhammad 'Abduh's room, a famous reformist figure. Al-Fiqqî witnessed the 1919 Revolution, but contrary to the majority of his counterparts, he rejected it, denouncing the participation of women and Copts. As Stéphane Lacroix writes, contrary to his coeval Hassan al-Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, al-Fiqqî was not concerned by the British occupation and by establishing an Islamic state. For him, the deep evil suffered by Muslims was neither political nor religious but existed within them, in that they had forgotten the real meaning of "transcendence" and the principle of divine oneness: *al-tawhid* (Lacroix 2012: 29). Al-Fiqqî formed this school to thwart what he considered a spirituality "vacuum" in the society that Al-Azhar had failed to fill up. Al-Fiqqî's preaching focused on pure monotheism and the protection of the Sunnah. He started

5   Salafi preach.
6   This happened mainly after the 2013 military coup.
7   One of the prestigious universities in the Arab world, far-famed for its religious teaching.

to refer to religious figures coming from Arabia, unknown in Egypt, to understand the principle of pure monotheism *(tawhid)*. Under al-Fiqqî's leadership, *Ansâr as-Sunnah al-Muhamadiyya* proclaimed its dedication to *al-tawhid* as preached by Mohamed Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, the co-founder of Saudi Arabia. Al-Fiqqî focused his discourse on the popular literary genre of the Hanbali school[8] concentrating on a specific definition of the "profession of faith" and listed the main tenets of Islam: divine omnipotence in good and evil; the rule of prophetic figure as mediator between God and man; defence of the uncreated nature of the Koran and therefore of its universal and eternal validity; predetermination of human acts and the denial of free will; the affirmation of the unity of the community and the unconditional obedience to the government, even in cases of impiety. They have to be cleaned of blameworthy innovations and go back to pure monotheism respecting the orthodoxy, the orthopraxis and the public authority (Mouline 2011: 45). Through this discourse the members of *Ansâr as-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyya* denounce religious and traditional practices, e.g. the cult of saints, considered by them as un-Islamic. To talk to God through divined saints is considered by Salafis as an "associationism blameworthy" and is considered as a (step) backward to polytheism. The ideas of al-Fiqqî were full of resentment toward Sufism. The rigorist social norm vision of Salafis came to break with the widespread Egyptian practice of the Sufi order which was still followed by a majority of Egyptians in the beginning of 1920s.

Salafis aimed to reform society by applying conservative social rules, similar to those applied by the Saudi Arabian monarchy (Lacroix 2016: 30). So the Salafi rigorist project of changing the religious practice of Muslims was different from the Brotherhood's aims, mainly political, and far more flexible regarding social norms. Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Brotherhood, was known for his Sufî aspirations. The first decades of the *Ansâr as-Sunnah al-Muhamadiyya* did not attract many Egyptians. The fundamentalist discourse of the Salafi school was listened only by a minor part of Egyptians, composed by the religious intellectual class from al-Azhar, like the founder himself. At the same time, during the 1930s and 40s, the Brotherhood experienced significant growth. It became a mass movement, consequently facing a fierce repression under Nasser's rule. In the early 1980s, due to President Sadat's assassination by a branch of the movement, they became the target of a strong repression designed by Egypt's new president, Moubarak. This gave Salafis the opportunity to spread in preaching territories. Additionally, Saudi Arabia's economic growth, thanks to oil revenues, allowed the Wahhabi doctrine penetration in Egypt, democratising the Salafi discourse, through mosques preaches and books publications.

2.2 Women's Presence in the Egyptian *Salafi School*

Women's involvement has been visible since the first decades of the Salafi school through writings for the reviews of *Ansâr al-Sunnah*. Among the women who were active in the *harakâ salafiyya* (Salafi movement), in the early 20th century, a woman by the name of Ni'mat Sidqî stands out for the work she carried out in close collaboration with the *Ansâr as-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyya* group (Zaghlûl 2016: 136). She published manifold articles in Salafi reviews; known as *Ansâr as-Sunnah, al-Hudâ al-Nabawî* and

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8   One of the four *madhhabs* (schools of religious thought forming Islamic law) in Sunni Islam.

al-Tawhîd. In her articles, she denounces the unveiling (of women's faces), *al-sufûr* in Arabic, and promotes wearing the *hijâb*. She also published a pamphlet in 1971 entitled *al-Tabarruj*[9], the eponymous concept developed in different intellectual currents of the Sunni Islam, which has particular significance in *minhâj salafi* (Salafi methodology). The word *tabarruj* can be translated as "adornment" and understood as the fact that men and women alike expose physical attributes for seduction. However, in her writings Ni'mat Sidqî targets particularly women in the peculiar context of the late 1920s and early 1940s. At that time, secular/nationalist feminism embodied by Huda Cha'raoui (Badran 1995: 42) became popular in the upper and middle classes. Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun explains that "in pursuing philanthropic activities, but in giving a 'wafdist' rationale, they [secular feminist women] expanded their social base, but not enough however, as shown by the birth of Marxist and Islamist oppositions a few years later"[10] (Dayan-Herzbrun 1998: 120). In her writings, Ni'mat Sidqi addresses first and foremost secular feminists and sharply criticizes the unveiling of women. She reproaches women for their use of western references and harshly condemns this feminism that does not respect the true and authentic Salafist' Islam (Hegghammer 2009: 267). Through her fight against feminism Ni'mat Sidqî gained legitimacy and received a special exposure within the Salafi movement, being published alongside famous personalities of *Salafi manhâj* such as Mohamed Abd al-Majîd al-Shafi'î, Jama'â chief in the early 1970s. She did so by staying to its woman area of predilection, committed to her "gender role" as described by Margaret Mead (1963: 145). A "gender role" is built through representation framed by the Egyptian society in which female "temperament" is described as delicate and a source of tension.

Hence, she participated in the *da'wa* practice through her writings; albeit not limited to it. She also granted *tazqîya* (recommendation letters) enabling holders to get access to Salafi circles. This practice has continued to present days. To gain *entrée* in a Salafi school one must acquire a status; provided upon recommendation by a well-accredited figure in the milieu. For example, she recommended Sheikh 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Wakîl (1913–1971), who would later play a substantial role in *jamâ'at Ansâr as-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyya* and would work together with the founder of the association, Sheikh Muhammad Hâmid al-Fiqqî. These facts highlight the importance of this woman who seems to have acquired a dedicated role along with a sound legitimacy within the movement.

The *Ansâr As-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyya* group seems to be fully aligned with the usages of his time. Indeed, as most newly formed associations of this period – between 1920 and 1960 – their message targeted the elites. Hence, the – mostly illiterate – populace did not have access to the *Salafi* message that propagated through newspapers and did not visit mosques to listen to the *khutba* (preach) of the sheikhs. At this time, the religious practices of the Sufi orders and acts were dominant in the country (De Jong 1983: 183). It was not until the second half of the 1960s that a "democratisation" of the Salafi religious terminology began to expand with preaches delivered in colloquial Arabic; by definition, accessible to everyone. In the meantime, broadcasting technologies had enabled a new way for the expansion of the Salafi message.

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9   www.saaid.net/feraq/mthahb/8.htm
10   This translation is not accredited.

2.3 The Key Status of the Dâ'iyât Movement

The role of Salafi *dâ'iyât* (female preachers) in the expansion of *Salafi* thought in the 1960s in the lower social classes was of crucial importance. Hence, this period can be associated with the broadcast of *dâ'iyât,* notably through the "democratisation" of the *Salafi* and Islamist message; enabled by President Anouar Al-Sadate's ascent to power. He put in place the *Infitâh* policy, pardoned Islamists imprisoned by Nasser, opening up the way for Islamists of different Sunni currents in universities, where the socialists had a strong base. *Jama'ât islâmiyât* (Islamic associations) were set up first in Cairo and Alexandria universities around this time and were driven by the government's desire to eradicate Nasser's legacy. I met two women who attended these universities at this time, Mona and Sofia, who both adopted the Salafi doctrine.

Mona[11] enrolled in the medical school at Alexandria University[12] in 1977. She was one of the few girls wearing the veil at that time. She was 15 years old when she decided to wear it; swayed by a high school teacher in Damanhur. Her family, originally from Alexandria, moved to a capital city in Upper Egypt. Mona was already *mutadayina* (religious) when she entered university. She got used to praying in the university's *masjîd* (prayer hall)*,* where she met several women wearing the *niqâb*. She then socialised with the *masjîd*'s manager who was also wearing it. A few years older than her, the *amîra al-jamâ'a* (the group's chief) provided her with substantial support with the university work (being more advanced) and with her religious practice. This Salafi trend inscribed itself in a movement aiming to promote Islam's good practice in daily life and good behaviour of Muslim women outside their household, which she was more likely to leave to study or work in order to support her multiple family members.

The second woman we met in Cairo was a former preacher in *minhaj salafi.* Sofia was educated in a liberal middle-class family in which there was no noticeable religious practice. It was only after entering Cairo University that she accessed the *jama'a salafiyya* and made a name for herself. She was a well-known preacher between the late 1980s and early 1990s, before leaving the movement in 1994. Her story is a good example of the organisational structure of the *jama'a* where women had assigned roles and an attributed place within the women's section*.* Some members' role was to attract female students to the *jama'a* and other women who were in charge of teaching basics of Islamic education and of working with them on Wahhabi doctrine's scriptures. It is worth noting that there was a hierarchy amongst the preachers. Every two weeks, the "great preacher"', a woman named Oum Hudhayfah, held a *dars* (lesson). When she came, as explained by Sofia, the meeting would not be held in Cairo University campus, but rather at Qasr al-'Aïni medical school, in Munîra district. Female students came from every corner of Cairo University to listen to her. She also recalls that "Oum Hudhayfah would sit on a chair with us encircling her, sitting on the floor. She was very good and showed a great mastery of the scriptures." Sofia further explains that she started praying in this circle and that the first books she read were those of Ibn Taymiyya[13].

11   To preserve the confidentiality of the women I interviewed, all names were changed.
12   The da'wa salafiyya movement was created here and became one of the most important Salafi movements in the country. The al-Nûr party, founded after the 2011 uprising, originated from this movement.
13   Ibn Taymiyya was a Sunni Muslim theologian, juriconsult, and reformer of the Hanbali School. He lived in the thirteenth century. His writings have a particular echo in the Salafi currents.

From her account we get an idea of how the preachers proceeded to set up a community that they educate according to the *Salafi* approach. Sofia was later assigned to preaching. She chose to do *da'wa*; developing her own methodology. "I was very humane and touching. I worked with human beings regarding them plainly as they were and not like machines". She pointed out that she had received a very strict training including learning by heart which often was tough. "I would elaborate a discourse with simple and emotional words, and that was efficient since my discourse would make many people come. I took philosophy classes at the university, which helped me get a vocabulary base that I used for my *da'wa*."

Sofia was in the faculty of arts and social sciences. Her counterparts reproached her for choosing this academic path and tried to make her change it. However, Sofia explained to me that it was out of question for her to give up on what she had always loved as a child who grew up in a household in which literature played an important role. She explained to the students of the *jama'a* that she would continue this path to gain the necessary knowledge to fight "evil". I observed monitoring of circle's members by the sheikh (spiritual guide) at all levels. The student's life is inspected, even with regards to marital matters, arranged by the men's section of the *jama'a salafiyya*. Here again, it is interesting to see the unfolding of the matriarchal system that constitutes networks within the *jama'a*. Mona, who married a man from the *jama'a*, explains:

"It is very complicated, but there is a marriage system that exists. It is a system of networks where your married friend asks her husband to find you a husband. This is the only way. A man who is looking for a wife would talk to a husband, who in turn asks his wife, and it is her who will find a wife for her husband's friend. In this fashion, we look out for each other".

This practice allowed the creation of closed circles with mutual dependence between members. This method is still in practice and Mona's son, who got married a few years ago, resorted to his mother to find him a wife.

Women in the movement play an essential role here as they are in charge of finding husbands for their spouse' friends; hence maintaining the circle closed. Sofia's role in these preaching sessions was to promote the *niqâb*. She would advocate it using arguments such as it being a symbol for a woman's rapprochement to God by following the Prophet's wives example covering her face as per verse 53 of the surât *al-Ahzâb*[14]. They operated in several neighbourhoods in Cairo. Sofia's status illustrates Mahmoud's (2005) and Du Chaffaut's (2011) point who in their studies speak of a "feminisation" of religion reaching its tipping point in the beginning of the 1990s. This feminisation is associated with the above-mentioned "democratisation" of *Salafi* thought. Preaches were delivered in popular areas' mosques or in private Salafi institutes that grew in number. Materials expanded (audio tapes were available in local markets in popular areas, reviews, etc.) allowing a greater accessibility to the *khitâb* (religious discourse) of the *Salafi* sheikhs (Haenni 2005: 39).

Salafis managed, over years, to blend themselves in the interstices of the Egyptian social fabric. Women participated in the build-up and expansion of the Salafi identity. Their involvement comes to complete the Salafi men's commitment, by educating

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14   "(…) and when you ask [his wives] for something, ask them from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their hearts." Surah 33 Al-Ahzâb (The Combined Forces), verse 53.

women. In an environment where gender mixing is not allowed, women play a strategic and central role in the expansion of *da'wa salafiyya* (Salafi Call) within closed female circles. Sophia reported that "it happened sometimes that a sheikh came to give us lessons". But when he came, he stayed in a corner of the meeting room, sitting on a chair behind the door opened from inside, to mark a separation between him and the women. He provided preach with a microphone, and the women who wanted to ask a question wrote it on paper. There was no discussion between them. The man/woman relation here is not seen as a dominated balance of power, but rather as being in line with virtue. So gender mixing is not allowed, but as illustrated by Ni'mat Sidki's case, women can still be influential to a certain degree – Sidki wrote *tazkilla* (letter of recommendation), to recommend someone for the Ansâr as-sunnah movement.

These Salafi marked-off communities – developed around closed circles' accessible only for those who have a recommendation, we enter in salafi circles by cooptation – had long kept a low profile until the revolutionary uprisings broke out and shed a different light on these groups.

3 *Da'wa Siyasiyya*[15] and *Salafiyyât's* Participation in Building Up a Salafi Constituency

The appearance of Salafism on the political scene and *salafiyât*'s accession to politics provoked a crisis within the movements of the *minhaj salafi.* The religious dignitaries of Ansâr as-Sunnah, well known for being close to the security apparatus of the Moubarak regime, attempted to deter Salafi members from taking part in the 2011 demonstrations. Members of the Salafi Call association *(Da'wa salafiyya)* – one of the most influential Salafi associations created in 1977 by religious students at Alexandria University – denounced women's participation in politics and their increased visibility in the media, after they were granted a bigger place in the political sphere. The initiators of the *Da'wa salafiyya* were members of the faculty of medicine. They did not choose to learn religious education in university like the ones of Ansâr as-Sunnah. Unlike the founder of the latter organisation, who was trained at al-Azhar university, the initiators of the *Da'wa salafiyya* received their religious education at Egyptian private schools, founded and run by members of Ansâr as-Sunnah. The founders of *Da'wa salafiyya* always kept a distance with this political scene and devoted themselves solely to preaching until the coming of the Arab Spring.

In the following, I will outline the development of this new feminine visibility in a broader context of reconfiguration of the Salafi milieu in Egypt. First, I will analyse the rhetorical changes that occurred through a critical view on the discourses of newly politicised sheikhs. I will then study the evolution of the electoral campaigns in which *salafiyât* participated. Finally, I will depict how, after chanting the 2011 Revolution slogans along with men, Salafi women have seized the opportunity to take a more central role within the movement.

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15 Political preach.

3.1   Access to Politics and the Crisis of Salafism in Egypt

Salafi participation in the revolutionary uprisings – followed by the formation of Salafi political parties – induced profound divisions within the Salafi movements in Egypt. The internal crisis has mainly been caused by religious rhetoric arguments coming from stances hitherto held by Egyptian Salafi pacifists. They were more inclined to respect what Nabil Mouline calls the principle of the three Os (e.g. with "my translation"): "respect of the Orthodoxy, the Orthopraxy and the religious Order" (Mouline 2011: 44). This stance implies, *inter alia*, that Salafis stay away from the political arena. This crisis has been particularly striking when newly founded Salafi parties decided to abide by the new electoral rules and therefore to integrate women within the partisan interplay. This dilemma of women's participation in the political game evoked discontent and mis-understandings among supporters of the Salafi *minhâj;* particularly those of the *da'wa salafiyya* movement*,* one of the most important Salafi bodies in Egypt. The founders of the Salafi Call all have over time managed to create strong roots in the country as part of its plan to become a mass movement, while the Ansâr as-Sunnah school has a rather elitist approach. Out of the *da'wa salafiyya* emerged the al-Nûr party, the most promi-nent Salafi political party today.

Complying with these regulations and incorporating women within the realm of politics caused an outcry among the ranks of the association, who saw in these brand-new practices a mockery of the "real Islam" (Hegghammer 2009: 249). To ease sup-porters' minds and try to convince them of the religious legitimacy and validity of the proceedings, a series of conferences was held about the issue of "the Muslim woman and her political and partisan participation"[16]. During these conferences that took place all over Egypt, *Da'wa salafiyya's* sheikhs stressed the legitimacy and the need to inte-grate women in politics. We attended one of these conferences held by the al-Nûr party's in Alexandria on 15 October 2011.

The conference was entitled: "The Egyptian woman's role in the political work". During the conference, several figures intervened, e.g. 'Imad al-Dîn 'Abd al-Ghafour, president of the al-Nûr party at that time, Yasser Bourhami, co-founder and vice pre-sident of the *Da'wa salâfiyya* organisation, and the Salafi preacher Hâzim Choumân. Hundreds of women wearing black *niqâbs* were attending the conference, separated from men. Yasser Bourhami told the audience why participation of the "*moultazimâte* sisters" was legitimate and explained that women's entry in the al-Nûr party was not a choice but a combination of circumstances. He added that the party had the chance to be part of the next legislature and that it was essential to seize the opportunity. To him, win-ning seats was worth complying with the constitution and the electoral rules; meaning to place women on electoral lists. He asked women to take up their rights offered by the then freshly adopted set of laws. He insisted that the "*Akhawâte"* (the sisters in God) were never absent of the association's activities. "Our women have a role in society, a public and a professional one. Their role is educational: they are in charge of fuelling political inspiration to other sisters to invest the political field". I observed that women were sought after because they were considered the best advocates for a feminine con-

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16   www.islamonline.net/1879; www.wonews.net/ar/index.php?act=post&id=723; www.anasalafy. com/ play.php?catsmktba=30263.

stituency by spreading propaganda within their families. As much as they were formerly missioned to preach the "real Islam" within their families, they were now called to advocate that the *Salafi* vote was directed at God and that it was important to elect supporters of the *salafiyya*. Bourhami's discourse targeted also the opponents of women's participation in the party. He reassured them that he would not agree on seeing a woman running a constituency or a country. Bourhami illustrate the position women should have within the party: like during the prayer at the mosque, women are present but in the "backdrop". This demonstrates for him that women have always participated as *multazimât* in the "Islamic project" and therefore can take part in the party. He referred to Aïcha, wife of the Prophet Mohamed, and so did 'Imad al-Dîn 'Abd al-Ghafour. The latter insisted on the importance of women's investment to support the party in post-uprising parliamentary elections. He also brought up the fact that women had always been involved in organising the *umma*[17]. He recalled that "*Sayida Aïcha* would come along the prophet during battles and take care of the wounded helping men; as *Sayida Safia,* daughter of *'Abd al-Mutalib*" (the Prophet's uncle). Through this example, he urged women "to fulfil their role in developing the Islamic community and [invite them] to promote the party*"*.

Sheikh Chûmân held a speech entitled "*man antî?*" (Who are you?). This intervention clearly illustrates the game-changing shift in the Salafi rhetoric. We identified a nationalist discourse that overlapped the religious discourse. Besides having for the first time religiously-affiliated political parties in Egypt, there was a Salafi party that assimilated heavy-handed Salafi discourse with citizenship. The question "Who are you?" was making women aware that they were Muslim but also citizens with rights and duties. "They have to take up these rights and run for parliamentary elections (…). They have to see this as an opportunity to extend the *umma*". This discourse seemed to be more strategic than really heartfelt. The Salafi political actors used a rhetorical gender approach to convince their conservative base of accepting Salafi women participation to the elections setting a clear limit to women's role by confining them to a strict gender role whereby women candidates would only interact with other women. Their primary goal of the male political leaders was to entice women to participate in the election and help them through the process.

3.2   Salafi Women in the Electoral Terrain: The 2011–2012/2015 Parliamentary Elections and Evolutions

To integrate women in al-Nûr party, the organization set up a substructure dedicated to and managed by women. A women's section was thereupon created and presided over by Hanân 'Allam, who had always been very active in the party. As representative of the female members of the party she regularly organises meetings with female counterparts.

Allam participates in the party's meetings, open to men and women alike. In her speeches, available on her Facebook page[18], she encourages women to take part to politics. She starts off each of her speeches as follows: "Women amount to half of the Egyptian society and they educate the other half". The discourse is part of the so-called

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17   Islamic community.
18   www.facebook.com/Dr.Hanan.Allam/

"Islamist feminism"[19] (Hussein 2015: 13). This new form of discourse and action has shaken up the established religious order. As previously mentioned, this discourse was part of the shift in the structure and the rhetoric of the Salafi movement. Allam's stance – though going against Salafi Islamic principles – is tackling issues such as women, family, children and education in accordance with the "gender role" promoted by the Salafi movement. She carefully remains within the given frames: we never heard al-Nûr's women express their views on foreign affairs or on international politics.

A series of actions has been taken to canalise the feminine Salafi electorate. Accordingly, Facebook pages were created for each governorate along with a main page entitled "*Banât hizb al-Nûr: malikât 'alâ 'arch al-dahâ'*" (Al-Nûr Party's girls: queens on the wisdom's throne). This Facebook page targeted young female electors, offering guidance through the electoral process. Hence, a series of trainings was set up for al-Nûr party's female runners[20] from 2013 onwards. It seems that no such trainings had been held previously. In 2011, there was no need for such trainings; women's quotas imposed by electoral laws were respected by the al-Nûr party. They just put names of female members at the bottom of their electoral lists. Back then, women of the al-Nûr party did not run individually and did not pound the campaigning pavement. During the 2011-2012 parliamentary elections, two thirds of the seats were reserved to the parties in the *Majlis al-sha'b'* (People's Assembly). This competition was essential to win in the newly drawn and extended constituencies. Women who were already listed did not have to campaign. In ads, they were represented by images of roses.

During the 2015 parliamentary elections, single-member districts were given more weight than list candidates[21]. In this context, the al-Nûr party had to prove its flexibility. Indeed, it had become extremely unpopular following its stance against the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013, supporting General al-Sissi's coup. In 2013, the al-Nûr party split up: Abdu-al-Ghafour set up the al-Watan party and was replaced by Younes Makhyoun. Inner struggles weakened the party. Abdu-al-Ghafour knew that he would lose part of his constituency for two reasons: he had lost his credibility in the eyes of the Salafi electorate for backing the military while mainstream media were demonising his party along with the Muslim Brotherhood. Backing the army was a tactical bet meant to enable the party to remain in the realm of politics (Lacroix 2016: 32). Following the party's demonization by mainstream media, the Islamist vote was no longer popular. As the deputy secretary of the party Râmî Hawâ[22] revealed in an interview: "The aim of the party in the parliamentary elections is to keep existing in the country's political sphere". The al-Nûr party hence sent out women on the electoral terrain in several governorates without risking much[23]. More than 20 women campaigned all over the country as

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19   Here, "Islamist" is used to refer to the heavy-handed religious discourse of these women. They are different from Islamic feminists through their references and reading of the religious scriptures.

20   www.youm7.com/story/2015/5/25/2197379/ح‌زب‌-النور‌-يعقد‌-دورات‌-تدريبية‌-للنساء‌-قبل‌-الانتخابات‌-البرلمانية

21   The mixed member proportional representation (MMP) was chosen as electoral system for 2011–2012 and 2015 parliamentary elections. Voters had two votes, one for their single-member district and one for the party list. The number of seats for each kind of vote was determined by the electoral council.

22   Interview with Rami Hawa (27 November 2015).

23   www.tahrirnews.com/posts/131268/أنفراد‌...أسماء‌+مرشحات‌+«النور»+في‌+البرلمان‌+المقبل

single-member candidates. Amongst the candidates was Magda Shalabî, a *dâ'iya* in her forties, a former candidate of the al-Nûr party, during the 2011–2012 parliamentary elections, who ran in the Beheira constituency. She campaigned in public spaces and answering journalists' questions. She was aired on TV where she remained particularly evasive as regards her political programme. If elected, she stated she would focus on education and health. Once aired on the popular '*Arch Samâ*'s show a viewer, most likely belonging to the *minhaj salafi,* harshly denounced the runner's discourse and clothing arguing that she [the viewer] did not identify with her[24]. She further said that Shalabî's behaviour had nothing to do with the Prophet's wife's behaviour. So, on the one hand, supporters of the *minhaj salafi* attacked female runners coming out publicly, on the other hand, liberals accused Salafis of making the country go backward and denounced women's candidacies as the incarnation of this backwardness, especially with regard to questions pertaining to women's role in the society. Salafis of the al-Nûr party seemed to use women to gain legitimacy and to show their respect for democratic principles and women's rights promotion, being aligned with Egypt's main political concerns. On the other hand, they had to give in to *minhaj salafi's* supporters who still remained the core of their constituency and had to resist the liberals' relentless attacks on their rigorous practice of Islam.

4 Conclusion: Women's Evolution in Salafi Milieus: From Indoors to Outdoors

The participation of Salafi women in the 2011s uprising, then in the politicization process of various Salafi movements, has given to these women an exposure they did not have before. Indeed, they appeared in public, politics and media scene, breaking with the Salafi religious discourse which confines them to a private and unexposed sphere.

Thus, we saw through our article how women have invested first the preaching field with the expansion of the Salafi ideology, in the 70s. A period tied with a feminisation of the religious sphere and an active involvement of women in pious circles. So the investment of women in the Salafi milieu during the 70s changes concomitantly with the spread of the Salafi discourse through the middle and poor social class. Women became thereby an important vector of distribution of the Salafi discourse.

After being active in the preaching field, they have followed the Salafi movements in their politicization, and this article focused on one of the more influential Salafi movement, the Da'wa Salafiyya Association, and the political party which emerge from this movement, al-Nûr party. Indeed, we saw how the coming of this Salafi movement in the political stage provoked a shift in the religious discourse, due to the integration of new values of democracy, citizenship and women access to politics. The Salafi al-Nûr party contains a women's section that has the specific role to exclusively look after women constituencies and people from their family circle. They were not much exposed by the al-Nûr party during the first parliamentary elections in 2011 as most seats were won through a proportional system with electoral list. But during the 2015 Parliament election, women were sent to constituencies as individual candidates, campaigning

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24   www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhhGQne9z1o

in various Egyptian districts. We observed an active involvement of Salafi women in the "preaching" of the Salafi vote, using the same Salafi network in order to gather an electorate. They then followed the Salafi movement from the *da'wa salafiyya* to what we called "the *da'wa siyassiyya*".

Hence, new voices emerged in both the media and the political sphere. During the 2011 demonstrations, these women used the democratic revolutionary slogans and discourse to redefine their positions. The revolutionary discourse had a performative power, which allowed women to cross borders of the closed Salafi circles. Here, the concept of "performativity", developed by Judith Butler (1990), can be referred to. Butler's performativity goes beyond language and includes not only speech, but also conventions as well as adopted attitudes and gestures. The use of the revolutionary rhetoric – and particularly the uprising's most important slogan demanding the respect of human dignity, work and freedom (karâma; huriyya; 'amal), – and women's increased public exposure had an impact on their empowerment and in Salafi circles. Women's participation seems to have redefined their relationship with the *da'iya* authority figure and to have opened new kinds of initiatives.

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