

Islamic Identity in Contemporary Egyptian Media Discourse (2014-2018)

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Introduction:

Renewing religious discourse has been always a contested issue in Egypt between the ruling authorities and the Islamic entities such as Sheikh Al-Azhar, Al-Mufti, and the civilian Islamic groups. Since 2014, the ruling authorities accuse Islamic discourse as a one-sided dogmatic communication that incites violence and supports terrorism and extremism. However, the Islamic entities tend to resist these allegations by distinguishing between the fundamental resources of Islam which are the Holy Quran and verified Sunnah, and the Islamic thought which is unholy human interpretations that vary by place and time.

This research explores the characteristics attributed to Islamic identity by media discourse along with the perspectives of the heads of political and religious institutions. Critical Discourse Analysis is applied to demystify the hidden agendas that the speakers inject through language. Al-Sisi calls to start a "Religious Revolution" primarily by reforming the Islamic discourse have been widely deliberated by the media and discussed within different contexts.

The investigation included in this paper is the first stage of a project aims to explore the vulnerability of an ideological identity to be influenced by media and public speeches. Moreover, to gauge the potential media impact on people perception and whether the identity in its religious version shows resistance against change or not.

Literature Review:

This research is located between identity and discourse studies and adopts the religious identity definition as “Human beings’ relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, absolute, spiritual, divine, or worthy of especial reverence. It is also commonly regarded as consisting of the way people deal with ultimate concerns about their lives and their fate after death”. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). The analyzed thesis is that the deliberated concept of identity through media discourse is a variable that impacts the public perception of identity and influences its development. The main assumption is that the regular repetition of some characteristics through public speeches and media discourse would replace the original perception of identity in the collective memory. This research aims to investigate the first part of this assumption to know how the Egyptian newspapers deliberate the concept of Islamic identity as a response to the presidential calls to renew the religious discourse. The calls that emerged after unprecedented terrorist attacks in the Sinai Peninsula in the northeast of Egypt, incentivized public attention and led intellectuals and activists from various backgrounds to participate extensively in the discussion. The media described the attacks as a systematic conspiracy of the Muslim Brotherhood group to destroy the Egyptian state. (Alyoum7,2017)

It seems that identity in its religious version is a dynamic rather than static perception. It has a developing nature that can be reconstructed and shaped interactionally with social and political factors. (Peek, L., 2005) Nonetheless, it is a powerful social force in the Middle East regarding proximity to ethnicity. (Payind, A.& Mc Climans, M., 2009) Similarly, there is a tendency that states of “collective effervescence” do not only link citizens to a society, but also construct a vigorous setting for the ingenuity of symbols and the personification of shared perceptions that defining a community. (Ismer, S. 2011) Moreover, when people experience collective emotions especially in the case of a close following of national sporting events, for example football matches, it creates feeling of belonging to the nation. This conclusion supports observers’ insights about 25th of Jan revolution when Egypt won the African Nations Championship in Angola 2010 for the third time in a row and for the seventh time in its history and believe that

Egyptians have experienced a sense of national pride created a sense of belonging to the homeland that constituted an unanticipated prelude to the revolution in 2011. Nonetheless, there is uncertainty about the cultural elements that orchestrate the collective identity specificities except the fact that it involves a positive effect toward other group members. (Polletta, F. and Jasper, J. 2001)

It seems that the continuity of the collective identity constitutes a bridging tactic to link the present of a group or social movement to the past. (Gongaware, T.2011) Maintaining collective identity and mastering collective action frames are instruments to align with a similar group on the activity field. Globalization facilitates the developing of collective identity through communication to wider audiences, broader ideas, and multiple targets.

Choup, A.M. (2008) argues that group consciousness, the distinction of a dominant order, and unique shared features are the elements that produce collective identity and suggests that an existing issue could be the trigger to form a new collective action frame. The terrorism challenge represents a stressful issue that mobilizes public and institutional contributions to reconstructing the conscious of religious identity through renewing the Islamic and Christian discourses.

From a different perspective, reconstructing identity at the level of the foreign affairs policy would impact the strategic relations and alliances of the state. The Islamic identity changing in Turkey produces a new foreign policy of a profound and vital position in the Muslim world and the Middle East. (Warning, M.& Kardos, T. 2011) Nevertheless, Haynes, J. (2010) claims that the xenophobic of outsiders go backs to the first decades of the twentieth century is the main defining characteristic of the Turkish identity and not Islam or secularism.

Speeches of the head of State are indicative of the characteristics of the collective identity adopted and encouraged in comparison with other undesirable characteristics. Analyzing speeches as a type of political discourse reveal how public leaders insert their ideologies through language. It is argued that Imran Khan's speeches were loaded with hidden agendas and negative perspectives about his political opponents through an emotional appeal associated with strong religious tendency. (Khalil, U. et al 2017) Imran Khan's model is an example of the sentimental style of communication that becomes increasingly critical

in politics as it converts public discourse to a type of “Post-Truth” politics that is formed mainly by emotions and repetition of words rather than facts and information. (Harsin, J. 2018, Fuchs, C. 2018)

Methodology:

The analysis adopts a mixed method formula to combine the advantages of the qualitative elicitation that explains the correlations between variables and suggest potential social and political interpretations to the interrelationships that impacts the media discourse around the Islamic Identity across six years. The methodological design along with the insights of the literature review are employed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1- How presidential and religious references differ in justifying the significance of renewing the traditional Islamic discourse?

RQ2- What are persuasion styles employed by the Egyptian media to deliver the message of renewing and correcting the Islamic discourse?

RQ3- What are characteristics of the Islamic identity that is being targeted and reconstructed by the media throughout five years 2014-2018?

To know the differences between justifications demonstrated by Al-Sisi as president of Egypt and Al-Tayyib as the most prominent religious reference in the Islamic world of being Sheikh Al- Azhar about the Islamic identity that should be delivered to the world and the associated discourse that illustrates the Islamic characteristics, a discourse analysis has been employed to investigate the messages derived from their speeches in the Islamic celebrations of Prophet Mohammad Birthday (PMB) and in Ramadan holy night of Laylat Al-Kadr (LAK).

The discourse analysis focuses on the main arguments delivered by each speaker throughout 19 speeches (9 in PMB by Al-Sisi and 10 in LAK by ASH) in addition to the characteristics of Islamic identity and the dominant keywords, symbols, structures, and stereotypes. The discourse analysis compares speeches at the substantive and temporal levels.

The quantitative analysis is applied to identify the dominant styles of persuasion that are used by the different types of sources such

as religious figures, secularists, and journalists in delivering their visions about Islamic identity and the possible reasons to renew the Islamic discourse and suggesting an alter interpretations to the actual problem from their own points of view. Moreover, the quantitative analysis defines the characteristics attributed to Islamic Identity in 200 newspaper articles and the targets accused of devastating the image of Islam and Muslims. The sample is derived from 649 articles published in Al-Ahram* and Alyoum7* newspapers across five years from 2014-2018 and excluded the irrelevant material (42 articles). The time span represents the first presidential term of Al-Sisi after the 30th of June uprising against Mohamed Morsi the first freely elected president after the 25th of Jan revolution.

The statistical test χ^2 ($\alpha < 0,05$) is employed to investigate the significant correlation between the sources of the articles and the characteristics attributed to Islamic Identity associated with general attitude towards Islam and certain targets accused with massively negative contribution to the Islamic identity. Contingency Coefficient value is used to assess the potential correlation strength between variables

Results:

The data shows a remarkable increase in the articles about Islamic identity in 2014 followed by a clear declining in 2016. However, the number of articles stays stable in 2017 and 2018. (Figure 1) After Morsi has been forcibly removed as he was considered as a representative of Muslim brotherhood group in ruling Egypt, many political and social celebrities called for the isolation of all religious-based parties and groups away from the political scene. Concurrently, many intellectual voices start to investigate the Islamic identity as a belonging that could be responsible for this situation. In 2014, the intensity of publishing articles about Islamic issues was the highest over years but it didn't last for a long time and dropped to the lowest level in 2016. The Central Bank of Egypt decided in 2016 to release the currency exchange rate and consequently a notable jump of prices and brought the country into a severe economic crisis.

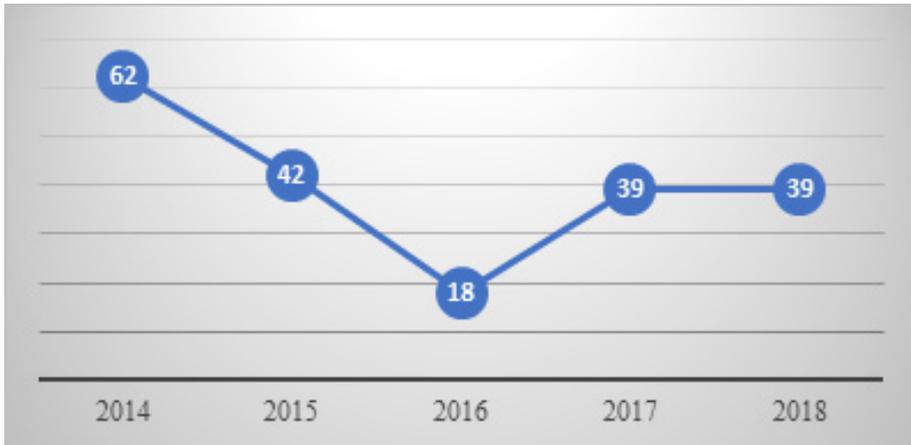


Figure (1)
Frequencies of Articles About Islamic Identity Across Years

The article's sources have been classified to three major categories, the religious figures, the secularists, and the journalists. The essential point that distinguishes between the first and the second is that the religious figures believe that Islamic rules are an organic part of Muslims life and should be activated in relationships and behavior. On the other hand, the secularists are convinced that it should be separated and deactivated and not to be publicly considered as it would destroy the citizenship values that should have superiority over Islamic practices.

Surprisingly, the data indicates that although the Islamic Identity is mainly a religious concern, the religious figures are less interested in writing about it. (Figure 2) They were relatively active in 2014. However, the journalists who have unidentifiable ideological background are the sources that show the highest interest in writing about Islamic Identity and renewing the religious discourse. The secularists are more enthusiastic than religious figures but still less than journalists.

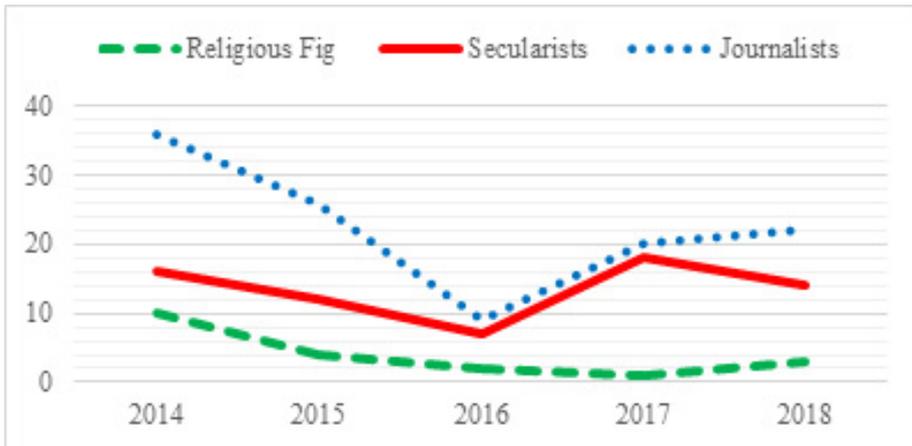


Figure (2)
Who Was More Interested in Islamic Identity

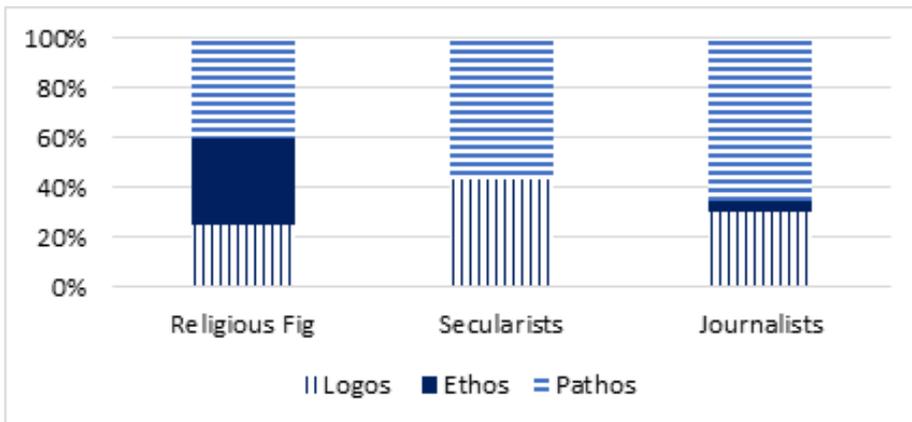


Figure (3)
Modes of Persuasion

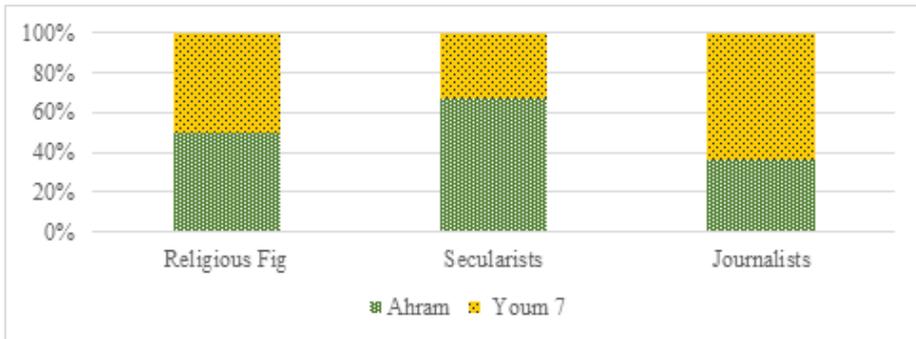


Figure (4)
Sources Preferences of Newspapers

The religious figures distributed publishing preferences evenly between Al-Ahram and Alyoum7. (Figure 4) The secularists preferred Al-Ahram and the journalists preferred Alyoum7. Generally, Alyoum7 published articles about Islamic identity (52%) more than Al-Ahram newspaper (48%).

We can observe an obvious difference in employing modes of persuasion between sources. (Figure 3) The religious figures tend to use the three styles and they applied the ethos styles more than any other source. The secularists avoid the ethical mode and focus on the logical and sentimental styles of persuasion. The journalists employ the sentimental mode more than other sources.

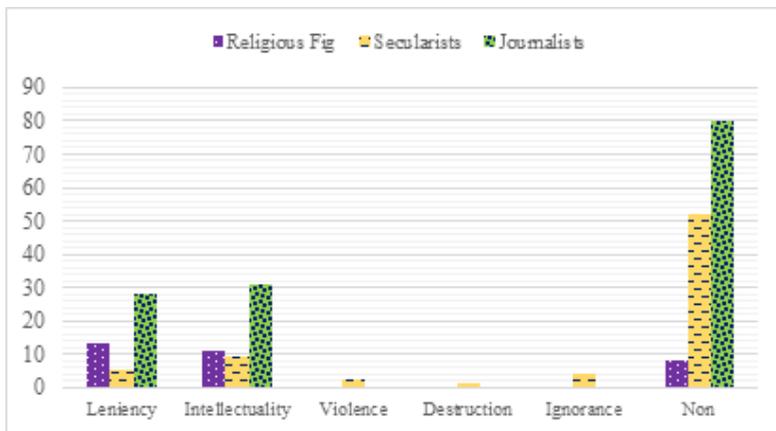


Figure (5)
Characteristics attributed to Islamic Identity by Sources

Most of the sources avoid direct characterizing of Islamic identity (70%) either in positive or in negative qualities. Leniency (23%) and intellectuality (25%) are the most repeated descriptions. As seems to be consistent, the religious figures tendency to associate Islamic Identity with positive characteristics is higher than other sources. The general preference to link it with negative descriptions such as violence and destruction was remarkably very low.

Table (1)
Characteristics of Islamic Identity

	R	S	J	Chi	Co-Value
Leniency	13	5	28	,000**	,356
Intellectuality	11	9	31	,001**	,261
Violence	0	2	0	,135	,140
Destruction	0	1	0	,369	,099
Ignorance	0	4	0	,197	,017
None	8	52	80	,011*	,208

Table (2)
Attitudes Toward Islamic Identity

	R	S	J	Chi	Co-Value
Attack	0	5	1	,031*	,183
Defense	15	5	50	,000**	,411
Criticism	5	42	60	,012*	,205
Accusation	0	1	4	,524	,080
Pride	10	0	7	,000**	,452
Appreciation	9	1	4	,000**	,462

Investigating relationships between Islamic identity characteristics and the sources demonstrate that leniency and intellectuality have potential correlation with the type of the source. Similarly, the tendency toward avoiding any descriptions. (Table 1)

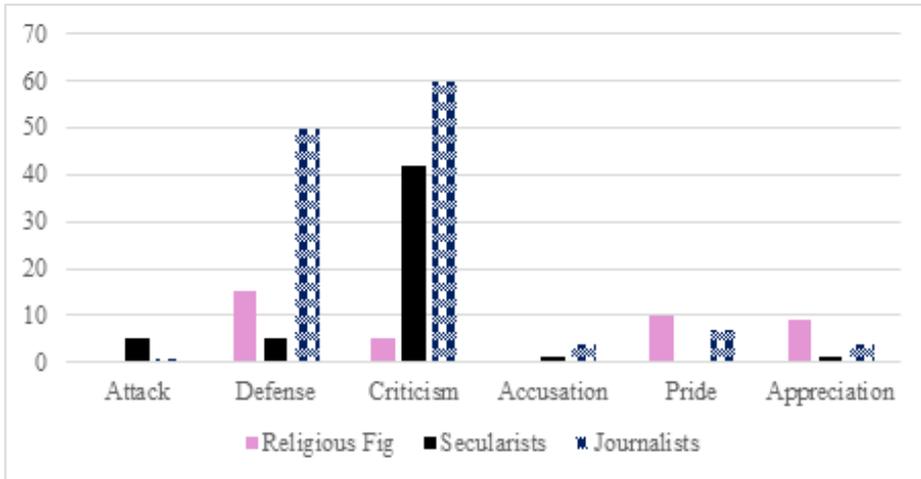


Figure (6)
Attitudes Toward Islamic Identity

Criticism is the dominant attitude of the sources toward Islamic Identity (53%) and adopted by secularists more than other sources (77%). The religious figures adopted defense (50%), pride (30%), and appreciation (28%). They are the least sources that criticizing the Islamic Identity. Some secularists (10%) attack Islamic identity for several reasons but never feels pride or appreciation toward it. (Figure 6)

Table (3)
Attacked Targets by Sources

	R	S	J	Chi	Co-Value
Alazhar	2	33	32	,001**	,254
Terrorism	7	19	38	,730	,056
Dictatorship	0	4	20	,014*	,202
Media	7	7	35	,004**	,227
Other	5	20	11	,002**	,240

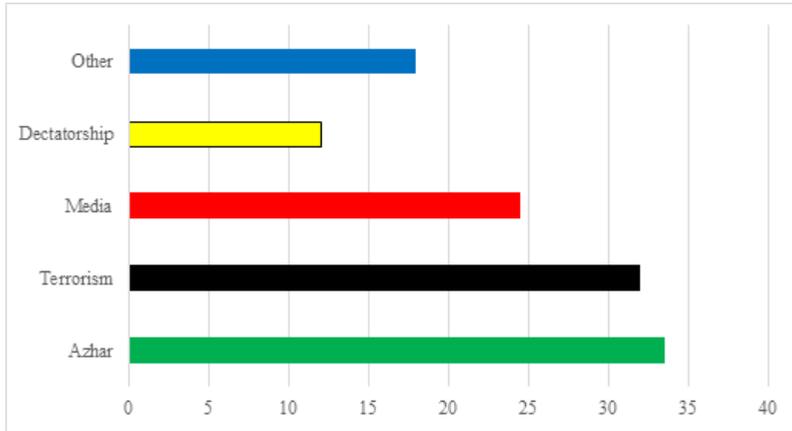


Figure (7)
Attacked Targets

A significant correlation has been found between different types of sources and all possible attitudes that include attack, defense, criticism, pride, and appreciation. The only exception is in the correlation with “accusation”. (Table 2)

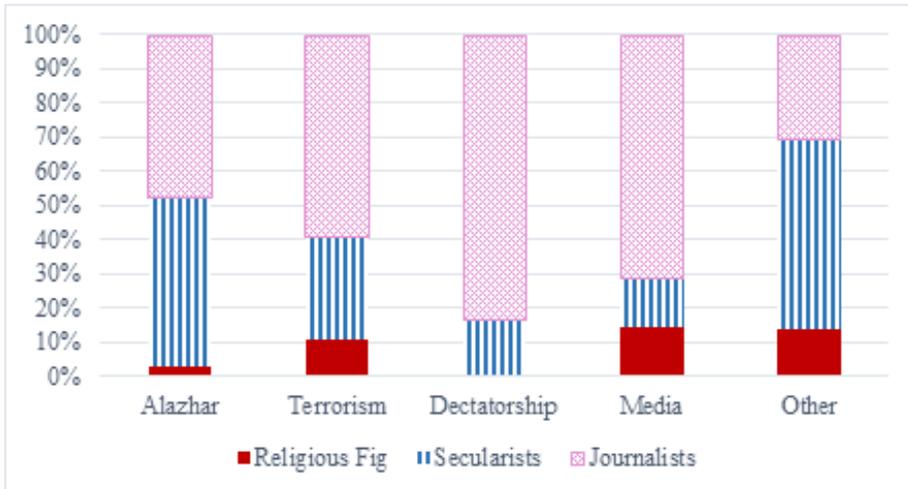


Figure (8)
Attacked Targets by Different Sources

The data indicates an interesting finding that sources identify Al-Azhar institution as a reason for the Islamic identity crisis and is attacked as it holds the first responsibility to combat the deviated interpretations of the holy texts and to confirm excluding the unverified speech of Prophet Mohammad. Suggestions from different sources are directed to pressure on Al-Azhar to perform a structural transformation in the educational curricula and to monitor the speeches that are delivered on Friday's prayer. It is unpredictable to rank Al-Azhar as an attacked target before terrorism. The secularists (61%) blamed Al-Azhar for misinterpretations of Islamic identity. (Figure 8) Moreover, it is remarkable that the religious figures bypass mentioning dictatorship as an attacked target however the journalists and freelancers are the most sources that attacked dictatorship. Significant relations are observed between Al-Azhar, media, dictatorship, other, and the sources that appointed them as targets of criticism. (Table 3) A considerable number of "Other" attacked targets include the following: the non-religious orientation of the Ministry of Culture, intellectual superficiality that dominates the society, culture of consumption and supermarket preachers, religion interpretations that legislate surrendering to dictatorship, believers blind obedience to the Muslim or Christian clergy, Salafies, Muslim Brotherhood, and civilian groups that deliver a religious discourse to the public without scholarly qualification, ambiguity of the Masjed role, rigidity of the secular discourse, the silent conflict between cultured elite and Al-Azhar, The monotony of political discourse and disappearance of opposition speech, conflict of interests between ministry of endowments and Al-Azhar, Polarization between literal meaning of holy texts and complete denial of it as reference, culture of believing in miracles, misinterpretation of "Jihad" concept in Islam and "Martyrdom" concept in Christianity, the dilemma of accepting the other as an inherent illness in the society.

Islamic identity from religious figures perspective:

- The religious backgrounded sources demonstrate Islam as a complete ideology and the texts of the Holy Quran and Sunnah are sacred self-contained references and are not editable for any reason. They confirm that any calls to renew the religious discourse by disqualified people from outside the Islamic institutions will be disregarded as it insults Islam and the right place to discuss this issue is inside research

and study sections, not the media. Additionally, they believe that the Holy Quran and Sunnah are the references that should guide the process of reviving Islamic identity and not the opposite, otherwise, calls to change the religious discourse means to employ religion to be compatible with narrow and temporary political interests and this is similar to employ it to terrorist targets.

- Accusing Al-Azhar of monotony of Islamic discourse is a false allegation. Monotony is a general characteristic of the entire cultural and political discourses. Reviving the Islamic thought precedes renewal of Islamic discourse. Diversity of opinions, freedom of speech, respecting others and accepting difference are building blocks of the democratic society that spontaneously produces developed forms of communication.

- Requalifying Islamic scholars and Imams is mandatory to acquire resilience that enables them to interact dynamically and sufficiently with current issues. The qualifications should include utilizing social media platforms mindfully to introduce Islam as advocating religion is a professional work, not a hobby.

- The Islamic identity is polarized between superficiality that stops on the apparent meaning of the Holy texts and believes that literal interpretation is enough, and it is what the Creator wants us to know, and the modernists who neglect old texts and believe that anyone has the ability to interpret these texts in whatever manner he likes or just deny its authenticity. Al-Azhar confirms that reforming religious discourse is only applicable to the Muslim scholars' interpretations and explanations of the Holy texts using the systematic instruments that assist them to correctly deduct and induct religious rules.

- The Islamic discourse has been distorted by religion traders who employ it for their personal interest. Members of Muslim Brotherhood group consider themselves as custodians of religion along with similar Salafi groups however they are the original reason for corrupting the Islamic discourse.

- Islamic discourse should be employed to understand the wisdom of performing worshipping, ensuring self-responsibility, and upholding justice. Islamic Sharia confirms personal accountability that guarantees loyalty to faith and to the homeland.

- Islamic Sharia prohibits killing people as well as intimidating them.

It is allowed only in case of war for the purpose of self-defense and within highly restricted conditions. The Holy Quran and Sunnah call for modesty, leniency, mercy, love, peace, and supporting women's rights and preserving her dignity.

Islamic identity from secularists perspective:

- The current Islamic identity is a victim of the rigid Salafi interpretation of the Holy texts that justify shedding blood, destruction, intimidation with the name of Allah.
- Al-Azhar scholars should be brave enough to declare the total separation between religion and politics and stop holding the dishonest intermediation position between ruler and religion. Terrorism is an illegal baby of the alliance between religious backwardness powers and political authoritarianism. Separation between religion and politics is better for the religion, and the civic state will protect faith choices of the citizens.
- Calls for renewal of religious discourse are an umbrella that covers the linguistic conflict between Al-Azhar and Islamic extremists, not an actual call to reform the Islamic thought. Moreover, core references of Al-Azhar education system contribute to formulating extremism intellectuality and they are the main reason for terrorism.
- Renewal of Islamic discourse will not eliminate terrorism as it is a consequence of the existing cultural, economic, and socio-political setting. When these circumstances change, the new mindset of the society will domain and automatically generates fresh thought that is capable to produce modern discourse.
- Although pioneer scholars of Al-Azhar such as Mohamed Abdo (1849-1905), Al-Tahtawy (1801-1873), and Hassan Al-Attar (1766-1835) believed in the civilian state, not religious. The current stance is completely different. Al-Azhar pretends of accepting the civilian state but -in fact- supporting the theocratic government and rejects democracy that puts authorities in people hands. This hidden contradiction is the reason Al-Azhar will fail in reforming the Islamic discourse.
- Secularists are divided in their opinion about Al-Azhar eligibility to carry over the mission of reforming the Islamic discourse. Some are convinced that it is not capable to perform the required structural changes. On the other hand, some voices confirm that there is no insti-

tution except Al-Azhar is trusted and qualified to reform the Islamic discourse.

Islamic identity from other perspective:

- Islamic identity is in trouble because of two reasons, first is the lack of accurate and sufficient knowledge about Islam. Shortage of information is one of the essential reasons for terrorism. The second is the remarkable gap between discursive performance and practical behavior of Muslims.

- Excessive enthusiasm of the media to call for the renewal of religious discourse after presidential “commands” within speeches creates a chaotic scene of attacking Islamic institutions, insulting religious symbols, describing Al-Azhar as “Castle of dogmatism and factory of terrorism”, and contempt Islamic heritage. These consequences lead to either extremism- as a defensive reaction to protect identity- or atheism – as an ideological stance from the distorted image of religion.

- Islamic identity should not be distinguished from other identities as all religions are identically similar in their original teachings. Objectors to this opinion describe those who support it with ignorance as they do not realize the fundamental contrasts between ideologies. This problem is getting critical by allowing distrusted and disqualified persons to talk about Islamic issues. Consequently, distrust as a characteristic is transmitted from the object (person) to the subject (Islam) and here is the catastrophe.

- Religious institutions that represent Islam should believe that Liberalism is not Atheism and Islamization of the society doesn't require retrieving caliphate ruling system. The primary step to correct the Islamic identity is in eliminating Wahabi thought and its representatives in religious institutions.

- Islamic identity is distorted by terrorism; however, Muslims are not responsible for the crimes of terrorist groups. The US is involved in weaponizing them and most of the victims are Muslims. International media play a major role in mischaracterizing Islamic Identity by magnifying attention to crimes committed by Muslims and marginalizing crimes committed by others even if larger in the scale of destruction. (Schmuck, D. et al 2018 and The Guardian)

- Islamic identity will flourish when the religious discourse produced

for citizens from all faiths, not only Muslims. Focusing on Islam as a universal ideology and on Sharia as a humanitarian law will fix the damage and restore Islamic message to the origins. Discourse language should be in an intermediate position between platitude and complexity to be acceptable and accessible to the majority.

- Reforming political discourse is a key to reform the religious discourse. Dictatorship creates imbalanced, opportunist, and extremist personality.

- Conflict of Al-Azhar and the Endowments Ministry over controlling the renewal process of the religious discourse obstructs and complicates the reform mission. Observers argue that contradicting interests leads to complete failure, principally because reform requirements and consequences are not beneficial for Al-Azhar public opinion leaders.

Comparative speech analysis of the Islamic identity:

The speech structure of Shiekh Al-Azhar is clearly divided into an introduction that includes the central topic, the body that contains the main argumentation supported by informative examples, and the conclusion. It takes a celebratory style with a religious content and an ethical flavor that adopts logical and sentimental modes of persuasion. All the way through the speech there is a commitment to speak in a clear Arabic and it is easy to figure out the type of occasion through the content of the speech. On the other hand, Al Sisi speech structure is disjointed due to the random improvisation that lasts longer than the prepared text and delivered in Egyptian slang. The celebrative genre is politically framed into an emotional appealing style of persuasion with religious/social flavor. It seems that there are two patterns of thoughts competing throughout the speech, an overwhelming idea stressing on to appear and the written text. The idea wins most of the time but in pure improvising and incomplete sentences that lack coherence and leaves the audience to guess the potential meanings.

The following tables classify speeches into main categories of purpose, argument, characteristics attributed to the Islamic identity, symbols, strategies, and the main repeated keywords throughout the speeches.

Table (4)
Speeches of Al Sisi & Shiekh Al-Azhar in 2014

2014	Al Sisi	Shiekh Al-Azhar
Purpose	*Praising Al-Azhar, the armed forces, the police, and inviting people to donate for Viva Egypt Fund.	* The strength of the Islamic nation stems from the Holy Quran.
Argument	*Scientists of Islam are responsible for the distorted image of Islam. * Atheism is one of the consequences of the separation of religious values from its practices.	* No waiver of the Palestinian cause and it is always an Islamic central concern. *Humanity appreciates the message of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for lighting the path of human rights and basic ethics.
Islamic Identity	* The humiliating cartoons of Prophet Muhammad are less harmful than our mistakes against Islam. * Allah will judge Imams and advocates if they present his majesty to people inappropriately. *Allah is not satisfied with his image delivered through Imams and preachers and this situation must be corrected.	*Islam is the religion of mercy, steadfastness, and dominance over time. *Scaring people is prohibited in Islam. *Judging the community faith is a blind incitement and severe mistake. * Terrorism has insulted Islam and the Prophet of Islam.
Symbols& Strategies	* Whoever dividing us is destroying us. *Allah will judge you *Only Allah has the ultimate justice.	*Egypt is a great country made by history. *Al-Azhar is capable to combat terrorism and deserves all possible support.

Keywords	*Look ...	*People of truth	None
	*Listen ...	*I swear to Almighty ...	

Surprisingly, although Sheikh Al-Azhar is representing the religious institution and Al-Sisi representing the highest political position in the state, it was clearly observed that the first made an obvious distinction between the Almighty Creator and every other creature and never speak on His behalf. However, Al Sisi repeated many words and sentences that seemed to deliver messages on behalf of the Almighty Creator such as “Are you ready to His judgment when He asks you why you didn’t represent me in a proper condition?”, and “Allah will judge each one individually, and He will judge me of what I have done and judges you too”. In another speech Al-Sisi equalizing himself to the power of Almighty Allah by saying in an unjustified self-defense position “we never conspire, and we will not conspire, we did not betray, and we will not betray, we did not kill anyone, and we will not kill anyone , and if this would please Allah, so whoever is able to defeat Him would be able to defeat us”. (Al-Sisi at PMB 2016).

Table (5)
Speeches of Al Sisi & Shiekh Al-Azhar in 2015

2015	Al Sisi	Shiekh Al-Azhar
Purpose	*Delivering social and political messages to the audience.	*Sunnah of Muhammad (PBUH) constitutes the goodness model that all people from different levels can follow. *In the LAK, The Holy Qur’an descended to confirm the importance of work along with worshipping.

<p>Argument</p>	<p>*Terrorism is an actual deconstruction of the religion.</p> <p>*No one has guardianship over believes of the others and we should fully choices.'respect others</p> <p>*Separating religion values from practices will lead religion to collapse.</p>	<p>*Following Sunnah is an organic part of believing in Allah and is evidence of correct worshipping.</p> <p>*Most of our problems can be solved by following Sunnah of Muhammad (PBUH).</p> <p>*Worshipping and behavior are integrated parts of the Islamic religion.</p> <p>*Work is an honor of whatever kind, and all professions are respected in Islam.</p>
<p>Islamic Identity</p>	<p>*Islam is the religion of mercy, leniency, and patriotism.</p> <p>*Islam is the religion of freedom that does not rights.'violate others</p> <p>*The religion revolution aims to represent the great creator in a manner worthy of his status.</p> <p>*The current interpretation of the religious holy texts contradicts with the creator desire to liberate s right to decide'people their believes.</p>	<p>*Unity requirements are available to the Islamic nation.</p> <p>*Islam is the religion of work and production, not unemployment and laziness.</p> <p>*Work perfection is an Islamic obligation.</p> <p>*Worshipping that wastes work time is not compatible with Islamic.</p>

<p>Symbols& Strategies</p>	<p>*Whenever a nation is destructed, it is impossible to be restored again.</p> <p>*Do not pay attention to those who are dividing us.</p> <p>*We need to get rid of the inability.</p>	<p>*An Islamic alliance of qualified scholars is a necessity to confront terrorist thought through intellectual and argumentative dialogue along with the military role.</p>
<p>Keywords</p>	<p>*I am telling you ...</p> <p>*Look ...</p> <p>*Egyptian State.</p>	<p>*Terrorism groups</p> <p>*The dreaded terrorism</p> <p>*Evil powers</p>

Table (6)
Speeches of Al Sisi & Shiekh Al-Azhar in 2016

2016	Al Sisi	Shiekh Al-Azhar
Purpose	<p>*Indicating that political and economic reform are strongly linked to renewing the religious discourse.</p>	<p>* The Holy Qur'an is the reason for the emergence of the Islamic civilization to the world.</p> <p>* The Prophet Muhammad is the greatest human in the history of mankind in terms of the value of the message he delivered to the people.</p>
Argument	<p>*Terrorism is the reason that some people deny the concept of religion. Therefore, we should defeat terrorism to protect Islam.</p> <p>* Terrorism will devastate our nation and if the state falls, it will not return.</p>	<p>* The Prophet's persona must be highly revered and respected for the great message he was responsible for.</p> <p>*Sunnah should be our nation guidance to combat poverty, illiterate, and diseases.</p> <p>*The Islamic civilization sovereignty based on teachings of the Holy Qur'an.</p> <p>* The useless talk and striving to differ rather than unite is an obstacle to the movement of the Islamic nation.</p>
Islamic Identity	<p>*Imams and preachers of Islam are delivering a scary message about religion.</p> <p>* We are the least civilized nation in the behavior and human values</p>	<p>*Wisdom, gentle preaching, and the best argumentative dialogue are the only permitted methods of inviting others to Islam.</p> <p>*Muslims behavior is the key to believe in Islam.</p> <p>* Al-Azhar facing the Islamic identity challenges successfully and silently.</p>

<p>Symbols& Strategies</p>	<p>*Allah is supporting us.</p> <p>*My speech is for the sake of Allah.</p> <p>*No country around us has a rational religious policy.</p> <p>*An Arab country spends billions to destroy Egypt.</p>	<p>* Sunnah deniers are just against the old without holding any valuable message to deliver.</p>
<p>Keywords</p>	<p>*State Security *Let me tell you something</p> <p>*Remember these numbers ...</p>	<p>*Islamic nation</p>

Table (7)
Speeches of Al Sisi & Shiekh Al-Azhar in 2017

2017	Al Sisi	Shiekh Al-Azhar
Purpose	Confirming that terrorists are severely violating Islamic values and relation between religious thought, development, and terrorism.	<p>*Magnifying the value of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam.</p> <p>* Al-Azhar education system encourages faith that is based on intellectuality.</p>
Argument	<p>*Evil forces are impeding our homeland renaissance.</p> <p>* The Egyptian State has been confronting a real war for many years and corruption that lasts for many years would take a long time to be reformed.</p>	<p>* Holy Qur'an is the permanent miracle of Islam across times.</p> <p>*Islamic ideology is based on scientific and intellectual evidence, not on following or imitation.</p> <p>*Islamic unity is our sole way to defeat enemies of the Arabs and Muslims.</p> <p>*The main reason for nations destruction is by deviating away from the ethical guidance of Prophets.</p>
Islamic Identity	<p>*Fifty Islamic countries are producing evil, killing, and destruction.</p> <p>*Terrorism with the name of Islam aims to deconstruct the human civilization for the sake of ruling illusions.</p> <p>*The whole world scared from Muslims.</p> <p>*Muslims are responsible for their distorted image.</p>	<p>*Islam respects science.</p> <p>*Islam respects intellectuality.</p> <p>*Islam is the religion that is compatible with human primitiveness.</p> <p>*Terrorists are criminals and they have distorted the text purposively.</p> <p>*Terrorism exists in all religions and ideologies and is not associated exclusively with Islam.</p>

<p>Symbols& Strategies</p>	<p>*The State is in war</p> <p>We need a comprehensive* intellectual revolution.</p> <p>*We should activate richness of thought against the poverty of thought.</p> <p>*I am totally confident, and you should have the same confidence.</p>	<p>*The message of Islam set the humanity on the right path to civilization.</p> <p>*Unity of Muslim nations is our challenge.</p>
<p>Keywords</p>	<p>*Terrorism *Evil season *Evil time</p> <p>*Look *Brute force.</p>	<p>*Modernity</p> <p>* Holy Qur'an</p> <p>*Intellectuality</p>

Table (8)
Speeches of Al Sisi & Shiekh Al-Azhar in 2018

2018	Al Sisi	Shiekh Al-Azhar
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>*Delivering social and political messages to mobilize efforts to combat terrorism</p>	<p>*Celebrating the descent of the Qur'an, which represents the fortress of the nation.</p> <p>*Confirming that Sunnah is a fundamental part of Islamic legislation.</p>

<p>Arguments</p>	<p>*Calls to marginalize Sunnah as a source of Islamic Sharia is less harmful to Islam than terrorism.</p> <p>* Al-Azhar Scientists must take responsibility for correcting deviated thought as an essential part of their role.</p> <p>*Hard work is the only way to progress, and the will of the people can overcome difficulties.</p>	<p>*Qur'an is the constitution of the Islamic nation and the highest guarantee of human rights.</p> <p>*Modernity calls to neglect Sunnah led to tampering with and disrespecting the verses of the Qur'an.</p> <p>* The West's audacity to intervene in Muslim sacred texts and beliefs is the cause of terrorism.</p>
<p>Islamic Identity</p>	<p>*Work was a fundamental part of the Islamic civilization and Muslim Scientists diffuse a moderated image of Islam. They have confronted extremists effectively</p> <p>*Islamic heritage needs to be consciously revised. The misinterpretation of the core sources distorted Muslims' reputation worldwide.</p> <p>*Egypt should lead the corrective path of the Islamic discourse and practices.</p>	<p>*Islam is the religion of peace, justice, and love. It never encourages aggression except in case of self-defense.</p> <p>*Islam distinguishes between Judaism and Zionism and between Jewish and Israel.</p> <p>*Islam commands justice and equity with all, even with non-religious and pagans.</p> <p>*Muslims should be proud of "Hadeeth Science" s'which verifies Prophet Muhammed Sunnah.</p>

<p>Symbols& Strategies</p>	<p>*Egyptians are one hand against terrorism.</p> <p>*Evil powers destruct the country and divide the nation.</p> <p>*Allah will judge all of us for what we have done in this world.</p>	<p>*The Holy Qur'an is the renascence key of the Islamic nation and the substantial basis to its revival and flourish.</p>
<p>Keywords</p>	<p>*Evil powers</p> <p>*Please ...</p> <p>*Bay attention ...</p>	<p>*Islamic nation</p>

Conclusions:

This research investigates the Islamic identity characteristics as an intellectual response to the presidential calls of renewing the religious discourse. Therefore, this section consists of two parts, first is the Islamic identity in the presidential speeches comparing to Al-Azhar in the most prominent religious occasions. Second, is the Islamic Identity in the media discourse.

Sheikh Al-Azhar looks at the identity that is committed to original Islamic values as the ultimate level of civilized humanity that mankind can ever reach. The Holy Qur'an constitutes the supreme constitution that regulates relations of human with Almighty Allah and with creatures. Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is an interdependent source of Islamic legislation and an integrated explanation of the Quran. Muslims should be proud of their identity and work hard to revive the original teachings of Islam and renaissance of the Islamic nation. Moreover, Al-Azhar considers terrorism as a result of forsaking Islamic teachings that are clearly illustrated in the Holy Quran and Sunnah. Besides some reasons such as the non-union of Islamic countries and the Western arrogance and effrontery against

Muslim sanctities. Furthermore, following the irrational trajectory of modernity that incites contempt of religious heritage and removes sacredness of texts and making human replace the Almighty Creator in deciding the good and the evil.

On the other hand, Al-Sisi focuses on the pictorial side of identity and expresses his deep concern that terrorism is massively distorted the Islamic religion image in the world. He claims that "In the past two centuries, the Islamic nation believes that religion means nothing except war and the peaceful time is the exception" (28th of July 2018) The hidden perspective in Al-Sisi speech can be derived from his hints and slang comments that visualize the Islamic identity in a scary image. He stated in one of his speeches (PMB 2015) that "it is illogical that one and half billion -means Muslims- want to kill seven billion- means the rest of the world- in order to survive!". This means that the problem of terrorism – in Al-Sisi opinion- is not about a group of renegades or criminals, instead, it is an inherent characteristic of the current understanding of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. Nevertheless, there is no scriptural evidence in the Holy Qur'an or in verified Sunnah to prove his allegations, on the contrary, there are many that deny what he claims. (Sheikh Al-Azhar at PMB 2014) He suggests that Al-Azhar scholars should lead the Islamic nation in what he called "Religious Revolution" to change the religious discourse and the current interpretations of the Islamic heritage.

Objectively, there is no contradiction between Al-Sisi and Sheikh Al-Azhar in their calls to revive the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah teachings and revise it through qualified scholarly lenses for the beneficial of the Islamic nation. The mission of excluding the unverified speeches of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) or any of his companions and officially declaring its inauthenticity is not difficult. The dilemma is in the discouraging environment that suppresses freedoms, restricts opinions and confiscates thought to the extent you barely find any opposition under the pretext that the country is at war, making the task of originative thought very difficult if not impossible to perform any significant reform. Reviving the teachings of any religion requires a secure atmosphere to be safely deliberated and developed. Consequently, the religious discourse is not the only victim of this situation but also the cultural and political discourses.

From different perspective, Islamic Identity characteristics in the Egyptian newspapers are generally positive and Islam is described as religion of peace, mercy, intellectuality, leniency, and justice. The controversial issue is about Al-Azhar capability to perform structural reform to the religious discourse that is sufficient to correct the Islamic identity, encounter the extremism, and consequently defeat terrorism. Secularists argue that Al-Azhar scholars used to copy and reproduce the same content of the Islamic heritage manuscripts. However, the targeted mission requires criticism abilities. Nonetheless, they don't recommend any other cultural institution to undertake the mission as they believe that the current cultural sphere is unqualified and untrustworthiness. The results of this research can be integrated with further investigation explores the Islamic identity characteristics perceived by the Egyptian people to gauge the extent to which they are potentially impacted by the media discourse. The complete findings could be beneficial to increase knowledge about media role in changing perceived characteristics of identity and whether the religious version has resisting factors or not.

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* AlYoum7 is one of the most popular private newspapers in Egypt.

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