Egyptians’ Perception of the Shias and the Role of Media

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by

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O ye who believe! Be conscious of Allah as you ought to be conscious of Him, and die not except in a state of Islam. And hold fast, all together, by the Rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah’s favor on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the Pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make His Signs clear to you: that ye may be guided. Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: they are the ones to attain felicity. Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving Clear Signs: for them is a dreadful Penalty (Aal `Imran 3: 102-105).

As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, you have no part in them in the least: their affair is with Allah: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did (Al-An`am: 159).

And obey Allah and His Messenger; and fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart; and be patient and persevering: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere (Al-Anfal 8: 46).
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Ameen
Abstract

Egyptians’ Perception of Shias and the Role of the Media

The research about Egyptians’ perception of the Shias and the role of media is very significant, especially at this time, due to the sensitivity of its broader impact on the Muslim world. Media, as one of the most important tools of communication, has always played a significant role in the mediation of religion through various channels. The researcher has not found previous research about this topic and thus hopes to establish a foundation for further study of similar work. The study shows that media in Egypt may have played a great role in creating a negative image of the Shias and could have an even more important role in correcting it. The study shows that the Egyptian population has certain negative view of the Shias which may have been cultivated, mainly through the media and, to a lower extent, through word of mouth and various publications as well. The problem lies in the core misunderstandings of the Egyptians about the Shias belief referring to the belief of a rare Shia sect, the Ghurabiyya, which may no longer exist, but their view is generalized to all Shias. They believe that Ali should have been the Prophet instead of Mohammad. The survey indicates that Egyptians’ general knowledge of the Shias belief is low and there is a more negative perception of this sect than positive, notwithstanding, Egyptians’ view Shia Iran’s President Ahmadinejad, as a hero and highly esteem him as one of the most unique leaders of the Islamic world. Similar views are held about Hasan Nasrullah, the Shia leader of Hezbullah in Lebanon based on his perceived victory in the war with Israel in July of 2007. The researcher has recommended
more media active role in improving the rapprochement process as well as government’s attitude by lifting media and dialogue restrictions.
Chapter I – Introduction

O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware.

Al-Hujurat 49:13 Holy Qur’an

Media play important role in affecting the perceptions of the public. Television in particular effects its viewers by the unique way it operates. Dramatization of events some times has the effect of “creating” a historical narrative. (Edgerton Gary, 2000).

It has been a common practice by the governments worldwide and throughout history to create a certain picture of their foes in the eyes of the public through various sources including the media in the modern times. Such created perceptions are called “framing” by modern mass communication scholars. The “framing” may vary greatly from one region to another depending on the purpose of the frame makers and the desired effect.

If the desired effect of the media is to create a certain frame of thought about the Shias, TV would be one of the most powerful tools to achieve the purpose.

The Shias in Egypt have evolved from being the rulers of Egypt and the highest authorities around the 11th Century, to an almost non-existent, underground community in Egypt.
1.1 - The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Egyptians’ perception of the Shias, analyze the possible sources, then attempt to recommend solutions to improve the perception. It will also investigate the possible role of the media in creating any negative perception as well as its part in correcting this perception. The paradoxical perception of Iran among Egyptians will also be examined in the context of religio/political relationship. While disagreeing with Shias’ belief, the Egyptians admire the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is seen among the Egyptians, as the hero of the Muslim world for his stance toward a super power.

This research aims to create a better understanding, among the Shia/Sunni sects, of each other’s beliefs and to bridge the gap of effective communication through media.

1.1 - Significance of the Topic

This topic is very significant today when the world is witnessing one of the largest scale sectarian clashes between the Iraqi Shias and the Sunnis. The fact that many Sunni/Shia leaders have engaged in direct dialogues recently to bridge some of the gaps is an indication of the need on both sides to take steps toward some kind of mutual understanding and cooperation.

It is noteworthy to mention that although the problem began as a religious political conflict, it has now turned into a sectarian political conflict, mainly in Iraq and to a smaller extent in Lebanon. This power sharing/struggle between the sects is surfacing as a new phenomenon.
Another important factor that makes this study significant is that there are no previous studies addressing this specific topic. Therefore, this research is timely and could serve as a stepping stone toward further research.

1.2 - Statement of the Problem

One of the basic impediments of this research is the complexity of the interplay between media and religion on one hand and the accumulated perceptions on the other hand. Hence, the problems seem to be as follows:

1. The Egyptian community has very little solid information about the Shias’ belief.

2. The information that they do have may not be fact-based for the most part, but transmitted misinformation by sources that will be examined and verified in this study.

3. The most significant area of misinformation, at the tip of the iceberg, is the Egyptian’s perception that Shias believe Angel Gabriel made a mistake and instead of choosing Ali as the prophet, he chose Mohammad (peace be upon him), while media has not done enough to correct this perception.

1.3 - Research Objectives

In-depth research will shed some light about the causes and effects related to this topic from opposing points of view.

Examining the root of this problem and how the media may have contributed to its escalation and their role in establishing a better understanding between the sects would be the objective of this study. It is also a great benefit,
not only for the Egyptians, but for the world community who make decisions about Muslim's affairs without adequate understanding of their differences.

In this study, the researcher will start on a macro level to examine sectarian problems beginning 14 centuries ago and will narrow it down to Egypt.

This study will attempt to suggest ways to bring a better understanding and tolerance between the two sects in Egypt as well as the world community. It is not the researcher's attempt to convert one sect over to the other, but to merely expose ways by which the media might be of significant tool to facilitate rapprochement between the sects.
Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

A Closer Look at Cognitive Effects of Political Communication

In this section, the researcher attempts to examine various theoretical frameworks in order to establish the basis for the research. A few such frameworks work in tandem to create the conditions that exist presently within the Egyptian population regarding their perception of the Shia. Each theory will be examined and its relevance to this research topic will be addressed.

2.1 - Theory of Framing and Opinion Formation

One theory under consideration is the “Theory of Framing and Opinion Formation in Competitive Elite Environments” by (Dennis Chong, James N. Druckmen, 2007).

The theory asserts that the issue of public opinion often depends on how elites choose to frame issues. However, they note that previous research has largely documented the size of framing effects in uncontested settings. In actual practice, audiences are rarely exposed to “uncontested” or single frames; rather, they receive one or more competing frames in differing frequencies.

Thus, these researchers attempt to understand how opinion formation works in competitive mass communication (framing) environments. After extensive review of literature on framing and public opinion and studying control groups, they present a theory that identifies the psychological processes and contextual factors that determine which frames will have the greatest impact on public opinion.
Chong & Druckman (2007) have used the term “frame” in two ways (as cited in Druckman, 2001c; Scheufele, 1999). First, a *frame in communication* or a *media frame* which refers to the words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker (e.g., a politician, a media outlet) uses when relaying information about an issue or event to an audience (cited in Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, 1989). Second, a *frame in thought* or an *individual frame* which refers to the understanding of a given situation in an individual’s cognitive perception (as cited in Goffman, 1974). Unlike frames in communication, which is related to a speaker’s emphasis; frames in thought refer to what an audience member believes to be the most important aspect of an issue.

The four processes that Chong & Druckman (2007) have identified (as cited in Scheufele 1999), synthesize a quarter-century of their framing research. They are categorized as follows: (a) “Frame building,” which focuses on the dynamics of how speakers, such as media outlets, choose specific frames in communication; (b) “frame setting,” which concerns the influence of frames in communication on frames in thought, and the precise psychological processes at work; (c) “individual-level effects of frames,” which refers to the impact of frames in thought on subsequent behaviors or attitudes; and (d) “journalists as audiences,” which looks at how citizens’ actions affect the initial frame-building process (also see D’Angelo, 2002; Scheufele, 2004).

These processes form a continuum whereby a frame is created and passed (communicated) by the frame builders to an audience, where it is received and influences the frame in thought of that audience. There is
then some level of feedback from audience to frame-builders. We can assert that this process describes the manner in which certain conceptions of the Shias as a population are created and passed from media to audience, and the mechanism by which attitudes are affected by this frame in communication.

In the political context, the effect of framing in changing the attitudes of the audience can be closely linked to priming and agenda setting theories as well. This notion can be confirmed by research which suggests that if one side can establish the relevant terms of debate over an issue, it can successfully persuade individuals to support its position (Chong & Druckman 2007).

The authors predict that the effectiveness of a frame can be determined via a confluence of factors: a frame that is strong (persuasive) or a frame that has high frequency is likely to be convincing for an audience. This effect can be modified or nullified by the previous inclinations of the public: if they already have a strong attitude on the subject they are less likely to be affected, and they may or may not be motivated to accept or process the available frames. Individuals who are highly motivated (politically conscious) will be active in comparing competitive frames and will choose the one that is strongest whether in a competitive or noncompetitive process. Low motivation individuals will generally be influenced by strong or weak frames when they are presented in a non-competitive environment, but will be prompted in a competition environment to select the stronger frame.
As discussed earlier, the arena of ideas within the media is competitive, fought between parties or ideological factions, and issues that are debated are framed in opposing terms. However, given the fact that the Shias have little voice in the public sphere or the mass media in Egypt, the frames that they are able to advance will be either weak or infrequent. Thus, regardless of the motivation of the consumer (which in Egypt can be generalized to be low), the strongest and most frequent frames will be those advanced by political elites. The higher probability to have either a weak or an absent Shia counter-frame tilts the debate towards one-sidedness.

Multiple frames, as suggested in the theory will not include a debate style framing, but rather, it may be possible that multiple frames are created and projected to accomplish a larger frame within the same context, which may fit more into an agenda setting process.

The researchers found that individuals favored the frame that was consistent with their values (As cited by Sniderman and Theriault, 2004). So, since the majority of Egypt’s population is Sunni, this notion may effectively explain the patterns of framing of the Shias when addressing their dogma and ideology. This information is not well known to many Sunni Egyptians and thus there is not adequate pre-existent “frame in thought”. They are thus likely to be influenced by any dominant frame that fills in this cognitive gap.

It is important to note that the value standard for measuring framing effects may be most applicable on “traditional” issues on which the association between values and competing positions has been established by past debate
(as cited by Sniderman and Theriault). It is more likely that individuals would adopt the position that is anchored by their values. So, when there is a debate about the Shias and their belief and ideologies, the Egyptian Sunnis may try to associate their position with popular values and to invoke those values in their frames.

The aforementioned researchers believe that in their definition of a framing effect, the strength or perceived persuasiveness of a given frame is not the same as its effectiveness or influence on individuals’ opinions. This is because the context affects the strength of the effectiveness of frame. A frame can be effective in one context but not in another. So, in which context must the Shias’ image be presented to the public in order to form a certain image of them?

There are numerous theories of persuasion that Chong & Druckman (2007) have adopted as having an effect on the attitudes by influencing the salience of the underlying evaluative process. They contend that individuals use considerations that are available, accessible, and applicable or appropriate (as cited in Price & Tewksbury, 1997; also see (Chen & Chaiken, 1999; Higgins, 1996).

2.2 - Theory of Cascading Activation Model

Prior theories of the relationship between government and news organizations fail to capture the subtleties of information control and dissent among elites. Robert Entman proposes a new model, the “Cascading Activation” model, to describe the manner in which information flows from Administration/Elite sources down to the public through the strata of the news
media. At each level, consultation occurs at, under, and above that level to further shape the frames that are used and which potentially affect the way in which information is interpreted by audiences (Entman, Robert M. 2004).

Framing is a notoriously fluid concept, often shifting to fit the needs of the individual researcher. Entman (2004) defines framing as “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution.” There are two subclasses: substantive, and procedural. Substantive framing defines problems, identifies causes, conveys moral judgment, and endorses solutions. The author claims the problem definition/solution endorsement as the most important aspects of this frame, as they determine the nature of issue and by endorsing a solution can endorse policy positions. Procedural framing involves narrower evaluations of political actors.

Frames consist of words and images that can be rated on two scales: cultural resonance, and magnitude. The greater the resonance, the more capability for influence they possess. Magnitude, on the other hand, deals with repetition and prominence. The higher the resonance and magnitude of a particular frame, the more likely it is to lead to similar thinking among audiences.

To elaborate on the cascade activation model, Entman (2004) describes each level from top down: administration, elites, news media, news frames, and the public. At each level, the sub-units are also tiered; some types of media are more important/credible than others. As information passes down, each level is
influenced and simultaneously seeks to influence the final form of what enters the
“news frame” tier and finally the public sphere.


Entman (2004) also describes the reasons that particular frames will be considered salient: motivations and cultural congruence act internally to “pull” a frame into the consciousness. There are a handful of important motivations, but important among them is the desire to maintain status quo and function within society. To overcome this, a frame must represent a high level of threat to the core values of a society, or feature an extremely high degree of resonance and magnitude.

Cultural congruence describes the ease with which a frame can pass through the cascade levels and produce a similar response at each. Highly congruent frames require no “processing” as their familiarity will lead to a habitual
response. An ambiguous frame will take more effort to pass through and an
incongruent frame may be blocked out completely and ignored.

As the previous two methods “pull” a frame, power and strategy act
externally to “push” a frame. Power simply describes the ability of a leader/elite
to push a certain frame downward through repetition and other means. Those
among the administration and elites have a great deal of influence on what
frames become salient and the degree to which they are emphasized. Strategy,
on the other hand, implies a careful choice of words or tactics to cause a certain
frame to gain importance.

An important implication of the cascade theory is that, absent of
particularly strong cognitive schemas (such as the “Cold War” or perhaps now
the “War on Terror” frames) and with either administrative inability or simply
apathy (lack of power exerted) in creating a strong frame, the news media plays
a particularly important role in shifting ambiguous frames in one direction or
another. Similarly, if a media source fails to fully develop a counter-frame to the
dominant interpretation (that of the administration/elites), the average individual
will have a difficult time establishing their own evaluations and interpretations.

Applying this framework to the Sunni-Shia divide in Egypt, there are two
possible results. First, there is the possibility that there exists a “Sunni-Shia”
frame that is already well established through socialization, just as the “Cold
War” frame would have been for Americans growing up in the mid 20th century.
In this case, there is a simple, highly congruous frame that the government/elites
and news media can slot stories into.
Second, one can assume the reverse. Instead of a “ground-up” frame in which the Sunni-Shia frame was pre-existent, the government and elites use the power they possess in “pushing” frames from the top down. This would presume a more active role in creating salient images within this frame. In Egypt, where the media can be considered to be less independent of government influence, dominant frames are likely to be created by government (and elite establishments, and universities such as al-Azhar) control of what information makes it way through the media. Even were the media to be more autonomous, the cascade theory suggests that they would be likely to follow along given a strong and congruous frame…the less ambiguous the presentation, the less ability (or desire) the media possesses to shift the frame once it reaches them.

To more closely see how this process operates, we can start from the beginning the creation of a strong and effective frame. The conceptual frame occurs first, choosing the aspect of the information being emphasized. For example, a story about a bombing could emphasize the attackers (“why they did it”) or perhaps a failure of law enforcement (“what went wrong”), among other possibilities. The locus of problem identification provides the media with the greatest power to shift the focus of a frame.

In order to “push” a frame successfully, magnitude becomes important: information salient to the chosen frame should be strongly emphasized and possibly repeated, while information that could be used to create or reinforce the counter-frame should be suppressed or otherwise limited.
The use of particularly resonant images or words can increase the congruence and salience of a certain frame. For example, using the word “shirk”\(^1\) has immediate connotations to an Islamic audience, because it fits into a readily available schema and the ramifications of that concept are immediately obvious. Other resonant words such as “terrorist” can accomplish similar effects, as can various images (Islamic symbols or compelling images such as the destruction of mosques).

In order to solidify the frame, further information must be put into the same conceptual framework. If one was to emphasize the term “shirk” and associate that with the Shias, the (presumably Sunni) audience would most likely think of the Shias as *mushriks*\(^2\). Repetition and expansion of such terms through media, publications and word of mouth would increase the frame's salience and credibility and will represent a successful "push" of a frame into the public consciousness.

Framing in various forms and “agenda setting” can be closely linked for achieving desired results. Although agenda setting is more relevant to shaping public opinion, in practice both agenda setting and framing act in the formation of public opinion.

**2.3 - The Agenda Setting Theory**

As opposed to the media shaping individual opinions, one can look at the role of the media in shaping the “list” of important concepts. Maxwell McCombs (2004) uses an elucidating quote from Bernard Cohen, stating “the media may

\(^1\) Associating partners with Allah (God)
\(^2\) Those who associate partners with Allah. Polytheists
not be able to tell people what to think, but they can easily tell them what to think about.” The news is limited in the number of stories it can convey. By selecting which article goes on the front page or goes on the evening news, that news source is lending increased “weight” to that story being important. Likewise, the audience has a limited “platter” of things they are concerned about at any given time. While there are many issues, not all of them are worth having an opinion on. The ability of the media to lend salience to an issue and “put it on the platter” is their agenda-setting role (McCombs Maxwell, 2004).

Studies conducted by McCombs (2004) and others continuously illustrated a strong correlation between the agenda of important issues in major media outlets (television and print media) and the agenda of important issues on the mind of various polling audiences. This strong effect they term the “transfer of issue salience” from media to consumer. Especially on topics in which the audience has no direct experience (foreign policy, for example), the media substitutes a provided reality for an experienced one.

Critically, citing a study of the New York Times coverage of the drug issue, McCombs shows that measures of salience can be highly volatile. After a long string of articles in the NYT about drug problems, 63 percent of the public named that the most important issue facing the US. One year later, that number was down to 9 percent. Redundancy and repetition are they key to the agenda-setting effect. A single story will likely not garner national attention, but a series of 100 articles could prime the public consciousness to be concerned about the issue.
In describing the effect of agenda setting on individual news consumers, McCombs (2004) cites the need for orientation. The higher the need to be oriented within the news, the higher the probability that they will be influenced by the agenda of the news media. By “need for orientation,” he refers to the desire to avoid uncertainty. This falls into two categories: relevance and uncertainty. If an issue of low personal relevance (the politics of Latvia, for example), then agenda adoption is not likely to occur. However, if the issue is relevant, the degree to which the media’s agenda will be adopted depends on the uncertainty of the consumer. If there is higher uncertainty, they are more likely to adopt the agenda presented to them.

McCombs (2004) also invokes the concept of framing as providing a “bundling” of certain objects and their attributes to the exclusion of others. Some of the attributes, furthermore, will be more important than others. These “compelling attributes” increase the salience of the object in the public agenda. This concept of “compelling” or “congruent” ideas recurs across several theories of framing, as we will attempt to synthesize.

McCombs (2004) mentions two other issues which are relevant for us here. First is the question: who sets the media’s agenda? In the case of the United States, he seeks to demonstrate a transfer of salience from Administration to media, from whence the salience is transferred from media to public. Looking now to the case of Egypt, the issue of “transfer of salience” from administration to media can be regarded as nearly moot. For primarily state/elite-owned media, the agendas of the state and the media are more directly linked.
Secondly, what are the effects of agenda setting? McCombs (2004) gives several examples of actions taken as a result of “high salience” issues. In one example, sales of plane tickets tend to decline when airline accidents or hijackings are being reported heavily. In another example, both in the United States and Japan it was found that when high salience is given to news about political elections, audiences are more likely to discuss or seek more information on the topic. This is of critical importance to the discussion of Shias in Egypt. If frames were created and conveyed but no action was taken as result, the entire concept would be moot. However, these studies show that the “agenda setting” role of the media can lead to direct action on the parts of audiences – whether that action be positive or negative.

Keying the theory as a whole into a look at Egyptians’ perceptions of Shias, there are important consequences of media agenda-setting. First and foremost, the media plays a strong role on whether or not people care in the first place. Secondly, if audiences are “primed” to care about the issue (give it high salience), if there is a high degree of uncertainty on the topic they will be likely to seek more information…almost always by adopting the “compelling attributes” of a frame advanced by the media.

Finally, what does this mean for the research at hand? There is a transfer of salience effect from media to public. If the media runs repeated (or at least regular) stories on the role or beliefs or even existence of Shias in Egypt, the issue will gain a higher degree of salience on the “platter” of issues that people care about. Because the primarily Sunni population of the country is generally
unfamiliar with the beliefs and practices of the Shia as a whole, there is a higher degree of uncertainty. This, consequentially, makes them highly receptive to dominant or compelling framing arguments advanced by the media. Because the media is closely linked with the government or elite sources, we should be seeing a high degree of influence from state/elite media via transfer of salience to the public at large.
Chapter III: Review of Literature-Historical Background

This section will consist of two divisions: 1. The historical background of the religion and causes of divisions between the two sect. 2. Review of previous media studies.

In the first section, after a brief introduction of advent of Islam, the Shia/Sunni conflict will be examined followed by historical background of the Fatimids in Egypt and the rare Ghurabiyya sect which seems to be the cause of major misunderstanding about the Shias in Egypt. General literature regarding media effect on public opinion will be reviewed and will be narrowed down to the international media and finally the Middle East media.

3.1 - Advent of Islam, the Origin of Shia-Sunni Conflict, Succession after Prophet Mohammad (pbuh)\(^3\)

3.1.1 - A Brief Introduction: Advent of Islam

Prophet Mohammad was born sometime between 570 and 571 A.D. in the city of Makka in the Arabian peninsula. He was orphaned at a very young age and was raised by his grandfather and uncle. He married his first wife, Khadijah, at the age of 25, and is reported to have led an honorable life. He was known to sit in meditation in a nearby cave, known as Hira, and it was there at the age of 40 that he received his first prophetic revelation from the Angel Gabriel. The first person who accepted Mohammad's prophethood and message was his wife, Khadijah, followed by his cousin, Ali, his slave, Zayd and his close companion Abu Bakr. During his 23 years of prophethood and declaration of

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\(^3\) Peace be upon him
Monotheism to the idol worshipping Arabs he suffered many trials (Picktall M, 2003).

His message spread rapidly and was accepted throughout the Arabian Gulf shortly after his triumph in Makka. He died at the age of 63 leaving the issue of succession either entirely clear, according to the Shias, or undecided, according to the Sunnis.

3.1.2 - Conflicts in Succession

Volumes are written by both Sunnis and Shias proving their points of view and arguments for or against rights of Ali or Abu Bakr for succession. Not only was the succession cause of major divisions between the two sects, other factors contributed to further division between the two groups. It is very important to have a clearer picture of the origin of the conflict in a more extensive detail. The researcher has included some of this detail in Appendix I.

The early conflicts between the two sects have continued in various forms throughout Islamic history to this date. Egypt has not been immune from Shia - Sunni power struggle, and has witnessed rise and fall of a Shia dynasty centuries back.

3.2 - Historical Background of the Fatimids in Egypt

For a clearer picture of Shias’ existence in Egypt, the researcher has done some studies about this sect in order to establish a better understanding of possible sources of the conflict.
Fatimids (Ismaeils) are one of Shia branches that unlike the Shia Imamiyyah (Ithna Ashari), expanded politically for more than two centuries in N. Africa and other locations in the Middle East.

Paul Walker (2002) writes extensively about the Fatimids, their conquests and lands they ruled. He asserts that not much has been written about this dynasty and at least not in complete details. He has researched numerous sources to compile his work in a book called, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its sources*. The researcher has extracted from this book, relevant data in order to paint a better picture of this dynasty, its origin and countries it ruled, including Egypt which is the subject of this research. These details may be found in Appendix II.

**Critical Perspectives on Fatimid Rule**

The historical documents indicate the military weaknesses of all Shia sects and their inability to expand very far and for extended periods of time for the past 14 centuries. Fatimids were to some extend an exception and were able to expand and control regions for some time.

The researcher has tried to use more neutral historical accounts of this dynasty from its inception to its demise in Egypt. However, many books are written in favor of the Ayyubids in Egypt and their reasons for eliminating the Fatimids. Due to unavailability of reliable sources in English, the researcher has not included these books.

Available sources, however, indicate the rise and demise of this sect as a 14 century-old pattern of temporary rise and demise of Shia power in some parts
of the world. Shias were at no time powerful enough to withstand their Sunni rivals to this date. Iraq, however, may prove to be a history in making – too soon to tell.

The following map shows the Shia and Sunni countries in the region.

![Map showing Shia and Sunni countries in the region.](Photo from NPR Website)

Research about one Shia sect, Ghurabiyya, however, sheds some light on the origin of the expanded conflict between the two sects in Egypt.

3.3 - Historical Background of Ghurabiyya Sect in Egypt

On the Egyptians' perception about the Shias in believing “Ali should have been the Prophet instead of Mohammad,” the researcher had much difficulty finding enough sources referring to this perception. What was discovered, however, could provide some clues to the origins of a small sect called
Ghurabiyya. The following narratives further clarify the position of this sect and their relationship of the Twelver Shia majority.

3.3.1 - Their Belief

In Encyclopedia of Islam, Goldziher defines Ghurabiyya as follows:

It is an unorthodox branch of the Shia, also referred to as, “exaggerators” (ghulat). Its adherents believed that Ali and Muhammad were so similar in physical features as to be confused, “as one crow (ghur) is to another” (a proverbial expression for great similarity, cf. Zeitschr. f. Assyrier., xvii, 53), so that the Angel Gabriel when commissioned by God to bring the revelation to Ali gave it in mistake to Mohammad. Ali was, they say, appointed by God to be a Prophet and Mohammad only became one through a mistake. According to Ibn Hazm, some believed that Gabriel erred in good faith; others held he went astray deliberately, and cursed him as an apostate. According to Baghdadi, the sectaries greeted one another by cursing Gabriel. According to the Bayan al-adyan, the Ghurabiyya were so called because they believed that Ali was in heaven in the form of a crow. Ibn Kutayba (Maarif, ed. Wüstenfeld, 300) remarks that this is one of the few sects the origin of which is not attributed to an individual.

In an interview with Dr. Yaser Al Shomali, a Professor in the Sharia (Islamic Law) Department of Jordan University, he said, first
and foremost, Sunnis and Shias read from the same Qur’an, and practice the same five pillars. However, there is only one sect of the Shias named Ghurabiyya, who believed that Ali looked very much like the Prophet Muhammad and that’s why angel Gabriel committed a mistake by choosing Muhammad instead of Ali as a prophet and they accused Gabriel of treason. This sect no longer exists, and the major Shia sect now (which is in Iran) is the Twelver or (Imamiyya) and condemns such belief. It is obvious that Shias believe in the same God, Prophet, and Holy Book. He argues that claiming that the Shias believe this way is disgusting and ridiculous (, Al Shomali, Yasser, Personal communication 2007).

Dr. Ahmed Rasem Al Nafis, an Egyptian Shia, denies the existence of this sect altogether. “Gurabiyyas never existed,” he said. This has all been the plot of enemies of Shias in order to taint their image. No one has ever been able to prove that they even existed. The enemies of the Shias have not stopped spreading rumors about the Shias from previous times till today (Al Nafis Ahmad Rasem, Personal Communication Nov 9, 2007).

3.3.2 - Other Views Concerning the Origins of the Ghurabiyyas

As to possible locations that this sect inhabited, Stephennie Mulder (2006) asserts that Ghurabiyyas lived in variety of locations. One interesting document below states how this group was widespread in Syria, and abhorred by Sunni
scholars. Also similarity between Syria and Egypt in periods of Shia domination and Shia persecution and loss of power later on:

While traveling through Syria at the turn of the 13th century, Ibn Jubayr was unhappy to see the Shias in this land. “In these lands, the Shias are an astonishing phenomenon. They are more numerous than the Sunnis, and they have disseminated their doctrines everywhere. They are divided into different sects, (including) the Rafidis…the Imamis (Twelvers), the Zaydis…the Isma’ilis, the Nusayris (Alawites) – these last are infidels because they attribute divinity to ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him – the Ghurabiyya, who claim that ‘Ali resembles the Prophet PBUH…as well as other sects one shrinks from enumerating. God has misled them and has misled many of his creations. We beg of God to protect us in (true) religion and seek refuge in Him from the deviations of the heretics!” He wrote in his diary, “Could it be true that there was a time when the land of Syria was dominated by Shias?” (Stephennie Mulder 2006).

Despite Ibn Jubayr’s concerns, the various Shia sects probably never achieved numerical majority in Syria, says Mulder (2006). Yet they were quite visible and influential in Syrian political and cultural life in this period. Actually, in the tenth and eleventh centuries series of Shia Dynasties controlled the lands of Syria, among them the Fatimids, the Hamdanids, and the Mirdasids. Unlike Egypt, where Shia Fatimids ruled for a time, but remained far smaller in numbers

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4 Abu ’1-Husayn Mohammad ibn Ahmad ibn Jubayr, usually known simply as Ibn Jubayr, came from an Arab family long settled in Spain. From travels of Ibn Jubair.

5 This person is actually the translator of the original book, Travels of Ibn Jubayr.
to Christians and Sunnis, in Syria the Shia dynasties not only built powerful communities but were in charge of many important affairs.

One similarity between Egypt and Syria is the existence of various mosques of Ahl al-Bayt (family of the Prophet) revered and visited by both Shias and Sunnis.

The Shias of Syria eventually lost their power and were persecuted relentlessly in later ages, according to Mulder (2006). The Mongols slaughtered thousands of Shias after capturing Aleppo in 1260. Mamluks in Egypt repeated the Mongol atrocities some forty years later when they drove the Crusaders from Syria and sought to impose their own form of orthodoxy on the Syrian multi sect society.

3.3.3 - Fundamentals of Faith of the Shia Imamiyyah or Ithna Ashari (Twelver)

Examining the belief of the majority Shia belief (Twelver or Imamiyyah), the following show the radical difference between their belief and the Ghurabiyya:

i) The Shahada: The Declaration of Faith

La ilāha il Alláh, Muhammadan Rasúl Alláh, Alíyun Walí-Alláh, Wasíyu Rasulillah, wa Khalífa tuhu bila fasl. There is no god but Alláh, Muhammad is the Messenger of Alláh, 'Alí is the Friend of Alláh. The Successor of the Messenger of Alláh And his first Caliph.

ii) Usul Al-Din: The Fundamentals of Islam

1) Tawhíd (The Oneness of Alláh)

2) 'Adl (Divine Justice)

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6 http://www.islamfortoday.com/Shia.htm
3) Nubuwwah (The Prophethood)
4) Imámah (The Imamate)
5) Qiyámah (The Day of Judgement)

iii) Furu’ Al-Din: The Main Branches of Islam

1) Salat (Prayer)
2) Sawm (Fasting)
3) Zakát (Poor-due of 2.5%)
4) Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah)
5) Khums (The Charity of 20%)
6) Jihad (To Struggle in the Path of Alláh)
7) Amr bil ma’ruf (To Promote the Good)
8) Nahy ’an al-munkar (To Forbid the Wrong)
9) Tawalla (Loving the Prophet's Family)
10) Tabarra’ (Shunning the Enemies of the Prophet's Family)

3.4 - Historical Background of Rapprochement Efforts Between Shias and Sunnis

Since there were no sects at the time of revelation of the Qur’an and Islam was only one religion among the Muslims, unity among humans in general would be emphasized here from the Qur’an followed by various attempts by scholars of both sides in the recent past.

3.4.1 - Rapprochement in the Qur’an

The concept of unity among all humans is mentioned or referred to numerous times in the Qur’an. Since it encourages tolerance among all human
beings, this becomes especially relevant for sects within Islam and as a clear
guidance to the community of the faithful:

   O men! Behold, we have created you all out of a male and a female,
and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to
know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one
who is deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all knowing, all-aware.
[Surah Al-Hujurat 49:13]

   All mankind was once single community...[Surah Al Baqarah 2:213]

   O mankind! Be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you
out of one living entity, and out of its mate, and out of the two spread
abroad a multitude of men and women. And remain conscious of God, in
whose name you demand [your rights] from one another, and of these ties
kinship. Verily, God is ever watchful over you! [Surah An-Nisa 4:1]

    "God does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who
have not fought against you because of your religion and who have not
expelled you from your homes"[60:8]

   That all men have originated from the same progenitor – The Prophet
Adam -- recurs also in al-Anam 6:98, al-Araf 7:189 and al-Zumar 39:6. It is thus
unmistakable that the Prophet's insistence on the unity of mankind reiterates the
Qur’anic stance.

   This is followed by his forceful plea for social justice, for peaceful co-
existence and for a tension-free society. The tribal society of Arabia was plagued
with feuds and internecine wars. Several Quranic passages preach the lesson of
tolerance, forgiveness and cordial relations. The Prophet's directive follows from the same fountain of guidance. The direct address to the members of the Quraysh tribe, to which the Prophet belonged, had a very important functional value.

3.4.2. Official Sources of Rapprochement and Dialogue

The principle of cooperation between the sects is not a strange one. As seen above, it dates back to at least the time of the prophet. Despite the occurrences of conflicts, rapprochement has been discussed in a variety of conferences and official venues and is enshrined in various places, including articles 11, 12, and 14 of the Iranian constitution. This document states, in part, that “the Islamic Republic of Iran has the duty of formulating its general policies with a view to cultivating the friendship and unity of all Muslim peoples.”

Additionally, a google search on “Al Azhar Verdict on Shia,” will bring up over 150 (mostly Shia) sites elaborating on the famous verdict that al-Azhar Shaikh Shaltoot issued in 1959. Please refer to the exact text of the verdict in Appendix III

The text’s importance should not be underestimated. It is an unequivocal statement from the head of one of the main centers of Sunni scholarship in the Muslim world. Nor was this al-Azhar’s only foray into dialogue between the sects. A group of scholars at that university formed an institute titled "Dar al-Taqreeb al-Madhahib al-Islamiyyah" which translates into "The Center for bringing together the various Islamic schools of thought." As the name implies, the Center was an effort to create a cooperation and appreciation between the
major schools of thought. Sheikh Shaltoot’s declaration was a very important result of this effort.

**Individual Scholars on Rapprochement**

The Iranian Consulate in Cairo publishes a magazine called “Lotus Magazine: Iran wa Misr,” in an attempt to provide more information about Iran and the Shias. The latest issue covers quotes from various Shia and Sunni scholars regarding the rapprochement issue. Some are as follows:

According to Magdy Murgan, Mohammad (2007), the Editor-in-Chief of the magazine, the arena of bringing together Sunnis and Shias is now enriched in most of the Arab-countries because of the Iranian position towards Palestine which is considered the most crucial issue in the arena.

Shaikh Al-Taskhery Muhammad Ali believes barriers which the approaching process might face must be classified in terms of religious, societal, even political barriers. He argues that keeping the differences between the groups at the forefront only serves the interest of a “certain group of people.”

Fadel-Allah Muhammad Hussein, the Arabic-Shia referee at one such conference, believes one of the major misunderstandings about the Shias in the Sunni world is that they consider the Shias to be exceeding the proper bounds in their love to the Ahl al-Bayt which leads to the worship of them. He said although the Shias do love the Ahl al-Bayt, any exaggeration regarding this point is condemned and considered to be outrageous, even toward Ali himself. Shias do believe that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad is the last prophet. The accusation that the Shia believe that Gabriel made a mistake by not giving
the divine revelation to Ali and gave it to Muhammad instead is ridiculous and unacceptable. He considers this idea to be a fantasy.

Dr. Muhammad Salim Al-Awaa, the Secretary General of International Union for Muslim Scholars said that the most important commonalities between Sunnis and Shias are that they believe in one book, one prophet, and have the same five pillars of Islam. Differences have existed, but he mentioned that the "International Assembly of Rapprochement Doctrine" in Iran had put enormous effort into finding the commonalities between both sects by conducting research and issuing books. These sources revealed that 90% of the source evidence between the sects is the same concerning the pillars and 412 of the Hadith Qudsi are identical.

Sheikh Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, the famous Egyptian Muslim scholar, says any rapprochement attempt between Sunnis and Shias must be settled in a clear mutual understanding -- to emphasize the major commonalities and excuse each other on disputed topics. He stresses the need to be assured from the very beginning that there is a multi-dialogue system devoid of extremist words and ideologies which may provoke disorder in the societies of both sects. Just as Sheikh al-Taskhery, he further emphasizes the need to present a unified Muslim front towards the most important issue: that of Palestine.

An interview with Dr. Yasir al-Shomali of Jordan University reveals much the same sentiment. He bemoans the conflict between the two sects and emphasizes the strong similarities between them. He states: "[…] we are in bad need to [have] a multi-party dialogue between scholars from both sects, clarifying
points, condemning hatred, and fostering unity. Such context could be acquired only by good faith initiatives from both sides, and providing a basis of trustworthy relations which can be considered to be the first step in bridging the gaps between the two sects.” It is outrageous, he says, to be fighting internally when the Muslim community is being targeted by “multiple parties (Al-Shomali, Yasir, personal communication, June, 2007).

These views go further back, including a book written in 1961 by the author Mostafa al-Shaka’a. In Islam Without Sects, he writes that justice and absolute equality are considered to be two of the major sacred principles of Islam, which ordered its followers to follow these principles even with the followers of other religions in accordance with holy verse in the Qur'an: "Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. …verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity" [Surah Al-Mumtahanah 60:8]. The author describes this verse as a strong critique of sectarian violence.

After the prophet Muhammad died, Muslims found that they had to face a new political era on their own and thus agree upon a system by which they could observe justice and preserve equality among all of the different levels of society. However, over the course of Muslim history, political parties evolved their own views of Islamic political life. Although very similar, these groups do maintain some differences. The resolution of these differences should occur through the propagation of what is right, rather than the labeling of the other as “unbeliever” or mutual combat. Rather, what is really needed is a system to provide an
opportunity for Muslim scholars to mull and exchange views over various sectarian issues in a bid to reach a consensus, involving even the fringes of each group (Al-Shaka’a, M. 1961).

3.4.2 - Difficulties in Rapprochement

According to Islamic Legal Authority, A book written by Stewart, J. Devin (1998), the Shias have a strong desire to participate in the greater Islamic community. However, certain strong factors continue to keep the gap open and seemingly difficult to close. For example, the Shias believe that they are the "chosen" sect in Islam and that they have the absolute truth when it comes to jurisprudence. This is because they feel the supreme authority has been passed on to the twelve Imams after the Prophet and their authority is from God—a privilege Sunnis don't have. The Imams as well as the Shias were historically persecuted and deprived of their rights by the majority. There was, however, an effort to participate with the Sunnis in various issues. While the Shias’ adoption of the first tier of consensus, *ijma’ al-ummah*, implied their acceptance of the Sunni methodology of jurisprudence and expressed their own desire to be included in that system, their development of the second tier of consensus, *ijma’ al-firqah*, expressed their unwillingness to relinquish their privileged position as a sect blessed, through the imams, with divine guidance the Sunnis did not enjoy. This, according to the Shias, would assert that the Shia law is inherently superior to the Sunni law. So, although the Shia would like to participate with the Sunnis on

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7 Popular majority
8 This theory holds that the consensus of the Shia/Shias which potentially excludes the Sunnis, is an authoritative argument. Since *ijma a’-firqa, al-* always includes the opinion of the imam, it serves as a guarantee that the Shia jurisprudence, stemming from the imams, can never be wrong.
equal terms, the Sunnis must lower themselves in order to do so, for the Shias believe they are the sole possessors of the truth. Such claims would prevent further rapprochement (Stewart, J. Devin 1998).

3.5 - Review of Literature Regarding Media coverage and public opinion

In this section, the researcher reviews various literatures on the power of media in forming or shaping public opinion as well as international news and Middle East media.

“Top-Down” Theories of Framing

In reference to what The McCombs’ theory of agenda setting partially confirms that the media, in the center of the cascade, plays a large role in defining the issues that are important to the government/elites, at the top of the cascade. A study undertaken in Britain, found, a high correlation between media agendas and the agendas at Westminster, it was not usually the result of straightforward cause (media agenda setting) and effect (government agenda adoption). It was, rather, the result of the “usage” or more bluntly “manipulation” of the media by the elites in order to manipulate the media and promote their own agendas, as opposed to vice versa. Thus, while media’s powerful influence over the nation’s agenda is highly important, the role of elites and government in indirectly affecting the agenda must not be forgotten (Davis Aeron, 2007). It is therefore conceivable that governments, being on top of the cascade, could funnel their agendas about the Shias through the media in order to generate the desired effect on the population.
Howard Tumbar (2002) brings up the need to analyze the source of information passed on in the media as well as guarding against censorship. Often coverage of an issue is biased in one form or another, and in order to appreciate the event in full it is important to understand the source of the information as well as the agenda (if any) and perceptions of both the source, as well as the receiving party (reporter, etc). Additionally, censorship of coverage may impact the final media product, in that powerful parties may bring pressure to spin a story in a certain way or to only cover approved portions of an issue. The reasons behind such censorship and biased sourcing is varied, but the fact remains that both are often present in media, especially in the reporting of conflict and as such the final product can give a skewed perception to the audience (Howard Tumbar 2002). It is a common understanding that many of the Muslim countries use censorship as one of the tools for controlling the flow of information. Religious issues have been on the platter to this date, especially if there is enmity between the sects.

**Bottom-Focused Theories of Framing**

The media not only has an effect on public opinion in political issues, but are seen by the researchers as influencing other facets of population cognition as well. The study by Cynthia-Lou Colomen, (1993), asserts that the mass media has influence on interpersonal channels, and on the self-efficacy of risk judgment. The study suggests that mass media channels are more likely to influence social-level risk judgment and less so various Interpersonal channels. These channels
account for a portion of the variance on social-level risk judgment, as does self-efficacy (Srinivasan, Nirmala, 1990).

It has already been established that the concept of framing and the selection of ideas to be thereby emphasized it is critical to how common perceptions can be passed from one “level” of society to another, or from one region to another. Author Gary Edgerton argues that television plays a particularly important role in affecting the perceptions of its viewers by way of the unique way that medium operates: dramatizations of events and the persistent use of the present tense has the effect of “creating” a historical narrative. (Edgerton Gary, 2000). If the desired effect of the governments is to create a certain frame of thought about the Shias, TV would be one of the most powerful tools to achieve the purpose.

3.6 - *Media and International News*

In this section the researcher will examine the interactions between media coverage and the international news arena.

As the Government and others work through the media to try to influence public opinion about local issues, international news coverage must also find its place on the “platter.” The salience of a given issue tends to drop off rapidly if the issue is on the global stage: unless directly affecting the citizen’s home country, physical distance will create mental distance. Additionally, because it sits outside the realm of direct experience, information is more susceptible to alteration (Herbst, S.1998).
3.6.1. Problems in International News Coverage

The relationship between journalists and the policy makers whose actions they report on can, at times, be adversarial. Policy makers may withhold information or otherwise seek to influence the news process. This tendency, although rational, works against the interests of the public by distorting the information presented. (Seib, Phillip, 1997).

International news coverage tends to focus on negative issues or conflict; these subjects are, by their nature, negative. In addition, the media’s stance is itself often negative leading to an overall pessimistic impression on those viewing the content in question. This could, then, cause a populace to develop negative impressions and associations about another people based on the media’s representation of a given situation or conflict. Conflict being defined as “The incompatible needs, differing demands, contradictory wishes, opposing beliefs, or diverging interests which produce interpersonal antagonism and, at times, hostile encounters” (Beaudoin, Christopher E., Thorson Esther, 2002)

It is also the case that media representations of the third world carry with them inherent conflicts and biases. Large and transnational corporations involved in a host of other activities and concerned with the business aspects of news gathering, in addition to the governments with great interest in the coverage produced, are subject to the criticism of colonialist mindsets. They are prone to ignoring the developing world to narcissistically focus on the developed, “accentuating the negative” and “exceptional” aspects of the region, such as war or famine, and to monolithically imposing a structure whereby they (the media
corporations) create the news without giving them [the Third World communities] the opportunity to respond (Reeves, J.1993).

3.6.1 - Problems of Covering Islam and the Middle East

From the perspective of the West, media coverage of Islam in general can be over-simplified and overly negative. According to Dr. Aslam Abdullah, the American media has taken up the use of loaded terms such as “extremist,” “fundamentalist,” and especially “terrorist” without properly defining them, leading many Americans to equate the above with “Islam” as a monolithic entity. He also identifies other sources that he argues have contributed to the spread of negative perceptions and misinformation regarding Islam. Firstly, news sources operating in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks did a poor job of drawing commentary about Islam from members of that community. Second, he points out that certain special interest groups with strong biases against Islam may have had undue influence on the news-making process.

Although he allows that many of these news outlets have improved and balanced their coverage overall, he argues that whether by unconsciously adopting misleading terminology or as the result of willful manipulation there is a widespread ignorance of Islam in the West. Reinforcing his point on this regard is a simple example. Jeff Stein, an American journalist, quizzed a number of key figures including top counterterrorism officials in the FBI and leaders of the intelligence committees of the House of Representatives. He found that a disturbingly high number of them could not tell the difference between Shi‘ism

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/17/opinion/17stein.html?pagewanted=2&ei=5090&en=c5709a9fc1e31b3f&ex=1318737600&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss
and Sunnism on even the most basic level, and few had any idea which sect was
represented by the al-Qa’ida and Hezbollah militant groups. This lack of
information, on the part of important policy makers no less, is a distressingly
clear example of the inimical effects of poor or distorted media coverage: among
those informed by the media are the very policy makers whose actions affect the
entire world (Aslam Abdullah 2006).

“The dangers inherent in action taken by policymakers who are un-, under-, or mis-informed should be clear from the results of the invasions of
Afghanistan and Iraq. These wars have had oft-disastrous consequences and,
as argued in [the article Uncertain Future], the tendency of the US to seek
military solutions to foreign policy issues has been detrimental to its relationships
with crucial states in the Middle East.”(Wunderle, William & Briere, Col Andre
2007)

“It is not only the news media that carries loaded or misleading
information about Muslims. Representations of Muslims and Middle Easterners
in US film and television have played a large role in creating and strengthening
negative stereotypes regarding Middle Easterners and Muslims among
Americans”(Hirchi Mohammad, 2007).

3.7 - Middle East Media

In this section the researcher will examine the particular effects of the
framing theories mentioned above in the context of media in the Middle East.
3.7.1 - Government Control of Mass Media and the Role of Islam

The ability of government to exercise total control over the channels of information dissemination has decreased with the advent of new forms of media such as satellite television and the internet (As cited in Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi, 1994). While certain forms of journalism retain either overt or covert political influences, newer forms of media can escape these constrictions. However, not all forms of media are available to all people. The language of broadcast production, for example, often does not reach to the lower classes, who may find themselves unable to understand the formal Arabic of the news media (Eickelman, Dale F; Jon W. Anderson, 2003).

Another, more subtle form of public control is seen by some observers to be the learned religious scholars whose presence in society exerts some control over public opinion in the arenas of religion and politics. When asked if the freedom of expression was a prerequisite for democracy, 98 per cent of the modernists and 94 per cent of the ulema\textsuperscript{10} agreed; to the observation that freedom of expression was guaranteed in Islam, 91 per cent of the modernists and 98 per cent of the ulema agreed. However, when it was suggested that freedom of expression should be subject to review by the ulema, 65 of the ulema supported this concept, while only 12 percent of modernists did. This is despite the fact that 94 percent ulema had agreed that freedom of expression was prerequisite for democracy and 98 per cent said that Islam guaranteed freedom of expression (Akhtar Rai Shakil, 2000).

\textsuperscript{10} Muslim scholars
Akhtar (2000) further states that the Ulema have an elitist approach towards knowledge and politics, which evolved during the period of the Muslim Empire. Furthermore, they tend to be suspicious of the people, and despite the fact that there is no clergy in Islam, they have a professional interest in not according recognition to those learned individuals who acquire knowledge on their own or hail from different school.

While platforms of governments tend to be based on what they support, the “opposition” tends to be defined by what it opposes. The position to be going “against” is based on those in power, and as such, opposition must be examined based, in part, on the nature of the regime in power. Often “Islamist” movements focus on the “ummah” or community, rather than the individual nation. Often the ummah focus is considered as a rejectionist stance by people in power. Lisa Anderson claims that dictated government positions on certain issues or groups tend to both shape the public view of the group as well as the group’s reactions to issues that may arise (example, a government which chooses not to offer aid to a Muslim lower class may find that its Islamist opposition will offer food, simply because the government did not (Anderson Lisa, 1997)

Although many governments of Muslim-majority countries have secularized significantly, asserts Anderson (1997), the role of political Islam cannot be overlooked. This major influence might, in turn, create more friction and provide a subtle source for media control by the government to insure that the power is in correct hands. Yet, it is nearly impossible to separate Islam from politics altogether.
3.7.2 - Religion in Regional Politics

In fact, it is an all-too-common occurrence for religion to get tied in with regional politics and rivalries. With the Iraq situation often occupying the top of the agenda in the Middle East media, it is not uncommon for the Shia/Sunni conflict to be emphasized and exploited by some governments, through media, in order to turn public opinion in line with that state’s foreign policy goals.

The fiery chasm between the two sects in Iraq is well known, and there are numerous other cases of inter-sectarian violence such as attacks on Shia mosques in Pakistan or street fights in Lebanon. In many cases, these inflamed tensions are the result of overzealous government rhetoric as Arab states square off against Iran. Sources as varied as Egyptian state-owned papers and Saudi chat rooms have spread rumors and stories that Iran desires to reestablish the Shia Safavid Empire and for that reason is seeking the destabilization of Iraq and strife elsewhere. Others accuse the United States and Israel of being behind the violence, seeking their own ends. In any event, Arab governments have used the potential to incite anti-Iranian and therefore anti-Shia feeling in order to guard against Iran’s emergence as a regional power. They turn somewhat to religious rhetoric instead of military containment (DeAtkine, N. B. 2005).

Many states are simply nervous because of the close proximity of a rapidly disintegrating Iraq. Jordan especially has faced consequences, accepting over 1 million Iraqi refugees. In Jan, 2007, Financial Times Information Limited, ran the following headline: “ABDULLAH’S 'SHIA CRESCENT' WARNING BACKFIRES.” King Abdullah of Jordan coined the term “Shia Crescent” to describe the axis
running from Damascus to Tehran, via Baghdad. This label has gained wide usage to describe an ominous Iranian threat and the King has since disclaimed it, saying that was referring to political, not religious labels.

King Abdullah does, however, recognize the consequences of such tensions. He stated: "If sectarianism deepens and spreads, its destructive effect will reflect on everyone. It will foster division, polarization and isolationism. Our region will drown in a conflict whose outcome cannot be foreseen."

“It is not only the governments of individual countries that have sought to head off the possibility of Iranian (and by extension Shia) influence in the broader Middle East. The Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC, sees relations with Iran as a key strategic issue. This fact, coupled with the fact that a broad swath of Arabic media outlets are either directly controlled or otherwise influenced by GCC countries, could lead to manipulation of media sources to meet political and strategic ends" (Mattair, Thomos R. 2007).

However, elsewhere in Pakistan, the Shia-Sunni schism is taking a different treatment by the majority Sunni and their publications.

3.7.3 - Internal Conflicts: The Example of Pakistan

It is not always geopolitics that sparks inter-sectarian tensions, nor are they confined to what is usually considered the “core” of the Middle East. Pakistan possesses a significant Shia minority, the size of which is reported at widely varying numbers but which centers at around 14.5% of the overall population. They became politically active primarily after the campaign of [Sunni] Islamization promulgated under the rule of General Muhammad Zia al-Haqq,
forming groups that asserted the rights of Shia to practice their beliefs and, importantly, define the terms of their own faith. These groups were moderately successful in getting the government to accede to many of their demands.

Some Sunnis were threatened by this development, and viewed the right to practice Shi’ism as synonymous with the freedom to denounce the Companions of the Prophet and to convert Sunnis to Shi’ism. Evolving since that period have been two competing groups, the Sipah-i Muhammad, a more aggressive Shia group, and the Sipah-i Sahaba, an equally if not more aggressive Sunni group. The Sipah-i Sahaba especially have exerted great efforts to promote a “Sunni identity” by “educating” the middle and agrarian classes, and have sought to extrapolate a national identity from this narrower sectarian identity.

The Sipah-i Sahaba, being based on the numerically dominant Sunni tradition, have enjoyed greater access to various outlets to protect themselves from what they view as “encroachment” by the minority Shia tradition. This includes publishing a monthly journal detailing, among other things, “what the Shia, or Iran, might be doing against them [the Sunnis].” There was also an abortive attempt to pass a bill in the legislature making the vilification of the Companions of Prophet Mohammad an offense punishable by death. The example of Pakistan shows that Sunni-Shia tensions can come from non-geopolitical sources as well. Societal, and in some cases economic conditions can create the seeds for tensions that can spread well beyond their origins. Furthermore, the usefulness of indigenous (as opposed to regional or
transnational) and self-published media should not be overlooked (Muhammad Qasim Zaman 1998).
Chapter IV – Media Research and Reporting on Conflict

In this section, research attempts to show the language some media use to depict Shias in conflict zones. Although there are many reports that objectively touch on the conflict, showing problems from both sides, there seems to be special focus on the Shias since the beginning of the Iraq war. The headlines appear at the beginning of each report.

4.1 - Major International newspapers and Magazines – Online Editions

Resurgence of Shia Arouses Ancient Fears Among Sunnis

Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak said that the Shia Muslims around the world are more loyal to Iran than their own countries. After outraged Shia leaders denounced such statement, Mubarak retreated, saying he meant spiritual following rather than political allegiance. Yet, the underlying anxiety that prompted the comments was an echo of similar comment made by Jordan King Abdullah, two years earlier when he warned of an emerging “Shia Crescent.” Arab leaders elsewhere are alarmed by changing political order in the Middle East where the Shias are in power in Iraq for the first time and their militias are engaged in sectarian conflict with the Sunni Minority. This fear has been compounded by the muscle-flexing of Shia rival Iran, determined to pursue a nuclear program and strengthen its alliance with Syria, Shias in Lebanon and some radical Palestinian factions, creating a radical anti-western alliance in the face of more moderate pro-western Sunni Arab states(Khalaf Roula, Financial Times, London, England, May 2006).
Widening Gulf; Shias and Sunnis

With violence between the sects occurring in such countries as Iraq, Pakistan, and Lebanon, leaders on both sides are pointing fingers elsewhere. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad and the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Movement, have released statements indicating that America and Israel are to blame for the widening sectarian violence. (The Economist, Feb 2007).

A Fiery Crucible; Shia Muslims

Shias account for a comparably small and fractioned portion of the world’s Muslims. Yet Academic Vali Nasr argues that their political influence is much greater than their numbers suggest. With the removal of two historically Sunni regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, Shias have been given new chances to exert their strength. Elsewhere, they have won increased rights in places such as Saudi Arabia. Mr. Nasr theorizes that upcoming events will be the result of a Shia political revival and Sunni reaction. (The Economist, U.S. Edition, Sept. 2006).

The Islamic Divide

The village of Kfar Jos, near Nabatiye in southern Lebanon, is representative of the increased opportunity for Lebanon’s Shia minority. The village’s generally higher living standards are partly supported by a number of family members living and working abroad. Also visible is their political clout, symbolized by the posters of political leaders including Hassan Nasrullah, leader of the Hezbollah, a powerful Shia political and military movement. Although
historically members of the underclasses, the Shia experienced a resurgence following the Iranian revolution in 1979. Their political clout in Lebanon makes some nervous, however, especially given Hezbullahs strong ties to Syria and Iran. The possibilities of conflicting loyalties have made some in the region, including Saudi Arabia, nervous, but Shia leaders insist there is no threat.(Khalaf Roula, Financial Times May 2006, London Edition).

**Comment & Debate: Sunnis will not be persuaded that Iran is their real enemy: Washington’s attempt to pave the way for another invasion by fomenting anti-Shia sectarianism in the Middle East will fail**

In an editorial in the The Guardian, Tamimi Azzam writes that western media outlets have been mis-reading the international scene by claiming that Iranian influence is behind the sectarian violence in the region. Azzam points to the execution of Saddam Hussein in Iraq as the touchstone that ignited arguments of sectarian conflict – many saw the execution as Shia vengeance against an unpopular Sunni leader.


**Fallout From Iraq: Power Shifting in the Middle East**

US action to eliminate the Sunni-led Iraqi government and empower the Shia majority there has given Iran a strong political edge in the region by eliminating its primary rival and neighbor. Iran’s newfound political power has put the Arab world on edge and forced them to scramble to protect their interests. Thus, Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq have all become frontiers for states
supporting different groups and causes to counterbalance perceived Shia and Iranian influence.

"All of the region's crises are now interconnected, thanks to the war in Iraq," said Rashwan. "Nothing can be resolved without the Americans finding a way out of Iraq" (Bazzi Mohammad, Newsday, New Yort, August 2007).

**Tiny Bahrain firmly in Tehran's orbit**

Shia majority Bahrain is now the only such country still under Sunni leadership. This has sparked some tension in the country, and has led to concerns that Iran might try to exert its influence here, in a small country that it claimed as its own as recently as 1970. Concerns about “foreign” influence in Shia opposition groups have allowed the Bahraini government use the spectre of Iran to shrug off calls for democratization. Like all states that neighbor Iraq, Iran is now an important factor in domestic politics. As governments fret over Iran, there has been a rise in anti-Shia rhetoric used by Sunni majorities in many of these Arab states. Bahrain is feeling increasing tensions, due to its location between the two powerhouses of Saudi Arabia and Iran, and underneath Iraq. Furthermore, its coast is a major base for the US military.

A recent political scandal in Bahrain, known as “Bandargate” after the Sunni advisor to the royal family who sparked it, accused the government of actively working to marginalize Shias. The government denies this accusation but there was some evidence to support the accusations. Additionally, despite being a majority in the population, Shias are a minority in the elected government. There has been criticism that the government uses Iran and the
Shias as an excuse to hamper reform movements. (Mark MacKinnon, The Globe and Mail, Canada, Feb 2007)

4.2 - International Broadcast Stations

**Sunni targets hit after at least 157 Shias killed in Baghdad**

Exchanges of mortar fire have targeted Shia neighborhoods and Sunni organizations while leaders of both sects appealed for calm. Combinations of mortar fire and suicide bombers targeted the Shia neighborhood of Sadr City in Baghdad, which is where religious leader Muqtada al-Sadr maintains his office. Elsewhere, Sunni gunmen assaulted the Shia controlled Health Ministry building with ministry workers still in the building. The assault was ended by the intervention of American and Iraqi army forces. Officials cast the blame for the high number of civilian casualties in the month of October, 2006, on increasing sectarian violence. (With files from the Associated Press - CBS News, Nov 2006).

**Shia – Sunni Conflict**

The bombing of a major Shia shrine in Iraq led to conflicts killing over 120 people in and around Baghdad. The destruction of the holy mosque’s golden dome was deemed sacrilegious and caused counter-attacks against Sunni sites around the country. Sunni officials have blamed Shias for sparking the protests that turned violent. The bombing of the mosque caused the biggest reaction from Shias who had suffered numerous deaths in previous sectarian violence. Analysts suppose that the attack was the work of the insurgement leader al-Zarqawi and his affiliated al-Qaeda in Iraq, and that it was intended to spark
precisely this sort of conflict. Shia leader Ayatollah al-Sistani stated that if Coalition and Iraqi forces are unable to provide security, Shia groups will provide it for themselves. US forces are faced with the decision of staying out of the way of sectarian violence, or inserting themselves in the middle of it. (Global Broadcast Database, 10:00 p.m. Show CNN, Feb 23, 2006).

**Saturday Night Live – Comedy**

It is not only regular media outlets who have covered the conflict. Even the American comedy show "Saturday Night Live" joined the fray with a humorous song lampooning the differences between Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds. (Inewsnetwork-English Global Broadcast Database, 12:01 show NBC, July 16, 2006).

**The Origins of the Shia-Sunni Split**

The US show Morning Edition produced a show attempting to explain to US audiences the root of the Sunni-Shia divide, giving a history of the conflict and a historical overview of the spread of Shiism. Their analysts argue that the continuation of the conflict is now a struggle for political power (Anchors: Montagne Renee; Inskeep Steve, National Public Radio-NPR, 11:00 a.m.EST show, Feb 12, 2007)

The researcher here notes the salience of the Shia and Iran in the media since the Iraq war and various angles the media has taken in tackling the Shia – Sunni conflict or Iran.
Chapter V - Research Design and Methodology

The objective of this study is to examine elements that affect the perception of the Shias in Egypt through empirical and qualitative studies. After the Research Statement, research questions and the hypotheses, the researcher explains various survey methodologies and demographics.

5.1 - Research Statement

This study is one of the timely and important fields of communication research, involving the population studies that attempts to revisit the history and media in an effort to attain empirical evidence of complicated issues. In the Middle East, dogma is one of the most difficult issues to discuss.

The researcher is attempting to investigate the image of Shias in Egypt. In that regard, the researcher explores the impact of media on the perception and the role of society in disseminating information about this sect and related conflicts.

One of the main findings of the literature review is the effect of media on influencing the public opinion, especially in the government control media throughout the Muslim countries. In that regard the researcher is finding that the media in Egypt is in fact playing an important role in shaping and forming the public opinion about the Shias.

5.2 - Research Questions and Hypothesis

This study asks four exploratory research questions in regards to Egyptians perception of the Shias:
The Main Research Questions

RQ1: What is the image of Shias in the Egyptian society?
RQ2: What are the levels of awareness about the conflict?
RQ3: What is the role of media in shaping the conflict?
RQ4: Did politics shape religious understanding?

While the above research questions explore the image of Shias among the Egyptian population and the possible role of media and politics, the following hypotheses attempt to resolve them.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature review including the historical background of the Fatimids in Egypt and the subsequent takeover by the Ayyubids, followed by the treatment of the Shias in the centuries to come, the following hypotheses are developed.

According to the theory of Framing, Dennis Chong & James Druckmen (2007) assert that the issue of public opinion often depends on how elites choose to frame issues. It is therefore conceivable that any government may distort the image of a certain opposition group in order to form a certain public opinion toward that group.

Further more, In the “Cascading Activation Model,” Entman, Robert (2004) asserts that the manner in which information flows from Administration/Elites sources down to the public through news media, consulting occurs at, under, and above that level to further shape the frames that are used and which potentially affect the way in which information is interpreted by audiences. Etman (2004)
further describes each level from top down: administration, elites, news media, news frames and the public. He also describes that the salience of an issue depends on the motivations and cultural congruence which act to “pull” a frame into consciousness. It can therefore be hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 1:** Government controlled media may have played a role in creating a negative perception of the Shias.

As per the belief of the Ghurabiyya, Wustenfeld (2006) assert that this was a rare sect of the Shia, believing that Ali should have been the Prophet and not Mohammad (pbuh). A notion contrary to the Shia belief (Islam, Ilyas) and firmly rejected by Twelver (Imamiyya) Shia, but exploited by various governments and Sunni religious groups.

Considering the fact that Egypt has been a Sunni country since the demise of Fatimids and Shia belief has not been taught or hardly practiced in Egypt, people might readily accept publicized belief about the Shias without having any in-depth knowledge of this sect. Hence, the following Hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a low level of awareness of about the Shia belief in Egypt.

The international news coverage tends to focus on negative issues of conflict, reporting on adversarial issues. Policy makers may withhold information or otherwise seek to influence the news process. This distortion, by means of withholding information works against the interest of the public asserts Seib, P. (1997),
Although such policies serve the interests of the politician, by creating a certain image of the subjects, it can have opposite effect elsewhere in the region. For example, Iran’s nuclear energy has received a tremendous amount of news coverage in both the West and the Middle East. Although the Westerner’s opinions about Iran may have been negatively affected, the process may have created an admiration by the Muslims around the world by President’s Ahmadijejad’s firm stance on defending Iran’s right to nuclear enrichment. Based on this notion, the researcher proposes:

**Hypothesis 3**: The negative international news coverage about Iran resulted in positive effect among the younger Egyptian population, despite the preexisting negative perception of the Shias.

### 5.3 - Sampling and Methodology

This study combines both a qualitative and quantitative analysis. The population of the survey is average Egyptians within the age group of 18 to 50, while that of the in-depth interviews are experts in the fields of academic, religion and media.

#### 5.3.1 – Survey

Survey research is a method of acquiring information using questionnaires or interviews. Researchers usually use the most available samples, and in many cases university students. The advantage of doing so is the availability and low costs of obtaining information. The disadvantage is that the sample may not be representative of an entire population (Wimmer, R & Dominick J, 2006).
5.3.2 – Demographics

The majority of the population surveyed consists of 262 subjects. The majority living in Cairo and are university students. For more details, please see Appendix V.

Figure 1 - Q: 1

Figure 2 – Q: 2

Figure 3 – Q: 3

5.3.3 - Characteristics of the Survey

The survey consists of 27 questions, some of which have multiple sub-sections with multiple answer possibilities and others are in form of Likerd Scale.
The Survey was distributed in Arabic with very small number in English (see Appendix IV for the English version).

5.3.4 - Pilot Study

A pilot study is the initial study examining a new method or treatment about a research under investigation.

Twenty questionnaires were distributed among some participants in order to determine if any adjustments, additions and deletions were needed. Changes were made after the initial distribution and new questionnaires were distributed for the final survey.

In the pilot study the researcher found that mixing the Shia, Iran and Nasrullah issues in one survey confused some of the respondents. However due to the closeness of the Shia issues, Iran and Nasrullah, the researcher attempted to somehow link the three to cross check the answers.

5.3.5 - In-depth Interviews

An in-depth interview is a formalized conversation, allowing the researcher and respondent to explore an issue. This is to determine individuals’ perceptions, opinions, facts and reactions to a certain issue and to explore potential solutions. The advantage of in-depth interview is that unlike survey where a fixed set of questions is answered by the respondents, the researcher has a chance to explore an issue more in depth and examine possible solutions. The disadvantage is that the response is specific to the interviewee’s opinion and may not be generalized (Wimmer, R & Dominick J, 2006).
In-depth Interviews Settings

In an attempt to have a better understanding of more informed viewpoints about the Shias in other countries, the researcher traveled to Syria and Jordan to interview high-position clerics and academics. She was also later able to find a selection of academics and media persons in a conference conducted at the American University in Cairo, titled, “Are Islam and Democracy Compatible?” for further interviews.

Interviewees’ Details

Interviews with the following participants were conducted during June to November 2007:

1. Al Abed, Mahmoud - the managing editor of the Jordan Times. Jordan
3. Al Shomali, Yaser, Dr. - Professor of Sharia (Islamic Law) department. Jordan University. Jordan
4. Bullent, Aras - university professor and project director of the Turkish-Asian Center of Strategic Studies. Turkey
5. Hassoun, Ahmad, Dr. - Grand Mufti\(^\text{11}\) of Syria, Dr. Ahmad Hassoun. Syria
7. Lewis, Charles - Former CBS \textit{60 Minutes} producer and academic
8. Moustafa, Nadia Mahmoud - Director, Supervisor of Program for Civilization Studies & Dialogue of Cultures, Cairo University and a professor of Political Science at Cairo University. Egypt

\(^{11}\) Government appointed religious leader who is authorized to issue religious verdicts
Chapter VI: Findings and Analysis

The findings in this study are based on results of the survey and in-depth interviews.

6.1 - Finding of the Survey

The following section includes descriptive analysis of the responses with their corresponding tables and frequency charts followed by cross tabulation tables which examine possible relationships between variables.

6.1.1 - Findings and Analysis of the Survey

The following section consists of tables in two forms. The first form addresses the answers to Likerd Scale choices only, and the second form addresses the multiple choices. (See the Appendix V, VI and VII).

The researcher is analyzing the survey based on the summary tables below to show some significant or non-significant findings among the variables. The following tables include multiple answers possibilities and therefore the total percentage might not be 100%.

6.1.2 - Frequency Charts, Figures and Tables

In table 1, it is significant to note that the majority of the respondent said that the Shias believe in Allah (94%), the Qur’an (81%) and Prophet Mohammad (66%) and a close percentage also think Shias believe in Ali as the Prophet (55%).
Table 1- Q:12 - In your opinion the Shias believe in: (Mark as many as you feel is correct)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q12.a</td>
<td>Allah</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.b</td>
<td>The Qur’an</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.c</td>
<td>Prophet Mohammad</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.d</td>
<td>Four Khulafa’</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.e</td>
<td>Ahl al-Bayt succession after the prophet, beginning with Ali</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.f</td>
<td>Following the Sunnah of the Prophet through the companions</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.g</td>
<td>Following the Sunnah of the Prophet through Ahl al-Bayt</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.h</td>
<td>Shia love the family of Prophet</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.i</td>
<td>The Shia worship the family of Prophet and exalt them beyond human level</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.j</td>
<td>Ali should have been the prophet not Mohammad</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

f=Frequency - %= percentage of people responding to this question - Rank= the lower the number, the higher the percentage of response.

Figures 4-8 (multiple answers), indicate that the majority of the respondents disagree that the Shias are on the right path (over 70%). However, like the table above, a large percentage think that Shias believe in Mohammad (over 50%) as the Prophet and while slightly smaller percentage think that Shias believe in Ali as the Prophet (about 45%).

Figure 4 – Q: 13A

Shia is on the Right Path

- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
Shia believes in Mohammad as the Prophet

Shia believes in Ali as the Prophet

Shias are Disbelievers

Shias are Apostates
In Table 2.1, it is significant to observe that about 70% of the respondents get their information from terrestrial and satellite TV, and a smaller percentage from books (about 30%). Magazines rate the lowest (6%). Given the age of the participants, it may be understandable that the youth would spend more time watching TV than reading newspapers and magazines (lowest).

**Table 2- Q. 14: About the Shia belief, where did you get your information? (A) Mass Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q14.a</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14.b</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14.c</td>
<td>Satellite</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14.d</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14.e</td>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14.f</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14.g</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14.h</td>
<td>All the above</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpersonal communications also play important role in spreading information. Table 2.b indicates that friends (28%) and religious persons (21%) are among the highest sources of information after which come parents. Schools play the least significant role due to reforms which has taken out vast majority of Islamic studies of any kind.

**Table 2- About the Shia belief, where did you get your information? (B) Interpersonal Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q14.a</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14.b</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14.c</td>
<td>Religious person</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14.d</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multiple answers in Qs 15-19 indicate that about 50% of the participants agree that there are minor differences, while about 30% disagree and a small percentage remain neutral, which may indicate they don’t know (Q: 16). However, nearly 85% agree that the two sects should have a better understanding of each other and the media role in bringing better understanding it is equally distributed between agrees and disagrees.

**Figure 9 – Q: 15**

![Shias are Muslims with Minor Differences with Sunnis](image)

**Figure 10 – Q: 16**

![Did You Read or Search about Shias Belief Before](image)

**Figure 11 – Q: 17: It is important for the two sects to have a better understanding of each other.**
Although government role in improving this image here is taking a higher percentage in the agree side (over 40%), question 21 indicates government role in creating rapprochement between the two sects has the lowest rating.

In Table 3, although more than 50% believe that rapprochement should be done through innovating techniques like the media, nearly 24% believe rapprochement should not be done with this sect at all, while only 4% see the government in playing a role in correcting Shia’s perception through the media (Table 3).
Table 3 - In your opinion, through what means could rapprochement be accomplished between the two sects?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q21.a</td>
<td>Media Dialogue</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21.b</td>
<td>Positive Media presentation</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21.c</td>
<td>School education</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21.d</td>
<td>Reading books</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21.e</td>
<td>government role in allowing free speech</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21.f</td>
<td>government role in correcting the perception of Shias through the media</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21.g</td>
<td>Role of Mosques in correcting the image</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21.h</td>
<td>All of the above</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21.i</td>
<td>None of the above because Rapprochement should not be done with this sect</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opinions about Iran:

Although a large percentage of respondents didn’t know enough about Iran the positive perception about Iran seems much higher than the negative among those who responded. Also, majority of respondents showed a lot of respect for Iran President, Ahmadinejad. The respondents seem to also agree by higher percentage that Iranians are believing Muslims, tolerant and a good Muslim society, while a smaller percentage believe that Iran is going to spread Shia belief in the region.

Figure 14 – Q: 22A

### Iranian People are Tolerant People

- **Disagree**: 13.7
- **Neutral**: 31.2
- **Agree**: 55.1
Figure 15 – Q: 22B

**Iranian Society is a good Muslims Society**

- Disagree: 41.1
- Neutral: 16.7
- Agree: 42.2

Figure 16 – Q: 22C

**I have a lot of respect for President Ahmadinejad**

- Disagree: 9.9
- Neutral: 32.1
- Agree: 58

Figure 17 – Q: 22D

**Iran is planning to take control over the region and spread Shia Belief**

- Disagree: 31.9
- Neutral: 38.5
- Agree: 29.6

Figure 18 – Q: 22E

**Iranian People are Disbelievers**

- Disagree: 69.8
- Neutral: 5.8
- Agree: 24.4
Table 4.A indicates that more than 50% of information obtained about Iran which has formed a positive perception is via Satellite and terrestrial TV, while internet has the next highest percentage and magazines, the least. Although books are included here, they are not part of mass media, but an indication that a small percentage of respondents are obtaining information about Iran through books. Radio seems to be an outdated medium for the younger generations to obtain information, especially news.

Table 4 - If your perception about Iran is positive, where did you get your information?

(A) Mass Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q23.a</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23.b</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23.c</td>
<td>Satellite</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23.d</td>
<td>News paper</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23.e</td>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23.f</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23.g</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23.h</td>
<td>All the above</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.B also shows friends (10%), parents (10%) and religious persons (10%) are equally important mediums for transferring information while schools (4%) remain the least informative source for obtaining such information.

**Table 4 - About Iran, where did you get your positive perception?**

**(B) Interpersonal Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q23.a</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23.b</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23.c</td>
<td>Religious person</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23.d</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.A shows similar information as table 4A in terms of positive and negative perception.

**Table 5 - If your perception about Iran is not positive, where did you get information?**

**(A) Mass Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q24.a</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24.b</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24.c</td>
<td>Satellite</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24.d</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24.e</td>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24.f</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24.g</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24.h</td>
<td>All the above</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.B however, indicates that the religious persons (10%) are the most significant factors in disseminating negative perception of the Shia to the public.

Table 5 - If your perception about Iran is not positive, where did you get your information?

(B) Interpersonal Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q24.a</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24.b</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24.c</td>
<td>Religious person</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24.d</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that about 40% of the respondents had a more positive view of the Shias after the second Lebanese war against Israel and about 62% had more respect for the Shia leader, Sheikh Hasan Nasrullah after following the war in the media.

Figure 20 – Q: 26

Perception of the image of Shias changed positively through following the 2nd Lebanon War

Disagree Neutral Agree

40.9 35.1 24

Figure 21 – Q: 27

After following the second Lebanese war in the media, I have a lot of respect for Sheikh Hasan Nasrullah as a Shia leader

Disagree Neutral Agree

62.9 23.3 13.8
General Findings of the Survey

The general analysis of the survey indicates that there is a moderate to strong leaning toward considering the Shias as believers in Allah (94%), Qur’an (81%) and the Prophet Mohammad (66%), with a slightly lower percentage thinking Shias believe in Ali as the Prophet (55%). “Shias are disbelievers,” ranks the lowest (13%), indicating that this notion is rejected by the majority of the respondents. Also, “Shias believing in the companions,” ranks very low. Some of the negative perceptions of the Shias stand in contrast with positive perception of Iranians and Iran President, Ahmadinejad. Media, mainly television plays an important role in shaping most of these opinions while friends rank the highest among the sources of information through inter-personal communication. Radio and schools are among the lowest ranking elements of information gathering among the participants.

Cross Tabulation

Cross Tabulation also called two-way tabulation, or cross tab is a statistical technique that establishes an interdependent relationship between two tables of values, but does not identify a causal relationship between the values.

In the cross tabulation here, the researcher has tried to determine if there is any statistically significant relationships between some variables in the survey.

The following tables are marked either with two stars which indicate that there is a highly significant relationship between the two variables with only (0.01%) possible sampling error while the ones with one start indicate significant as well but with (0.05%) chance of sampling error. The variables with no stars
indicate that there are no statistically significant relationships between the variables.

**Analysis of Cross Tabs**

Figures 21-29 indicate that there is a significant relationship between gender and more positive views of Iranian people and Iran President, Ahmadinejad. There is less significant relationship between gender and negative views about Iran, while there is no relationship between gender and “rejection of Iranians by all Muslims” question and the Lebanon war.

**Relationship between Gender and Opinion about Iran**

**Figure 21 – Q: 22A Iranian people are tolerant people in relation to Q1: Gender**

**Figure 22 – Q: 22B Iranian society is a good Muslims society in relation to Q1: Gender**

**Figure 23 – Q: 22C I have a lot of respect for President Ahmadinejad in relation to Q1: Gender**
Figure 24 – Q: 22D Iran is planning to take control over the regions and spread Shia belief in relation to Q1: Gender

Figure 25 – Q: 22E Iranian people are disbelievers in relation to Q1: Gender

Figure 26 - Q22.F Iranian people should be rejected by all Muslims in relation to Q1: Gender

Figure 27 - Q25 Following the events of Lebanon war in the media in relation to Q1: Gender
Figure 28 – Q: 26 Perception of the image of Shias changed positively through following the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lebanon War in relation to Q1: Gender

![Bar chart showing the perception of the image of Shias among males and females.]

Figure 29 – Q: 27 After following the second Lebanese war in the media, I have a lot of respect for Sheikh Hasan Nasrullah as a Shia leader in relation to Q1: Gender

![Bar chart showing the respect for Sheikh Hasan Nasrullah among males and females.]

Table 7.1 indicates that there is no relationship between age and various media sources and books, except some significance between the age and newspaper.

Table 7 - Relationship between Age and Positive Opinion of Iran.
1. Opinion derived from Mass Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>c.c</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.144</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>23a1- Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>23a2- TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>23a3- Satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.03*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>6.66</td>
<td>23a4- Newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>23a5- Magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>0.402</td>
<td>23a6- Internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>23a7- Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>23a8- All the above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the 0.05 level  ** Significant at the 0.01 level
Table 7.2 likewise shows no significant relationship between age and relationship with Iran, with some statistically significance only through friends.

**Table 7 - Relationship between Age and Positive Opinion of Iran.**

2. Opinion Derived from Interpersonal Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>c.c</th>
<th>Chi-Squar</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>23.b1 Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.05*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>23.b2 Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.76</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>23.b3 Religious person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.84</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>23.b4 Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the 0.05 level ** Significant at the 0.01 level

Table 8.1 show a significant relationship between the negative perception of Iran and Radio, and no relationship with other variables.

**Table 8 - Relationship between Age and Negative Opinion of Iran**

1. Opinion Derived from Mass Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>c.c</th>
<th>Chi-Squar</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.002**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>24.a1 Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.78</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>24.a2 TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.93</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>24.a3 Satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.37</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>24.a4 Newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>24.a5 Magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.08</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>24.a6 Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>24.a7 Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.79</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.464</td>
<td>24.a8 All the above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the 0.05 level ** Significant at the 0.01 level

6.2 - **In-Depth Interviews Main Findings**

The researcher has conducted various interviews in order to get a wider perspective on the Shia – Sunni conflict in various countries. The main emphasis, however, is the treatment and position of the Shias in various countries. This is to draw a comparison with that of Egypt in the later discussion.
Syria – Religious Leader

The Grand Mufti\(^\text{12}\) of Syria, Dr. Ahmad Hassoun, believes the two sects have more in common than they have differences, and were it not for the interference of the outsiders, there would not be many problems between them they could not solve. He emphasized on secularism as a correct way to run governments and believes that even at the time of Prophet Mohammad, the government and the religious issues were separated. (Hassoun Ahmad, personal communication, June 2007).

Jordan – Academic - Religious Scholar

Al Shomali Yaser, likewise focused on the commonality of the Shias and the Sunnis rather than the differences, notably believing in the same Holy Book, Prophet and the pillars of Islam. He did not seem to be much willing to talk about the differences and problems Shias in Jordan might face. However he was instrumental in providing the initial information about the Ghurabiyya sect (Al Shomali, Yasser, personal communication, June, 2007).

Jordan Times, however gave much more detail about the conflict and possible solutions.

Jordan – Media

Al Abed Mahmoud, said It is no secret that Jordan, a Sunni, country, is taking the side of the Arab Sunnis in Iraq, first because they are closer to the identity of Jordanians, in addition to the historical relations during Saddam's reign, when the Sunnis were the powerbrokers in Iran, Amman and Baghdad were in the same camp during the Iran-Iraq war and Gulf War I. However, the sweeping majority of

\(^\text{12}\) Government appointed religious leader who is authorized to issue religious verdicts
Jordanians are against violence targeting the Shias, especially the attacks by Al Qaeda, which is a major enemy of Jordanians, especially after the attacks on Amman hotels in November 2005.

When asked about the media role in the conflict, he said the media has walked a tight rope in addressing the Sunni-Shia conflict, especially after an Arabic daily (Alghad.jo) ran a story more than two years ago, saying a Jordanian clan celebrated as a martyr a young Jordanian who blew himself up in Hilla, Iraq, killing scores of Shias. The reporter was sued, and chief was replaced. Besides, local media almost never cover Shias news regarding the Iraqi refugee community in Jordan (estimated at 750000). There is a kind of a hush-up, even over news like authorities' banning Shias from having their own mosques, called husseiniyyas, fearing attacks on these places of worship.

He saw the solution to the conflict as being in the hands of Iraqi groups themselves. Jordan wants national unity and stability in Iraq because it is in its best interests. Meanwhile, clerics can play a key role in refuting Al Qaeda's premises that Shias are infidels. King Abdullah has done a lot in this regard, inviting representatives of all schools of Islamic fiqh (jurisprudence) who issued a statement insisting that Shias are Muslims whose blood and properties should be preserved (Al Abed Mahmoud, personal communication Oct. 2007).

**Turkey – Shia Academic**

Aras Bullent said the Alawis of about 12 million, by far, out-number the Shias of maximum 50 thousand in Turkey. Although some of their rituals are mixed with the Shia, they are not really considered Shia. They elevate Ali to God’s level
and are rejected by the Shias who are from Azari origin. Shias are free to practice their religion; have their own mosques and are tolerated by the Sunnis. Sunni Turks, themselves are very pro Ali.

The media has a neutral position regarding the Shias. In fact it shows the Karbala event of Ashura, and is sympathetic toward this sect. There is a very outspoken Shia media person who is very active and has ideologist close to Iraqi Shias. His slogans are very anti American (Aras Bullent, personal communication, Nov 5, 2007).

**Bahrain – Shia Activist**

Salman Ali said due to the fact that the majority of the Bahrainis are Shias, there is general acceptance of the Shias and there are even some intermarriages. There is no animosity or violence between the sects. However, the last ten years when the Salafi ideology emerged, it affected the relationship somehow. The two sects don’t clash, but the speeches in the mosques cause a big problem when they are anti-Shia. Yet, there are ongoing dialogues between the sects. Shias also have 17 seats out of 40, in the parliament.

Salman was imprisoned from 1994-2001 for his uprising demanding the reinstatement of the constitution. After a general amnesty and his return from exile in Europe to Bahrain, he continued his opposition. The constitution was modified and reinstated in 2004. Not many are happy with the new change, he said. The media do not create divisions between the sects and accept Shias as Muslims. Everyone practices according to his/her madhab (sect). Scholars of both
sects are active on TV and newspapers advancing their own creeds (Salman Ali, personal communication, Nov 5, 2007).

Egypt – Sunni Academic

Nadia Mahmoud Moustafa, said the perception of Shias differs between elites and common man; also common man with religious background may spread division.

But during Lebanon war in July of 2006, there was much support for Hezbollah. There were two general impressions: Firstly, they saw Iran and Hezbollah connected and as resistance entities toward Israel and the U.S. Even common man was impressed. We found that the boundaries have transcended the differences between the sects. Secondly, Egyptians see Iran trying to be regional power at the expense of Arabs.

Recently, much effort has been exerted by both sects for rapprochements, but the condition is that the Shias have to stop offending Aisha and the companions of the Prophet.

As for the media, the government won’t stop blaming Iran and Hezbollah for creating conflict in the region.

When asked what the media should do to correct the perception, Moustafa said, the Sunni religious leaders should stop calling Shias, disbelievers. She also mentioned when the Iraqi refugees in 6th October City tried to build a mosque, they faced stiff resistance and permission was not granted to them (Moustafa, Nadia Mahmood, personal communication, Nov 4, 2007).
Egypt – Media – Nile TV

Khattab Dalia, believes the division is very unfortunate from her personal point of view. She mentioned that the Nile TV receives the news from national news agencies and reports them as they are. However, Al Arabia which has its own reporters tends to side with the Sunnis.

Media did not focus on Shia ideology until after the Iraq war. Most Sunnis here do not know much about the Shias except through dirty hands, she said.

When asked what the media can do to bridge the gap, she mentioned, more dialogue between the sects is necessary by the scholars of both sides and focus on the commonality being one God, one Prophet and One book (Khattab Dalia, personal communication, Nov 4, 2007).

Egypt – Religious Scholar

Sheikh Hasan Abdul Majeed believes Shias and Sunnis are two completely different entities. Shias believing in two gods, calling upon Ali for everything they need, believing in a different Qur’an, different companions, Ali as the Prophet and different religious practices. One cannot take anything from their books because they believe in taqiyyah or concealing the truth for the fear of persecution. They reject most of the companions of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and disrespect them up to now (Abdul Majeed, Hasan, personal communication, November 20, 2007).

U.S. – Media – Academic

Lewis, Charles believes that stereotyping in the U.S. media has contributed a great deal to the misunderstanding towards the Muslims in general. He also
believes the Shia Sunni conflict may not be properly presented by the media which is influenced by external forces (Lewis Charles, personal communication, Nov 4, 2007).

**General Findings of the Interviews**

The researcher found, through the interviews that treatment of Shias vary greatly from one country to another. Countries with majority Shia population or notable size seem less likely to exert much discrimination toward them, except in the political realms in which the Sunnis still hold the reign. Other countries with minority or invisible Shias are more likely to continue persecution and discrimination against the Shias.

With the exception of Egyptian Sheikh, other religious scholars seem to take a more middle approach about the Shia – Sunni conflict and wish for more dialogue and mutual understanding. The Egyptian Sheikh, however, has washed his hands off of the topic and sees no hope for reconciliation.

As for the academics, similar response as other religious leaders were found, encouraging more tolerance between the two and dialogue among the sects, emphasizing the role of media in improving this problem.

The media persons admitted stereotyping in the media as one of the reasons for misrepresentation of Muslims as well as the Shias in Islamic regions.

**6.3 - Discussion and Conclusion**

In this chapter the researcher is discussing the main findings of the two research methods, the survey and intensive interviews as well as covering some aspects of the partially answered questionnaires that were noteworthy, but not
included in the survey tabulations. In the discussion process, the researcher also examines the relevance of the findings to the research questions and hypotheses.

6.3.1 – Survey Analysis and hypothesis Testing

In testing Hypothesis 2: “There is a low level of awareness about the Shia belief in Egypt,” the general findings of survey indicate lack of sufficient knowledge of the Shias in Egypt by the Sunni younger generations in general. For those who do have some understanding of the sect, there are mixed reactions and uncertainties. Therefore Hypothesis 2 is supported according to this survey.

RQ1 is also answered in this survey: “What is the image of Shias in the Egyptian society?” The fact that nearly 90% of the respondents said the Shias believe in Allah, the Qur’an and Prophet Mohammad (pbut) indicate a more positive outlook toward this sect. Yet, the close percentage of the respondents thinking that the Shias believe in Ali as the Prophet with those thinking Shias believe in Mohammad as the Prophet raises the question of how this perception came to be formed and grounded in the Egyptians’ mentality. Therefore, although the majority of the respondents do not consider Shias as disbelievers, the perception of Egyptians of the Shia belief in Ali as the Prophet, throws the positive points about this sect out of balance.

In testing Hypothesis 1 which states, Government controlled media may have played a role in creating a negative perception of the Shias, it is evident that media has not been the source of creating a certain image of the
Shias in Egypt centuries back. However, from the study of the Fatimids’ history (909-1171), one can assert how the rise of this dynasty alarmed many Sunni rulers at that time, especially Abbasids who ruled Iraq, and later on, Ayyibids in Egypt who ruled after the Fatimids, according to Walker (2002). This resonates closely with the history of the Shias domination by the Sunnis from the reign of Mu’awiya who refused to grant Hasan, the rightly appointed son of Ali to become khalifah. Mu’awiya’s son as pointed out by Askari (1994). Yazeed, killed Hussein who was also chosen to be the successor of Hasan. This pattern continued through the lives of all the Imams of the Shia Ithna Ashari who were the progeny of Prophet Mohammad (Askari M. 1994).

With hardly any military power, the Sunnis had the upper hand in politics from the time of Mu’awiyah to this day. They crushed any Shia uprising or indication of power.

It is historically important to note that the Ismaili Shias (Seveners, not Twelvers) rose to some substantial power for a few centuries but the last of them were crushed by Salaheddin El Ayyubi in Egypt with especial efforts made to subjugate the Shias back to subordination by the Sunni rulers or were forced to hideout.

The fact that the Fatimid archives were destroyed by the subsequent Ayyubi rulers may indicate their intention to wipe out their trace from the history. It would be possible that certain extremist beliefs from a very rare Shia sect (Ghurabiyyah) would have been exploited and politicized in order to taint the image of this sect and turn the public opinion against them. These evidences
repeatedly show governments’ roles in crushing any Shia power for centuries, which partially supports **Hypothesis 1**, but without the role of media.

Although media in their forms today was non-existent in the past centuries, word of mouth, books, government efforts to create certain public opinion have been at work regarding this sect to shape public opinion.

Recent survey however, indicates that now, the media rank the highest in creating certain image of the Shias today.

The fact that nearly 70% of the respondents got their perception about the Shias from terrestrial and satellite television, answers the **RQ3**: “**What is the role of media in shaping the conflict?**” Media is in fact playing an important role in creating certain perception of the Shias in Egypt, especially the younger generation who are higher consumers of television than other age groups. Some of the information may be through the news and some through various religious channels. The questionnaire did not specifically asked which kind of program, which may leave the assumption open that religious channels may have played a part in creating a certain image of the Shias. The survey shows that the interpersonal relationships, mainly through friends also play a role in creating a certain image of the Shias, but in a much lesser extent than the media.

Another interesting finding is that most of the respondent didn’t really know the differences between the two sects and the level of conflict, but they consider media as an important tool in bringing a better understanding between the sects. This answers **RQ2**: “**What are the levels of awareness about the conflict?**”
The respondents’ opinion about role of government in creating such understanding is noticeable in one section but is undermined in the rapprochement area. This may be due to the fact that although people see the important role the government can play in a rapprochement issues, given the historical background of Egyptian government’s negative position toward the Shias, such hopeful wish might be out of question at the present time.

It is noteworthy to mention that given the fact that the younger generations, mainly the university students in general are not tuned to news as much as other TV shows, it is not surprising that they not only do not know enough about the Shias, but they also do not know much about answers to questions asked about Iran (nearly 50%). Yet, among those who answered, there is a general strong sense of respect for Iran President Ahmadinejad in this survey and likewise among most of the Egyptian population in general.

Although positive and negative perception of Iran is mainly obtained through Television, there are larger percentages leaning toward the positive side than the negative. This may be due to the fact the Egyptians also consume news from international satellite channels which has had Iran and its strong nuclear stance against the U.S. on their agenda quite often. There seem to be a strong sense of praise among the Egyptians toward a Muslim leader who stands firm against a super power. This finding supports Hypothesis 3: “The negative international news coverage about Iran resulted in positive effect among Egyptian population, despite the preexisting negative perception of the Shias,”
The fact that about 30% of the respondents had a more positive view of the Shias after the second Lebanese war against Israel and about 62% had more respect for the Shia leader, Sheikh Hasan Nasrullah after following the war in the media further supports the notion that the media is in fact an important tool in shaping or changing opinions by its coverage. This also answers RQ3: **What is the role of media in shaping the conflict?** which indicates through media, negative or positive perceptions are created.

In the cross-tabulation process, the gender had a significant relationship with the respondents' opinion about Iran as well as the perception of Shias after the second Lebanon war with Israel and positive perception of Nasrullah. Such might be due to the fact that there were slightly higher percentage of male to female respondents and also the fact that the male may be more inclined to news consumption than female.

The findings also show that there is a strong relationship between the economic status and positive perception of the Iran. This could also be due to the fact that the more educated persons might be less inclined to focus on the religious issues locally or internationally, and be more interested in the political or economical or entertainment issues.

A number of the respondents did not complete the survey and were not used in the tabulation process. However it is noteworthy to mention that a large percentage of these incomplete surveys had all but the parts about Iran filled out, indicating that although they had some knowledge of the Shias in Egypt, they did not know much about Iran or Iranian's people. Some of the same persons,
however, had answered questions about the Lebanon war and Nasrullah, which indicates that the intensive media coverage that war received could not be overlooked by majority of Egyptians and even without knowing much about Iran, the war changed Egyptians’ perception of the Shias and created admiration for Nasrullah.

6.3.2 - Intensive Interviews Analysis

Unlike the survey, there seemed to be adequate knowledge of the Shias in general due to the interviewees’ higher academic, religious, and or media background. However, either due to social respect, political - diplomatic concerns, or other factors the interviewees, with the exception of one Egyptian scholar, gave neutral or positive perception of the Shias. All the interviewees would most likely be heavy consumers of news in various forms and most likely be much more interested in sectarian issues and conflicts.

An interesting contrast between Syria, Jordan and Egypt’s religious figures was that the Syrian and Jordanian scholars were government monitored and were assigned to the researcher by the ministry of endowment, where as the Egyptian scholar was chosen by the researcher and not assigned by the government. After a video interview with Syria’s Grand Mufti (highest government assigned religious figure, authorized to issue religious verdicts), the tape was seized and a day later returned to the researcher requesting certain sections of the interview not to be reported. This leaves the question of how objective the answers were to the sectarian questions. Also, given the positive relationship between Sunni Syrian and Shia Iran, it would be highly unlikely that the Grand
Mufti would say anything negative about the Shias. However, various requests to interview Syria’s most well-known religious figure, Sheikh Al Buti was turned down by him, most likely due to the fact that it involves the Shia issues. He is known to have an adamant stance against the Shias and will not engage in any dialogue regarding this sect. Researcher’s various attempts to interview him in 2002 also failed due to the same reasons.

The Jordanian Sheikh/academic was also very cautious in making comments on the camera, but once the camera was off, he made certain comments indicating that his real opinion was somewhat different than what he would be willing to admit publicly.

The Egyptian scholar, however, got right to the point and condemned the Shias belief and ideology. His interview was by the phone and the other two were in person and videotaped.

Also, the opinions on the intensive interview about Iran was very positive and informed, except for the Egyptian sheikh, where as the survey indicated lack of adequate knowledge about the Shias in general and Iran in particular. Of course the Turkish and the Bahraini interviewees were Shias as mentioned in the interview section.
Chapter VII: Limitations and Recommendations

In this chapter, the researcher attempts to point out to the limitation of this research as well as recommended means of improving the relations between the Shias and the Sunnis through media and dialogue.

Limitations

Limited media discourse between the sects and lack of effort to promote more positive image of this sect, makes it difficult to continue forward movements.

Also, due to time factors, political sensitivity of the subject and limited resources, the majority of the survey was conducted on campuses. The researcher's recommendation is to do this kind of survey randomly and among all sectors of the population in order to have a more representative data of Egyptian population. Researcher's own experience gathered by talking to ordinary people over the course of two years was that many of the negative perception came from lower, uneducated and older persons who had formed their opinion about Shias through words of mouth, to a higher extent, and TV programs or books, to a lower extent. Since most of these people were not surveyed, the final result might not be representative of Egyptian majority.

7.1 – Recommendations: Improving Relationships through the Media

In this chapter, the researcher attempts to recommend means of improving the relations between the sects through media and dialogue. The survey demonstrated the participants’ interest in more dialogue through the media for creating a better understanding between the sects. However, the
researcher wonders how this might be possible in a country where government’s media control is well known and at the same time anti Shia sentiments runs high among the government officials and a large percentage of the public.

Numerous efforts in the past for rapprochement did not have lasting results. This might have been due to laxity of efforts, lack of flexibility on both sides, and possible external influences. “Al-Taqreeb bayn al-Mazaheb” or “Rapprochement between Schools of Thought” in Al Azhar was shut down in the 40s and further dialogs banned.

However, with the recent sectarian crisis in Iraq, which threatens to spread to the rest of Islamic regions, the two sides see the necessity of making serious efforts to bring about a better understanding and working relationships.

Iran has been one of the forerunners in the rapprochement activities. In recent months in 2007, Iran has intensified efforts and has invited Sunni scholars from various countries to attend conferences in Tehran for Rapprochement discussions. Also, Al Azhar has re-opened “Al-Taqreeb bayn al-Mazaheb” or “Rapprochement between Schools of Thought” in the 2007, and has had various conferences on the Taghreeb issues, in an attempt to revive the stalled relationships. This is an indication of recognition of need from both sects to be involved in active dialogue to solve sectarian conflicts, or at least deal with it objectively. Important religious figures from Iran and Egypt have engaged in TV debates.

On Feb 14, 2007 Al-Jazeera broadcasted a very important direct dialogue between the Sunni Islamist Yusuf al-Qaradawi ad Iranian politico Akbar Hashemi
Rafsanjani, dealing with the Sunni-Shia sectarian tensions, reported by Reuters. Rafsanjani is an adviser to Iran’s top supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and a key state body.

In the dialogue, Rafsanjani called on the Iraqi Shias not to pursue revenge against the Sunnis in the emerging sectarian war. He referred to the Shias suffering for years under Saddam’s regime. He said although the Sunnis started the first bloodshed after the war by assassination of a key cleric and attacks on holy Shia shrines, he still called for restraint. “We must note who started,” he said.

The fact that the various U.S. offensives against Sunni and Shia militants in Iraq have not quelled the violence, is a more indication of the necessity of the two sects cooperation and dialogue by their leaders in a large scale in order to come up with lasting solutions.

In the debate, Egyptian Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi pressed for a binding Shia edict ordering Iraqi Shia militants to refrain from violence, according to Reuters. "This is the stance that can solve the problem, extinguish the fire and prevent a civil war ... in which we all would be loser and the only winners would be the American, the Zionists (Israel) and the enemies of this (Islamic) nation.” Said al-Qaradawi.

Rafsanjani defended the Shia position by stating that the Shia clerics have always denounced bloodshed in Iraq, but avoided to make an edict similar to one made by the leader of Shia guerrilla group Hezbollah in a bid to stop Lebanon from slipping into sectarian violence.
Even with recommendations by the Iranian clerics, many of Iraq's Shias follow reclusive spiritual leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and abide only by his edicts.

Other important conferences have been arranged, especially in year 2007 trying to bridge the gap between the sects. One important conference was the Doha Conference.

In Jan 2007, the Doha Conference, with the support of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought witnessed the participation of 44 scholars from various countries including Iran and al-Azhar University from Egypt. The eight sessions of the conference discussed the following 3 issues:

1. The importance of dialogue for the unity of the Umma\(^{13}\),
2. The relationship between Islamic schools of thought in Islamic heritage - obstacles and challenges,
3. The phenomenon of exclusivism and its dangerous impact on inter-faith dialogue (Doha Conference, 2007).

Again, the researcher emphasizes the government’s role in such issues as having major importance followed by media discourse. One of the recommendations of Doha Conference was, “to call on governors and heads of Arab and Islamic states to strengthen the efforts of scholars and thinkers in order to achieve unity and the adoption of a policy dialogue between the Islamic sects.” This is one of the most important factors the Egyptian government must implement and allow media freedom to facilitate the discourse. Dialogue between scholars will have important impact among the elite scholars. However, the only

\(^{13}\) Muslim nation
way any progress in improving relationships can be seen is through public awareness. Media is the most important tool to achieve this goal.

Zaqzoug, Mahmoud (2007), the Egyptian Minister of Endowment, stressed in the Doha conference that the mutual dialogue is important to avoid stereotyping, misunderstanding/ misinterpretation on the both sides. He mentioned the point in the 40s when Egypt experienced a joint-attempt in establishing a group called “al-Taqreeb bayn al-Mazaheb” or “Rapprochement between Schools of Thought” which included a large number of al-Azhar Ulama (Sunni) and Shia Ulama. This committee issued a magazine and conducted researches in a mutual-cultural context, which played a crucial role in approaching the divides on the both sides (Doha Conference, 2007).

The researcher therefore recommends media discourse through which the following objectives should be observed:

1. Egypt and Iran must strengthen their religio/political ties and continue discourse on rapprochements through the media.
2. Egyptian government must make serious effort to clarify the misunderstanding about the Shia belief through media discourse.
3. Iran and Shia scholars should reform some ideologies that are controversial and make serious effort through the media to let Egyptians and the Islamic world know about these reforms.
4. Both sects must deal with sensitive issues objectively and come to terms with a mutual solution.
5. Calling on heads of Arab and Islamic states to encourage and strengthen the efforts and thinkers in dialogue between the Islamic sects globally.

Comment: In the month of Jan 2008, there have been numerous media reports that Iran and Egypt are trying to reestablish a friendly relationship and political communications. Some senior government officials from both sides have made recent visits and the atmosphere seems to be changing for the better. This might be a beginning step toward normalization of relations and steps toward more peace and tolerance between the sects.
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*Islam’s divide--and us*


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Appendix I - Shia and the Sunnis Conflicts

Conflicts in Succession

Ali’s right to succession

In his book, *Two Schools in Islam*, (Askary, Morteza, 1373/1994)\(^{14}\), a Shia writer, talks about centuries of dispute between the Muslims regarding the succession, and asks if the Prophet (pbuh) chose Ali, his cousin, as his successor, or if such judgment was left in the hands of a few companions who chose Abu Bakr at a time while Ali was busy burying the Prophet (pbuh) after his death.

He claims that for Abu Bakr’s nomination, none of the members of Bani Hashem (the clans of the Prophet) were present. Omar was the originator of the nomination process who subsequently got the allegiance of those present. Later, this included the allegiance of a large number of the companions of the Prophet while others disagreed with such nomination and believed Ali should have been nominated.

Askari (1373/1994) further argues that if the Prophet himself did not nominate anyone, and the correct method to nominate a leader was through ijma’ (consensus of the majority), then why were the majority not present at the nomination of Abu Bakr, including Ali and members of Prophet’s family and why did Abu Bakr choose Omar as his successor, without going through the same process? Omar subsequently chose Usman as his successor, but Ali was nominated by the people after the assassination of Usman. He also points to the

\(^{14}\) To convert Iranian calendar to Gregorian calendar, add 621 years, which would be 1994.
events immediately after Usman’s assassination, which involved Aisha, the wife of the Prophet, going to war with Ali. This conflict caused the deaths of nearly 30,000 Muslims on both sides and fanned further disunity between the Muslims. Askari then discusses the assassination of Ali by the Kharejites (a radical offshoot of Islam) and the nomination of Hassan, Ali’s oldest son, by Ali before his death. Another figure, Mu’awiyah, tried to claim succession and rose to go to war with Hasan. To avoid bloodshed, Hasan agreed with a treaty to allow Mu’awiah khelafah or rulership which would revert to Hasan after Mu’awiah’s death.

Hasan was poisoned, according to the Shias, by one of his own wives who was promised marriage to Mu’awia’s son, Yazid—which never materialized. This, according to Askari (1373/1994), would eliminate Hasan’s succession, leaving Yazid, as the next khalifah. Hasan, however, chose Hussein, his brother, as the successor before his death. The bloody battle between Hussein’s small family and Yazid’s army in Karbala, Iraq, marks the most tragic event in Islamic history in which the brutal army of Yazid beheaded Hussein and slaughtered all who were in his company after 30 days of bitter cruelty toward the progeny of the Prophet (pbuh), depriving them of food and water. One of Hussein’s sons, Ali, escaped the slaughters and became the next Imam of the Shias. Through his progeny the succession passed down to the twelfth Imam. (Askary, Morteza, 1373/1994).

There are other interpretations of these historic events. In the “Two divergent traditions narrated by the two sects,” the author points out that the

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15 Radhiallaho Anha (May Allah be pleased with her)
Shias believe that the Prophet (pbuh) died while resting on the shoulder of Ali, while the Sunnis believe his head was on Aisha 's lap when he died. Whether Ali was with the Prophet at the hour of his death or not, it is clear from all historical backgrounds that he was a truly intimate companion of the Prophet, especially in his last days (Rogerson, Barnaby 2006).

Until Mohammad's death, Ali was with him nearly all the time. Ali was his first cousin. Ali’s father, Abu Talib, had acted as a father for Mohammad who was orphaned, losing his father before birth and mother at a very young age. His grandfather reared Mohammad for the first eight years of his life and after he passed away Abu Talib took over.

Rogerson (2006), an orientalist, tries to paint the entire story of the Prophet’s life from an outsider’s point of view, and without taking sides. He continues with the story of Mohammad’s upbringing, saying that Abu Talib took a serious position in teaching him all that he knew and even taking him on trading journeys in order to teach him about life outside of Makka. When Ali was born, Mohammad was twenty nine years old and had already been married to Kadijah for four years. Mohammad took over Ali’s guardianship when Ali was very young, and raised him as his own son. He was the first young man to accept the message of Islam after Mohammad declared his prophethood.

When Mohammad first summoned his clan to join and support him in his new mission, none responded except the young Ali who may have been 11 or 13 years old at the time. After Mohammad’s own tribe, as well as other Makkans, did their utmost to persecute the new Muslims, Mohammad ordered the Muslims
to migrate to Madina. Ali, Abu Bakr and Mohammad were among the last ones who stayed behind.

To avoid an assassination attempt, Ali was reported to have slept in Mohammad’s place while he and Abu Bakr left Mekka together at night. Ali’s heroic acts in many wars also testify his zeal for Islam and closeness to Mohammad (pbuh). He became one of the leading warriors among the Muslims.

Rogerson (2006) talks about how Ali later proposed to Mohammad that he marry his daughter, Fatimah. Mohammad had previously rejected marriage offers to Fatimah from Omar and Abu Bakr. Fatimah was the youngest daughter of Mohammad, and she shared with Ali from childhood a strong desire for her father’s spiritual teachings. They were both strong adherents to Islam. They also both shared strong love for Khadijah, Fatimah’s mother, who was a strong bond between them. Khadijah and Fatimah are the ultimate examples for both Shia and Sunni Muslim women. The two were among the four women whom God called the best women on the earth.

Fatimah gave birth to Hasan and Hussein, the only male progeny of the Prophet. This may have been a reason for jealousy from the other, childless wives of the Prophet, especially, Aisha and the enmity which developed between Aisha and Ali, according to Rogerson (2006).

The successful conquest of the oasis of Khaybar, and the peaceful submission of the neighboring oasis of Fadak ended the days of poverty for the Muslims. There was much land and booty which the Prophet carefully distributed among the people of Madina. In addition, fields were put aside for members of
his family including Aisha, Fatima and Ali. The produce of oasis of Fadak would
amply support the family of the Prophet. (Later, Abu Bakr would take away
Fatima’s share of this land, after Prophet's death which caused her not to speak
with him till her death and a great enmity still carried by the Shia toward Abu Bakr
as a result.)

By 629 the Muslim army had transformed from an embattled group of
refugees to the rising power within central Arabia. Many powerful Makkan
pagans had defected and joined the Muslim army as well. In 630, when the
Prophet finally lead his army into Makka, Ali was the standard carrier. When it
came to cleansing the Ka’ba\textsuperscript{16} from all the idols, it was Ali who stood on the
shoulder of the prophet and together, they destroyed them all.

When the Prophet made his last pilgrimage to Makka, he gave a sermon
of which there is no definite record, though both Shia and Sunnis maintain
divergent texts of what was said. In this sermon, after reminding people to fear
God and various advices, the Prophet (pbuh), makes a declaration in favor of Ali
saying, “O God, be a friend to whoever he [Ali] befriends, and an enemy of
whomever he takes as an enemy.” This was prevented from being made into a
clear oath of succession only by the direct intervention of Omar, talking the
Prophet out of such an action.

Some historical sources, mainly Sunni, pass this event all together, while
the Shias consider this one of the most important events in which the succession
of Ali was made public by Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). This succession would,
according to them, pass from Ali to his progeny which later formed the twelve

\footnote{16 The House of God in Makka built originally by Prophet Ibraham and his son, Ismael.}
Imams of the Shias. Shias and Sunnis will never agree on exactly what was said. Instead, this speech has become a major point of departure between the Shias and the Sunnis.

Rogerson (2006) continues with detailed stories of Abu Bakr’s merits, his nomination and the dispute between him and Ali about succession as well as the problems of the Prophet’s daughter Fatima’s inheritance. As mentioned previously, Abu Bakr took away the Fadak land from Fatima which was given to her by the Prophet while he was alive. Abu Bakr maintained that the Prophets do not leave behind any inheritance a hadith narrated by Aisha, who claimed she heard the Prophet saying that. Ali finally made reconciliation with Abu Bakr after Fatima’s death.

**Abu Bakr’s Right to Succession**

The researcher here shifts to other writers and their points of view. Sunnis consider Abu Bakr, who ended up as the successor to Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), one of the greatest figures in Islamic history. They regard his nomination totally justified and although, they respect Ali as a great figure in Islam as well, they deem Abu Bakr as a better choice at that given time. Much has been written about Abu Bakr’s character, personality and sacrifices he did for the sake of Islam.

No event in the history of Islam divided the Muslims more than the issue of succession after the Prophet’s death. For Sunnis, Abu Bakr was the only rightful successor since he was the best among the companions after the Prophet’s death. Although he was not explicitly chosen by the Prophet, the fact that the
Prophet asked him to lead the prayer during the last part of his illness showed
the Prophet’s preference for Abu Bakr over others. The consensus reached by
the Muslims in favor of Abu Bakr further confirms God’s choice for succession
(Madelung Wilferd, 1997).

Abu Bakr was a close companion of the Holy Prophet. Therefore, he knew
him better than others. He had total belief in the Prophet. Such knowledge and
belief in the Prophet made Abu Bakr to become the first adult man to accept the
Message of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). He was titled As-Siddiq (truthful), by the
Prophet who considered him a man with a strong faith (Hamzah Qassem 1999).

Qassem (1999) states, Abu Bakr, a wealthy man, offered most of his
wealth for the cause of Islam, fought bravely in wars, spread the message of
Islam and had no hesitation to sacrifice his life for the Prophet (pbuh).

Many Sunnis believe that Allah mentions and praises Abu Bakr in various
verses His Holy Qur’an such as:

"As for him who gives and keeps his duty, we facilitate for him the way to
ease." (Al-Lail (5-7)

"And (away from the fire) shall be kept the most faithful who gives his
wealth, thereby purifying himself, and seeks to gain no pleasure or reward
other than the Presence of his Lord, the Most High." (Al-Lail (17-21)

Other Causes of Division

The great deal of writings regarding both Ali and Abu Bakr make it clear
that both sects see clear favor in their particular candidate. A comprehensive
The report by BBC in: Religion and Ethics – Islam, covers the succession issue. A Summary is as follows:

The great support of Shias in favor of Ali and the Sunnis for Abu Bakr regarding succession may leave a wide chasm to overcome between the two groups. Volumes written by both sects supporting their points of view have made little difference in the determination of the other group regarding the succession. This was only the beginning of their differences. The most notable problem that deepened the divide came after the assassination of Usman and nomination of Ali by the people as the successor.

Aisha, the daughter of the first Caliph Abu Bakr and the widow of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), rose against Ali in 636 for not bringing the murderers of Usman to justice before taking on the leadership of people. She is reported to have said, “By God! Usman was innocent, I will avenge his blood.” Both Talha & Zubayr, the brother-in-laws of Aisha aided her in the battle which cost the life of Talha, defeat of Aisha, and loss of thirty thousand lives on both sides. Aisha was advised by Umm Salama, the oldest wife of the Prophet against such decision, but she was encouraged by Talha and Zubayr to move on with the war.

The report goes on to say that, after her defeat, Ali returned her home with respect and without any harm. Enmity caused by this further divided the Muslims, especially the newly formed and crystallizing group: the Shias of Ali (partisans of Ali), and the Sunnis. The conflict has continued since then, as mentioned by Islamic Occasions: Truth, Wisdom and Justice Website, and this view is vastly supported by majority of the Shia writings (BBC Report). In the famous Shia
book, Nahjulbalagha, attributed to Ali’s sermons and advices, mentions numerous times Ali’s discontent about these events and his deep sorrow.

BBC report further mentions that the problem did not end here. Ali had to deal with another war with Mu’awia. By the time of Ali’s khalifate, Islam's dominion had already spread to Syria. The governor of Damascus, Mu'awiya, fought Ali to claim the caliphate for himself in the famous Battle of Siffin in year 657. After nearly losing the battle, Mu'awiya's soldiers flagged the ends of their spears with verses from the Qur'an which made Ali’s supporters feel morally unable to fight their Muslim brothers. The Battle of Siffin proved indecisive and Ali and Mu'awiya agreed to settle the dispute through outside arbitrators. However this solution of human arbitration was unacceptable to a group of Ali’s followers who pointed to the Qur'anic verse: *The decision is for Allah only. He telleth the truth and He is the Best of Deciders* (*Qur'an* 6:57). In 661 these persons, the Kharijites, killed Ali while he was praying in a mosque in Kufa, Iraq. In the years that followed, the Kharijites were defeated in a series of uprisings, (reported by the BBC: Religion and Ethics – Islam).

**Shia Sunni Expansion**

**Sects’ Settlements in regions**

Continuing with BBC Report: What happened next, according to the above report, gave Shia Islam its strong theme of martyrdom. Ali’s youngest son, Hussein, who was chosen by his martyred brother Hasan as the next Khalifah rose against Yazid, Mu'awiya's son, who seized the caliphate in 680. He led a rebellion but was met by Yazid's forces in Karbala, Iraq. Despite knowing that
defeat was nearly certain, he fought heroically and was killed on the battlefield. It is one of the most significant events in Shia history, where he is considered to have sacrificed his life for the survival of Shia Islam. It is still commemorated today as Ashura where millions of pilgrims still visit the Imam mosque in Karbala.

The family of the Prophet continued their spiritual leadership from the line of Ali and Hussein. The Shia believe they were divinely appointed until the late 9th Century when the last Imam disappeared, and is expected to return at the end time to establish peace and justice on earth. Later on, a council of Ulema was appointed to elect an Ayatollah: the supreme spiritual leader. Ayatollah translates literally from Arabic as 'Sign of Allah’. This person would have a great religious authority.

Sunni Islam expanded as far as Roman and Persian empires. New religious authority was established to answer legal and religious questions. The Hanbali, Hanafi, Maliki and Shaafii emerged. To this day, many Sunni Muslims continue to seek to find Islamic solutions through their rulings, in any society, regardless of time or place. Due to lack of military power, Shia Muslims who have always believed that the Prophet's family were the rightful leaders of the Islamic world, they never ruled the majority of Muslims, but during the empire of the Safavid dynasties in the 16th Century, they scored a great political triumph. This Dynasty covered parts of modern Iran, Azerbaijan and Iraq. Today, Iran is the political face of Shia Islam.

Sunni Islam continued through the Umayyads (started by Mu'awiya) and other dynasties that led to the powerful Ottoman and Mughal empires of the 15th
to 20th Centuries. Therefore, Sunnis emerged as a visible identity growing close to 85-90% of the now over one billion Muslims. This large population stretched geographically from the Indonesian through the Indian subcontinent, central Asia, the Arab world and Africa to the periphery of Europe (BBC Religion and Ethics – Islam).

As mentioned earlier, the Shia population is about 10-15% of the Sunni majority. The numerical differences could be attributed to the fact that from the time of Ummayed rule, (Askari,1373/1994) asserts that the military power shifted from the four original Khalifahs to self appointed rulers who adamantly opposed giving the right of succession to any one of the Prophet’s family. The Shias, or the followers of the family of the Prophet, therefore remained underground spiritual guides, while various dynasties ruled the Muslims and expanded worldwide.

The table below summarized similarities of the main two sects to each other, as well as their major differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunnah</th>
<th>Shia (or Shiah)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adherents called</td>
<td>Sunnis</td>
<td>Shias, Shi’i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning of name</td>
<td>&quot;well-trodden path&quot; or &quot;tradition&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;party&quot; or &quot;partisans&quot; of Ali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current adherents</td>
<td>1.3 Billions Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percentage of total Muslims</td>
<td>85% - 90%</td>
<td>10%- 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary locations</td>
<td>most Muslim countries</td>
<td>Iran, Iraq, Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsects</td>
<td>none, but four major schools of Muslim law are recognized</td>
<td>Ithna 'Ashariyah (Twelvers; the largest), Isma’iiliyah and Zaydiyah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origins</td>
<td>c. 632 CE; theology developed especially in 10th cent.</td>
<td>c. 632-650 CE; killing of Ali's son Husayn in 680 CE is major event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Mohammad designate a successor?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>true successor of the Prophet</td>
<td>Abu Bakr, father of the Prophet's favoured wife, 'A'ishah (elected by people of Medina)</td>
<td>'Ali ibn Abi Talib, husband of the Prophet's daughter Fatimah (designated by the Prophet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qualifications for ruler of Islam</td>
<td>tribe of the Prophet (Quraysh); later, any qualified ruler</td>
<td>family of the Prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current leaders</td>
<td>Imams</td>
<td>Mujtahids (learned scholars)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity of imams</td>
<td>human leaders</td>
<td>infallible manifestations of God and perfect interpreters of the Qur'an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Mahdi</td>
<td>will come in the future</td>
<td>was already on earth, is currently the &quot;hidden imam&quot; who works through mujtahids to interpret Qur'an; and will return at the end of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious authority other than the Qur'an</td>
<td>ijma' (consensus) of the Muslim community</td>
<td>infallible imams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concealing faith for self-protection (taqiya)</td>
<td>affirmed under certain circumstances</td>
<td>Emphasized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temporary marriage (mut'ah)</td>
<td>practiced in the Prophet's time, but now rejected</td>
<td>still practiced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holy cities</td>
<td>Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem</td>
<td>Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Najaf, Karbala</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major holidays</td>
<td>Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr</td>
<td>Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr, Ashura</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table taken from: [www.religionfacts.com](http://www.religionfacts.com)  
[http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/comparison_charts/islamic_sects.htm](http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/comparison_charts/islamic_sects.htm)
Political Power Fuels Religious Split

According to the Shias, Sunni political powers continuously usurped the rights of the family of the prophet, leaving them with little voice in the political arena. At the same time, as Islam grew, the Islamic leaders faced other challenges (Shuster, Mike NPR 2004).

Shuster (2004) reports on NPR the following observations:

Over the next centuries, Islam clashed with the European Crusaders, with the Mongol conquerors from Central Asia, and was spread further by the Ottoman Turks. By the year 1500, Persia was a seat of Sunni Islamic learning, but all that was about to change with the arrival of Azeri conquerors. They established the Safavid dynasty in Persia — modern-day Iran — and made it Shia. "That dynasty actually came out of what's now eastern Turkey," says Gregory Gause. "They were a Turkic dynasty, one of the leftovers of the Mongol invasions that had disrupted the Middle East for a couple of centuries. The Safavid dynasty made it its political project to convert Iran into a Shia country."

Shiism gradually became the glue that held Persia together and distinguished it from the Ottoman Empire to its west, which was Sunni, and the Mughal Muslims to the east in India, also Sunni. This was the geography of Shia Islam, and it would prevail into the 20th century.

There were periods of conflict and periods of peace. But the split remained and would, in the second half of the 20th century, turn out to be one of the most important factors in the upheavals that have ravaged the Middle East. "Why has there been such a long and protracted disagreement and tension between these
two sects?" asks Ray Takeyh, author of Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic. "It has to do with political power."

In the 20th century, that meant a complex political dynamic involving Sunni and Shia, Arabs and Persians, colonizers and colonized, oil, and the involvement of the superpowers. The political climate remained tense between the Sunnis and the Shias and each country which had majority of one sect consider the other sect a possible threat to their security and national identity. Persecution of the minor sect has not been uncommon among the Muslim nations to this day.
Appendix II – Fatimids in Egypt

As stated in section 3.3 of the thesis, Fatimids were one of the branches of Shia who came into political power for a few centuries. The following is a more detail narrative of their rise and demise according to various publications in Egypt.

Fatimids Rise to Power

Fatimids\textsuperscript{17} rose to political existence and power in North Africa in 296/909 after a long struggle within the Muslim regions. Their khalifate started a year later. Their first Khalif, al-Mahdi was also the Shia Ismaili imam who had come to political power for the first time. He was however, the imam for ten years previously. He was from the line of the Prophet’s family from Fatima’s line who was the Prophet’s daughter and the mother of his only two grandsons. Thereafter al-Mahdi and his successors were both religious imams and political leaders who grew from Tunisia, Algeria and Sicili. By 358/969, Fatimids had taken over all of North Africa and parts of Mediterranean, and moved on to take Egypt and parts of Syria and the holy cities of in Saudi Arabia, adding to their growing empire. In Egypt, they founded Cairo and chose it as their new headquarter while moving forward with their expansion to overpower the Abbasid khalifate.

Although they had a high point in the middle of 11 century, controlling Baghdad, the capital city of Abbasid rivals, their decline began and was prolonged by the crusaders invading Jerusalem in 493/1099 which took it from

\textsuperscript{17} Fatemites, or the Ismaili sects are a branch of the Shia sect, different from the twelve sect.
Fatimids only a year after they claimed it for themselves. Later, Latin crusaders under the King Amalric I, king of Jerusalem got involved in Egypt while still under the Fatimid rule. Finally in 567/1171, 261 years after establishing their state, Saladin (Salah al-Din), one of the most famous Muslim opponents of the Crusaders who was the wizir\(^\text{18}\) to the last Imam-khalif of the Fatimid Dynasty, abolished the succession of the khalifate. The Fatimids had faced challenges from the Sunni Islam, Abbasid rulers as well as the Ummayads of Spain, their other enemy. However, their two-hundred year rule over Egypt, marks Egypt’s first independence in Islamic period and it remained so until the Ottoman conquest in 923/1517. This dynasty covered areas such as North Africa, the Hijaz, Syria, Sicili, and Yemen.

**Comparison with the Twelver Shia**

What made this sect of Shia different than the Twelver Shia, was the fact that the Ismaili imams were also rulers and they covered all aspects of political life as well as religious, where as the twelve imams never really got to rule. Other Sunni rulers, like the Abbasids did not follow similar principles. The Ismaili rule, therefore was not widely understood by the Sunni population, if at all.

**Sunni and Shia Coexistence and Enmity**

It is noteworthy to mention the sources of scholarship which shows Ismaili affinity on the one hand and Sunni attitude on the other. Walker, (2002), however mentions that most of the writers were simply ignorant of Ismaili doctrine. Some of these writings have continued to this day based on the false notion of Ismaeli belief. The author further notes that the reason that not much was written about

\(^{18}\) Prime Minister
the Fatimid era by scholars, and historians, especially during two centuries in
Egypt, may stem from aversion to, or perhaps unease and unfamiliarity with
Ismaili shiism, its doctrine and literature.

The author further points out that the Shias were always minority within
Islam, and therefore, they were different than the common Sunnis. They trace
their original problems to the opposition of the companions to the nomination of
Ali, whom the Shias believe was nominated by the Prophet. Such failure to
recognize Ali’s right was condemned by the Shias (follower of Ali). They
considered those who denied Ali’s succession, their enemies, which left a mark
of animosity between the two groups from its beginning to this day.

Shias, being the weaker of the two contenting parties was always
persecuted or forced into silence. Any political movement had to be undertaken
with much caution and secrecy. Although Ali himself finally achieved the rank of
Supreme Leader of the Muslims and the Commander of the faithful after Abu
Bakr, Omar and Usman, the ultimate enemy was the head of Usman’s
Ummayyad clan, Mu’awiyah. The Ummayyeds were then, and were to continue
to be a staunch enemy of Ali, to his lineage and to his Hashimite clan.

Although the Ummayyads were eventually overthrown by the Abbasids,
they survived in Spain where they continued their distant opposition to Abbasids
and newly formed Fatimids in the area.

Although Abbasids once began supporting Ali’s descendants, by ninth
century abandoned their support and turned to hostility when the Ismaeli da’wa
began to grow. They became equally hostile to Ali’s descendants. Many Shias in

\[19 \text{ Propagation}\]
the coming times had to conceal their faith in order to escape persecution or attain education or participate in schools of law belonging to the Sunni madhabs.  

**Cairo as the New Center**

For Ismailies, the residence of Imam was the most important factor in many issues. With his move to Egypt to his newly capital city, Cairo, Al Mu’izz had shifted the focus of the devotion from Maghrib\(^{21}\) to Cairo. His followers came from long distances to learn and get Islamic Education according to their supreme Imam’s rulings. His capital then, had to be adorned both physically and administratively, even for his supporters who accepted his claim as a ruler without subscribing to Ismaili imamate doctrine. Cairo therefore became the seat of a powerful empire encompassing much of North Africa, Sicily, large section of Syria, the Red Sea, and the Hijaz. For the first time in Islam History, Egypt was not just a province, but an independent state with Cairo as its capital. Trade between Egypt and other countries prospered largely at this era.

Massive elaborate construction in this era can still be seen after half a century has passed. Unfortunately very little remains of the two massive palaces from that time. The policy of building elaborate constructions extended to mosques as well. Fustat, the pre-existing capital was a commercial center and quite crowded with population, few of whom were Ismailis. Its main mosque was named ‘Amr b. al-As, the first Muslim conquer of Egypt, a person regarded by the Shia as an arch-enemy for his support of the Mu’awia against Ali. Therefore

\(^{20}\) Four schools of Sunni Jurisprudence

\(^{21}\) Morocco
almost immediately after his arrival, Jawhar began construction of al-Azhar mosque, which later became the most famous mosque in Egypt. During Ismaili rule, this mosque served as the principal mosque of the army, the government and Ismaili community in Egypt. Other mosques were built by the subsequent Ismaili rulers.

The Fatimid government was generally tolerant to others as appointment of non-Ismaili judges was among such indications. But the head of religious mission, the chief da'īa\(^{22}\) had to be Ismaili and was required to compose and deliver weekly lessons on Ismaili doctrine to other members of Ismaili community. This was passed on to other regions away from Cairo. This system continued to the end of their rule.

**A Century of Military Wazirs**

Among various wazirs, Badr made a great name for himself, especially at later time when the Fatimid expansion and rule had subsided. He managed to subdue and eliminate any Arab rivals and over time, he had control of all titles that others could hold, making him the supreme authority. He changed the way the Fatimids ruled and except for a short period, the new configuration remained intact to the end of the dynasty. An Ismaili imam continued to be recognized as the caliph, and thus his role persisted. The religious character of the government did not change but the real power stayed with the wazirs whose authority was from personal military might and not necessarily from the approval of the caliphs. It is important to note that not all of the wazirs were Ismaili and that the final wazir

\(^{22}\) Inviter to Islam. Islamic teacher
was the famous Sala al-Din, the great hero of Sunni Islam and the person who ultimately eliminated the Fatimids’ rule in Egypt.

** Destruction of Fatimid Archives **

Walker (2000), finally points to the fact that although many archival records did exist during the Fatimid era, not much exist presently except some coinage and letters. It is not clear the reason for the disappearance of such important documents. Yet the author believes more data could have shed greater light onto the details of this dynasty and its period and would have shed further light on this extremely valuable information to the historian especially for social history regarding social classes.

The author wonders why archival sources about Fatimids exist in Europe and not in Middle East. The only reasonable answer, he asserts, could be the fact that this dynasty was succeeded by another regime which saw no reason to preserve the records of the one it replaced. Some sources report that Ayyubid era did wholesale emptying of Fatimid storerooms and destroying all they left behind. The Ayyubids came to power utterly opposing the Fatimids and possibly with no interest in preserving their archives.

Despite this fact, there are still some documents issued by Fatimid governmental sources do exit, not enough for survey, but enough to provide solid evidence of how they were produced and recorded.

** Fatimids History from a Different Angle **

In the book, *The History of Islamic Egypt (567-648 after Hijra)* Saied, Dr. Ahmed Fouad (2004), the author writes regarding the rise of the Fatimid
caliphate. The Fatimid caliphs in Egypt led the Islamic empire side by side with their counterparts in Iraq – the Abbasids. Many of the basic accusations against the Fatimid caliphate were introduced by the opposing Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad and the Ayyubids who supported them and eventually built their empire on the ruins of Fatimid's.

The author explains that love for the Prophet and his family was clearly an important issue for Egyptians - This can be shown clearly in the fact that Egyptians regularly visit tombs and mosques where members of the Prophet's family are buried.

The author summarizes some of the reasons that doomed the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt to failure, they include:

1. Young age of Caliphs
2. Corruption of the responsible ministers
3. Political and sectarian divisions within the Caliphate
4. Success of Crusaders to invade Jerusalem and the Syrian coast
5. Fatimid's failure in pushing people to Jihad against the Crusaders
6. Regular economic crisis on Egypt led the Caliphate to lose its legitimacy

The main reason for the crusaders' success was the weakness of the Islamic empire after its division between Sunni Abbasids and Shia Fatimids by the 4th century after Hijra.

Egyptians sincerely accepted the Fatimid regime as shown by the constant strikes and demonstrations against Salahuddin, the subsequent ruler
after the Fatamids, which erupted all over Egypt. Furthermore, Egypt under Fatimid rule was the initiator for unifying Islamic thoughts and different sects under one banner through efforts of Azhar Ulama and Iranian intellectuals.

**Al Ahram Weekly Reports**

The following is a summary of an article in Al Ahram Weekly: *Labyrinth of the sect*, Rasha Saad (2006) gives further detail about this dynasty:

The Egyptian manifestation of Islam, although largely considered to be “Sunni” retains a great deal of influence from Shia traditions stemming from the Fatamid period of 969-1171. Although not directly adopting the principles and practices of the rulers, Egyptian Muslims still absorbed a great deal of overt Shia tendencies. This influence can be seen in many areas, ranging from naming conventions (the frequency of the name “Ali” being given, for example) and a love for the Ahl al-Bayt, to the celebration of moulids\(^{23}\) and worship at shrines such as al-Hussein and Sayyida Zainab, similar to shrines in Iraq or Iran. Although many Egyptian’s practice a Shia influenced form of Islam, there are still very few professing “Shias.” Some families, who immigrated from the Levant area and from Iran, are among the approximately 5,000 Shias in Egypt today. The true number is uncertain, due to a practice of *taqiya*, which involves concealing one’s religious affiliation in order to avoid persecution. Others have converted recently but this conversion is subject to some controversy. Mohamed Taqey El-Ghomi, the founder of the Center for the Rapprochement of Islamic Sects (CRIS) argues that converting from Sunnism to Shi’ism would change little if anything in a Muslims day to day life. The differences can be as little as

\(^{23}\) Birth day celebrations of the Prophet and Imams
combining two prayers into one occasion, and various legal differences stemming from the divergence of the legal schools of thought.

Even al-Azhar mosque was founded during the Fatamid period as a place for the study of Shia jurisprudence, but was later converted under the Ayyubids in 1171. That notwithstanding, al-Azhar has added the study of Jafari legal studies and in the early 1960’s, its sheikh produced a fatwa stating that Sunnis and Shias were equal in the eyes of Islam. This has not, unfortunately, meant that Shia are immune from discrimination in the religious community of Egypt.

Recent tensions with Iran and Hizbollah, a Shia militant group that recently engaged in combat with Israeli forces in Lebanon, have caused the Shia to come to the forefront in the public consciousness in Egypt. Some were criticized for praising the actions of Hizbollah and of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinajad, and others were physically assaulted according to Al Ahram Weekly. Editor in chief of the magazine Rose Al-Youssef, Abdullah Kamal, spoke of the real danger that Sunnis could convert to Shi’ism, calling the threat of the Shia “more of a threat to the Islamic nation than Jews.”

Attempts at producing Shia political representation have also been met with challenges, with one political party under planning (the Aman party, or “safety”) and another competing party founded by Mohamed El-Dereini, the president of the Higher Council for Affairs of Aal Al-Bait. He hopes to form his own party, Al-Ghadir, but he was arrested and held by the government for over 2 years beginning in March of 2004, until his release in June of 2006.
Many misconceptions about the Shia abound: that they have a different Qur’an, that the call to prayer omits the statement that Mohammad is the messenger of God, and that they believe that the Angel Gabriel mistakenly made the revelation to Mohammad instead of to Ali. Such polemical rumors can be attributed to a political base, as can much of the overall hostility. Many of these rumors can be traced back to approximately 1601 when Iran was unified under Safavid Shia rule. The same things happened after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the Iran-Iraq war in which Egypt took the side of Sunni-led Iraq. Conspiracy theories about Iranian influence have led to the perpetuation of such rumors. Islamist political analyst Fahmi Howeidy argues that this conflict with Iran has led to security and media exaggerations of the Iranian Shia influence in Egypt. He argues that there is no real “risk,” stating that “A big country with a population of 73 million will not slide into strife when a few thousand change sects.”

There is hope that the activities of groups such as CRIS will be able to bring forth a dialog and remove the misconceptions about the Shia that may have been spread. In any event, the population of Egypt more receptive to discussion with Shias than perhaps many other countries, given the strong Shia historical background from the Fatamid period (Al Ahram weekly, Saad Rasha, 2006).

An interview with an Egyptian Shia professor of Medicine and active writer on Shias in Egypt, Dr. Ahmed Rasem Alnafis shed a new light on the Fatimids in Egypt.
The last Fatimid Khalifah, in spite of the opposition from his advisors, sent for Salaheddin El Ayyubi to come from Shaam to be his Wazir. As predicted, later on, Salaheddin demolished Fatimids dynasty, murdered many, house arrested all who were left from the royal family till each of them died. The rest of the Ismaelis were either exiled to Yemen, Saudi Arabia, India, killed or those who remained professed to be Shafei in order to avert persecution. Some also moved to Aswan, Egypt.

The Shias have been continuously persecuted and discriminated against to this day. Alnafis himself was imprisoned three times and believes that there are no Shia mosques in Egypt presently and any attempt for Shia gathering will meet harsh crack down by the authorities (Personal Communication Nov 9, 2007).
Appendix III – Al Azhar Verdict on Rapprochement

Head Office of al-Azhar University:

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE BENEFICENT, THE MERCIFUL

Text of the Verdict (Fatwa) Issued by His Excellency Shaikh al-Akbar Mahmood Shaltoot, Head of the al-Azhar University, on Permissibility of Following "al-Shia al-Imamiyyah" School of Thought.

His Excellency was asked:

Some believe that, for a Muslim to have religiously correct worship and dealing, it is necessary to follow one of the four known schools of thought, whereas, "al-Shia al-Imamiyyah" school of thought is not one of them nor "al-Shia al-Zaidiyyah." Do your Excellency agree with this opinion, and prohibit following "al-Shia al-Imamiyyah al-Ithna Ashariyyah" school of thought, for example?

His Excellency replied:

1) Islam does not require a Muslim to follow a particular Madh'hab (school of thought). Rather, we say: every Muslim has the right to follow one of the schools of thought which has been correctly narrated and its verdicts have been compiled in its books. And, everyone who is following such Madhahib [schools of thought] can transfer to another school, and there shall be no crime on him for doing so.
1) The Ja'fari school of thought, which is also known as "al-Shia al-Imamiyyah al-Ithna Ashariyyah" (i.e., The Twelver Imami Shias) is a school of thought that is religiously correct to follow in worship as are other Sunni schools of thought. Muslims must know this, and ought to refrain from unjust prejudice to any particular school of thought, since the religion of Allah and His Divine Law (Shari'ah) was never restricted to a particular school of thought. Their jurists (Mujtahidoon) are accepted by Almighty Allah, and it is permissible to the "non-Mujtahid" to follow them and to accord with their teaching whether in worship (Ibadaat) or transactions.

2) (Mu'amilaat).

Signed, Mahmood Shaltoot (muslim-forum.org).
Appendix IV – Survey

Please Participate in this questionnaire. It is designed only for research and academic purposes for obtaining a Master's Degree. Your responses will remain anonymous.

1. Gender:  1. __ Male  2. __ Female

2. Geographical Distribution: 1. ___ Urban  2. ___ Rural

3. Age:  1. __ Less than 20  2. __ 20 and Less than 30  3. __ 30 and less than 40  4. __ 40 and less than 50  5. __ 50 and above

4. Marital status:  1. __ Single  2. __ Married  3. __ Divorce  4. __ Widowed

5. Educational Level:  1. __ No Education  2. __ Can Read and Write  3. __ Basic Education  4. __ High School/Equivalent or Higher school  5. __ University Certificate  6. __ Graduate Degree

6. Occupation Status:  1. __ Working  2. __ Not Working

7. Working:  1. ___ Governmental Sector  2. ___ Private Sector  3. __ Self employed  4. ___ Craftsman  5. __ Other

8. Not Working because:  1. __ Retired  2. __ No Job opportunity  3. __ Student  4. ___ Housewife  5. __ Other .................


If you are a Muslim, please complete the rest of the form. If not, please stop here.

11. Sect:  1. __ Sunni  2. __ Shia (___ Ithna Ashar ___ Ismaili)  3. __ Sufi  4. __ Other __
12. In your opinion the Shi’its believe in: (Mark as many as you feel is correct)

a) ____ Allah
b) ____ The Qur’an
c) ____ Prophet Mohammad.
d) ____ Four Khulafa’
e) ____ Ahl al-Bayt succession after the prophet, beginning with Ali
f) ____ Following the Sunnah of the Prophet through the companions
g) ____ Following the Sunnah of the Prophet through Ahl al-Bayt
h) ____ Shia love the family of Prophet.
i) ____ The Shia worship the family of Prophet and exalt them beyond human level
j) ____ Ali should have been the prophet not Mohammad.
k) ____ None of the above.
l) ____ I don’t know anything about their beliefs.

13. How do you perceive the Shias

a) Shia is on the right path

1. __ Strongly Agree. 2 __ Agree 3. __ Neutral 4. __ Disagree 5. __ Strongly Disagree

b) Shia believes in Mohammad as the Prophet

1. __ Strongly Agree. 2 __ Agree 3. __ Neutral 4. __ Disagree 5. __ Strongly Disagree
c) Shia believes in Ali as the Prophet

1. __ Strongly Agree. 2 __ Agree 3. __ Neutral 4. __ Disagree 5. __ Strongly Disagree

d) Shias are disbelievers

1. __ Strongly Agree. 2 __ Agree 3. __ Neutral 4. __ Disagree 5. __ Strongly Disagree

e) Shias are apostates

1. __ Strongly Agree. 2 __ Agree 3. __ Neutral 4. __ Disagree 5. __ Strongly Disagree

14. About the Shia belief, where did you get your information?

a) Mass Communication:

7. __ Books  8. __ All the above

b) Interpersonal Communication

1. __ Parents  2. __ Friends  3. __ Religious person  4. __ Schools  5. __ Others

15. From what you have learned about the Shias. You believe they are Muslims with minor differences with the Sunnis.

1. __ Strongly Agree. 2 __ Agree 3. __ Neutral 4. __ Disagree 5. __ Strongly Disagree

16. Have you, yourself read and searched about the Shias belief before?

1. __ Yes, 2. __ No. 3. __ Very Little

17. It is important for the two sects to have a better understanding of each other.
1. __ Strongly Agree. 2. __ Agree 3. __ Neutral 4. __ Disagree 5. __ Strongly Disagree

18. In your opinion, the media can play a significant role in improving the image of this sect in Egypt.

1. __ Strongly Agree. 2. __ Agree 3. __ Neutral 4. __ Disagree 5. __ Strongly Disagree

19. In your opinion, the media can play a significant role in tarnishing the image of this sect in Egypt.

1. __ Strongly Agree. 2. __ Agree 3. __ Neutral 4. __ Disagree 5. __ Strongly Disagree

20. In your opinion, the government can play an important role in improving the perception of the Shia in Egypt.

1. __ Strongly Agree. 2. __ Agree 3. __ Neutral 4. __ Disagree 5. __ Strongly Disagree

21. In your opinion, through what means could rapprochement be accomplished between the two sects?

1. __ Media Dialogue 2. __ Positive Media presentation 3. __ School education 4. __ Reading books. 5. __ government role in allowing free speech. 6. __ government role in correcting the perception of Shias through the media. 7. __ Role of Mosques in correcting the image. 8. __ All of the above 9. __ None of the above because Rapprochement should not be done with this sect. 10. __ Other

22. Your Opinion about Iran
a) Iranian people are tolerant people
1. __Most disagree, 2. __disagree, 3. __neutral, 4. __agree, 5. __strongly agree

b) Iranian society is a good Muslims society.
1. __Most disagree, 2. __disagree, 3. __neutral, 4. __agree, 5. __strongly agree

c) I have a lot of respect for President Ahmadinejad.
1. __Most disagree, 2. __disagree, 3. __neutral, 4. __agree, 5. __strongly agree

d) Iran is planning to take control over the regions and spread Shia belief.
1. __Most disagree, 2. __disagree, 3. __neutral, 4. __agree, 5. __strongly agree

g) Iranian people are disbelievers.
1. __Most disagree, 2. __disagree, 3. __neutral, 4. __agree, 5. __strongly agree

h) Iranian people should be rejected by all Muslims.
1. __Most disagree, 2. __disagree, 3. __neutral, 4. __agree, 5. __strongly agree

If you have any positive perception of Iran, please answer question 23, if not, please answer question 24.

23. About Iran, where did you get your positive perception of Iran?

A. Mass Communication:
7. __Books 8. __All the above

B. Interpersonal Communication
1. __Parents 2. __Friends 3. __Religious person 4. __Schools 5. __Others

24. Were did you get your information about the negative perception of Iran?
25. Did you follow the events of Lebanon war in the media?
1. ___Yes  2. ___No 3. __to some extent.

**Note:** If yes, (if the answer is (Yes) or (To Some Extent) please answer the following questions, if your answer is (No) Thank you and please stop here and don't answer the following question)

26. My perception of the image of Shias changed positively through following the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lebanon War.
1. ___Strongly Agree. 2. ___Agree 3. ___Neutral 4. ___Disagree 5. ___Strongly Disagree

27. After following the second Lebanese war in the media, I have a lot of respect for Sheikh Hasan Nasrullah as a Shia leader
1. ___Strongly Agree. 2. ___Agree 3. ___Neutral 4. ___Disagree 5. ___Strongly Disagree
Appendix V - Demographic table

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<td>22.4</td>
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### Appendix VI - Frequencies Charts: Scale

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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>St Disag</th>
<th>Mn</th>
<th>C.V.</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>13- How do you perceive the Shias</td>
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<tr>
<td>a- Shias are on the right path</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
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<td>b- Shia believes in Mohammad as the Prophet</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>c- Shia believes in Ali as the Prophet</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>d- Shias are disbelievers</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>e- Shias are apostates</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>15- From what you have learned about the Shias. You believe they are Muslims with minor differences with the Sunnis</td>
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<td>a. Iran is a good Islamic country</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Iran is a good Islamic country</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I have a lot of respect for President Ahmadinejad</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Iran is going to</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>16- In your opinion, the media can play a significant role in cultivating a certain image of this sect in Egypt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17- It is important for the two sects to have a better understanding of each other.</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>18- In your opinion, the media can play a significant role in tarnishing the image of this sect in Egypt.</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. In your opinion, the media can play a significant role in tarnishing the image of this sect in Egypt.</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. In your opinion the government can play an important role in improving the perception of the Shia in Egypt.</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<td>22. Your Opinion about Iran</td>
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<td>a. Iranian society is a good Muslim society</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Iranian society is a good Muslim society</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. I have a lot of respect for President Ahmadinejad</td>
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<td>84</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Iran is going to</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>84</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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spread Shia belief in other Muslim countries

<p>| | | | | | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Iranian people are disbelievers.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 7. | Iranian people should be rejected by all Muslims | 7 | 2 | 10 | 3.8 | 55 | 20.8 | 100 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 34.6 | 92 | 34.6 | 2.02 | 48.6 | 0 | 6 |

| 26. | My perception of the image of Shias changed positively through following the 2nd Lebanon War. | - | - | 65 | 28.9 | 79 | 35.1 | 43 |
|     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4.9 | 11 | 4.9 | 3.24 | 32.4 | - | - |

| 27. | After following the second Lebanon war in the media, I have a lot of respect for Sheikh Hasan Nasrullah as a Shia leader | 76 | 3 | 70 | 30.2 | 54 | 23.3 | 21 |
|     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 9.1 | 11 | 4.7 | 3.77 | 30.2 | - | - |
## Appendix VII: Tables

### Table 2 - In your opinion the Shi'its believe in: (Mark as many as you feel is correct)

<table>
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<th>Rank</th>
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<td>Q12.a</td>
<td>Allah</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.b</td>
<td>The Qur’an</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q12.c</td>
<td>Prophet Mohammad</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.d</td>
<td>Four Khulafa’</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>23.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12.e</td>
<td>Ahl al-Bayt succession after the prophet, beginning with Ali</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>69.9</td>
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<td>Q12.f</td>
<td>Following the Sunnah of the Prophet through the companions</td>
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<td>8.6</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q12.g</td>
<td>Following the Sunnah of the Prophet through Ahl al-Bayt</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>45.5</td>
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<td>Q12.h</td>
<td>Shia love the family of Prophet</td>
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<td>55.3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q12.i</td>
<td>The Shia worship the family of Prophet and exalt them beyond human level</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q12.j</td>
<td>Ali should have been the prophet not Mohammad</td>
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<td>None of the above</td>
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<td>Q12.l</td>
<td>I don’t know anything about their beliefs</td>
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### Table 3 - About the Shia belief, where did you get your information? (A) Mass Communication

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<td>8</td>
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<td>Q14.b</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Q14.c</td>
<td>Satellite</td>
<td>89</td>
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<td>Q14.d</td>
<td>News paper</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q14.e</td>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Q14.f</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Q14.g</td>
<td>Books</td>
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<td>16.5</td>
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### Table 3 - About the Shia belief, where did you get your information? (B) Interpersonal Communication

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<td>Q14.a</td>
<td>Parents</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>Q14.b</td>
<td>Friends</td>
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<td>28.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q14.c</td>
<td>Religious person</td>
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<td>21.1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q14.d</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>16</td>
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### Table 4 - In your opinion, through what means could rapprochement be accomplished between the two sects?

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<td>Q21.b</td>
<td>Positive Media presentation</td>
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<td>21.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21.c</td>
<td>School education</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Q21.d</td>
<td>Reading books</td>
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<td>15.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q21.e</td>
<td>government role in allowing free speech</td>
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<td>government role in correcting the perception of Shias through the media</td>
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<td>Role of Mosques in correcting the image</td>
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<td>Q21.i</td>
<td>None of the above because Rapprochement should not be done with this sect</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>23.7</td>
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</table>
Table 5 - About Iran, where did you get your information?

(A) Mass Communication

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<td>Satellite</td>
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<td>Q23.d</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
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(B) Interpersonal Communication

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Table 6 -

(A) Mass Communication

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(B) Interpersonal Communication

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## Appendix VIII - Cross Tabulations

### Table for significant relationship between Gender and Opinion about Iran

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<td>0.24</td>
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<td>c. I have a lot of respect for President Ahmadinejad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.041*</td>
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<td>0.155</td>
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<td>d. Iran is planning to take control over the regions and spread Shia belief.</td>
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<td>0.963</td>
<td>f. Iranian people should be rejected by all Muslims</td>
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### Table for significant relationship between Gender and Opinion about Iran

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### Table for significant relationship between Age and Opinion about Iran

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Table for significant relationship between Age and About Iran, where did you get your positive perception of Iran?

**Mass Communication**

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**Interpersonal Communication**

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Table for significant relationship between age and variables

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Table for significant relationship between Age and About Iran, where did you get your positive perception of Iran?

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**Interpersonal Communication**

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