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ABSTRACT

“The Role of Al Azhar and the Coptic Church in Post-Mubarak Egypt”

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This paper highlights and investigates the role played by the official Islamic and Christian institutions in Egypt beginning with the January Revolution to the present, to assess their contributions to the transition in Egypt toward democracy. This paper examines the impact they have on the lives of Egyptians, their relationship with the Mubarak regime, and the changes in their leadership since the Revolution, and analyzes the policies they promoted to secure stability and democracy in Egypt, and the adjustments they made in light of Egypt’s new reality. The leadership of Al Azhar witnessed little change. The death of Pope Shenouda III of the Coptic Orthodox Church promises a new hierarchy for the Christian community in Egypt. There are agreements and differences espoused by Al Azhar and the Coptic Church in facing the difficult situation in Egypt. Both stressed the civil character of the state, and consented on keeping Islam the official religion. Both have made arguments about the role of *Sharia* in the new constitution. They also have provided responses to the Salafi movement. Each institution has a unique role to play. Al Azhar insists on being the ultimate reference in religious matters (*Al Margaiyah*), and the Coptic Church is dealing with a President from the Muslim Brotherhood. Since my methodology is chronological-historical, institutional and bureaucratic analyses will be referenced when analyzing the performance of Al Azhar and the Coptic Church. Arabic-language sources in newspapers, magazines and on-line publications will be used.