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Authoritarian Upgrading?
The Role of Islamist Movements in the Arab Spring
A Case Study on the Competitive Islamist Parties in Egypt

In the last two years the Arab World has witnessed popular uprisings against long-ruling dictators.[1] The Middle Eastern political *status quo* has been challenged by an "enlightened" young elite protesting in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria and Yemen calling for a more prosperous future and the advancement of political and civil rights. Much has been written on the factors which attributed to the lack of democracy in the Arab World such as the role of religion[2], the existence of neo-patriarchal state and society[3], charismatic leaders[4], the role of the armed forces[5], the economic context (rentier economy)[6], or foreign factors[7] (e.g., US foreign policy during the 1990s). All of these scientific explanations showed Arab regimes as non-democratic, though politically stable systems, failing to point out the economic and political tensions within these societies, which erupted in massive protests.[8] These kinds of protests are relatively not new to the Middle East. The case of Egyptian bread riots in 1977 is one example to show how the discontent against the economic restriction initiated by the Sadat regime resulted in mass protests. However, at that time – unlike in 2011 – the Egyptian regime remained stable, and Sadat was successful in silencing the protesters with economic rewards and with launching a gradual and limited political liberalization process. It was unthinkable before 2011 that the widespread daily usage of Internet sites (such as Facebook, Twitter and other blogs) helped to force down dictators such as Mubarak or Ben Ali. It is widely discussed among Middle East experts that the outcome of these uprisings is still not visible. It is expected by many Western leaders that the fourth wave of worldwide democratization has arrived, which will completely transform Middle Eastern political regimes. Others are more critical saying that the

1 This paper was supported by the grant (OTKA PD 100594, entitled: The end of authoritarian stability in the Middle East?) received from the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund. A draft of this paper was presented at the Middle East International Congress at Kocaeli University, Turkey on 1-2 November 2011.

2 HUNTINGTON, *The Third Wave,* p. 307.

3 SHARABI, *Neopatriarchy.*

4 TALBI, "A Record of Failure".

5 KAMRAVA, "Military Professionalization and Civil-Military Relations in the Middle East".

6 LUCIANI, "Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East".

7 GERGES, *America and Political Islam.*

8 In a recently published article – "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring?" – F. Gregory Gause III. explains how Middle East Studies have failed to predict the events of the Arab Spring.

changes in Egypt or Tunisia do not affect the main fundamental pillars of these regimes as the role of the armed forces or the influence of the old guard is still the reality on the ground. A reconfiguration of the authoritarian structure of Arab regimes is the most plausible scenario. The aim of this paper is to place Islamist parties/movements in these changes and to show how they reacted to recent uprisings. Several authors warn that Islamist parties can benefit from the democratic elections and can heavily influence the transition process (decisions on election law or constitutional changes, etc.). The author argues that an Islamist threat or an 'Islamist tsunami' is not the real challenge of these regimes. The paper draws on the example of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood – the oldest and most important Islamist movement in the modern Middle East – wishing to show the complexity of Egyptian politics.

Moderation of Political Islam in the 21st century

Political Islam was the most important ideology of the second part of the 20th century in the Middle East. Frustration and identity crisis were among the main factors behind joining to an Islamist movement for thousands of young citizens of the Arab World, which helped to establish a sense of belonging to a community in time of a failed modernization process. These Islamist movements became the most popular political and civil institutions in the Arab World providing services – such as hospitals, jobs, and schools – for the well being of the society. On the one hand, they functioned as charity organizations, but on the other hand, they opposed to secular regimes of that time. Their main goal was to topple these secular regimes by moderate or radical means and to Islamize the society and the political system aiming at establishing an Islamic state ruled by *shari'a*. Much has been written on the history of these Islamist movements showing the evolution of different generations of Islamists from the very beginning of the 1920s to the struggle against the "infidel" Soviet Union in the name of Islam in Afghanistan.

At the end of the bipolar world system Islamist movements became the most popular political entities, as secular parties were incapable to address the needs of the population. Arab political systems also underwent limited, gradual political and economic liberalization, which failed to challenge the structure of these regimes. The period of political opening was followed by a wave of suppression of civil liberties and political rights. Brumberg classified this type of Arab republics as "liberalized autocracies" in which political freedom exists on a certain level, but severe restriction applies to the rights of freedom of speech [9] Arab autocrats portrayed Islamist movements as a threat to the existence of Western-oriented and quasi-secular regimes in the Middle East. Isolating even moderate Islamists was part of the regime survival strategy of the Arab elite used to suppress the opposition. These authoritarian Arab republics have failed to engage moderate Islamist movements within the existing political context. The international community aimed at preserving the favourable *status quo* further supported this strategy. The *status quo* has been challenged by the

[9] BRUMBERG, "The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy".

events of 9/11, when international actors called for an urgent need of political reforms. However, the failure of the Palestinian elections – which was won by Hamas in 2006 – convinced the United States and the European Union that pressure on political reform did not serve the interest of the Western world.

From the beginning of the 1990s the political goals of Islamist organizations have started to change. After the end of the joint armed struggle in Afghanistan a very small minority joined the terrorist organizations aiming at global *jihad* such as Al-Qaeda or similar to Al-Qaeda. Terrorism in the name of Islam is widely condemned by Muslims themselves as it was showed by the Gallup poll saying that only 7 percent of Muslims in the world sympathize with the use of violence in certain cases. The vast majority of Muslims strongly condemn the use of violence in the name of Islam and they do not sympathize with Osama bin Laden or Al-Qaeda at all[10].

Most of the Islamist organizations have turned toward a different alternative: de-radicalization and moderation. Islamists realized that armed struggle against the "infidel" autocrats failed to achieve the desired political system based on Islamic legislation. Many Islamists dropped the idea of establishing an Islamic state from their agenda and focused more on society rather than politics (de-radicalization). Omar Ashour defines the process of moderation on two levels: 1. On an ideological level, Islamist movements accept the principle of democracy; and 2. On a behavioural level, they participate in electoral politics if they can[11]. This process has many pitfalls as Islamist movements differ in how to respond to the challenges of the emancipation of women or the role of non-Muslim minorities in the country.

Recent literature on Middle Eastern political developments shows a certain kind of transformation within Islamist movements, called as "Post-Islamism" by the French scholar, Olivier Roy. Religious-oriented political movements have begun to emphasize the unresolved national problems instead of focusing only on the international scene. National integration and political participation became a viable alternative of a radical, military interference into the political life of the state. Most of the leaders of these moderate organizations accept the peaceful coexistence with the ruling elite, at the same time 'postponing' the primary goal of implementation of an Islamic state based on *shari'a*. As Roy pointed out, the main ideological commitment of Islamists is not politics, but society: "The contemporary religious revival in Islam is targeting society more than the state..."[12]. More and more Islamist organizations have started to give up the military struggle against the "infidel" authoritarian regime, which was the ultimate answer in the 1970s by many armed movements (*e.g.*: Islamic Jihad, Jama'at al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra).

Islamist movements have embedded more deeply into the national environment. Roy notes: "The mainstream Islamist movements in the 1990s have failed to produce anything resembling an 'Islamist International' along the lines of the Communist International (or Comintern)"[13]. The case of Hamas and Fatah as rival organizations can

[10] ESPOSITO and MOGAHED, *Who speaks for Islam?*

[11] ASHOUR, *The De-radicalization of Islamists*, p. 6.

[12] ROY, *Globalised Islam,* p. 4.

[13] ROY, *op. cit.,* p. 62.

help to understand the impact of national interests on political movements. Islamic symbols are not only used in the Palestinian Authority by Hamas, but also by the more nationalist party, Fatah. And *vice versa*, Fatah gains popularity by relying on Islamic ideals, which clearly shows that a pragmatist approach is more beneficial than relying on a dogmatic ideology without flexibility. Another example of the nationalization of Islamist movements is the Shii Hezbollah, which was viewed by many experts as the right hand of the Iranian theocratic regime. Recent articles have shown a different picture, the so-called "Lebanonization" of Hezbollah that has started in 1992 with the participation in the Lebanese government and with the gradual rejection of armed struggle[14].

Peter Mandeville – offering a critical evaluation of Roy's argument – shows that Islamist movements differ in their main goals. He characterizes Post-Islamism in five points[15]:

1. Islamist movements are nationalist in orientation.
2. Following an Islamist path has not any strategic importance as the international community favours spreading democratic values over religious ideologies.
3. Muslims do not vote according to religious beliefs, but rather their political conviction.
4. The political participation of Islamist movements involuntarily helps in the secularisation process of their home country.
5. Individualistic religious approaches have taken preference over collective practices ("The privatization of religion").

In Asef Bayat's understanding, the term Post-Islamism is a condition and a project simultaneously. On the one hand, Post-Islamism is an existing reality, but on the other hand, it is a plan under discussion among Islamists on how to combine Islam with the values of modernity (democracy, liberalism, human rights, etc.)[16]. Some Islamist parties embrace the idea that modern values are inherent in Islam, rejecting what several Western scholars and politicians argue that Islam is a backward religion and Islam and democracy are incompatible.

It must be underlined that with the presence of a Post-Islamist trend, classical Islamism is not a phenomenon of the past. "But the advent of post-Islamism, as a trend, should not be seen necessarily as the historical end of Islamism" – wrote Bayat[17]. According to his interpretation of current trends in the Middle East, the Egyptian Wasat Party, the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP), and the Indian Jami'at-i Islami belong to the category of Post-Islamism. Movements like the Palestinian Hamas, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood or the Jordanian Islamic Action Front represent (classical) Islamism. However, in my opinion there is no clear dividing line among the different

[14] FULLER, "The Hezbollah-Iran Connection".
[15] MANDEVILLE, *Global Political Islam,* p. 343.
[16] BAYAT,*Making Islam Democratic,* p. 11.
[17] BAYAT, *op. cit.,* p. 13.

types of movements, especially because new movements usually split from a mother organization, as it was the case with the Egyptian Wasat Party. The existence of divergent fractions within the Islamist movements should also be taken into consideration.

Politicians and experts often show Islamists movement as static political actors with never-changing political agenda. It is often neglected that an intensive debate on the future started between members belonging to different political wings (and different generations) of these popular societal movements. The main disagreement between political fractions is about participation in the general elections and the commitment to the original ideology of the founding fathers. The usually called "dovish members" think that a *shari'a*-based society and political system is not the best solution for the contemporary challenges of their host country. They also notice that the implementation of ideological principles is not a real opportunity in the 21st century. These moderates show a willingness to form *ad-hoc* coalitions with secular parties and cooperate with the regime on issues with shared interests. On the other hand, the ("hawkish") conservatives see any kind of political participation as a legitimization of the oppressive policies of the regime. The members of the existing political factions often belong to different generations[18].

Islamists at the polls

Islamists movements had different opportunities to participate in politics before the Arab Spring. The article differentiates among four subtypes of Islamist groups according to their electoral possibilities.

1. Islamist movements are illegal entities

In Syria, for instance, the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood has diminished after the brutal crackdown in 1982 in the city of Hama. It was impossible for them to articulate any kind of political goals against the Asad regime despite the fact that many Syrian citizens have turned to Islam. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood tried to influence Syrian politics only from outside the country before the 2011s uprising. The main political leader Ali Sadruddin Bayanouni has been living in exile in London and he organized the Syrian opposition from there during the 1990s and later on. It is forbidden to be a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and participate in the movement, as it is illegal, cannot run for elections. The Syrian model shows that Islamists do not have any opportunity to decide whether to participate or not in elections as the rule of the games are decided by the authorities. Neither can they participate in the civil society as a charity organization. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in exile became a moderate movement aimed at ousting the Alawite-minority led Syrian regime[19].

[18] BROWN, "Islamists Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World".

[19] RABIL, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood", p. 73-88.

The Libyan example is similar to the Syrian one as in both countries Islamist movements were illegal organizations. Muammar al-Qadhafi nearly eliminated the presence of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, and members of the radical Libyan Islamic Fighting Group were hanged or incarcerated. However, the son of the former Libyan dictator, Saif al-Islam Qadhafi has launched a campaign in 2008 to convince the radicals ideologically about the peaceful methods. Libyan Fighting Group members were given amnesty and they completely cut their ties with Al-Qaeda[20]. The only difference of the Libyan case is the existence of a certain kind of *modus vivendi* between the regime and the Islamists. However, it does not mean that they were allowed to influence Libyan politics on any level.

2. Islamists are legal in the civil society, but illegal as a political party

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's political opportunity in electoral politics has been limited by the regime's decision of not allowing the formation of a political party in the name of religion. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt from the very beginning of its establishment in the 1920s was embedded in the sphere of the civil society. The case of the Ikhwans in Egypt is a clear example of how a radical (Qutbist era) movement becomes a moderate organization. After the death of Nasser, under the leadership of Omar al-Tilmisani the organization was used as a balancing force by Anwar Sadat between the Nasserites and more radical Islamists. The beginning of the Mubarak era brought Ikhwans closer to politics as they were allowed to form coalitions with secular parties. From the 1980s to the Arab Spring, members of the Muslim Brotherhood were elected regularly to the Parliament as independent candidates[21]. The engagement of Islamists in Egypt had mixed result, as they were the most organized political movement against the regime, but without the possibility to legalize themselves as a political party.

3. Islamists are legal as a political party, but integration is incomplete

The Lebanese Hezbollah has started its journey as a resistance organization against the Israeli occupation force, but at the end of the Lebanese civil war the Shii Islamist movement has entered into politics as the most popular group in Shia inhabited areas of the country. Hezbollah cannot be viewed as a terrorist movement from the 1990s, because to prove its moderateness, the Shia organization has been part of Parliamentary politics. However, on certain occasions Hezbollah used force in order to achieve its political goal within Lebanese politics[22]. Hezbollah continues resistance against Israel, but only on the controversial Shebaa farms, which are claimed by Syria, Lebanon and Israel. Today Hezbollah is a nationalized movement deeply embedded in the Lebanese political system.

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[20] PARGETER, "Reform in Libya: Chimera or Reality?", p. 13.

[21] WICKHAM, *Mobilizing Islam,* pp. 214-226.

[22] WIEGAND, "Reformation of a Terrorist Group", pp. 669-680. In 2008, when Hezbollah's security chief at Beirut's airport was dismissed the organization launched attacks against Lebanese authorities.

The other example is the Palestinian Hamas, the political integration of which was a failure due to several factors. Before the national elections Hamas signed a temporary cease-fire with Israel and then won the elections in 2006. There was an internal struggle among different factions about the benefit of political integration. Due to international pressure the more radical faction was able to surmount the more moderate group. The integration of Hamas is not only a failure of political integration, but also shows how re-radicalization can occur after frustration with electoral politics.

4. Islamists are legal and integration is complete

The only Islamist organization in the Arab world with a successful history of integration is the Jordanian Islamic Action Front. This party became legalized in 1992 as the political wing of the local Muslim Brotherhood, but it has failed to be independent from the mother organization. The IAF participates in elections frequently achieving good results as the most popular political party among the mainly tribally affiliated Jordanians. The IAF by its own decision boycotted elections several times, due to its opposition to the existing non-democratic political milieu. However, it has never questioned the legitimacy of the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan. The Jordanian example is very unique, as the Muslim Brotherhood from its establishment shared common interests with the monarchy[23]. The party's relation with the regime has deteriorated because of the events during the Arab Spring.

The four different models of Islamist participation in politics have shown that due to the authoritarian context of the Arab regimes, it was not their decision to stay away from elections. The severe oppression against them applied by the regime forced Islamists in the Arab world to take root in the sphere of civil society. But what were their previous achievements at the polls?

According to an analysis in 2005 an Islamist tsunami has swept through the Middle East. The author referred to the consequences of the post 9/11 political contexts, when international pressure forced Arab dictators to launch a political opening. This minor reform process helped moderate Islamist movements to move forward with accepting the often non-democratic rules of the game. Islamist parties achieved good results in the national elections in 2005 and 2006 in the Arab World. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood gained 88 seats out of 454 in the Lower House of the Egyptian Parliament, which was the most significant political success of the Islamist movement. In the Moroccan elections, the Party for Justice and Development performed well, similarly to the Islamic Action Front in Jordan[24]. Several studies have shown that the relative electoral strength of Islamist parties is mainly attributed to the incapability of secular parties and the weakness of the party system[25]. Islamist parties embarked on an anti-regime policy monopolizing the religious propaganda as an alternative to the incumbent elite's usually more secular vision. An empirical study proved that Islamist parties have historically failed to gain majority in elections. During the last 40 years, 89 parliamentary elections were compared and the median performance for Islamist

[23] CSICSMANN, "'Terrorist Organizations' or 'Political Parties'?".
[24] YACOUBIAN, "Democracy and Islamist Parties.
[25] LANGOHR, "Too Much Civil Society, Too Little Politics?".

parties was 7.3 % of the vote and 6 % of the seats. It is important to emphasize that most of these elections cannot be regarded as democratic ones. In addition to this aspect, it is equally important to remember that this statistics cover all Islamic countries, not only the Arab world. Owing to several political factors the electoral performance of Islamist parties in the Arab world is more substantial than in non-Arab countries. The same study has also shown that Muslims do not vote according to their beliefs, but in some countries according to tribal-familiar affiliation or ideology[26]. It means that the popularity of Islamist movements is not only due to the attractiveness of religious slogans, but is also attributed to other important factors.

The role of Islamist movements in the Arab Spring

The popular uprising in the Arab world was initiated by frustrated and enlightened young groups and not by the Islamist movements themselves. The younger generation's slogans are borrowed from the Western dictionary and not from Islamic sources. These young citizens of the Arab world have been socialized in a very different way from their parents. They use Internet sites on a daily basis and they do not have memories from the years of revolution under the leadership of Nasser. Islamists at the very beginning of the protests in Egypt or in Tunisia felt themselves frightened by the regime, which usually accuses the Islamists for any political disturbance. The last years in Egypt, for instance, were marked by a serious oppression against the Muslim Brotherhood movement. However, after recognizing the seriousness of the uprising – that it is not only a simple protest – they joined with secular parties to accelerate the ouster of former dictators. The leader of the Tunisian al-Nahda movement, Rashid Ghannoushi returned from his exile on 30 January 2011, just two weeks after the overthrow of the presidency of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. As it was emphasized in the previous part of the study, Islamist movements had different opportunities to participate in the uprisings. In Libya, former members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group have joined in the rebel movement's National Transitional Authority. In Syria, however, the reality is slightly different, as rebels have failed to achieve any durable success against the Assad regime. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood participated in the protests, but they hide their political affiliation with the movement.

In Egypt and Tunisia – where the former dictators have been overthrown by the popular uprisings – the moderate Islamist movements established political parties and published their political programmes for the upcoming elections. It is important to emphasize that both in Egypt and Tunisia many parties were established in the name of Islam. The old movements – as it was analyzed in the previous part of the article – split into several new political parties. The old movements usually support only one of these parties aimed at monopolizing the usage of Islamic slogans. However, these new parties are not the only players in the political market, but they are the most popular political organizations. The parties of the old Islamist movements classify themselves as civil parties with an Islamic reference. They refuse to wear the Islamist label and

[26] KURZMAN and NAQVI, "Do Muslims Vote Islamic?".

they form electoral coalitions with secular parties in order to show their commitment to democratic principles. However, many politicians accuse moderate Islamists of using *taqiyya* – hiding their true face, their true goals. According to many analysts if they come to power they will change their moderate tone and start to implement the Islamic state. "Anti-Islamists" argue with the "one man, one vote, one time" principle, which means that Islamist parties use the democratic process as a tool to hijack the political system[27]. These analyses base their argument on the experience of the existing Islamic states, namely Iran, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. These fears have been escalating since the electoral victory of al-Nahda in Tunisia in the 23 October 2011 elections.

The Tunisian secular French-oriented elite accused Rashid Ghannoushi of double speech. The head of al-Nahda movement is regarded by many Europeans as one of the most moderate voices among the European Muslim minority. Ghannoushi argues in his article that the achievement of an Islamic state is unrealistic in the near future[28]. Therefore power-sharing is obligatory with non-Muslims in order to achieve justice, which is the most important Islamic principle. Ghannoushi told to the audience several times that his party does not want to implement *shari'a* and after the elections it is ready to initiate talks with other secular parties. He also explained that wearing a bikini and consuming alcohol would be tolerated in Tunisia if al-Nahda formed the government. However in an Arabic interview this February, Ghannoushi argued that an Islamic Caliphate is the ultimate goal of the Muslims. Ghannoushi was also accused by more conservative Islamists (Hizb ul-Tahrir) that his political vision fails to incorporate Islamic principles.

According to the author's interpretation the main challenge of the Tunisian transition is the possibility of the evolution of a neo-authoritarian configuration. The popularity of al-Nahda Party in the Tunisian elections cannot only be attributed to the usage of Islamic slogans, but is mainly due to the fact that the Tunisian Islamist party kept its anti-corruption public image. Islamists have clean hands in politics, which is a major advantage in the transition period. Opposition parties legalized during the Ben Ali regime have often been criticized with forming a *modus vivendi* with the regime.

The establishment of the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt

The Egyptian case shares some similarities and differences with the Tunisian example. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, which is the oldest among Islamist movements in the Middle East, had the opportunity to nominate independent candidates in the parliamentary elections. However, it has never been legalized as a political party by the authorities due to the Political Parties Act, which prohibits establishing political parties in the name of religion. The relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the regime in recent decades have ups and downs. In the 2005 parliamentary elections the MB has achieved its greatest electoral success with 88 seats out of 454 in the Lower

[27] AL-ANANI, "The Myth of Excluding Moderate Islamists in the Arab World".

[28] GHANNOUCHI, "Participation in Non-Islamic Government".

House of the Egyptian Parliament. In 2005 the Egyptian political system has witnessed minor changes when Mubarak – submitting to Western pressure – has initiated gradual political reform. Amendments to the constitution were approved by public referendum showing the commitment of the regime to respond to severe internal and foreign criticism. These political reforms, however, have failed to touch the structures of the authoritarian system as the main goal was *regime survival*. The Muslim Brotherhood played a very active role in the opposition movement called *Kefaya* (Enough). This coalition movement – officially called as the Egyptian Movement for Change – emerged in 2004 when rumours circulated among Egyptians about Gamal Mubarak's "accession" to presidency. In the Kefaya movement the Muslim Brotherhood has cooperated with a number of leftist and liberal secular parties, which shows how the political game forced the moderate Islamist movement to accommodate itself to the Egyptian political realities. Despite the Kefaya movement's call for boycotting the next elections, the Muslim Brotherhood decided to contest the parliamentary elections with an enormous success. However, the aftermath of the 2005 parliamentary elections was the beginning of a harsh repression against the Islamist movement[29].

Several high-ranking members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested with false charges of terrorism or money laundering. In 2007 the further amendments to the constitution did not change the realities on the ground as the opposition still faced serious repercussions[30]. The aim of the amendment was to prevent the MB's electoral success. The MB called for a boycott of the 2008 local elections, which was in contradiction with the movement's previous statements. These years were marked by an intensive internal debate about the future of the movement and its role in Egyptian politics. As the Muslim Brotherhood is an umbrella organization for various Islamists, split within the movement is unavoidable. This internal struggle has been part of the history of the movement since the 1970s, when the process of moderation and de-radicalization has begun under the guidance of Hassan al-Hudaybi.

According to Khalil al-Anani the members of the movement belong to four generations. The first generation is the most conservative and apolitical fraction of the MB as they were used to underground activities under the Nasser era. Their goal lies more in the Islamization of the society rather than the political system. This generation plays a very important role in the official bodies of the movement influencing the direction of the activities. The second generation is a pragmatist wing of the MB as they socialized during the *infitah* policy of Anwar Sadat, which was a time of gradual political opening. This fraction is not as conservative as their older counterparts, and they have more willingness to form a political party and to play political games. The third generation – the so-called neo-traditionalists – is the fraction the members of which grew up under the beginning of the Mubarak regime. As the name suggests, they share common political views with the oldest camp of the movement. The youngest (fourth) generation has a more complete worldview and perception of Egyptian politics than

[29] PIOPPI, "Is There an Islamist Alternative in Egypt?", p. 5.

[30] RUTHERFORD, *Egypt after Mubarak,* pp. 248-259.

their predecessors had, as they are reform-minded and they do not share the conservative view of the older generation[31].

The official body of the Muslim Brotherhood (Guidance Bureau) has been dominated by the members of the first and to a lesser extent by the second generation. In 2010, the conservative Muhammed Badie was elected as the 8th general guide of the movement. The younger members calling for reform of the movement's leadership harshly criticized this decision. Badie – a veterinary professor by expertise – served in prison for 12 years during the Nasser era, when many of his fellows were executed. He spent an important part of his life with underground activities as the regime banned the Muslim Brotherhood for a long time.

In 2007 the Muslim Brotherhood has publicized a very controversial party platform, which was criticized by the political elite. The political manifesto stipulates that the future president of the country should be a Muslim man excluding women and non-Muslims from top government positions. The other controversial point of the political platform was the intention of forming a religious committee aimed at overseeing the legislation and the decisions. This is somewhat similar to the Iranian Guardian Council, which has a veto-power above politics. According to the Egyptian party platform this religious body has only an advisory function and it does not have a veto power over decisions taken by the president or the Parliament[32].

In 2010 – when the parliamentary elections came closer in time – opposition parties/ movements have started to harmonize their efforts to prevent Gamal Mubarak from acceding to power. In February the opposition organized the National Association for Change (*al-Jam'iyya al-wataniyya lil-taghyir*) calling for free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections. It is headed by the former director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei who returned to Egypt in January 2010. The Muslim Brotherhood has joined this loose political alliance aiming to amend the constitution and end the state of emergency as soon as possible. The movement was represented by a pragmatist member of the second generation, Mohamed Saad al-Katatni, who is the former head of the movement's parliamentary block and member of the Guidance Bureau. The National Association for Change is a perfect example of how secular parties cooperate with the Islamist movement sharing a common goal, the structural reform of the whole Egyptian political system.

The November 2010 national elections were a complete disaster for the whole opposition. The head of the National Association for Change, Mohamed ElBaradei called for a boycott of the elections due to the unwillingness of the regime to amend the controversial articles of the constitution. Many parties agreed on the boycott, except the Muslim Brotherhood, whose spiritual guide, Muhammed Badie expressed in a statement that his movement would contest 30% of the seats in Parliament. In the run-off, however, the movement called its members to boycott the elections, a decision which caused controversy among the various fractions. At least 6000 members of the Muslim Brotherhood were detained before or during the elections, which was a major political factor behind the decision. In consequence of the boycott

[31] AL-ANANI, "The Young Brotherhood in Search of a New Path".

[32] BROWN and HAMZAWY, "The Draft Party Platform of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood".

the Muslim Brotherhood has lost its Parliamentary presence as most of the members observed the decision taken by the Guidance Bureau.

The Tunisian "Jasmine revolution" in January 2011 had a demonstration effect on the frustrated Egyptian society. In Egypt the oppression used by the regime coincided with a serious economic crisis. The regime has started an economic liberalisation policy from 2004 which had positive impacts on the macro level. In the year 2009, however, 43.9 % of the Egyptian population lived on less than 2 USD per day, which clearly shows how the global crisis and the increase of food prices hit the Egyptian economy[33]. The simultaneity of the deteriorating living conditions and the political oppression has triggered the frustration of the middle class youth which erupted in a mass protest against the regime.

On the one hand, at the very beginning of the uprising, the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood distanced the movement from the mass protest. This is due to the historical experience of the movement with the regime. When any political instability has occurred in Egypt, the regime accused the Muslim Brotherhood with undermining the political stability of the country. The regime historically exaggerates the 'Islamist threat' with portraying the Muslim Brotherhood to the outside world as an enemy of a secular, democratic Egypt. For this reason the movement was very careful with joining in the first days of the mass protests. On the other hand there was a consensus within the movement that the goal of the mass protest – to oust Hosni Mubarak and to initiate a structural political reform – corresponded with the overall strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood. The last days of January 2011 many Islamists joined to the protests organizing logistical supply at Tahrir square. According to Sheikh Qaradawi around 10% of the protesters recruited from various Islamist groups[34]. The Muslim Brotherhood initially boycotted the national consultation convened by the newly appointed vice president, Omar Suleiman. A few days later, however, the movement decided to participate in the consultation which shows the dissent among the different fractions.

Muhammed Badie gave an interview to France 24 on 31 January 2011 articulating the main demands of the movement: ending the state of emergency, codification of a new constitution, formation of a national unity government, immediate resignation of Hosni Mubarak (France24, 2011). These demands were in line with the goals expressed by other secular parties and Mohamed ElBaradei's movement. Muhammed Badie has never called for implementing an Islamic state in contemporary Egypt. Nevertheless, the forced resignation of Hosni Mubarak put the Muslim Brotherhood in an advantageous political position, as it is the best-organized political movement of Egypt. The movement was in favour of the amendment to constitution approved by public referenda in March 2011. As the deputy of the Muslim Brotherhood, Khairat Shater stated in an interview: "The constitutional amendments are the most suitable, not the most ideal, solution for this transitional period that cannot drag on for too long"[35]. These amendments incorporated the most important political demands of the

[33] *AHDR 2009*, p. 231.

[34] ELSHAMY, "Qaradawi Calls on Mubarak to Step Down".

[35] AHRAM ONLINE 2011.

opposition movement. The strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood was to create a self-image of a constructive, but critical political movement aiming at not to destroy the political system, but to enforce a gradual political reform. With this strategy the Muslim Brotherhood has reached out to the Egyptian public, the two main fears of which are the continuation of the military power and political chaos. However, various factions within the group expressed their dissatisfaction with the leadership's decision with the middle path.

Muhammed Badie announced the establishment of an independent political party affiliated with the Brotherhood, called as the Freedom and Justice Party (*Hizb al-Huriyya wa-Adala, FJP*). The FJP came into existence after the successful registration process on 30 April 2011. It was a long time desire of the pragmatist wing within the movement to form a party and contest the elections. The MB as part of the above-mentioned strategy formulated its self-restraint policy, namely the willingness to contest the elections, but only for 30-35 % of the seats. These numbers show that the movement does not want to send the signal to the public and to the political players that it wants to monopolize the political system.

In theory the party is independent from the mother organization in all spheres. However, with the appointment of the party leadership, it is clear that the most important members of the MB were elected for leading positions. Essam al-Erian, the former spokesman of the Muslim Brotherhood, a leading member of the pragmatist branch became the vice-chairman of the party. Saed al-Katatni has been appointed as the chairman of the party. Al-Katatni was the head of the Parliamentary block of the movement from 2005 to 2010; he is also regarded as a key pragmatist member from the second generation. Mohamed Morsi – a former MP of the movement – has been chosen as the president of the party. All of them should leave the Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood showing the commitment of the movement towards the independence of the party. The same dilemma has discussed in Jordan, where the local Muslim Brotherhood established its political party, the Islamic Action Front in 1992. Still, the Islamic Action Front cannot be characterized as independent from the mother organization as the latter has the right to appoint the party's secretary general. The same is true for the Egyptian Freedom and Justice Party. Mahmoud Hussein, the secretary general of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt told that: "As said before, the group decided that none of its members can join a party other than the group's party"[36]. It means that anybody who wants to join to a different party than the FJP, first has to quit the Muslim Brotherhood theoretically.

The appointment of the party leaders made the young generation of Ikhwans disappointed. Many in their late 20s and early 30s openly criticize the old guard within the movement as they feel themselves alienated from their political motivation and values. The young generation of Ikhwans wants a full-fledged democracy in Egypt, a very different vision of what the members of the old generation have in their minds. There is an ongoing split within the Muslim Brotherhood as the movement has lost its ability to monopolize Islamic politics. The young Muslim Brothers have managed to register their separate party (*Hizb al-Tayyar al-Masry*, Egyptian Current Party). The

[36] AL-HENNAWY, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Selects Hawkish Leaders".

founders of the ECP want to complete the revolution and create a democratic Egypt. The frustrated youths of the party support a former member of the Guidance Bureau, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh who was suspended from the Muslim Brotherhood after his announcement to run for presidency. The medical doctor, Aboul Fotouh harshly criticized the old guard within the movement for keeping their conservative stance on many questions.

According to Hani Nasira there are fourteen Islamist parties in Egypt with very different political programs[37]. The strict Salafist movement established al-Nour Party, while the real post-Islamist generation has managed to register al-Wasat Party. Islamist politics in Egypt is very competitive now, and the Freedom and Justice Party has the vision to monopolize that part of the political spectrum. The main strategy of the party is to label the main political opponents of the movement as un-Islamic. In March 2011, when the constitutional amendments were put to a public referendum, the main leaders of the Brotherhood sent a message to the public that a no vote is un-Islamic. Among the fourteen Islamist parties, the main competitor of the FJP is the Salafist al-Nour Party. According to the party's political manifesto, they prefer to see a greater role of Islam than the FJP, but they also distance themselves from the more radical Islamists, who speak for imposing *shari'a* on the Egyptian political system.

The political program of the Freedom and Justice Party has moved away from the 2007 political platform of the Muslim Brotherhood, in which certain references were made to a religious council. In this new party program Islam plays a significant role especially as the term *shura* (consultation) is widely used. The term democracy is simultaneously applied in the text reaching out to the pragmatist reformers of the party. "This usage also reflects the party's attempt to balance the discourse of the conservatives with that of the reformers in the Brotherhood, with "*shura*" being favoured by the conservatives and "democracy" appealing to the reformers" – noted Khalil al-Anani[38].

The party platform breaks with the former standpoint about the role of non-Muslim minority and women in the political sphere. In order to promote a democratic image of the party, a Copt, Rafiq Habib has been chosen as the vice president. It is important to emphasize that Habib is not the only Christian member of the FJP as there are more than 100 Coptic founders of the party as well as more than 1000 women. Habib has started its collaboration with the Egyptian Islamic movement against the Mubarak regime. Habib stated several times that being a member of an Islamic party is not a contradiction as Islamic civilization gathers Muslims and Christians. According to a report on religious freedom in Egypt, the 8 millions Copts face serious security challenges in their daily life. Habib rejected it saying that democracy is the solution for the conflicts: "Problems will be solved and each faction or sector of society will be heard and will be able to express itself freely and its problems will be overcome"[39]. However, on the party list formed by the FJP for the November 2011 parliamentary elections, the upper half of the list is preserved for former MPs of the Muslim Brotherhood. It suggests that Coptic membership in the party serves the leaders to

[37] NASIRA, "Perspectives on the Islamist and Salafist Parties in Egypt".

[38] AL-ANANI, "Egypt's Freedom & Justice Party: to Be or Not to Be Independent".

[39] IKHANWEB, "FJP Leader: Democracy in Egypt Will Solve Copts Issues".

create a positive, democratic image of them without offering more important positions for Christians.

The Freedom and Justice Party was the major political force behind the Democratic Alliance which at the beginning of its formation consisted of more than 30 parties. However, when it became clear that the FJP wanted to dominate the party list, important parties such as the Wafd Party left the coalition. Along with the Wafd several Islamist parties also joined another bloc. The main reason behind the disintegration of the Democratic Alliance was the fact that the FJP dominated the party list of the bloc. Around two-thirds of the members on the party list of the Democratic Alliance were recruited from the FJP.

The leaders of the FJP emphasize that the party is not an Islamist party, but a civil party with an Islamic background. They call for the preservation of the secular character of the Egyptian state. However, if we analyse the pre-revolution constitution in Egypt, we realize that it is not secular. The 2nd article of the constitution states: "Islam is the religion of the state, and the Arabic language is its official language. The principles of Islamic law are the chief source of legislation"[40]. For the vast majority of Islamist organizations the 2nd article gives enough opportunity to call for implementing Islamic principles. In this regard it is not the aim of Islamists to change that part of the constitution, but rather the goal is to preserve it.

The FJP shows itself as a mediating and constructive political party. Proving this image the party did not support the renewed violence on the streets of Cairo and other cities in November 2011 when the youth movement called for an immediate step down of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). On the one hand, FJP has never asked the SCAF to resign, but called for conducting the Parliamentary elections in time (from 28 November 2011). According to public opinion polls, the FJP will have a majority in the next Parliament with around 40% of the seats (2nd National Voter Survey in Egypt, 2011). It means – even if they will not run for the presidency – they have enough political power for influencing the next constitution of Egypt. The FJP – as the Muslim Brotherhood itself – has a willingness to cooperate with both leftist and rightist secular parties. The main dilemma of the transition process in Egypt is the role of the FJP and other Islamist parties in the transition process. As most of the members of the party socialized during the repression years, the years when an authoritarian regime shaped the political rules, they do not have experience with a democratic system. The main paradox lies behind the fact that FJP's "hawkish" older members call for further democratization very actively.

Which model: Iranian or Turkish for Islamists?

There are two rival models of Islamism which can have an impact on the transition process taking place in several Arab countries. The moderate Islamist movements – like the FJP – perceive the Turkish Justice and Development Party *(Adalet ve Kalkınma*

[40] *Constitutional Declaration 2011.*

Partisi, AKP) as their best example how to combine democratic values and Islamic principles. The AKP accepts the existence of a secular Turkish state and political system, and it does not have a vision to implement the Islamic state. The AKP's political experience is a complete break with the former Turkish Islamists of the 1970s and 1980s. The AKP is often compared to the European Christian-democrats who do not want to challenge the logic of secularism, but rather embrace the religious values in the daily life.

The Iranian model refers to the 1979 Islamic revolution, when Islamic values were incorporated in the constitution of the Islamic Republic. This model calls for a religious body that has the right to veto any decision, which is not in line with the *shari'a*. According to the Supreme Leader of Iran, the bottom-up revolutions in the Arab World are part of the worldwide Islamic awakening in which Iran plays a leading role. Ali Khamenei reinforces the opportunity to implement *shari'a* in Arab republics.

According to the author's analysis neither model is feasible for Arab States or purely for Islamist movements. The weak point in the AKP model is the fact that secular nation states do not exist in the Arab countries. The members of the AKP have been socialized in a very different way than their Arab counterparts. As it was analysed, the majority of the moderate Islamist parties want to preserve the existing reference to Islamic principles in the constitution or – in the case of Libya – they want to introduce it in the new constitution. The future of the Arab states will oscillate between the ideologies of secularism and Islamism. Neither a secular nation state, nor a purely Islamic state is achievable in the short run.

Some Western scholars and politicians accuse moderate Islamist movements with the adaptation of the Iranian model as their approach to politics. The Iranian model is not so attractive for moderate Islamist parties, as the realities have changed on the ground. Implementing an Islamic state is not possible anymore and the Iranian model is a combination of Western and Islamic concepts. It is more likely that a third way, a new distinct Arab model will evolve in the near future, as the political context is different from Turkey or Iran. Islamist movements in the Arab world emphasize the importance of true democratic reforms. It is equally true, however, that these movements do not have a democratic internal process. The newly established political parties are only theoretically independent from the old Islamist movement, but not in reality. The main challenge of the Arab world is how to continue with the transition process and what role Islamist parties can play.

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