

Theology and Democratization: The Role of Religious Forces in the Aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution

*Nesreen K. El Molla**

ABSTRACT

Liberal Democratic Theory has often advocated for the strict separation between the state and religion; confining the later to the private sphere. Over the past year, Islamist movements have increasingly managed to translate their popular standing into sweeping election successes especially in the Arab Spring region. This has raised the inevitable concern of whether political Islam can be compatible with democratic transformation or not.

Due to this fact, the paper aims at examining the role such religious forces can play in the democratization process in Egypt and whether the political opening and attainment of power can affect their ideological and political stances or not.

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The role of religion in the public domain represents one of the main features of the post revolutionary phase in Egypt. According to some analysts, this may disrupt the process of democratization of the country. On the theoretical level, the Liberal Democratic Theory has often advocated for the strict separation between the state and religion; confining the later to the private sphere. Over the past year, Islamist movements have increasingly managed to translate their popular standing into sweeping election successes especially in the Arab Spring region. This has raised the inevitable concern of whether political Islam can be compatible with democratic transformation or not.

With the demise of the authoritarian regime in Egypt and the current transition towards a democratic system, Islamist forces specifically the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists have been allowed to widen their scope of operations and activities, and to institutionalize their efforts into political parties that have come at the forefront of the current political landscape of the country.

* A Ph.D. Candidate at the Faculty of Economics and Political Science (FEPS) – Cairo University

1.1 Main Problem Statement

It is worth mentioning that the complex relationships between the role of religious forces - newly attaining power - and state are still under-theorized and under-researched in the existing social science literature, as these are primarily linked to the Arab Spring phenomenon.

To this end, the main problem statement of the paper is examining the expected role that can be played by the religious forces in the democratization process in Egypt and whether the political opening and attainment of power can affect the ideological and political stances of these forces or not.

Through a comparative approach between the Muslim Brotherhood represented by the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and the Salafists represented by the Nour Party, the novelty in this paper is manifested in that it aims at the following :

- Scrutinizing and examining the beliefs, ultimate goals, and platforms of both the Freedom and Justice party (FJP) of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Nour party of the Salafists.
- Assessing the impact of the inter-generational dimension within these forces - specifically within the Muslim Brotherhood - on their political stances and choices with regards to the democratization process in Egypt.

1.2 Research Questions

In addition to the main problem statement, the paper aims at examining a number of research questions that include but are not limited to the following:

- To what extent political Islam can be compatible with democracy?
- How pluralism and political opening are affecting the ideological stances of the two main religious forces in Egypt? To what extent these forces coincide or depart from each other on specific political issues; such as the nature of the state, civil and political rights, and foreign policy orientations?
- What implications the state-religion relations may have on the quality of democracy under-examined.

1.3 Methodology:

In doing so, the paper will examine the formal rhetoric/ discourse of the different Islamist forces in Egypt against their on-ground actions. This will entail studying their official statements; examining their discourse as expressed in their newly developed political platforms in relation to their actions and practices on ground. It is worth noting that such research efforts might be confronted with two main methodological challenges. The first is the difficulty in differentiating between the religious forces on one side and their institutional political set up ; as parties from the other side. Accordingly, throughout the paper the terms Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) , for example, might be used interchangeably.

The second challenge is the absence of the inter -generational conflict within the Salafists as a religious force, due its recent presence on the political landscape. Thus, in addressing the inter-generational conflict, the paper will be only confined to the Muslim Brotherhood in tackling this aspect.

2. THE RISE OF POLITICAL ISLAM AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION IN EGYPT: WILL THEY MATCH?

The Arab Spring at first had nothing about it that was specifically “Arab” or “Muslim.” The demonstrators were calling for dignity, elections, democracy, good governance, and human rights. The main focus was thus individual citizenship and not some holistic entity such as “the people,” the "Muslim Community *Umma*", or the "Arab Nation"¹. Despite this fact, religion was not entirely absent from these revolutions. The demonstrators did not take power — indeed, they did not even try. Instead, they merely wanted to establish a new political scene. Predictably, the Egyptian and Tunisian elections brought ballot-box triumphs for Islamist parties².

In the Egyptian revolution, the rise of political Islam was a predictable phenomenon. Religion as a factor was not a main driver for the revolution, however it was present in many forms; some of which were tactical, while others were symbolic.

The tactical presence was evident during the revolution; this was clearly manifested with the role of mosques in organizing and mobilizing citizens.

¹ Olivier Roy, " The Transformation of the Arab World", *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 23, July 2012

² Ibid

On the symbolic level, religion was present with the Islamists movements - and mainly the Muslim Brotherhood - taking part at the revolution; though in a non institutional and fragmented way ³. The Salafists, as well, had a role only at the last weeks of the revolution and beginning with the post revolutionary phase despite the fact that Salafists were against the revolution at the beginning due to religious and ideological obligations that forbid revolution on the ruler.

In fact, one may say that since the collapse of the Mubarak regime, the Islamist forces particularly the Muslim Brotherhood were accused of hijacking the revolution. This was understood in light of the pragmatic and self centered approach that was adopted by the Brotherhood since the last days of the revolution. The Brotherhood engaged in negotiations with different players during the last few days of the revolution to test waters. In early February 2011, Omar Suleiman, then Vice President, brought together several political groups and organizations, including members of the Brotherhood, to negotiate a deal in an effort to thwart the revolution⁴. Despite the failure of these talks, the Brotherhood continued their willingness to negotiate in their relationship with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) until tensions aroused between both parties and the Brotherhood held a strong grip on the politics of the game then became at the forefront of the political scene.

In the Egyptian case , the expansion of the role of religion in the post revolutionary phase is natural and expected. Two reasons can explain the smooth rise of the Islamist forces during and after the revolution. The first is that religion had a positive presence that was consistent with the mood of consensus that prevailed during the revolution. The second is the spontaneous harmony that occurred amongst the different political forces during the revolution; the single goal was overthrowing a long standing autocratic regime regardless of the political or ideological

³ Khalil Al Anani, " The role of religion in the public domain in Egypt after the January 25 revolution", *Research Papers*, Arab center for Research and Policy Studies, April 2012 (Available at: <http://english.dohainstitute.org/release/d0b4cc5e-93d7-44ef-aacb-c0177157c490>)

⁴ Dan Murphy, "Will Egypt's government now strike a deal with the Muslim Brotherhood?," *Copt Science Monitor*, February 6, 2011 (Available at: <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/0206/Will-Egypt-s-government-now-strike-a-deal-with-the-Muslim-Brotherhood>)

differences that attributed those who revolted⁵. By achieving the common shared goal, the religious and Islamist forces became more vocal and visible than before.

On the possible compatibility or clash between political Islam and democratic transformation in general, it has been mistakenly believed by a considerable number of Western scholars that Islam and democracy share different philosophical and historical assumptions and are thus incompatible. Moreover, a number of Western scholars have tried to present Islam as anti-democratic and inherently authoritarian⁶. Many voices have even warned that the Arab Spring might end up as an "Islamist Winter", and that the Islamists, though claiming to support democracy, will soon turn against it. By misrepresenting Islam in this way, Islam was perceived as incorporating a set of values inferior to Western liberalism and thus constituting a barrier in the way of progress of civilizations. The Turkish and Malaysian models have set a positive example for the co-existence of democracy with religion. Moreover, with the wake of the Arab Spring, the relationship between political Islam and democracy became one of the controversial topics to the extent that one might talk about a fourth wave of democratization.

In the Egyptian case, the assumption that political Islam is contradictory to democratic transformation can be perceived as a kind of fallacy. One may say that whatever new state emerges in Egypt, almost certainly, won't be democratic in the liberal and European tradition⁷. Thus we might find ourselves before a new modality for democratization; in the Islamist outlook. With both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists coming at the forefront of the political landscape, many analysts argued that both are not known for their attachment to democracy. Even if they have given up talk of the "Islamist Revolution," they still put religion at the heart of their agenda⁸.

This paper argues that Islamist parties may have more power and freedom to maneuver from the famous Western model of democracy, but they too will find themselves being pushed to adjust to

⁵ Khalil Al Anani, Ibid.

⁶ Rahil Yasin, "Are Islam And Democracy Compatible?", Countercurrents, 21 March, 2009 (Available at: <http://www.countercurrents.org/yasin210309.htm>)

⁷ Timothy Stanley, "An Islamist state in Egypt can still mean democracy", CNN Website, 27 June, 2012 (Available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/06/27/opinion/stanley-morsi-islam/index.html>)

⁸ Olivier Roy, Ibid.

the democratization process (even in their own format) due to the constraints and characteristic of the social, religious, political, and geostrategic fields in which these parties must operate.

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the Egyptian revolution specifically, the religious forces might find themselves sidelined⁹. Not only that, but an open and participatory modality of governance will be the only chance for Islamist forces to survive and build their legitimate presence. The Islamists must also listen to their voters, who will not follow them blindly. Furthermore, the presumption that Egypt's political Islam is the vanguard of theocratic dictatorship ignores historical and contemporary evidence which proves that Islam is simply too complex to be stereotyped as the faith of tyrants¹⁰. It would thus seem as a matter of stereotyping by assuming that a democrat should always be a liberal by definition. It would be even a mistake for scholars and the international community to use the election results to assume either that the future of Egypt is assured, or that the country is destined for Islamist leadership.

An insight into Western history would also emphasize this argument. Religious tolerance in the west was not necessarily the fruit of liberalism and enlightenment. Rather, it was the byproduct of the savage wars of religion which resulted at a later stage in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648¹¹. The paper argues that politics has always played a bigger role than philosophy or theology. Fathers of the United States were not secularists; for them, the separation of church and state was a way of protecting religion from government, not the reverse¹².

To this end, the paper argues that that the revolution has begun to break such stereotypes, revealing a more moderate Muslim Brotherhood than many expected. So far, observing the discourse of the presidency and the government of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is becoming clear that radical Islam will not be utilized by the Brotherhood and its supporters, yet there is an explicit emphasis and inclination by officials towards embracing democratic, national and civilian traits in their discourse.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Timothy Stanley, Ibid

¹¹ Olivier Roy, Ibid

¹² Ibid.

3. THE BROTHERHOOD AND THE SALAFISTS IN THEORY AND ACTION: A DIFFERENCE IN TACTICS RATHER THAN GOALS OR PRINCIPLES

In the immediate aftermath of the Egyptian revolution, both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists institutionalized their efforts into political parties. Having the largest number of votes in the first parliamentary elections in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) along with the Salafist al-Nour Party represented what was termed as the newly arising political Islam. Despite the centrality of religion to both parties, yet, there are indeed important differences between both trends but these are really issues of timing and tactics rather than of goals or principles¹³.

As a general remark, many analysts agree that the Muslim Brotherhood is a "moderate Islamist" group while the Salafists are explicitly radical. The Brotherhood - according to this viewpoint - seeks to transform Egypt into a state governed by the "Islamic Sharia". It is, however, more cautious and smarter into the transformation process in comparison to the Salafists who are newcomers to the political scene. Due to the lack of political experience on the Salafists' side, their image was perceived as more of a fundamentalist, puritanical stream of Islamism¹⁴.

In order to highlight how pluralism and political opening are affecting the ideological stances of the two religious forces and the extent to which these forces coincide, when and how they depart from each other, the paper will investigate into the stances of both parties concerning specific policy issues using their platforms and official discourse as the main guidance of analysis. These include the following:

- The stance towards the Islamic Sharia (Islamist Rule) and the civil state;
- The perception of the role of women;
- The perception of the Egyptian Copts;
- The foreign policy orientations.

¹³ Barry Rubin, "Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists: Same Goals; Different Strategies", The Global research in International Affairs (Gloria) Center, December, 2011 (Available at: <http://www.gloria-center.org/2011/12/muslim-brotherhood-and-salafists-same-goals-different-strategies-2/>)

¹⁴ Ibid.

3.1 The Stance Towards Islamic Sharia (Islamist rule) and the Civil State

In its political discourse, the (FJP) advocates for a political system that fully conforms with the Islamist norms and principles. This entails that the Islamist political values should be incorporated in legislation as well as in the life pattern of each individual. The (FJP) also aim at Islamizing the society through gradual work rather than sudden legislative change¹⁵.

The main elements of the proposed state as elaborated by the Brotherhood is clearly manifested in the (FJP) platform under the section " State Characteristics". The proposed state according to the party's platform is based on the principle of citizenship . It is attributed by being a constitutional, civil, democratic state (based on consultation)¹⁶ and governed by the rule of law¹⁷.

The party has thus emphasized through its platform and through the official statements of its representatives its aim to establish a " civil state with an Islamist reference"¹⁸ . Moreover, the party elaborates in its platform what a civil state may entail. It emphasizes that the aspired state is neither a military state run by the military nor a theocracy run by the clergy¹⁹.

To this end, the Islamic Sharia as understood by the (FJP) is aimed at regulating the day to day aspects of the political system and the lives of people but through generic and comprehensive guidelines and principles, leaving the specific details to the legislation and the proper interpretation of specialized scientists. Any interpretation of the Islamic Sharia should, thus, be based on the context and the changing needs of each era as advocated by members of the (FJP).

As for the Salafists represented by the Nour party, one can say that the core issue tackled within the party's platform was the issue of " identity" especially with regards to its perception to the nature of the state.

¹⁵ Nathan J. Brown, " Egypt and Islamist Sharia: A Guide for the Perplexed", Q&A, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May , 2012 (Available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/15/egypt-and-islamic-sharia-guide-for-perplexed/argb>)

¹⁶ It is worth noting that platform equates between the connotation of the word democratic and the consultation process (Shurra).

¹⁷ The Freedom and Justice Party platform 2011, (available at http://www.hurryh.com/Party_Program.aspx)

¹⁸ Khaled Hefni, " Adopting a Civil State with an Islamist Reference" , *El Masry El Youm Newspaper*, December 3rd, 2011

¹⁹ The Freedom and Justice Party platform 2011, Ibid

Although the party emphasizes in its platform that the state should not be a theocracy, yet, it also refused a non-religious state. The party aspires for a democratic state within the context of the Islamist Sharia (rule).²⁰ It explicitly emphasized that it is against a civil state since it is equated to a secular state that maintains strict separation between religion and politics according to its perception. In this regards, the party advocates for "a state with Islamist reference in principles, objectives and guidelines".²¹ Going beyond that, the party also emphasized the necessity that the president of Egypt should be a "Muslim - Male" as stated by the spokesman of the party; Mohamed Nour , since it is religiously unacceptable that a woman leads from their perception²² .

3.2 The Perception of the Role of Women

The (FJP) adopted in its platform a stance that is pro-women empowerment along with an attempt to investigate into the main reasons that were behind her marginalization during the past decades. Practically speaking, The (FJP) took concrete actions to prove its stance. It nominated 76 women on its electoral lists during the first parliamentary elections in the aftermath of the revolution. Moreover, the party managed to achieve the highest percentage of women success within the elected parliament in comparison to other parties and political forces.

Despite this fact, some contradiction in discourse may appear with regards to the perception to the role of women. A significant example was clear when the (FJP) members criticized the committee on the "Elimination of Discrimination Against Women" because of the claim that the committee's provisions violate Sharia- based rule about guardianship in the case of divorce²³.

As for the Nour party, it emphasized in its platform the respect to the role of women. Moreover, the platform emphasized that that the work of women is not a shame or a fault if the main principles and ethics of the Islamist Sharia (rule) were taken into account by women workers.

²⁰ Osama Saleh, " The Cautious Approach: Will the Rising Islamist Movements Restructure the Arab State", *Al Syassa Al Dawlia: Strategic Transformation Papers*, issue no. 188, April 2012, P. 19

²¹ Ibid.

²² Al Mashhad Journal, 17/1/2012

²³ Nathan J. Brown, Ibid.

The party also referred to statistics highlighting that 30% of the Egyptian families are being taken care of by women. More importantly, the party referred to the role of women during the era of prophet Mohamed where women used to go out during wars and conflicts to cure war injuries²⁴.

3.3 The Perception of the Egyptian Copts

The (FJP) adopted a relatively open stance towards the Egyptian Copts. The party emphasizes the notion of citizenship and the equality of all Egyptians in rights and obligations before the law despite their religious or sexual affiliations. Moreover, the statements adopted by the party members' assure that Copts are not a minority but rather partners with their Muslim counterparts. It also emphasizes that the negative image concerning the Brotherhood stance from the Copts had been an attempt from the old regime to widen the religious gap among the Egyptian citizens, and to increase and deepen domination over the state, institutions and the citizens²⁵.

To prove its good intentions, the (FJP) appointed the Copt intellectual Rafik Habib as a deputy to the president of the party. The party also emphasized in its platform the right of non Muslims to resort to their religious and personal status laws concerning their own affairs²⁶.

As for the Salafists, the Nour party emphasized the full rights of the Egyptian Copts as partners, however they additionally expressed on numerous occasions that they were against the appointment of a non Muslim for the position of the president especially that the constitution stipulates explicitly that the religion of the nation is the Islam. On the other hand, the party has opened its membership to Muslims and non- Muslims alike.

3.4 The Foreign Policy Orientations:

The foreign policy orientations of the (FJP) and eventually the Brotherhood is clearly manifested in the party's platform and is based on three main principles; the first is regaining Egypt's position regionally and internationally, the second is maintaining a balanced and open relationship with all

²⁴ The official website of the Nour party; (available at: http://www.alnourparty.org/page/program_headers)

²⁵ Alyoum 7 Newspaper, March 2, 2011 (Available at: <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=361708&SecID=97&IssueID=106>)

²⁶ The Freedom and Justice Party platform 2011, Ibid.

regional and international powers, and the third is preserving the dignity of Egyptians living abroad²⁷.

The First Principle; Regaining Egypt's Position Regionally and Internationally: The (FJP) platform stipulates that Egypt has suffered during the past decade from a deterioration in its position and role whether at the regional or international levels. This has been a result of the practices of the old regime as clearly expressed in the platform. The (FJP) proposed a number of measures that should be adopted to regain Egypt's role and position. These included emphasizing the importance of the Arab, African and Islamist foreign policy circles alike. A special emphasis was made to the River Nile file. The platform stressed on the necessity of initiating joint developmental projects in Africa to fortify relations with African neighbors and to ensure the sustainability of the Nile water to Egypt. Emphasis was also granted to the relations with the Arab countries highlighting that the Egyptian national security is directly linked and affected by its relations with the Arab world. A just and fair settlement to the Palestinian case was also emphasized within the platform ensuring the Palestinian people's rights of having their own state with Jerusalem as its capital.

On the Islamist circle; the platform emphasized the necessity of opening channels and venues for cooperation with the Islamist countries and powers alike. The platform also gave a special status to the role of Al - Azhar in disseminating moderate Islam and in acting as a lead institution within the Islamist world.

On the international circle: the platform assured a number of principles that should be adopted, these included the following:

- Establishing a network of relations with worldwide countries on the basis of mutual respect, independence of decisions and mutual interests.
- Adhering to international conventions and agreements that Egypt had been part to, while ensuring that these conventions and agreements are popularly accepted. The platform emphasized that this principle necessitates that conventions and agreements should be based on equal attainment of the interests of all parties alike and noting that such agreements could be revisited or revised whenever needed.

²⁷ Ibid

- Refusing the dominance of any super power - particularly the United States of America (USA) - on the international community or any possible intervention in the internal affairs of any country. The platform also called for revisiting the role of the United Nations (UN) to act as a more efficient and effective organ in the international system.

The Second Principle; Maintaining a Balanced and Open Relationship with all Regional and International Powers: This entails allowing for a margin of maneuvering in international politics. The platform stressed that relations should be based on mutual interests and mutual respect.

The Third Principle; Preserving the Dignity of the Egyptians Living Abroad: This entails adopting principles that ensure the preservation of the dignity of Egyptians abroad.

As for the Nour party, despite the fact that it shares the main principles adopted by the (FJP), yet it hadn't identified detailed mechanisms for putting its principles into action. The main principles of the Nour party on foreign policy include the following:

- The establishment of relations with countries worldwide based on mutual interests, mutual respect and peaceful co-existence within a dialogue among civilizations rather than a clash of civilizations.
- The necessity of consolidating the diplomatic presence on both the regional and international levels. Special emphasis was dedicated to the African circle; especially the Nile River as well as the Islamist and Arab circles.
- Adhering to international conventions and agreements that Egypt had been part to and avoiding any irrational decisions which may drag the country into unpredictable conflicts worldwide.
- Emphasizing the independence of the decisions of the Egyptian policy makers based on the national interest.
- Emphasizing the necessity of relying on popular diplomacy along with formal and official diplomacy .
- The necessity of preserving the dignity of the Egyptians living abroad.

After highlighting the foreign policy orientations of both parties as reflected in their platforms and discourse, it is important to assess whether there had been an impact for the religious factor on the foreign policy orientations and preliminary actions of both parties or not. To this end a number of observations can be highlighted as follows:

- There is an evident similarity between the orientations of both parties with regards to the main aspects of foreign policy in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution. Despite this fact, it was noted the (FJP) was more operational in reflecting its foreign policy orientations into a number of on-ground activities through the active role of its external relations unit in the party as well as the role of its main political figures in the realm of international relations. On the contrary to that, the Nour party didn't reflect its foreign policy orientations into real on-ground activities in the foreign policy domain.
- The expected change within the Egyptian political system in the aftermath of the revolution may not necessarily lead to a complete discard of the old foreign policy orientations.
- To date, the role of the religious factor is not that evident with regards to the perceptions and the political discourse of both the (FJP) and the Nour parties. Pragmatism and strategic interests is the main driver of both activities and decisions with regards to foreign policy.
- Both parties emphasized their willingness to adhere to the international obligations that Egypt is part to. Despite this fact, leaders on both sides frequently stress that any party has the right to revisit the peace accords with Israel assuring that no unilateral decisions will be taken but, rather, decisions should be derived from the will of the Egyptian people.
- The political platform of the Nour party was too short and not detailed in comparison with that of the (FJP). A number of reasons are proposed to explain this fact. One of which could be the weak and immature experience of the Salafists in comparison to the Brotherhood who have been working in the political domain since decades. Another interpretation could be that the Salafists are willing to test waters before getting into any political commitments immediately in the aftermath of the revolution.
- Both parties gave special emphasis in their platforms to the African, Arab and Islamist circles, despite this fact, the Nour party platform did not address in its platform the importance of relations with the strategic partners such as the United States. Furthermore, it did not address the future relations with the emerging powers such as China and Malaysia for instance.

- Two important transformations were noticed with regards to the role of the religious factor within the discourse of the two parties with regards to foreign policy. The first was that both parties are to a certain extent in agreement on the necessity of enhancing relations with the Islamist powers in the region namely Turkey and Iran. There has been even concrete steps towards resuming talks with Iran after decades. This was manifested by President's Morsi's visit to Iran on the meeting for the non alliance movement in August 2012.

The second transformation is a tendency towards re-establishing the regional balance of power in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution. In this regards, one might note that in the near future we might be before two regional settings; either an interest-based alliance comprising Egypt, Turkey and Iran or a traditional alliance comprising Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It is not quite clear yet which of the two alliances is most likely to take place. Again it is pragmatism and strategic interests that will determine the future orientation for the two parties.

4. THE INTER-GENERATIONAL CONFLICT WITHIN (THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Since the beginning of the Egyptian Revolution on January 25th , the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has tried to project an image of unity in its forces, actions and demands. In spite of this facade, the internal, operational and theoretical crises began to invade this show of unity²⁸. Investigating into the internal structure of the Brotherhood, one can say that there are three main trends or groups within the Brotherhood as follows²⁹:

The conservative trend: is the group fully manipulating the guidance office (Ershad) and the local offices of the Brotherhood. Their power is mainly derived from their dominance over the administrative and bureaucratic operations. Members of this group emphasize the adherence to the hierarchical structure and the rules and principles of the Brotherhood .

²⁸ Hany Nasira, The Internal Crisis of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the James Town foundation, Volume 9, Issue 16 , April 22, 2011, PP 5-6

²⁹ Mohamed Bassiuni Abd El Halim, " The Generational Gap: The Aspects of the Internal Crises between the Muslim Brotherhood and their Leaders after the Revolution" *Al Syassa Al Dawlia*, Issue no. 188, April 2012

The pragmatic conservative trend: a group of members that abide by the rules and regulations of the Brotherhood but at the same time advocates for more participation by the other members. This group is more open to change but still is not that revolutionary.

The reformist trend: a group of members that call for a renaissance and a renewal of thinking based on participation, openness and avoiding extremism. This trend is mostly comprised of youth who have their own revolutionary vision and aspirations. Members of this group have called for serious reforms of the movement's political perspective and organization³⁰. They are much more at ease with modernity and pluralistic politics than their elders, who have resisted internal attempts to democratize the decision-making process and open up to the outside. Members of this group have also demanded new ideologies that will lead the movement to more open perspectives, they also called for the dissolution of the organizational structure of the current Brotherhood and the formation of a transitional administrative council until new and free elections can be held³¹.

Younger members of the group have used new media such as blogs , Facebook and Twitter to criticise their elders and to call for the democratising of the movement as a prerequisite to building a pluralistic civil state in Egypt. Their world-view is closer to that of their liberal and nationalist counterparts than to their conservative elders³². Frustrated by the closed leadership, younger members of the Brotherhood established four political parties of their own and were promptly expelled from the organisation for disobedience³³.

Against this background, the main elements of the inter- generational conflict within the Brotherhood was not absent from the revolutionary context in Egypt. The primary features of this conflict appeared on the decision of participation at the 25th of January revolution³⁴. Despite the preliminary official stance of the Brotherhood of not participating in the revolution, this position

³⁰ Hany Nasira, Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Fawaz Gerges, " The Irresistible Rise of the Muslim Brothers", Comment and Opinion, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) Website, (available at : <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/newsandmedia/commentandopinion/2011/12/brotherhood.aspx>)

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Mohamed Bassiuni Abd El Halim, Ibid.

was explicitly encountered by a more revolutionary stance from the young brothers who were pro participating in the revolution from the beginning. However, at a later stage, the rest of the Brotherhood came on board and joined the reformist group.

Further losses and intergenerational conflict within the Brotherhood occurred with the decision to establish the (FJP) without any consultative process with the youth. Moreover, the president, the deputy and the secretary general of the newly established party were appointed by the Brotherhood Guidance Office (Ershad) with a lack of an open or transparent process.

Generally speaking, the Brotherhood leadership forbade its members from joining any other party rather than its own. Those who joined other parties, or started their own, were expelled from the Brotherhood.

On April 2, 2011, the escalation of the conflict was apparent when Dr. Abdul Moneim Abu al-Foutoh, one of the most prominent reformists within the Brotherhood declared his willingness to run for presidential elections; a decision that was against the Brotherhood's position of not nominating any candidate to run for the elections.

As a result of this position from Dr. Abo El Foutoh and the decision to dismiss him from the Brotherhood, a number of the reformist trend (youth) chose to support and back him and accordingly a severe polarization appeared among the main trends and generations within the Brotherhood.

At a later stage, the Brotherhood decided to nominate Khairat El Shater to run for presidential elections, the mistrust among the generations was more evident than before especially that the conservative trend lost its credibility after having declared that the only purpose for the Brotherhood after the revolution is participation and not domination of politics.

In an attempt to analyze the inter-generational conflict , the paper argues that the dynamics of managing such conflict within the Brotherhood usually take the form of a zero-sum game; when one trend achieves something, the other trend will eventually achieve nothing³⁵. Evidence had shown that the conservative trend had been often inflexible and intolerant with regards to ideas proposed by the reformist trend. Harsh penalties that include dismissal from the Brotherhood was adopted towards reformists that were not aligned with the consensus of the group on discussed

³⁵ Khalil Al Anani, Ibid.

matters. The justification for such harsh penalties was usually: to preserve coherence within the Brotherhood and to avoid the contagion and the spillover effect of ideas that didn't bring together members of the Brotherhood into consensus.

There is a strong belief within the conservative group of the Brotherhood that individuals within the Brotherhood derive their influence not primarily from their own political talents but from the fact they are part of the group, one that is presumably greater than the sum of its parts.

In a famous statement to the (FJP) deputy leader Essam El-Erian he emphasized that "*All decisions are taken as an organization, with shura (consultation), with democracy... Youth are appreciated but they are appreciated in the context of the organization and not outside of it. Dissent was permitted before a final decision was made, but not after*"³⁶.

For these reasons, the old guard within the Brotherhood had often constituted a firewall in front any attempt by the new reformist generation to hold any executive or influential positions³⁷. The power politics between the different generations and trends within the Brotherhood will most likely be challenged in the upcoming years especially that the Brotherhood is now in power and thus conflict of interests and aspirations will probably alter the traditional balance of power within the group, and bring other players at the forefront. Without a clear enemy—the Mubarak regime—maintaining organizational cohesion will constitute a real challenge before the Brotherhood.

There are other problems and challenges that stand in the way of the Muslim Brotherhood in the post-revolutionary Egypt. These challenges include the movement's inability to renew its identity by keeping itself captive to the era of its founder, Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949). In addition, there has been a growing negative perception by some prominent Islamists and social leaders who believe that Egypt's largest Islamist group; the brotherhood has deviated from the real teachings of Islam to concentrate its efforts on political pursuits³⁸.

³⁶ Shadi Hamid, " Brother President: The Islamist Agenda for Governing Egypt", *Cairo review of the Global affairs*, June 2012

³⁷ Khalil Al Anani, Ibid.

³⁸ Hany Nasira, Ibid,

In light of these facts, one may highlight two main remarks that can be attributed to the intergenerational conflict within the Brotherhood as follows;

First: The intergenerational conflict is mainly about the political aspects and not the preaching aspects of the Brotherhood ³⁹. Despite the fact the (FJP) has aimed to act as the political arm of the Brotherhood; and where the latter should be confined to the religious preaching role , yet the intersection between the Brotherhood and the (FJP) led to further conflicts between generations on the political realm.

Secondly: The conflict over the main principle of the Brotherhood which is the principle of "adherence and obedience". The young generations within the Brotherhood are not accepting unconditional "adherence and obedience". Instead , they are demanding new patterns of internal governance within the Brotherhood based on participation rather than obedience.

The future and the dynamics of the inter-generational conflict in the Brotherhood is still unclear, one may say that there are two possible scenarios that can determine the future of relations between the different generations within the Brotherhood⁴⁰:

The first scenario; is about searching for a common ground between the generations of the Brotherhood. In this scenario there should be consensus on the main issues and topics while differences will be much focused on means of implementation and operation. While the second scenario; is about deepening the gap between the generations on the issues of differences between the different generations.

Many analysts believe that the first scenario is more likely to happen, despite this fact, to avoid disintegration and fragmentation , the Brotherhood must compromise with their factions and wings. They must find a common ground to work on. This will require considerable political skill, which their current leader does not have. It also needs a vision of the future which the old guard does not have.

³⁹ Mohamed Bassiuni Abd El Halim, Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid.

5. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND THE RISING ISLAMIST FORCES IN EGYPT

For years, the west has feared the rise of political Islam in the Middle East region. Since the 11th of September 2001 attacks, fear of Islamism in general, not just of al-Qaeda, has taken hold of the western imagination and was further intensified. The parliamentary elections of Algeria in 1992 was a sort of a nightmare for western politicians .

At the early days of the Egyptian revolution, the main players of the international community were counting on the long standing autocratic regimes existing in the region. With concrete successes achieved by those who revolted, the Western governments such as the USA and the EU member states called the existing regimes of the Arab region to take concrete and tangible steps towards achieving real reforms.

The West was thus reluctant in supporting the Arab revolts at their first days and was even skeptical about the possibility that such revolts could lead to any tangible results.

With authoritarian regimes in Tunisia then Egypt being demised, the West started to voice their support to the people of the Arab Spring countries and in some cases called for the immediate stepping down of autocratic rulers flagging the legitimate right for the people to choose their regimes.

In the Egyptian case, and after decades of being outlawed and persecuted, religious activists and Islamists have emerged above ground as a pivotal forces and were openly mobilizing their old supporters as well as recruiting new members.

The Egyptian revolution and the rise of political Islam has definitely affected the international community at large. To this end, the paper will examine the different positions and stances of the most prominent countries affected by such revolution.

USA

Western powers and specifically USA were extremely anxious about the rise of Islamist forces in Egypt specifically the Brotherhood. They view the group as a bitter foe and especially as a threat to Israel, which signed the Camp David peace treaty with Egypt in 1979, ending the state of war between the two neighbors⁴¹.

⁴¹ Fawaz Gerges, Ibid.

Pro-western, autocratic Arab rulers, such as Mubarak, exploited this fear by portraying themselves as partners to the US in the fight against "extremists" and "fundamentalism". *"Either us or the extremists,"* Middle Eastern dictators warned Western officials.

"For years, dictators told their people they had to accept the autocrats they knew to avoid the extremists they feared" ; a statement that was emphasized by the US Secretary of State in response to the Arab Spring events⁴².

Not only that, but Hillary Clinton even stressed that the Obama administration would work with the ascendant Islamist parties in Tunisia and Egypt if they played by the rules of the political game; a statement that marked a shift in the US foreign policy discourse.

A pragmatic insight would reveal the fact that the US can also find common grounds with the rising Islamist powers. The US alliances with Sunni leaders are pivotal in front of Iran's efforts to gain influence, and given its resources and international influence, the American government still has leverage that it is able to use in the region.

EU

The Arab Spring, has been a main visible failure of the EU projection - as well as other players - in the region, as it did not have any role in shaping or, at least, orienting what happened there though the Spring happened on its southern Mediterranean borders.

The EU and its member states were also reluctant in supporting the Arab revolts in its early days due to the same reasons of the US. However, at a later stage, the EU expressed its endorsement to the Arab revolutions and expressed its willingness to support the Arab countries in their democratic transformation.

Therefore, it was thus quite understandable why, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the EU has been very keen to set the deepening of the Arab reforms as a key objective of its development cooperation policy towards the region. The EU, then, swiftly proposed a series of European policy initiatives and a revisiting to its European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in May 2011 to offer support for Arab reforms and to embrace momentum into the old policy .

⁴² Ibid.

Israel

The Arab Spring and particularly the outbreak of the revolution in Egypt was a real surprise to Israel. The Israeli politicians continued their support to Mubarak's rule until the last minute. For Israel, Mubarak was the country's most important regional ally. There is no doubt that Israel as well as the whole international community did not anticipate the outbreak of revolts in the region and particularly in Egypt. There was a hope on the Israeli side that steps taken by Mubarak will eventually put an end to the disturbance. Despite this fact, and after Mubarak had been forced to step down, Israel was encountered by a state of uncertainty. Politicians even took a hostile explicit position towards the Egyptian revolution. "*What happened in Iran could happen in Egypt*", Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stressed expressing his fears that a radical Islamist regime like the one in Iran could also come to power in Egypt⁴³.

Generally speaking, there is a strong conviction amongst the politicians in Israel that although the protests in Egypt may not have been triggered by religious extremism yet they believe that in times of chaos and lack of state control the rise of religion in its extremist form can materialize. The fear can be also doubled by the possible cooperation between the Brotherhood in Egypt and its counterpart in Hamas putting additional pressure on the Israeli government and increasing the Israeli isolation within the region.

Two factors will potentially characterize Israeli actions towards the Arab Spring; first; hostility towards Arab unity and secondly; hostility towards democracy in Arab countries⁴⁴. Of course the main concern of Israel is the preservation of the peace accords signed with Egypt. Any possible alteration in this arrangement will result in further isolation of Israel in a changing Middle East. Despite the fact, that the Islamist forces in Egypt; both (FJP) and Nour party emphasized their respect to international agreements and treaties that Egypt is party to; yet in a revolutionary context, the role of public opinion will be a significant factor that can affect the Egyptian foreign

⁴³ Haaretz Website (Available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/netanyahu-warns-outcome-of-egypt-revolution-could-be-like-iran-s-1.340411>, 31 January 2011)

⁴⁴ Mahmoud Muhareb, "Israel and the Egyptian Revolution", *Research Papers*, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, May 2011

policy towards Israel in the years to come. In reality, Israel will come under renewed pressure to deal with both Hamas and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank⁴⁵.

Other optimistic view points; though not that significant, were positive about the revolts in Egypt. Their argument was that a democratic Egypt could in the long run deliver to Israel something much better than Camp David's cold peace⁴⁶. Despite the different arguments, one may conclude that Israel will have a hard time in dealing with the upcoming regime in Egypt. It has always preferred despotism and corruption rather than a "political Islamism threat".

Iran

With the wake of the Arab Spring, Iran believed that the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions reflected an Islamist popular rejection of tyranny and of subservience to the United States and Israel; and thus such revolutions could be understood as extensions of the Islamist Iranian Revolution⁴⁷. The position of the Islamist Republic regarding the Egyptian revolution was very supportive. The Supreme Guide of the Islamist Revolution; Sayyid Ali al-Khamenei claimed that the *"Egyptians revolted against Mubarak's regime because he was an agent of Israel and subservient to America"*⁴⁸.

Despite the explicit support of the Arab Spring and Iran's ambitions to play a regional role within the region, there is a clear and historical rivalry between Iran and countries such as Egypt over the dominance and manipulation of the Middle East region. More importantly there were Egyptian fears from spreading the "Shiaa Principles" within the Egyptian Sunni context. Despite this fact, Egypt is still considered a crucial potential ally for Iran in becoming the regional superpower, especially after the decline of Egypt's role in the region.

In this context, there have been continuous Iranian attempts to improve relations with Egypt after these attempts failed under the leadership of Mubarak.

After the 25th of January Revolution, Iran has been among the first countries praising the Egyptian uprising and expecting it to lead to an improved relation with Egypt.

⁴⁵ Kai Bird, "Why the Egypt Revolution Is Good for Israel", *Foreign policy*, February, 2011

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Rachid Yalouh, "Iran and the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions", *Research Papers*, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, May, 2011

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Moreover, it has perceived the new system in Egypt after the revolution as an opportunity to be exploited, to open new markets for Iranian goods, and to face down the economic sanctions imposed on it⁴⁹.

As for the benefits on the Egyptian side, there is also a need for a new ally in the Middle East that can increase its power vis-à-vis others in the region. To this end, the visit of an Egyptian delegation of 45 public figures to Iran was welcomed by high officers in the Iranian government as a way to enhance relations between the two countries, on the political as well as economic fronts.

More importantly, the visit of the newly appointed Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi to Iran on the occasion of handing over the presidency of the Non Alliance Movement Summit to the Iranian president was a precedent and was viewed by many analysts as a sign from Egypt to consider dialogue with Iran in the near future.

With this optimistic future for the Irani relations with the Egyptian political system, Iran is still encountered by a very important challenge and a question that will eventually find an answer in the years to come: If Iran's main instrument for achieving regional leadership has been its soft power among the region's populations—rooted in a rejection of the U.S.–Israeli–Saudi status quo—will the regional shifts enable the Islamic Republic to exploit popular Arab victories to its own interests? Or will the emergence of a more empowered Arab street will undermine the foundation of Iran's soft power, thereby allowing its rivals to exert greater influence? ⁵⁰.

Turkey

The rise of Turkey as a regional power during the last decades had been notable and well recognized. Ankara has sought to become the preeminent arbiter in the Middle East region.

Moreover, Turkey has presented an attractive model of a soft-power that has been appealing for many of the Arab states. It has employed trade, investment, and a consistent approach that emphasized diplomacy and international integration. Turkey's significant political, economic, and

⁴⁹ Al Ahram Newspaper, 22 August 2012

⁵⁰ Ibrahim Kalin, " Turkey and the Arab spring", Project Syndicate, May 2011, (available at: <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/turkey-and-the-arab-spring>)

cultural influence have steadily increased in the region. In the wake of the Arab Spring, Turkey was amongst the first countries that praised the Arab revolts.

Not only that, but over the last decade, Turkey has developed different types of relationships with the countries of the Middle East, targeting improved relations with both governments and the public. Indeed, Turkey is probably the only country that has been able to promote relations at the two levels in the Arab world⁵¹.

Arab intellectuals, activists, and youth leaders of different political inclinations have taken a keen interest in what some describe as the “Turkish model.” Turkey’s stable democracy, growing economy, and proactive foreign policy have generated growing appreciation of the country’s achievements, which has augmented its “soft power” in the region⁵².

After the toppling down of the Mubarak 's regime, the Turkish prime minister; Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid a visit to Egypt and he was extremely welcomed by many of the Egyptians. With the rise of fears from an extremist version of political Islam, Turkey took the initiative of promoting its own brand of Islamist democracy and called for adopting the ‘zero problems’ approach in its foreign policy.

Despite this fact, Turkey is also open to accusations of hypocrisy. Although Turkey was one of the first countries to call for Mubarak’s resignation, yet it urged dialogue and restraint in dealing with Gadhafi in Libya; a stance that posed a question mark on its credibility and image. Turkey will eventually face an increasingly difficult challenge of balancing its interests with its values.

Saudi Arabia

Although Saudi Arabia did not praise the Egyptian revolution since its outbreak, and despite the fact the Saudi Arabia opened its territories to Ben Ali of Tunisia and offered support to Mubarak who refused it, yet it declared that it respected the choice of Egyptians in changing their system.

The Saudi fears from the Arab revolts is derived from the fact of the threat of a Sunni monarchy on its border being overthrown, or even entering a power-sharing arrangement with the Shiite communities concentrated in Bahrain on the Eastern borders of its territories.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

However, to prove its support and good will to the Egyptian revolution, the Saudi foreign minister Saud Al-Faisal announced that his country would provide Egypt with \$3.75 billion to support its economy that was negatively affected after the revolution, and it already transferred \$500 million by mid-May 2011 to the Central Bank of Egypt⁵³.

The positive side of the rise of political Islam in Egypt is that , Saudi Arabia can mobilize relations with the Islamist forces attaining power in Egypt to its interests; both the Brotherhood and the Salafists particularly due to the similarity of the Salafist ideology with the Wahabi ideology in Saudi Arabia .

It is even clear by now that Saudi Arabia strongly understand that having a dominant role in the Middle East is conditioned by good relations with Egypt, especially after the 2011 revolution and thus further support and commitment from the Saudi government to the revolution and the current political forces in Egypt is a must in the near future.

6. THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY WITHIN THE EMERGING POLITICAL SPECTRUM IN EGYPT

In the aftermath of the revolution, there is no doubt that the Egyptian political scene became highly pluralistic . It is still uncertain that out of this disorderly pluralism a democratic regime can emerge in the short term.

Four different players can determine the answer to this question; the rising political parties, the military, the former National Democratic Party (NDP), and the protest movements.

With regards to the political parties in Egypt, one can say that these are still in the maturing process except for the (FJP) (Muslim Brotherhood). To a great extent most of the rising parties have quite similar party platforms, essentially centrist ones. Most of which- including Islamist parties, describe themselves as civil parties. Despite the similarity in platforms, the division between Islamist and secular parties is quite obvious and sharp. To date a real attempt to form a democratic alliance of all - namely defined as - civil parties didn't materialize and a strong political will and proper organization of all civil factions is a must in the near future.

As for the Military, one can note that the military played the central role in the aftermath of the revolution and the stepping down of president Mubarak . Members of the Supreme Council for

⁵³ Ibid.

Armed Forces (SCAF) had promised an interim period of holding power, promising elections and a return to civilian rule within a framework of 6 months. Despite this fact, the military rule lasted much longer till the presidential elections took place in June 2012 and resulting in the winning of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Dr. Mohamed Moursi. The new president seemed reluctant in his first days in office to take any concrete decision. However in a surprising manner, a number of decisions were taken in parallel after almost 45 days held in office. The most controversial decision was calling Field Marshal Tantawi the head of the Supreme Council for Armed Forces (SCAF) for retirement and undertaking concrete changes within the military. Moreover, the newly appointed president issued a decree to cancel the complementary constitutional declaration that gave evident powers to the military. Such decisions were perceived by many of the analysts and Egyptians as being a soft civilian coup by the president that would put an end to the role of military at least of the time being, while others perceive it as an agreed compromise to ensure a safe exit for the military and to avoid presenting the main figures within the military into political trials.

As for the dissolved National Democratic Party (NDP), one may say that a number of its former senior members are still working behind the scenes to revive its role. The launch of new political parties by prominent figures of the old (NDP) makes it clear that the old guards are still fighting back⁵⁴.

With regards to the protest movements which were the driving reason for the revolution, these movements which then formed what was named as the " Youth Revolutionary Council" is still a loose immature coalition. This is due to the fact that youth movements refuse strict hierarchical structure and well defined leadership roles⁵⁵. Revolutionaries who had called Egyptians into the streets failed to make concrete moves towards forming political parties. When such revolutionaries had a political demand , they resorted to the public demonstrations and strikes and avoiding the long task of party building⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ Marina Ottaway, " The emerging political spectrum in Egypt" , *Commentary*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October , 2011 (Available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/10/emerging-political-spectrum-in-egypt/5u7l>)

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Nathan J. Brown, " The Muslim Brotherhood Democratic Dilemma", *National Interest*, December , 2011

Due to the current political spectrum in Egypt, a number of possible challenges to democratic transformation lie ahead of the Islamist forces holding power in Egypt particularly the Brotherhood, these can be summarized as follows:

- The challenge of how to let democracy, as an organizing principle for the Egyptian polity, trickle down to other arenas in society. In other words, how to institutionalize democracy with its key procedures and values not only in formal politics but beyond⁵⁷.
- The challenge before the Brotherhood to separate institutionally between the movement's *dawa* (religious call) component and its political component. The Brotherhood has sustained itself since 1928 as both a social/religious movement and a political arm⁵⁸.
- The secular-religious divide is the most fundamental fault line in the Egyptian politics, and it is one of the significant factors that threatens the transition from authoritarianism to pluralism.
- Although the Islamist forces and specifically the Brotherhood flag their continuous calls for a civilian state with an Islamist reference, yet in reality, they are unable and unwilling to free themselves from a heavy ideological inheritance⁵⁹. In contrast to the Turkish and Tunisian Islamists, the Brothers in Egypt are allergic to the terms secular and secularism and view them as "anti-Islamist". A paradigm shift in the Brotherhood mentalities is a pre-requisite for a healthy democratic transition.

CONCLUSION

The paper aimed at examining the role of the rising religious forces on the democratic transformation in Egypt and whether the political opening and attainment of power can affect the ideological and political stances of these forces or not.

The paper concluded that despite the centrality of religion for both the Muslim Brotherhood represented by the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and the Salafists represented by Nour Party,

⁵⁷ Amr Hamzawy, " From dictatorship to democracy", *Cairo Review of global affairs*, (Available at <http://www.aucegypt.edu/GAPP/CairoReview/Pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=27>)

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Fawaz Gerges, Ibid.

yet, there had been differences between both religious forces. These differences were mainly issues of timing and tactics rather than of goals or principles.

Assessing the rhetoric and the political discourse of both forces, the paper revealed that pluralism and political opening have clearly affected the ideological stances of the two religious forces. Furthermore, it stressed that dealing with the religious forces in Egypt collectively as a cumulative force representing political Islam is a kind of fallacy, as in some cases, these forces departed from each other and in other cases they coincided together. This was evident with regards to their perception of the nature of the state. So while the (FJP) called for a civil state with Islamic reference, the Nour party explicitly refused the term civil state and called for a state governed in the context of Islamic Shariaa (rule). On the other hand, both forces coincided on issues such as their stances from the role of women and the rights of Egyptian Copts.

Findings have also shown similarity between the orientations of both parties with regards to the main aspects of foreign policy in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution. Despite this fact, it was noted the (FJP) was more operational and detailed in reflecting its foreign policy orientations into its political platform and a in number of on-ground activities. On the other hand, the foreign policy orientations of the Nour party was a sort of general guidelines that lacked political experience and maturity.

The paper argued that the role of the religious factor was clearly noticed on the discourse level for both the (FJP) and the Nour parties. However, when it comes to real stances and on-ground actions, pragmatism and strategic interests are the main drivers for both parties especially for the Muslim Brotherhood

Against this background, the paper concludes that Islamists leaders who came into power have learned the art of compromise and pragmatism and thus one may say that ideology, in this sense, takes a back seat to the interests of the Islamist leaders particularly within the Muslim Brotherhood..

In addition to the main research question, the paper has also tackled and pinpointed the inter-generational dimension that has been clearly evident in the case of the Brotherhood. It tried to examine its implications on the future of movement and the democratic transformation at large. The paper concluded that the power politics between the different generations and trends within the Brotherhood will most likely be challenged in the upcoming years especially that the

Brotherhood is now in power and thus conflict of interests and aspirations will probably alter the traditional balance of power within the movement, and bring other players at the forefront. Without a clear common enemy, the paper concluded that maintaining organizational cohesion will constitute a real challenge in front of the Brotherhood in the years to come.

Finally , the paper examined the extent of possible compatibility between political Islam and democratic transformation in Egypt. It concluded that political Islam in Egypt can co-exist with democracy. Islamist parties will find themselves being pushed to adjust to the democratization process, though not necessarily in its Western format. The current religious forces will most likely embrace democratic and civilian traits in their actions due to the constraints and characteristic of the social, religious, political, and geostrategic aspects in which these forces must operate at.

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the Egyptian revolution, an open and participatory modality of governance will be the only chance for Islamist forces to survive and build their legitimate presence at the popular and societal level otherwise they will end up being sidelined.

More than religion or ideology, it is geopolitics and hegemony that have come to the fore as the central factors shaping how governments are responding to unprecedented regional unrest.

For now, the future implications the rise of religious forces in Egypt is still being examined. Only time will reveal whether the Arab Spring will be followed by a winter of renewed autocracy or if, instead, the seeds of democracy will bring the Arab Spring to full fruition.

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