POLITICAL ISLAM AND THE ARAB SPRING: BETWEEN THE FAILURE IN EGYPT AND THE SUCCESS IN TUNISIA

Ibrahim S.I Rabaia

University of Malaya, Malaysia

ibr20002000@gmail.com

Abstract

By the end of 2010, the spark of the Arab Spring started in Tunisia, by the following year, several Arab countries had been affected by such revolutions in different degrees. However, Tunisia and Egypt signed a special and unique experience by their political and nonviolent transformation in few years after toppling down the former dictators.

Unfortunately, such transition ended in Egypt by restoring the military regime, which controlled the country for more than 6 decades, and the Muslim Brotherhood "MB" winners of the first free democratic elections in the Egyptian for presidency and parliament, failed in staying in office under the pressure of army intervention. On the other hand, Alnahda –the local Muslim Brotherhood- still a key player in the political order of Tunisia with an ongoing political transition under democratization roles.

In this paper, I am asking about the reasons of such different in the outcomes for the participation of Islamist in political transition in both countries, the methodology is basing on comparing the both cases and analysing the structure of MB in both countries from one side, and exploring, in brief, the surrounding political environment from the other side. In general, I am building this paper on the hypothesis of that MB failed in maintaining their power in Egypt due to fundamental differences between them and the Tunisian MB in their political ideology, in addition to the differences in the political context and Army role.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Egypt, Muslim Brotherhood, Political Transition, Tunisia.

Introduction a sudden and unexpected political transition took place in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), these changes led to a fast stepping down for the leaders of Egypt and Tunisia. Within few months after that, the transition process started on democratic bases by witnessing the first free elections in both countries ever.

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) dominated the political sphere in Egypt by getting the majority in the parliament and winning the presidency seat. The same happened in Tunisia when Anahda became the main political player and dominated the parliament as well as the government.

After a dramatic and tremendous changes, the MB experience failed in keeping power and staying in office in Egypt while the experience of Tunisia still alive, and MB, represented by Anahda, still one of the two leading political powers in the political process.

In this paper, the question is why the political Islam failed in staying in the political process after the Arab spring in Egypt, while its experience of Tunisia still successful in term of participation and political transition.

In general, no single answer for such question. It needs a structural analysis for the political system and an analysis of the internal thought and practices in each experience. This is what I am trying to do in this paper, and of course, this analysis needs to be expanded by dealing with other cases for the political Islam in order to have a frame for modeling each of these experiences.

Before the revolution

Since 2005, MB enrolled the increasing political protest against Mubarak regime and his plans of succession, however, this contribution came mainly from the young generation. The old guard which witnessed long decades of suppression and coercive methods did not believe in the impact of such methods to change in regime. The leaders of MB decided not to participate in Kefayah movement officially in 2005, however, they allowed their members to do so individually. This step was under pressure of coercive apparatuses.

The MB official opinion was conservative in participating in the early protests of 2011, the leadership was afraid of the regime suppressive reaction. But the youth contributed through the youth movements which flourished since 2005. Other leaders of MB were public figures as parliament members and unions leaders also did so. The guidance office had been threatened by the regime not to participate in the demonstrations, the estimating position also had been built on

the Egyptian regime anti-Islamist policies and the strong ties with western governments in such context(Awadi, 2013).

In few days, the Egyptian protestors proof that their revolution is much different than the previous uprisings. MB announced its official participation and contributed in the massive protests of Altahreer squire. Their skills in organizing and managing the popular activities were important in the protests(Awadi, 2013).

The Tunisian experience for the political Islam was different, Anahda was not allowed to practice its political role since the first days of Ben Ali. Anahda transformed from the Islamic tendency movement in the 1970's. Rachid al ghana noshi,who was one of the founders of the party and one of the main Islamic scholars, came back to Tunisia after the success of the revolution. Indeed, the role of Anahda was limited in the revolution due to its limited institutional structure in Tunisia. But the party became the key political power in the postrevolution Tunisia.

Egypt and Tunisia: Two different structures

Egypt is the largest Arab country in terms of the population, it lies also on one of the strategic geopolitical positions, and it had an unstable modern history forced it to enter several wars with Israel.

The Egyptian society also conservative and religious, and the political structure still designed around the military establishment. Since the free officials revolution, the president comes from the armed forces with the exception of Mohammed Mursi.

On the other hand, Tunisia has a lower population and higher levels of education, the country has been secular since independence, and the regime designed around the one leader, in the cases of Bourguiba and Ben Ali, while the army was small and had no economic or political roles.

There were limited differences in the nature of the regime in both countries, it was patrimonial and client. However, the education and specifications of the bureaucracy, army, and the coercive apparatuses.

Historically, the army dominates the political and economic sphere of Egypt. Since the early born of the modern Egypt under Mohammad Ali in the 17th century. The army role expanded after the revolution of 1952 and became the center of the economic development under the model of the post-colonial state building in Egypt which was state led. The Egyptian military became the focal point of industries and services because it was the mother institution for the presidents since the revolution(Marshall, 2015).

The military forces dominated high portion of the industries in the country under Nasser and Alsadat. Continually, the Army diverse its investments to face the privatization under Mubarak and made partnerships with local businessmen and foreign investors.
The estimations about the Army share of the Egyptian economy varied between 10-45%, but in general, the Army has a large share of the food, vehicles, cement, gasoline, construction, shipping, agriculture, and a long list of other industries. Moreover, the public land in Egypt is under the control, ownership or authority of the Army(Hashim, 2011).

These facts made the first priority for the army officials to protect and keep their benefits as individuals and institutions. For this reason, the army did not support Mubarak against the

revolutionary powers of 2011, the fears inside the military institutions were from the association

plan of Mubarak to bring his son as the first president from a non-military background(Hashim,

2011).

On the other side, the Tunisian army is small in size and have no contribution in the economic

and political sectors. The army has only 40500 soldiers. Also, the militarization is poor,

financing is limited, and had been controlled by the president. This bad situation for the Army

was planned by Bourguiba and his successor Ben Ali. Both of them were afraid of any military

threat. Bourqiba and Ben Ali had been sure of isolating the military forces from the political

life(Grewal, 2016).

The laws and regulations have been designed to guarantee this situation, for instance, the army

members are not allowed to vote in the elections. Bourguiba appointed loyal officials and kept

his direct control on the top leaders. Indeed, Ben Ali gave more attention to the army as a former

member of the armed forces. However, this hope did not last long for the Army after discovering

a plan for a military coup in the early 1990's. finally, Ben Ali monopolized the main decisions in

the Army, he did not distribute the leadership authorities(Grewal, 2016). Ben Ali regime

designed a police state, his police, and coercive apparatuses were one of the most professional

among the Arab countries. Its members were well-trained by the Americans and French

governments(Barany, 2011).

The large bureaucracy is one of the key components of the Egyptian political structure. the

wages and salaries consume around 66% of the total budget(Owen & Tripp, 2013). The numbers

of the employees in the Egyptian public sector was higher than 5 million by the end of the last

century. This large number of employees reflected the big impact of this population on the

decision and policy implementation. The Egyptian public sector had been corrupted, inefficient, and client.

On contrast, the current number of the public sector employees in Tunisia is less than 600000, including the employees of the public companies and around 100000 appointed after 2011. The recruitment process is competitive, there is an evaluation system, and supported by the general labor union(Brockmeyer, Khatrouch, & Raballand, 2015). Finally, the Tunisian public servants are in general qualified and trained, as it was the policy of president Bourqiba and Ben Ali to follow the French model in establishing and development and efficient public sector.

The third component of the political structure in both countries is the business elite, which had a significant role in both countries before and during the revolutions. However, the role was tremendously different in size and impact.

The business elite started to appear in the political arena slowly since Alsadat adopted the opening policy in the 1970's. gradually, this elite increased in size,role, and impact under Mubarak, it has benefited from the privatization of the state huge enterprises. As a result, the business elite started to be part of the political structure and participated in the national party and the parliamentary process as well. By the end of Mubarak period, this elite became more hegemonic by dominating the national party, government, and the parliament. This increasing power supported Gamal Mubarak succession plan and confronted smoothly the armed forces(El-Sherif, 2014).

On the other side, the business Bourgeoisie in Tunisia was small, limited, and not satisfied with its relation with Ben Ali regime. The president wife, Layla Trabolsi, dominated with her family the business key components. However, no major big business players, individuals or families,

had been appearing in the Tunisian political sphere. The businessmen role in elections, for instance, was limited in the financial support to some candidates without large expectations(Luciani, 2013).

These are some of the general structural differences between the Egyptian and the Tunisian political structures, in the last part of this paper, I will detail the role of each of these components on the political Islam experience as a ruling party after the Arab Spring.

MB and Anahda: Different historical structure and sequence

Tunisia got its independence of the French colonization in 1956, since that, the first president of the country Bourguiba adopted policies of westernizing and modernizing the country. The Tunisian modern state separated religion from institutions as a secular country. Since the foundation of the modern state, the both presidents, Ben Ali and Bourguiba excluded any comparative political powers. Normally as in most of the Arab countries, leaders considered Islamists as the main threat and prohibited their activities.

Since 1990's Anahda members and leaders had been jailed and exiled from the political life, their leader, Alghannoushi, moved to London in 1989 and his party became the main antiregime power. Earlier, Alghannoushi founded his Islamic party in 1981, his hard line against the regime from the first days of the "Islamic tendency movement." The Islamic party in Tunisia did not recognize the regime legitimacy and introduced itself as an alternative to the regime. From its side, the regime had practiced all kinds of repression on the Islamists, which resulted in an absence of any opportunity for dialogue. This relation of tension and confrontation continued later after the Islamic tendency movement transformed to Anahda(Torelli, 2012).

The level of suppression practiced by the Tunisian state in the 1980's and 1990's against the Islamists made it impossible for the Tendency movement and later Anahda to have any political or social role in Tunisia. This absence spread to the leaders, for instance, Alghannoushi was staying in London for 20 years(Torelli, 2012).

The project of Bourguiba was totally against Islamists project, his secular model motivated the Islamists to start their movement by proselytizing activities in 1970's. the ideas of Anahda were mixture of the eastern salafisim of MB, the traditional Tunisian Islamic culture, which was moderate and Sufi, and the moderate values of the anti-regime group of "yousefists". This diversity introduced a moderate thought believes in inclusion and democratic values. However, such diversity produced and double standard speech, one is internal and radical and the second is public and liberal(Marzoq, 2014).

After the palace coup of Ben Ali in 187, the Islamists welcomed this change and supported the new president. From his side, Ben Ali promised the Islamists and opposition with democratization and freedom, his promises resulted by releasing thousands of the political prisoners and allowed Anahda to participate informally in the parliamentary elections of 1987. However, this period did not last for more than few years and the regime claimed that its apparatuses disabled a potential coup by Islamists in 1990-1991. Again, more than 8000 of Anahda leaders and members jailed.

Ben Ali promises were not more tool to bring stability and strengthen his newly installed authoritarian regime. The relation between the regime and Anahda continued as usual again. Here I can figure some special characteristics for Anahda as the representative of the

Tunisian political Islam. The First is its short experience compared with the other Arab Islamists experiences, especially Egypt. The second is the absence of its social and popular network. The third is related to the moderate and inclusive political and ideological thought compared with the sister movements in the region.

The first foundations of the modern political Islam came from Egypt by the decline of the Ottoman khilafat. By the finding of MB, Hassan Albanna put three stages to achieve the goal of is amazing the state and society. the first is communication and propagation, this stage started by Albanna himself and continued by the other MB leaders and members in Egypt. The second is mobilization and organization in which contains building the capacities of the member and prepare them for the third stage of implementing and applying the Islamic rule(zhyntativ, 2008).

Since 1920's, the MB in Egypt have practiced the first and the second stage of Albanna thought. In the 1940's the MB became an active social movement with a political focus.

Indeed, the first priority of the MB, as the other Egyptian political powers, was to end the British colonization. for this purpose, it established an armed wing to practice violent activities. Later, the Egyptian regimes claimed that the MB practices such violence against the state and tried to change regime(Brown, 2011).

Sayyid Qutb was the founder of the dogma of the MB, his writings spread among the members and influence them for the later period. In the 1950's the Egyptian military and regime suppressed more the brotherhood and arrested its leaders such as Qutb himself and leader Hassan Alhudaibi. Qutb thought of Jahiliyyah "ignorant", power and clash, and the classification of Dar al-Islam " the house of Islam" against dar al-Harb " the house of war" still guiding MB not only in Egypt but also in the other Arab countries(Brown, 2011).

The MB started to have larger space in the political sphere of Egypt under Alsadat. The new Egyptian president during the 1970's tried to use the MB as a counter power to eliminate the Nasserists and the leftists. This policy had been used by several Arab leaders at that period to make a new balance in the political tough structure. Alsadat gave the MB their properties back, he realized their members from jail, and he allowed them to practice politics legally.

It was an opportunity for the MB to rebuild their movement and win new members. For this purpose, they started to appear in the universities and confronted the strong leftists and Nasserists. Alsadat from his side allowed to show the Islamic identity of the state and supported the religious formal activities. However, the regime did not accept to legalize the political practices of the MB. The Egyptian court had not decided in the appeal of the MB in their illegitimate decision of 1954. The MB worked under the eyes of the regime apparatuses and with its approval(Ibrahim, 2015).

The new leadership and elite of the MB constructed mainly from those who were voluntarily exiled to the Saudi Arabia under the suppression of Nasser. They came back with strong financial network and new Salafi contribution in the MB ideology. The MB had no revolutionary structure or values in such context, it was one of the pragmatic powers which accepted the gradual development and the negotiations with the regime to reach their goals. Even this was not complying with the thought of Sayyid Qutb, but it was related to the earlier ideas of Albanna(Ibrahim, 2015).

The Egyptian state left a big vacuum in the social and economic context by adopting the liberalization policies of the 1970's. No doubt that the MB cached this opportunity and filled this space by a large network of economic and social services that supported the marginalized

groups. This network had been strengthened by the financial support of the movement member in the rich oil countries. Year by year this network expanded and covered more regions and groups in Egypt. For instance, the medical services of the MB had been organized by the Islamic medical association and covered around 2 million beneficiaries

since 1977. Meanwhile, the list of the affiliated social organizations included 1142 entities structured the social network of the MB before the coup of 2013(Brooke, 2015).

The MB participated in the parliamentary elections under Mubarak, its first attempt was in the parliamentary elections of 1984, the MB joined Alwafd on a joint list. The MB became part of the minor opposition in the people house. Until the revolution of 2011, the MB participated in the political process of Mubarak regime and within the state borders. Later, the coercive apparatuses increased its suppression for the MB before and after any elections, the movement did not increase its opposition to touch directly the legitimacy of the regime(Ibrahim, 2015).

I can conclude the difference between the both experiences firstly by the difference in political age, as I mentioned before that the foundation of the modern political Islam came from Egypt and the Tunisian players enrolled after around 50 years and benefited from the mother movement thoughts. Secondly, the difference in ideology which came from the context and the circumstances of the foundation, Anahda was moderate party compared with the MB and it was more inclusive in thought. However, the third difference is the gap between the thought of Qutb and the pragmatic practices of the MB under Mubarak in Egypt. On parallel, the practices of Anahda was more revolutionary and national trying to represent the whole Tunisian society.

After revolution: Different tracks and outcomes

The MB had practiced politics legally for the first time since 1954. The political party that had been established by the MB, freedom and justice party, became the parliamentary majority by winning 216 out of the 508 seats. Surprisingly, the MB decided to participate in the presidential elections after its previous commitment of not to do so. Mohammed Mursi, the MB candidate, won the election and became the first civilian president in Egypt since 1952. Exclusively, the MB formed the government and dominated the public sphere(Awadi, 2013).

The Tunisian experience of Anahda was different, the Islamic movement won 39% of the plurality in 2011. Anahda participated in the post-revolution government as a part of a crossideological coalition. However, Anahda had been indicated that it was planning to Islamise the secular society of Tunisia and exclude the other powers. But on the contrast of the MB, Anahda did not support any presidential candidate in 2011 and worked jointly with the other political powers(Marks, 2015).

During the following 2 years, each of the two parties chooses its own track. The legacy of Mubarak regime in Egypt was an accumulative economic, political, and social failure. the Tunisian failures were mainly economic, related the unemployment and inequality issues. But in general, the political choices that had been taken by the Islamists in office were different and changed the outcomes in the both cases.

The MB in Egypt was not pragmatic in understanding and working with the existing political structure, by overthrowing Mubarak and his ruling party, the map of power had been changed by increasing power for the military forces and the revolutionary powers. But in the political transition, the theories of revolution suggests to establish a revolutionary coalition aims to

protect the revolution outcomes and confront the former regime powers. On the contrary, the MB had not understood the popular demands and the high pressures on the decision makers after Mubarak and tried to dominate the legislation and executive powers.

The MB and AL Noor Salafi party were hegemonic powers in the people council and the constitutional committee. The result was excluding large scale of the Egyptian society components such as the Qubit, around 15%, of the population, the bureaucracy, the business elite, and finally, the military forces. The liberal political forces established a new front against the Islamists powers, and it became a direct clash between the civil state supporters and the Islamists. These changes came from the religious and hegemonic nature of the 2012 constitution, and the practices in office from the president and government(TAWIL, 2013).

The MB came without a clear and efficient socioeconomic program, instead, they continued socioeconomic policies as it is, without understanding the expectations and the needs of the people after the revolution. The facts on land were difficult, and the performance indicators were declining more and more under the pressure of huge demands with limited resources.

the MB mixed in the process of decision making between the party and the state. Its hegemonic situation in the institutions allowed it to do so. Indeed such situation resulted in weak outcomes and expanded the fears from this trend among the political players. Finally, the army intervened to protect its interests with creating new coalition under the control of the military establishment and without the MB in the political sphere(TAWIL, 2013).

The Tunisian Islamists worked jointly with the secular powers, after the election of the constitutional assembly elections of 2011, Anahda formalized the "Troika" as a coalition with two secular parties to manage the transitional period. This coalition had 138 members out of the

available 217 seats. The negotiations on framing the constitution faced several disagreements and conflicts. The troika kept power for more than two years under a tremendous pressure of security, economic, and social failures(Jamawi, 2o14).

Interestingly, Anahda respected its pledges of ruling within the coalition, the head of the Anahda, Rachid Al Ghanoshi, presented the Tunisian Islamists opinion of forgetting the era of one-party domination. Al Ghanoshi advised the MB in more than occasion and speech to respect the diversity, and understand the joint work concepts(Marks, 2015).

The association of the political leader Mohammed Brahmi and the coup in Egypt made Anahda more pragmatic to offer more steps. the party did not come with overwhelming expectations, it had realistic programs with suitable dynamics for passing the transitional period. Anahda stepped down from the government by 2014 in a smooth political transition. It had led the constitutional framing process and successfully set Islam as the religion of the state(Marks, 2015).

In 2013 the opposition established the national rescue front, as the Egyptian did, calling for stepping down the troika by a military intervention. However, the army had no interest to do so. At the same time, 60 of the assembly members froze their participation. The strong power of the labor unions was important in determining the path of the political transition, the union supported the demands of dismissing the government but not the constitutional assembly(Jamawi, 2o14).

Currently, Anahda is a political, democratic, and civil party, inspired by Islam. The party left the preaching part as it was in the early beginnings and moved to the political practices and pragmatic tactics. In the current political map. The Tunisian political powers worked under a revolutionary informal coalition and established for the new state of national negotiations in

2013. Anahda still a key political power even after losing 20 seats in the 2014 elections in front of the secular front, Nedaa'Tunis.

Conclusion

The political structure in Egypt is more complicated than the Tunisian. The role of Army, Business elite, and a bureaucrat was important in confronting the post-revolution political powers. On the other hand, the political powers failed in establishing a revolutionary coalition and the results of the elections of 2012 made the Islamists the hegemonic power by dominating the both councils and the presidential office.

The MB practices were like any other totalitarian party, had not accepted any role for the other revolutionary powers. The MB governed Egypt with the pre-revolution mentality, the opinions of the Qubt, women, and liberties during framing the constitution had led the popularity of the movement to decline and increased the disenfranchised groups. The MB in Egypt, as the mother movement for the global MB, has its long history of thought and political participation. However, the movement preaching part overshadowed the MB political practices in office, with no economic or social plan to solve the accumulative needs for the Egyptian state and society.

The experience of Anahda was different as the thought of the party was more inclusive, liberal, and pragmatic. Anahda defines itself as a political, democratic, and civil party with an Islamic background. The party has learned from the Algerian, Egyptian, Sudanese, and Turkish experiences of political Islam. And the intellectual leader of the party, Alghanoshi, successfully prioritized passing the transitional period on staying in office.

Currently, the Tunisian Islamists still one of the main political powers. they have led Tunisia to its new constitution, and they have passed with the other political powers to new elections, the new government, the new president, and in general new political structure.

Worthily to say that the neutral role of the Tunisian army was important in protecting the political transition process. However, the conspiracy assumptions can not give the proper analysis for the MB failure in Egypt. Instead, the structural analysis can do so.

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