

*Egypt's Political Future in a Comparative  
Analysis between the Turkish and the Iranian  
Experience*

*Türkiye ve İran Tecrübelerinin Karşılaştırmalı  
Analizi Bağlamında Mısır'ın Politik Geleceği*

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***Abstract***

*The perspective of establishing a democratic regime in the aftermath of the youth revolution in 2011 has stimulated a lot of debates among intellectuals as well as in the Egyptian street about the possibility of having a ruling authority that is mainly dominated by some Islamic-oriented groups. The emergence of different religious factions that were repressed under the precedent regime and their public expression of a willingness to take part into the political life in Egypt increased the doubts about this possibility especially in the absence of liberal, grass-rooted and well-organized opposition parties. By relying on a comparative analysis of political Islam in both Turkey and Iran, the argument of having a possible religiously oriented regime on either country's model is examined in light of the evolution of religion involvement in the Egyptian political life.*

**Keywords:** *Islamism, Iranian revolution, Political islam, Welfare Party, AK Party, Shiite politics.*

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## Özet

2011 devriminin sonucu olarak demokratik bir rejim kurma perspektifi İslamcı gruplarca domine edilen bir hakim otorite olasılığını barındırdığı için Mısır sokaklarında olduğu kadar entellektüeller arasında da pek çok tartışmaya yol açtı. Özellikle liberal, köklü ve örgütlenmiş muhalif partilerin yokluğunda eski rejimin baskı altında tuttuğu farklı dini grupların meydana çıkışı ve Mısır siyasi hayatında yer alma isteklerini alenen dile getirmeleri bu şüpheleri daha da arttırdı. Dini merkezli bir rejime sahip olma olasılığı tezi, Siyasal İslam'ın Türkiye-İran karşılaştırmalı analizine dayanarak, dini hareketlerin Mısır siyasi yaşamına katılımlarında yaşanan evrimin de ışığında her iki ülke modeli için de incelenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İslamcılık, İran devrimi, Politik İslam, Refah Partisi, AK Parti, Şii politikası

## **Introduction**

After the youth uprising that took place in Egypt on January 25<sup>th</sup> and led to the demise of the regime, the political future of Egypt turned to be a crucial issue and hence a subject of numerous speculations and debates. The lack of security and the economic stalemate are not the sole features of the actual situation; the absence of an official organized opposition is a major problem that faces Egypt in the aftermath of the revolt and impedes the possibility to reach a consensus on the coming political regime. The phenomenon of the quasi-absent opposition that existed throughout four decades was even manifested in the uprising that had a spontaneous character without being organized by a political leadership. Besides, the aftermath of the revolt was marked by an uncertain and unstable political atmosphere where different demands of economic nature were and are still raised by various segments in the society. This uncertainty gained a considerable magnitude especially after the referendum that was held on the constitutional amendments where a major split occurred among the public about the viable choice that would be made. Both the refusal and the acceptance of the constitutional amendments were visibly polarized by different political forces that leaned on the expected results of this referendum for the realization of their political expectations in the future. However, the intriguing factor in this referendum was the formulation of political arguments coated in a religious discourse addressed to the masses in order to incite them to support the amendments. The results, by showing an overwhelming rate of popular support for the amendments, signaled the existence of a visible religious mobilization that was receivable by a large constituency in national politics.

Besides, the removal of the previous repressive mechanisms deployed by the ex-regime against Islamic groups and their comparative privilege in terms of structural organization and ideological discourse vis-à-vis the other secular parties shed the light on several scenarios where religion would have a leading role in framing Egypt's future. The religious involvement in national politics raises a lot of questions about the political future of Egypt within a continuous debate about democracy and the empowerment of a pluralist society where human rights are respected and the rule of law prevails. In light of this tumultuous situation in Egypt, this paper aims to study what place would the religious variable occupy in the Egyptian domestic politics. In other words, how the visible presence of

structured and politicized Islamic groups would participate in shaping the Egyptian political system in the future in terms of what we refer to as political Islam. In order to answer this question, this study will start with a literature review about the various definitions attributed by different scholars to “Political Islam” as a contemporary phenomenon where religion is intermingled with the political process. Afterwards, in light of these definitions, the paper will examine two different experiences about how Islamists participated in national politics of their countries and what importance the religious variable occupies in relation to politics by illustrating political Islam in both Turkey and Iran.

### **Defining Political Islam**

In order to identify the magnitude and the importance that the religious variable would occupy in Egypt’s political future, there must be a clear understanding of political Islam in terms of the various features this phenomenon would reveal in relation to politics. Accordingly, to better illustrate the Islamic factor in the Egyptian context and to lay a convenient theoretical background for both the Turkish and the Iranian cases, this study will examine the different definitions that were attributed to “Political Islam”. Most of these definitions approach political Islam as a political ideology formulated according to religious premises in order to rule societies and provide legitimate channels for the expression of different forms of disenchantments. Therefore, some authors indicated that political Islam is a synonym for Islamism and hence refers to the belief that the religious texts, the Quran and Sunna, provide normative guidelines about the society’s organization and governance in the Islamic world (Fuller, 2002; Bradely, 2007 and Ashour, 2007). According to Mohamed Ayoub, political Islam is the result of the reformulation of Islam as a political ideology rather than being a normative construction of a set of religious or theological values. Therefore, this phenomenon defines how the relation between politics and society should look like and thus concretized (Ayoub, 2004 and 2009). Accordingly, there are different forms of political Islam which results in the classification of the different Islamic groups in terms of their political agenda, their means, and modalities of action as well as their level of organization. Therefore, some of the Islamic groups can be declared as moderate or reformist once they accept democracy as a peaceful political means to come to power within the state institutions without undermining their legitimacy and by accepting the

social and political pluralism (Ashour, 2007). On the other hand, extremist groups look forward declaring a revolution on the sociopolitical and economic status quo while refusing the state's institutions, denouncing political and ideological pluralism and abstaining from engaging into a democratic competition (Ashour, 2007). Hence, Islamism is a sort of a political discourse that provides politics with both an ideological reference and political lexicon that differ from those adopted by the west. Therefore, Quran and Sunna as an ideological reference constitute a pre-conceived and organized agenda that guides governors towards the main principles advocated by religion and legitimately supported by masses. This religious reference is by its turn supported by a religious lexicon that manifests a considerable flexibility to be formulated in conformity to the different political principles like good governance, social justice and economic equity. It is thus perceived in some societies as a political potential that can be an alternative for the government and/or the marginalized opposition to empower their positions towards each other (Fuller, 2002). In other terms, according to Fuller, political Islam is manifested either as an umbrella movement that regroups all the opposition entities or as a medium for accession to power that is deployed by some groups that lack legitimacy and hence have recourse to a religious rhetoric to consolidate their existence by attracting a wide Islamic constituency.

The recourse to religion as an ideology of reference in politics was considered by some scholars as a political manipulation as well as an instrumentalization of Islam in order to pursue a political activity due to several factors such as a repressive secularization process (Denoeux in Ayoob, 2004; Sagiv, 1992; Shepard, 1996; Yilmaz, 2007). Accordingly, political Islam could be perceived as a visionary project about how a society should look like based on religious principles that are reinvented and readapted for usage in the contemporary world. Thus, a modern version of political Islam would exist in terms of integrating many features of the western civilization like science, technology and state governance although most of its intellect is based on a cultural dichotomy between the Western and the Islamic societies (Zubaida, 1996). Hence, political Islam implies a neutralization of the historical context in order to perpetuate the validity of the religious principles as an eternal reference for purifying the Muslim societies. However, by applying these religious values that were rendered abstract by the Islamic groups, the context

plays a considerable effect in concretizing these values differently in every Muslim society. Accordingly, the islamization of the political discourse by deploying religious principles in response to local challenges and existing claims differs throughout the space and the time (Bayat, 2005). If we referred even to one movement like the Muslim Brotherhood, we will realize that it differs in its strategies and policies in the different countries where its branches exist. Even in Egypt, the Muslim brotherhood's leadership changed through the time especially in 1980 when it was decided to give up the religious radicalism coined by Qutub in the 1960's (Ayoob, 2004).

### **A Historical Account of the Political Islam in Turkey**

By tackling the question of political Islam in Turkey, we will focus on the major two experiences where religion had either explicitly or implicitly a role in the ideological orientation of some political actors. Therefore, the two major experiences that would be illustrative in explaining both the evolution of political Islam and the role of the religious variable in politics are those of the Welfare and the Justice and Development Parties (AKP). In Turkey, political Islam is perceived as a potential threat for its western values and civilization especially since 1979 the date of the Iranian revolution that cast out the secular rule of the Shah. This perception of threat was even accentuated afterwards since this religiously oriented paradigm became the sole legitimate ideological reference that would replace the political vacuum that occurred in different Islamic countries (Mason, 2000). This danger was doubled in Turkey by the preemptive measures taken by vulnerable countries in the Middle East. Accordingly, to counter the effect of the Iranian revolution and the Shiite version of political Islam, Saudi Arabia promoted two Sunni ideologies that are basically founded on radical premises advocated by both Al Mawdudi and Qutb. Therefore, in spite of the existence of different political parties and social groups that advanced an Islamic fervor, Turkey had its first experience of political Islam in 1996 by the arrival of the Welfare party to power.

After the independence war, the Kemalist elite led a wide ranged secularization process in Turkey in order to create a modern and western nation state while religion, marginalized from the public sphere, persisted in the daily life of the masses. The Diyanet as a tool to purify religion and

reform it in an adaptive way to modernity and state's principles, promoted secularism by diffusing a rational version of religion which is the official and conventional one in terms of reconciling Islam with the Kemalist principles. The empowerment of the secularization process implied the necessity to control religion, private and cultural life since they would harm its sustainability. Besides, institutional Islam was abolished and state institutions started to provide a religious indoctrination that suits the western development path chosen for the country. This top-down modernization process led to the alienation of the public from the ruling elite who were called the seculars which denotes the deep divisions that were rooted in the Turkish society between traditionalism and modernity, rationalism and religion as well as conservative and progression (Yavuz, 1997). Besides, the importance was accorded to the state nationalist identity while Kurds and Islamists weren't allowed any formal channel of expression and their specificities were solely expressed through private and informal social ties. Secularism in Turkey wasn't a separation of politics from religion but was a form of subordination of the latter to the former which instigated political struggles between Islamists and seculars on the political power (Yavuz, 1997). This division favored the permanent stigmatization of any outsider groups from the marginalized ones to intimidate them to participate in politics since it was considered as an Islamic or an ethnic revival. The perpetuation of the Islamic and the traditional values in any form of mobilization was not stopped in spite of the seculars' efforts to limit the religion's presence in politics due to the flexibility of the religious values and principles that can be easily universalized and used to particularize some universal principles (Yavuz, 1997). In addition, the secularist measures adopted by the Kemalists didn't succeed to replace the Islamic values by more flexible codes of conduct that would regulate the masses' daily life that is highly marked by a religious presence.

According to this perspective related to the persistence of Islam as an important factor of identification, it is possible to follow the evolution of political Islam especially among the semi urbanized and fragile rural Muslims that were challenged by several changes that took place simultaneously with the secularization process. Industrialization, mass migration and expansion of the state authority incited many of these groups to constitute their own cultural organizations that would voice their concerns. Thus, the Turkish system as a liberalized autocracy

imposed many restrictions on the Islamists as well as on their interactions with their constituencies and with the state. By repressing religious orders, Turkish authorities adopted the Sunni in its Hanafite version as the sole legitimate political sect that accepts the state autocracy and doesn't tolerate revolution or chaos (Yilmaz, 2009). As a result, many of these orders continued to exist in a clandestine way without claiming any public or official role in state politics. Therefore, the Suleymanci and Fethullaci as Sufi groups provided different services to students and poor people especially after the liberal policies that implemented drastic measures in cutting down the states' expenditures on welfare and social services. They engaged into different economic and complicated activities to withdraw necessary resources for their success in achieving their educative role as the main goal of their existence. The Sufi's goal is the return to faith in order to cope with problems related to western domination by carrying out a self-reform which consists of purifying the individual behavior from any derogatory practices (Ayata, 1996). The religious marginalization and the absence of visible and alternative activities paved the way for the development and the dissemination of Sufi orders' networks and activities all over the country starting from the 1970's. Only the Nakshbandi order and its branch Khalidi developed a political discourse based on the belief that a Muslim must take part in state's affairs.

The emergence of political Islam in its most visible manifestation on the domestic scene in Turkey is explained by the importance of the religious factor for the public which incited several state actors to have recourse to a religious discourse to appeal to the masses throughout the Turkish political history. However, some autonomous groups like the radical movements and the Sufi orders are against political Islam since, according to them, it can't be reconciled with the secular foundations of the state on which they depend in addition to the center-right parties to have access to public resources (Ayata, 1996). The state's secular parties like those affiliated to the center-right parties merged Islamic principles with their policies and developed clientelistic relations based on religious affinities with Islamic groups in terms of giving them access to public resources. These symbiotic relations between Islamists and center-right parties would be explained in light of the evolution of the Turkish political history (Ayata, 1996). Since the 1950's, center-right parties entailed within their structures and among their members a wide array of positions



regarding the reconciliation between religion and secularism. These positions vary between two poles as follows: a liberal pole that advocates religious freedom while preserving the secular character of the state without a religious interference in politics and a conservative one that is more than pro-religious freedom and goes for a strong role of Islam in both state and society to counter secularism. As a result, Islamists took hold of important positions in the civil society and state bureaucracy which compelled Özal, at the end of the 1980's, to break this holy alliance and support liberals in the local and parliamentary elections (Ayat, 1996). The center-right parties reigned throughout four decades since the establishment of the republic and changed the relation between state, religion and society from the way in which it was managed under the rule of the single Kemalist party that maintained an antagonist relation between Islam and the secular elite's rationality based on scientific positivism (Ayat, 1996). Accordingly, there were continuous attempts to incorporate religion in state politics in order to appeal to the electorate and to counter the opposition. Therefore, they allowed the explicit use of religion in politics as a means of communication and political propaganda in addition to their deployed efforts to reduce the state repression exerted on the different religious activities in the public sphere. For example, in 1970's vakıflar were created and legally approved and they entail several Islamic foundations, associations and orders that carry out different types of activities like education and charity which helped in the formation of a new type of professionals and functionaries who are more religiously oriented through different Islamic schools like Imam Hatip (Zubaida, 1996). As a result, some parties in the center-right faced the problem of two faces ideology in the same version of many Arab countries where leaders express their secular character to empower their alliance with the west while manifesting religious affinities to gain larger electoral basis like the True Path Party (Dogru Yol Partisi) whose leaders were compelled to show a certain degree of religiosity to have a popular support among the masses (Zubaida, 1996).

On the other hand, in 1980's, the military elite that came to power after a coup d'état led against a civil government in the aftermath of persistent political instabilities, found the political situation in a clear chaos. The government was unable to deal with the existing political and ideological polarization in the society and the parliament couldn't elect a president. Besides, an economic shift followed the economic instability that reigned

in the country from mid 1970's and was by its turn intensified by the collapse of successive governments which drove the military to induce a political stabilization by depoliticizing economy in a legal form by the 1982 neoliberal constitution (Onis, 1997). The military wanted to end with the pre-1980 system by creating two parties regulated by a strong executive where a legislative authority chooses the president. As a result, Islam side by side with national fervor was promoted in a Turkish-Islamic synthesis that would preserve the state power and counter the communist threat that was the inspiring ideology of both the Kurdish separatist movement and the Soviet Union which are the most viable enemies of the State at the time. This synthesized ideology was disseminated by universities, media and schools which combined cultural elements with religious and Ottoman ones in the formulation of a Turkish identity that had recourse to Islamic rhetoric to legitimate the authority of the ruling elite (Yavuz, 1997). It was a version of establishing a hegemonic ideology where Turkish nationalism embraced both religion and patriotism to ensure social cohesion and the masses' consent by referring to a religious vocabulary like community (Jemmah) and religious nation (Ummah). This synthesis was combined by the liberal economy policies formulated under the rule of Turgut Özal which led to the emergence of a new business elite that originally comes from central Anatolia. Most of these elites incarnated by Özal himself combined a conservative and religious-oriented mentality and a technical expertise that they acquired from the west and managed to create an order where they prevail by having recourse to religious rhetoric as a substitute for their lack of intellect and their pursuit of self-welfare (Feroz in Mason, 2000). Besides, various religiously-oriented political parties like the Welfare party were financially and institutionally supported since this new ideological formulation allocated more financial resources to the Diyanet, introduced compulsive religious education in schools' curriculum as well as empowering religious secondary schools (Onis, 1997). Therefore, Turkish Islam and nationalism became explicitly bound in the Turkish identity which endorsed the emergence of pious rulers who would be both Muslims and supporters of the secular principles (Zubaida, 1996). Özal's reforms alleviated the intensity of the secular character of the state since the economic liberalization helped different Islamic foundations to reap benefits especially in light of the party's affiliation with the Nakshebendi order (Zubaida, 1996). Besides, the pluralistic society and the cultural openness that grew in parallel with the liberalization policies held by Özal

in Economics helped to introduce the Islamic factor due to his attempt to revive and reinvest the millet system of the Ottoman Empire by adopting better ethnic policies especially towards the marginalized groups (Ataman, 2002).

The political history of Turkey was marked by periods where several parties affiliated to political Islam emerged like the Justice party, the National Order Party established with support of Zahid Kotku a leader of the Nakshebendi order, the National Salvation Party and the Welfare party. All these parties that nearly belong to the same political elite whose leader is Erbakan the disciple of Kotku, encompass most of the socially and politically marginalized groups and manifested a religious ideology that led to the successive ban of each of them by the constitutional court after a military intervention in 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1997 (Yavuz, 1997). The Welfare Party was the sole party among the opposition that displayed a religious ideology to come to power. It was different than any other party on the domestic scene since it was competing on the ground of an explicit Islamic electoral campaign (Onis, 1997). The rise of the Welfare party should be perceived in light of several interwoven changes on the national and global levels. Accordingly, the conflict between the secular traditional elite and the masses still emphasizes the importance accorded to the Islamic principles and values that clearly emerged after the adoption of the multiparty system in 1946 (Onis, 1997). Besides, the neoliberal economic stance that accompanies the globalization process shed the light on the existence of an external conjuncture of cultural transformation that favored the rise of fundamentalists to the power as a manifestation of identity politics (Onis, 1997). These transformations changed the rules of the political game established in the domestic political scene that is no longer organized on the dichotomy between the right and the left. Thus, the rise of political Islam in the 1990's in Turkey is a result of the weakening of the social democrats on the left wing of the secular elites. Most of the leaders of political Islam are individuals well acquainted with the contemporary order's features in terms of education and technology mastery (Onis, 1997). In addition, political Islam cements different classes together on the basis of a common religious identity and consolidates their social position regardless of their different status. It consists of a movement based on a dual structure: an elitist structure, "Islamic Bourgeoisie", where leaders benefit from modernity and globalization while being politically marginalized by the governing elite

and an electoral structure where the constituency entails marginalized individuals who have many expectations that need to be fulfilled (Onis, 1997). Moreover, the paradigm shift in the economic system in Turkey that ended the state dominated, interventionist policies based on the import substitution model and adopted a neoliberal economy that is more export and market-oriented. The waves of privatization that accompanied this economic shift favored the rise of political Islam to power. The State weakening and its inability to intervene for a better and just resource allocation and distribution in the society increased dissent among the marginalized masses. In addition, the increase of the monetary flows from Saudi Arabia and workers' remittances in Europe favored the emergence of political Islam especially in light of the Turkish inability to succeed in its negotiations for accessing the European Union (Onis, 1997).

Therefore, the Welfare party electoral success in the 1990's on the local and parliamentary levels constituted a turning point in the political scene in Turkey where for the first time a prime minister promoting a political ideology on Islamic premises comes to power in a coalition with Tansu Ciller a west-oriented leader of the right path (Yavuz, 1997). The Welfare party manifested some modern features in a sense that it adopted a third way economic model that recognizes the liberal market and the individual initiatives in terms of capital accumulation but pleads also for a State role in the income distribution in terms of achieving a social equality (Onis, 1997). This vision of Islamic capital promoted by the party's slogan the "Just Order" was supported by medium and small economic units and allowed the party to have access to different resources. For example, the MUSIAD, created in 1990, is an association of industrialists, small and medium sized companies from inner Anatolia that were called the Anatolian tigers, illustrates the depth of the Islamic economy and business in Turkey (Yavuz, 1992). It includes one of the strongest Islamic companies of the Welfare party "Kombassan". These small and medium based businesses, the professional and the working classes formed the socioeconomic basis of the welfare party that reformulated the right and left idioms in religious terms (Gulalp, 2001). On the political and social levels, the welfare party wanted to adopt a policy of social homogenization based on the realization of an ideal Muslim society by referring to the application of the Sharia as a holistic vision for every domain of life in society (Onis, 1997).

The Welfare party played a considerable role in engaging Islamic groups into politics by mobilizing all the disenchanted people in Turkey like the poor rural population, a large portion of Kurds as well as other constituencies that were marginalized by the secular parties. The success of this integration was facilitated by the state policies that aimed to enlarge the social base of the system by including Islamic elements after the liberalization and the economic growth. Accordingly, the Welfare party was the expression of a modern and educated conservative social movement that tried to reconsider the existing socioeconomic and cultural relations by addressing the public as Muslims without according attention to their ethnic or social differences. Hence, this party considered the society as an organic unit that is cemented by the religious faith and worships. It illustrated Islam as the ultimate solution to the existing injustice and inequality by providing citizens with a moral strength which implies that societies must obey to the divine rules and achieve an ethical renewal by refusing the western domination and supporting their country's development in all domains especially in terms of the industrialization process (Ayata, 1996). Accordingly, the party gave people a worldview paradigm as well as an explanation for their situation, the reason for their problems and how to cure them in a simple and clear formulation. Thus, this party combined between modernity and traditionalism while deploying third worldist rhetoric against the west and the traditional secular foundations of the state (Onis, 1997). Moreover, the party developed a strong grass-root organization that provided welfare and religious services, social activities and material benefits to individual ranging from health care to assistance in finding jobs (Ayata, 1996). It also established a social network based on sympathy and affection with its large constituency which shows the party's deep and vast range of activities that reach grass-root levels (Ayata, 1996). Erbakan offered services to squatter areas in the most urban Turkish cities on the basis of a political discourse that is more oriented towards Turkish nationalism and traditionalism than to the Kemalist ideology which constituted a threat to the state bureaucracy, the judiciary and the military establishment. In spite of the military's struggle against Islamists, they always existed on the local level which means that they can't be easily eliminated from politics especially in light of the lack of credibility from which suffer the secular parties that created a huge gap between them and the masses since they were self-centered (Kramer, 1999). In terms of center-periphery relationship, the secular parties were in the center and

any other party opposed to their paradigm was marginalized which made the Welfare party as the party of both the civil society and the periphery in opposition to the state and the center (Gulalp, 2001).

Once in power, Erbakan manifested some declarations and actions that were considered as provocative for the secular elites. He first supported the creation of a multi-legal system where citizens would refer to a legal regime that suits their beliefs. Besides, he made critical trips to Libya and Iran where he expressed some outrageous declarations against the West and Israel that he was obliged to alleviate afterwards in order to prevent frictions with the military and the secular institutions. However, Erbakan couldn't survive a long time in the cabinet since his stance was identified as a reactionary and dangerous rhetoric for the country which incited the media, businessmen, unions and military to create a coalition that would pressure Erbakan to resign. Besides, the military compelled him to enact some laws that limited religious education and prevented women from wearing the scarf in public institutions and universities. At the end, the party was banned by the constitutional court that declared the Welfare party illegal due to its involvement in anti-secular activities that threatened the state's security which forced Erbakan and his ministers to resign in 1997 (Mason, 2000).

The Welfare party was followed by the Virtue party that formulated an electoral program that is more focused on human rights and civil liberties by emphasizing religious freedom but also expressed some religious sympathy by denouncing the mandatory education law that is perceived to be designed to discourage students to enroll into prayer leaders' schools. Generally, they were careful in their party's program in terms of defending the Kurdish question and supporting Turkish foreign policy orientations towards the west and the European Union. They used disguised terms that managed to keep them on the same track of the Welfare party without provoking the military like the preservation of the family and traditional values instead of defending explicitly religious values. Therefore, the successive failures in establishing political parties with an Islamic stance incited many Islamists to change their confrontational discourse and avoid any manipulation of religious lexicon.

This methodological reconsideration resulted in a schism inside the Virtue party where two tendencies emerged in reaction. The first one consists of the traditionalists who refused to adopt any changes in the group strategy or policy while the other one under the banner of the renewalists realized the necessity to review the group's approach towards many central issues like democracy, human rights and relations with the west (Yilmaz, 2009). The traditionalists formed the Felicity party while the renewalists formed the AK party that promoted a political agenda based on universal and liberal values related to the market, human rights and society. This party has moved away from the religious instrumentalization and started to adopt a discourse that showed how devoted Muslims can be able to deal with daily politics by understanding Islam as a personal belief that doesn't impede them from adapting to the secular premises of the State (Yilmaz, 2009). Therefore, the AKP crystallizes a transformation of the Islamists due to several domestic factors which are mainly manifested by the legal constraints imposed on them by the army and the voters' tactics in reaction to the previous political Islam experience incarnated by Erdogan. Accordingly, Gul described this party as the Muslim version of the Christian Democratic Party in Germany and that it will be guided by democratic principles as a means to solve many domestic problems like the Kurdish one.

### **An "Islamist" Party without an "Islamic" Agenda: AKP**

The existing political system constituted an incentive for Islamic movements to adapt to the local context which was illustrated by the AK Party that is a new formulation of the former Islamic party the Welfare that split into two political parties one of them is the AKP. This party is structured on modern basis as a post-Islamic party that promotes a conservative democratic ideology. This structural and ideological reconsideration is due to the realization of many moderate Islamists that their parties won't be able to participate in governing the country unless they reformulate their political stance. Accordingly, the emphasis was on giving importance to the culture and religion while respecting the secular foundations of the state; hence, they illustrated themselves as the Muslim version of the Christian Democratic Party in Europe. The European membership vision of the AK Party highlights a tactical choice that is used by its leadership in order to alleviate the pressure exerted by the military and the secular establishment on the party (Yilmaz, 2007). The party's

leadership insists that religion doesn't constitute any basis of legitimization or political project that is aimed by the AK Party but it deploys the democratic tool in order to be able to come to power and to avoid any confrontation with the military. Besides, Erdogan, the leader of the AK Party, insisted that there isn't any intention from the party to change the society by denying the existence of a social engineering project on the basis of an Islamic agenda and that his party doesn't represent any version of political Islam. The leaders of this party manifest their understanding of modernity in a wide and inclusive approach that combines both Turkish nationalism and Islam as the main components of the Turkish identity. Hence, their orientation towards the European Union is not only tactical but also strategic since it aims to confirm the party's liberal structure and ideology that is completely distinguished from political Islam which protects the party from any military intervention. In addition, the adoption of the European "acquis communautaire" will increase the liberal features in the Turkish society by enabling the party to pass laws that give more liberty to citizens, especially believers, to manifest their religious affiliations (Yilmaz, 2007). Thus, by being devoted to the membership question, the party underlines the notion of conformity between the Islamic identity and the European and western concept of modernity. Therefore, the party is considered as a moderate Islamic party that through its political performance adopts democracy, modernity and liberalism as guiding principles in its policies formulation and state governance (Somer, 2007).

Hence, it would be inferred that the democratic moderation thesis is still applicable to the Turkish case where the involvement of Islamists in politics led to the creation of a moderate party like the AKP. Besides, the more it participates in politics, the more it will be modernized and democratized by having a moderate and secular outlook in spite of its Islamic roots (Somer, 2007). The gradual openness of the political scene in Turkey led to the development of a liberalized Islamic ideology on the contrary to the Egyptian and the Iranian cases. The autocratic rule in Egypt impeded the Muslim Brotherhood from participating in politics and refining their agenda into pragmatic projects. Therefore, they went further than claiming the creation of an Islamic state by considering the Qur'an as a state constitution (Mamdani, 2005). On the other hand, the Iranian Islamism as a state ideology locked the political scene by restricting it to the expression of a Shiite rhetoric combined with a third wordlist



populism that manifests an outrageous position against imperialism and world order.

The successive Islamist parties in Turkey have been banned from taking part in politics which incited them to change their discourses and reframe their ideological and institutional premises like what happened with the emergence of the AK party (Yilmaz, 2009). According to the state secular political code regarding constitutional legitimacy, pious politicians affiliated to religious orders were allowed to create political institutions that would participate in politics as political parties. Hence, a succession of parties has been created by the disciple of the order's chief "Erbakan" who formed different political parties that have been closed since their leader developed a national discourse of a political and economic order that is opposed to the western model. He called for the spread of religious values in order to unite all the Muslim societies while manifesting a nationalist fervor that is against Turkish membership in the European Union. His policies tried to link Turkey with Islamic countries and to increase the margins of religious freedoms in the country which irritated the bureaucracy and the military. Therefore, the increasing votes that the party obtained in 1994 and 1996 allowed Erbakan to come to power in a coalition with the right path party and became the first Islamist prime minister. As a result, not only the previous elections results were an indicator for the AK party of the voters' tendency but also its members created think tanks and social institutions that work on developing a scientific awareness of the sociopolitical trends and the expectations of the people.

These preliminary steps helped the AK party to develop a pragmatic and realistic discourse that would engage in state politics without having frictions with the military. Besides, the party realized that most of the religious groups don't vote for Islamic parties but rather to center-right ones which reflects their will to only take part in the political system rather than converting it into an Islamic one (Yilmaz, 2009). Moreover, most of the religious groups are questioning the possibility of adopting political Islam as a political project and they don't see that Islamism conforms even to Islam. In addition, the social and the economic basis of Islamic groups started to be weakened at the end of the 1990's which incited many of them to support non-Islamist groups that promoted social Islam rather than a political one which contributed to the transformation

of Islamism. Consequently, Islamists, from their experiences in local politics, realized that pragmatism is the shortest and best way to gain larger support from masses that don't care about the ideological utopism advocated by some political parties. Accordingly, the Turkish Islamism was transformed into a non-Islamism that was feasible through political participation and opportunities accorded to the Islamic groups and parties in the Turkish system. This new formula of Islamism was manifested by the AK party's campaign where its leader, Erdogan, supported issues related to human rights, economic development and candidacy for the European Union. The army's resistance to some AK party's figures for being candidates for presidency and the improvement of the economic performance were the principal elements that boosted this party's popularity while underlining the transformation of Islamism in the country into a pragmatic actor (Yilmaz, 2009).

### **Political Islam in the Iranian Case**

Concerning the Iranian case, the revolution that occurred in 1979 was considered as the result of a lasting Islamic religious movement that was active since the 1960's especially in light of the deep religious character of the Iranian society (Bayat, 1998). It just waited until the surrounding conjuncture was favorable for a radical change by the clergy. Therefore, the religious movement took its time in preparing for the revolution by mobilizing, recruiting, training the different recruits as well as organizing "Hawzeh" and making their own publications through mosques and several religious institutions (Dabashi in Bayat, 1998). It is considered as a process of identity confirmation and authentication in reaction to the western influence that was concretized by the increasing secularism and westernization process diffused by the Pahlavi regime. As a result, the revolution was instigated as a rejection to the western influence by the promotion of an Islamic identity and a political system dominated by a Shiite clergy (Keddie and Parsons in Bayat, 1998). Besides, following the socioeconomic changes that occurred in the 1960's, like the economic development that took place under the auspices of an autocratic political regime that monitored capital and resource distribution arbitrarily, the different marginalized social groups, like the traditional bazaars and the religious groups that weren't integrated by the state, were mobilized by the Shiite clergy (Arjomand and Misaq in Bayat, 1998). Accordingly, the sense of a spiritual community was the main factor in rallying these

groups that found consolation in the creation of a theocracy in Iran that would replace the unfair system established by the Shah. On the other hand, the Iranian experience is perceived also as a version of political Islam where the Shiite clergy took over the power by establishing a theocratic regime that changed the political structure of the country. Therefore, it would be important to mention that political Islam had strong roots in Iran even before the revolution in 1979. Political Islam existed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century where the Ulama in the Tobacco movement had a considerable role in instigating the constitutional revolution in 1906 that aimed to establish an Islamic constitution as well as the Jangali one that rose in the 1920's and controlled provinces near the Caspian Sea (Bayat, 1998). In addition, there were activities undertaken by some clergymen under the leadership of Mosaddeq which led the urban riots in 1963. This effective mobilizing role of the clergy is an important factor in the reemergence of the Shiite clergy who had the legitimacy and the Islamic discourse that gave them the opportunity to lead a revolution and thus come to power in 1979.

Generally, political Islam in Iran had neither an ideological nor a religious appeal for the masses but it was considered as an important channel for marginalized and deprived classes to express their disenchantments (Arjomand, 1986). It was more a grass-root movement that was able to restart after its repression for three decades due to the negative effects of the modernization and secularization waves that modified the whole social and cultural structure in Iran. The source of governance in Shiism is based on the imams as the sole legitimate governors. But the death of the twelve imams incited Shiite Ulama to think about how Islamic governance would take place either by following the prophets' teachings or by accommodating these teachings to the context of the contemporary world. Although the clergy can't be considered as a source of authority after the imams, Al Khomeini came up with the notion of an Islamic government as an innovation in the Shiite tradition since it was necessary due to the political circumstances in Iran at the time (Bayat, 1998). Therefore, political Islam in Iran is the sole religious legitimization of authority that succeeded to come to power by a revolution led in 1979 against the modern and pro-western rule of the Shah. The basis of this version of political Islam is essentially conceived on the principle of the hierarchical political authority which required an innovative paradigm for governance since the political history of Shiism didn't include any claim for temporal

power (Ashtiani, 1994). Thus, the quest for power in the Iranian case led to a conflict between the doctrinal percepts of Shiism and the political practice which drove the Shiite clergy to formulate a political ideology that suits contemporary Iran (Ashtiani, 1994).

Besides, political Islam in Iran should be perceived in light of the cultural, social and political changes that led to a political vacuum due to the repression exerted by the secular institutions under the Shah's rule which paved the way for the clergy to mobilize people and penetrate into state politics. The cultural gap that resulted from the modernization process undertaken by Pahlavi alienated the masses and drove them to have recourse to the Shiite ideology promoted by religious institutions as a way to assert their national identity. The Shiite ideology was then the safe asylum that would be provided for the disenchanting and marginalized population who doesn't have any other alternative to reinforce its social cohesion but the populist and political agenda provided by the clergy (Ashtiani, 2007). Accordingly, political Islam drew itself as the sole imaginary identity for Iranians since it managed to articulate a coherent ideological framework that integrates modernism in a way that suits the Iranian historical and cultural specificity. Besides, the Shiite ideology provided a vast social network for the revolution by rallying mosques, associations and schools which formulated Islam as a social force that provides the dynamics of change against oppression as the sole political alternative (Ashtiani, 2007). This social network was supported by a wide range of organizations and institutions that played a crucial role in disseminating Khomeini's discourses and ideology to the masses that were socialized within the Shiite ideology by the permanent and intense existence of many cultural centers that commemorate religious ceremonies, distribute Shiite literature and disseminate religious consciousness. On the other hand, the Islamic movement in Iran succeeded also in developing a secular and appealing intellect that reflects self-image in an authentic and national perspective. The secular formulation of a Shiite Islam by some modern theologians like Shariati provided the movement with a wide middle social class support since he developed a humanist and modern vision based on the individual choice rationale. This secular outlook helped in articulating the Shiite religious ideology within a political framework by giving political lectures that try to rally more youth to the movement rather than being limited to incite

them to follow the Islamic teachings and the prophet's Sunna (Ashtiani, 2007).

In spite of the pacific role of the Shiite ulema under the Qajars' rule, the intensified repression that they incurred incited them to reconsider their role in politics in order to change the society. Accordingly, the Shiite ulema had a sort of financial and institutional independence while playing an intermediary role between the ruling class and masses since the latter considered the ulema as the protecting shield against any sort of oppression that may be used against them (Ashtiani, 2007). Besides, between 1941 and 1953, the Shiite clergy decided to be outside the daily politics and to focus on their institutional development without provoking the shah in order to overcome the structural damages that they incurred by the drastic measures that undermined their position and authority (Ashtiani, 2007). However, the Shah insensitivity towards the clergy as well as the clerical leadership vacuum that was filled by Khomeini led to the consolidation of political Islam. Khomeini, as the leader of the Osuli movement in Shiism, established a political doctrine about state and its relation to the society through the lens of Islamic Shiism that was clarified in a series of lectures that he gave in Nejev in the 1960's and that were published afterwards in a book called "vilayeti el faqih". He established the Islamic concept of the Islamic state and the role of clergy in parallel with his criticism to the Shah of Iran's secular and modernizing rule (Ashtiani, 2007). Consequently, there was regular attempts to reform the Shiite institution and its way of intervention in the socioeconomic and political affairs of the country based on the fact that there is no separation between politics and religion since the latter is a comprehensive normative system that regulates all the aspects of the state including the spiritual and the material needs related to the people's well-being (Ashtiani, 2007).

This connection between religion and politics was theoretically established on two notions which are the source of emulation and the deputyship (Ashtiani, 2007). These two notions indicate that the clergy can intervene in the state affairs by the means of *ijtihad* which consists of making an independent judgment of the Islamic law on pragmatic basis in the *velayet-I El faqih* which is considered as a fundamental human prerequisite for guiding the state and the society. This principle of *ijtihad* exists even in many Sunni contemporary thoughts about finding the

religious precepts that support or suit the social contract in the west (Akhavi, 2003 and Ashtiani, 2007). Khomeini borrowed Al-Mawdudy and Qutb's ideas about the secular state as a pervasive political application that contradicts with Islam. Hence, Islam is a revolutionary ideology that can be deployed in order to change the political and social order in any country since it is about struggle that is an Islamic tool that restarts everything from the beginning (Arjomand, 1986). This comprehensive representation of Islam stems from the binary division of the world order into a Muslim and non-Muslim one where the latter is equivalent to the pre-Islamic ignorance (jahilliya) that has to be ended by a revolution that establishes the rule of God.

On the other hand, the leaders of the revolutionary system manifest a high level of activism and engagement in organizing seminar, televised conferences and interviews with press which illustrates their appropriation of secular means to ensure their political-religious rule. Besides, they designed a theocratic system that tries to imitate the structure of the Western system while functioning through different mechanisms. Thus, Iranian majors' institutions are the office of the supreme leader, the office of the president, the Iranian parliament and the Council of the Guardians (Bradely, 2007). Besides, there is a constitution that states the different types of liberal freedoms like the freedom of speech, expression, gathering and press provides it is not against the Islamic values. The Majlis is the legislative body supervised by the clerical jurists of the Council of Guardians who monopolize the interpretation of the divine law (Arjomand, 1986). In addition, the Jurist's (faqih) authority has to be extended to the right to rule on the behalf of the imam since his governance is considered as God's government on Earth after eliminating any other sort of regime that doesn't apply God's laws (Arjomand, 1986).

According to the constitution, Islam is a central aspect of all domains in life since the goal of the political life is to achieve an Islamic vision; hence, all state regulations and laws have to be based on religion. The ulemas are the rulers and accordingly they monopolize the definition of what is Islamic and the specification of the means by which they will apply and enforce this definition. The Qur'an, 12 imams and Sunna are the basic references of the constitution that justify the rule of imams and the qualities according to which ulemas and rulers will be chosen. Accordingly, imams have delegated their power to the ulemas as

indicated by the founding principle of the republic “velayat-e faqih” and by “the marja-I taqlit” who is the leading mujtahid that would be a person or a group (Zonis, 1985). In Iran the principle of oath (bay’a) is active in the consolidation of the imams’ rule (Akhavi, 1992). Accordingly, the imams are supposed to be the sole rulers since they are the proof of Allah’s existence, they prevent that the Muslim societies be in a state of ignorance and they represent God’s light on earth while possessing some metaphysical abilities. Due to the occultation of the twelfth Imam by the command of God, Shiites have to give their oath of allegiance to that imam. So, the Shiite doctrine doesn’t allow clergy to have a substantial authority as sovereign governors which made Khomeini to introduce the possibility of the clergy rule on the imam’s behalf till his return. Thus, he made a rational inference from the sacred script by emphasizing the importance of the clergy role and justifying their rule in order to make them the nation leaders in succession to the prophet.

Furthermore, the Council of the Guardians controls the legislations of the Majlis in terms of conformity to the Islamic laws and standards as well as making sure that the presidency candidates are pious and believers of the state’s official religion, Shiite Islam of the twelve imams. The Council of Guardians is formed of twelve members where six are nominated by the Ayatollah and the others are chosen by the Majlis and the High Council of Judiciary. The backbone of the jurist rule (Vilayet-I faqih) is the Council of Guardians and the Leadership Council and it succeeded due to the fact that the Ayatollah manifested a strong personal commitment to the rule of the clergy and he enjoyed a charismatic leadership vis-à-vis the Iranian population. Besides, constitutionally, the clergy had the sacred and founded right of monopolizing the interpretation of the Shiite Sharia at least until the return of the imam from his occultation (Zonis, 1985). Moreover, the clerical rule retrieves its legitimacy from the divine election of the Ayatollah’s position which explains by its turn the ulemas’ right of monopolizing the interpretation of the state’s laws. As a result, the ulemas have a sense of grandiosity that stems from God’s vision that they are trying to emulate and which constitutes their source of inspiration. They base their rule on the principle of political homogeneity where the divine will can’t be defied by any other alternative paths. Therefore, there exists only one interpretation that stems from the divine character of the Ayatollah that is expanded to the ulemas. Here the principle of unity has been philosophically invested in order to encompass not only the

monotheist Islamic belief but also the unity of the Islamic community and the way to achieve God's will. This homogenizing domestic view of unity or "tawhid" has been emulated to the external world in terms of dividing it into allies and enemies. Accordingly, all the other states are enemies since they either didn't apply God's vision or impeded its implementation into their borders and hence are trying to threaten or eliminate the Islamic rule in Iran (Zonis, 1985).

### **Development of Political Islam in Egypt**

Before examining the implications of political Islam in Turkey and Iran on the analysis of the role of the religious variable in Egypt's political future, a comprehensive map of the various religious groups and the evolution of their role in politics would be illustrated. Muslim Brotherhood represents a moderate mainstream political Islam in comparison with extremist groups that call for purging the society from the moral and cultural decadence that it incurred due to the apostasy of its ruler (Abed-Kotob, 1995). Their main goal is to establish an Islamic state based on the Islamic law, the Sharia that encompasses the adoption of a democratic system where freedoms and accountability are applied as well as a socioeconomic just order (Abed-Kotob, 1995). Since their leadership change after the death of Huddaybi, the Muslim Brotherhood's strategy and ideology was modified in a way that its leaders no longer label the society as an unbeliever entity and don't have recourse to violence against the government or citizens. Hudaybi underlined a more cultural approach in the implementation of the movement's goals by shedding light on the dissemination of the Islamic teachings through peaceful methods like the education of Islamic teachings to Egyptians (Abed-Kotob, 1995). Hence, they have accommodated themselves with the system's rules in order to be able to do their civilizational and educational mission that will automatically result in an Islamic nation since they are convinced that politics is a part of religion and organized by its teachings (Abed-Kotob, 1995). Some middle class members in the Muslim Brotherhood tried to escape the state dictations that marginalized them from engaging in political activities. As a result, they cooperate with three Christian figures in the formation of a new political party, Al Wasat party that emphasizes the cultural aspect of Islam without being a tool for political participation like advocated by the Muslim Brotherhood and they created their own NGO through which they operate since they weren't accorded a license by



the party committee (Ayoob, 2004). Al Wasat party in Egypt separated from the Muslim Brotherhood and started to develop a moderate view of political Islam that accepts the basis of democracy, human rights, the inclusion of Copts, and women's rights. It is a manifestation of post Islamism in a form of a pragmatic political platform that not only moves away from preaching (Al Dawa) but also according to Gilles Kepel is a hybrid synthesis between Islamism and western values (Stacher, 2002). Al Wasat thinks on the basis of a civilizational inclusive project for a more democratic Egypt where Sharia can be adapted to the western institutions of democracy. According to them, Sharia is a flexible normative system that has to be submitted to *ijtihad* in terms of legal interpretations by a democratically elected group of religious officials in order to cope with changes and help to induce modernity in the system (Stacher, 2002). It is therefore illustrated as an alternative to the rigid structural and ideological pattern manifested by the Muslim Brotherhood and it constitutes an evolution in political Islam by being oriented towards the western democratic model.

Burgat and Dowell indicated that political Islam in Egypt and North Africa incarnates a third phase of the anti-colonial movement in terms of reasserting the cultural independence in addition to the political and the economic ones. The regional context in terms of foreign domination, the existence of Israel and the social disruption under a political autocracy that resulted in inequality and rural disenchantment are the main reasons for the rise of political Islam in Egypt and in Iran (Kepel and Ibrahim in Bayat, 1998). Most of the supporters of Islamic activism in Egypt were hence among the disenchanting middle class that couldn't be absorbed by the job markets which disappointed them since they couldn't realize an economic success that copes with their high education and social status. The social expansion of political Islam that rallied many supporters and members from various social classes especially among the youth was simultaneously accompanied by wide religious publications as well as an increase of Islamic nongovernmental mosques and investments.

In Egypt, Sunni Islam was manifested by a variety of groups that were either non violent and supportive to the state policies like Al Azhar or violent groups that are against the government. In spite of the violent expression of some politicized extremist movements like Jama'a Islamiah and Jihad, the non-violent and gradual expansion of other Islamic

movements and the increasing level of religiosity in the Egyptian society allowed the integration of Political Islam in various social and popular activities through the civil society (Bayat, 1998). The two sorts of religious groups are supporters of the application of the Sharia law in Egypt based on the non separation between politics and religion and that Islam provides normative basis for both the state and religion (Akhavi, 1992 and Bayat, 1998). Both of them position themselves vis-à-vis the regime based on the state's decision on that matter and even if they support the application of the Sharia, they diverge on the principle of whether the Sharia is the sole or the main source of legislation. The radical groups in Egypt like it was illustrated by Abdel Salam Farraj's text are calling for the return of the jihad as the absent precept whose abandon led to the decadence of the Egyptian society. Besides, they asserted that the creation of an Islamic state is the ultimate goal of their political action since it was a vision that has its own normative support in the Qur'an and Sunna by referring to al hakkimia principle. In light of this principle and the inability of the rulers to apply the Islamic law, they are declared apostates and they have accordingly to incur the capital punishment (Akhavi, 1992). Their ideology is coated in the premises of the far enemy theory which states that it is easier to fight a near enemy whose elimination will facilitate the task of winning external enemies. Therefore, the jihad in its minor and major versions has to be carried out effectively on the individual and community level for the sake of God to fight the enemies of Islam. In addition to the Islamists' various agenda, the government's resistance to their influence by the means of arbitrary laws created a political deadlock in Egypt and obstructed Islamic groups from engaging into politics and experiencing the chance of moderating their stances. Besides, the absence of a coherent and hierarchical leadership structure weakened the Islamic groups in addition to the domestic debate about the place of religion in politics which spurred a fierce competition between them on the provision of the correct version of Islam (Bayat, 1998). In addition to Al Sadat's legacy where political Islam was deployed as a counter ideology to communism and Arab socialism, Mubarak embarked into a consistent struggle with Islamists who rallied to their sides many of the masses who have been marginalized in light of the socioeconomic changes that were imposed by international institutions on Egypt (Fawaz, 2000).

## **Egypt Between Turkish and Iranian Cases**

In light of the repression of the radical violent groups by Mubarak's regime, the Muslim Brotherhood had the chance to illustrate themselves as a non violent political alternative for the government. Therefore, the main dilemma of political Islam turned to be in the management of the gap between modernism and Islamic precepts that puts Islamic groups in an ideological impasse in terms of determining the relation between modernity and Islam as either an interaction or a submission of modernity to Islamic preaching (Najjar, 2000). This dilemma is clearly manifested in Egypt nowadays especially in the vacuum of power that occurred after the demise of the regime. Not only the repressive mechanisms that the ex-government deployed in controlling Islamists disappeared but also the eruption of various unfulfilled economic demands from middle and low social classes paved the way for the emergence of a strong religious identification on the domestic scene. These two factors intermingled with the vacuum of power by resulting in a considerable political instability that can't be even handled by the military council that rules the country since February 11<sup>th</sup> 2011. By examining the current situation in Egypt, in spite of the existence of political Islam as an ideology promoted by various groups with different degrees of intensity, the sudden elimination of the state coercive mechanisms and the inability of the military apparatus to replace them with regulatory alternatives seem to be more dangerous for the country's political future. It would be important to indicate that the Islamic groups still enjoy the grass-roots' support among the disenchanting classes which resembles to the circumstances that brought both the Welfare party in Turkey and the clerical regime in Iran to power. Besides, the military council as the sole legitimate ruler in this transitive period would draw some analogies with the Council of Guardians and the ex-National Security Council in Iran and Turkey respectively. Both of them detained considerable constitutional authorities and prevailed on all the other institutions in terms of decision-making in politics. Therefore, the National Military Council adopted a strong secular ideology that displayed Islamists as the first enemy while the Council of the Guardians is the supreme religious authority that decides on the validity of the various institutional decisions in light of the deliberation of the imams/ulemas. In spite of the ideological disparity that they manifest, both of these councils monopolized the right of the production of an Islamic synthesis that would sustain their authority. In Turkey, the state

promoted an adapted version of Islam to both the secular process and Turkish nationalism while in Iran, the Twelve Imam Shiism was the sole official religion of the state. As a result, the collegial rule as experienced in Turkey and existing in Iran would present several scenarios about the nature of the military transitional rule and the type of regime that would dominate after the coming elections in Egypt. The Military Council doesn't seem to follow the ex-regime policy towards Islamists that many of them were released from prisons and others created their own political parties. Therefore, a lot of speculations would be drawn on the reasons for this openness towards Islamists especially when we realize that such openness wasn't selective in terms of empowering some Islamists in the detriment of Ultra-extremists. In Turkey, religious extremism was supported by the military in order to carry out clandestine missions against some undesired elements but the Turkish army didn't have the ambition to rule but only acted as a referee that preserves the State's secular principles.

Egypt's political future shouldn't be held in a debate that illustrates it as an evolving process towards the adoption of either the Iranian or the Turkish experiences that started to be labeled as "models". The idea of modeling seems reductionist and superficial since it ignores not only the specificity of each experience but also seems to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Therefore, by illustrating the evolution of political Islam in Turkey and the politicized religion embedded in a theocratic rule in Iran, the paper tries not only to describe both experiences but also to highlight how specific political Islam was in each country. This thesis emphasizes political Islam as a domestic political formulation that has to adapt to the rules and the regulatory frameworks in every state. Accordingly, political Islam in Turkey has appeased its claims by rejecting the application of the Sharia while the reformists in Iran and Al Wasat party as well as the Muslim Brotherhood that represent the moderate voice of Islamism in Egypt are still promoting the idea that Sharia is a flexible normative framework that adapts to the western mechanisms of nation-state. The main problem in Egypt is the masses' alienation intensified through the unequal distribution of income and benefits which manifested considerable disparities within the same cities as well as between them. Besides, four decades of various form of nationalism exalted by the state elite to endorse their rule increased the state's identity crisis. The awareness of this weakness and its manipulation by the authorities

distorted the political process in Egypt and increased the magnitude of state failure in Egypt. This phenomenon as we have seen in Turkey and Iran paved the way for the radicalization of the religious fervor and the intervention of the Islamic groups in politics which reached its peak in Iran by the arrival of the clergy to power. However, Turkey succeeded to overcome the dilemma of religion and politics conflict since politicians with an Islamic background managed to reconsider their agendas on pragmatic basis that fulfills the masses' demands through the adoption of a visible economic development. Most Islamists adopt the religious fervor to take over the power which is clearly seen in the different Islamic countries where conservative groups rally marginalized classes by formulating their concerns into a religious idiom. This formula was revised by the AK party that kept his conservative outlook while basing his agenda and rhetoric on the fulfillment of public demands. The initiation of wide-scale development projects on the domestic and the regional levels emphasized a new reference for a conservative party who instead of referring to abstract divine rules has recourse to scientific and rational tools like think tanks that conduct researches and surveys that orient the party's actions. Consequently, this party is somehow distinguished from the traditional version of political Islam and managed to create a conciliatory synthesis between modernity and Islam as well as liberalism and conservatism which rendered the recourse to Islamic discourse useless in terms of building legitimacy. Besides, the AK party's path into national politics expressed a considerable contrast with traditional Islamists since it embraced the pillars of the global order in terms of neoliberal values and modernization which enabled its integration in a secular regulative paradigm.

Even if the Turkish experience under the AK party seems to be a little distant for Egypt nowadays, the Iranian one shows a sort of a unified institutionalization of authority and religious deliberation that guaranteed the theocratic regime's cohesion which is not applicable for Egypt as well. The Sunni identification of the different Islamic groups in Egypt exhibits various forms of authority, agenda and modalities of action that are unable to be unified. In addition, political Islam in Turkey and Iran manifests a neutralization of the religious variable since the ruling parties in both countries focus only on economic speeches like the bread discourse and the public service one adopted by the conservative party and the AKP respectively. This de-emphasis of religion in politicized

Islam shows the level of public disinterest in religious rhetoric while according the significant attention to their needs. The Islamic groups in Egypt are divided in terms of their rhetoric. The Ultra-Salafi movements still hold on a pure theological and abstract discourse while the Muslim Brotherhood developed a pragmatic vision for their political agenda by adapting its program to the basic needs and expectations of its constituency. Therefore, the structural and ideological disparities within the religious groups in Egypt shed the light on the intensity of the political polarization between the different religious stances which manifests a specificity of religion's experience in Egypt's politics. Thus, the political visibility of the religious movements in Egypt seems to be intriguing and incites further observations and analyses that have to take into consideration different variables in determining the place of religion in the Egyptian future politics rather than only focusing on Turkey and Iran as the model paradigms.

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