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“Democratic Islamic Yuppies: Post-Islamism or another Islamism?”

By: Ashraf El Sherif
(Ph.D. Candidate, Boston University, MA)

Introduction

A successive wave of events seem to push the issue of Islamic movements and democracy on top of political and academic agenda. The eye-catching winning of Hamas in the last parliamentary elections in the Palestinian occupied territories was a culmination of a sequence of electoral successes scored by Islamist groups across the Muslim world. In 2000 an Islamic party in Turkey(the Justice and development party) came to power democratically after a stunning landslide electoral victory which signaled an all-encompassing reshuffling of the political system in that country. In Lebanon three members of Hizbullah, a resistance movement that, like Hamas, is blacklisted a terrorist organization by the West, now participate in the Lebanese cabinet in light of the new pluralist strategy of the movement. In Iraq the Islamically-oriented Shiite United Iraqi Alliance is the key partner in the governmental coalition following its strong performance in the 15 December parliamentary elections.

In Egypt the officially outlawed Muslim Brotherhood holds 88 seats in the recently elected People's Assembly, making it the largest opposition bloc unprecedentedly in the modern history of Egypt . In Kuwait, Yemen and Bahrain Islamist groups constitute the main opposition force in the political life. In Morocco the Justice and Development Party(PDJ), modeled on the Turkish ruling party, holds 40 seats and is the main opposition bloc, while in Jordan the Muslim

Brothers running under the banner of the Islamic Action Front have 17 seats in parliament. Before that, without much notice, the Islamic ann-Nahda party in Tunisia and its leader Rashid al-Ghannoushi were the first Islamic movement to declare their unequivocal support and commitment to democracy both as a political necessity and as a religious preference. In the mid-1990s al-Wasat party emerged in Egypt as a splinter attempt by some Muslim Brothers trying to chart a new political framework as an alternative to both the Muslim Brotherhood and the radical militants, more modernist and democratic. To the east of the Arab world, democratic and pluralist transformations in Post-Khomeini Iran were so far-reaching and extensive in scope instigating a whole dynamic of reform in Muslim politics that was not confined to the Iranian case. And finally, a country like Saudi Arabia correctly long perceived as a stronghold for religious and social conservatism was not immune to that current of political and intellectual shifts. A very complicated situation existent nowadays in Saudi Arabia that can't be attributed to this or that current, but in the context of talking about the emerging Islamic democratic yuppies, one can highlight the emerging trend of "Islamoliberal" intellectuals asking for a reconciliation of Islam with democracy and liberties(Lacroix 2005). Denunciation, suspicions and all sorts of paranoia and phobias disseminated by media machines in the west or in those Muslim countries wouldn't preclude the fact that we are witnessing a transformation that is significant in its scope and implications. A new age of Islamist politics is in the making right now and that is heralded by those electoral ascendancies. Importantly, at the center of that new age is a fundamental transformation in the position of the Islamist movements regarding the question of democracy.

A much sophisticated process on its own, democratization in the Muslim world- as a problematic and question that is preoccupying the agendas of decision-makers and academics in the west and in the Middle East recently – has acquired new complexities. Sooner or latter, all must come to terms with those Islamist democrats whose presence and integration into the much hyped process of democratization can no longer be ignored.

Tentative research questions

Many important questions need to be addressed here. Is there a real new democratic profile adopted by the Islamic movements? Is it heralding a completely new trajectory for Islamic movements? What are the fundamental features of that democratic transformation of the Islamic movements? What are its intellectual, doctrinal and political pillars, socio-political scope and implications? What constitutes the new ideology of those Muslim democrats? And what are its constitutive elements and formative contexts? Does it represent a breakthrough in the political development of the movement or a punctual re-adaptation of some of its salient characteristics? How can the new democratic profile of those Islamic movements positively engage with the process of democratization in their respective countries?

Some countries and cases are specifically important here. Egypt comes on top of the list. Not only due to its strategic and historical importance at the center of the Middle eastern regional political system, but also because the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood(the mother Islamic movement in the Middle East) is the oldest and largest Islamic movement, not to talk about its rich intellectual and doctrinal production and complicated political legacy. In addition to all of that, it is there in Egypt where we are witnessing the democratic twist of the Islamists and their success in triumphing over both the regime's authoritarianism and other non-Islamist opposition contenders gaining an electoral sheet that put them as the largest opposition bloc in the Egyptian parliament, unprecedented in the history of modern Egypt(Howeidi, December 2005).

Turkey is important both as a shadow case for the developments in Egypt, and as a benchmark for the democratic development of Islamic movements as definitely the experience of the AKP(Justice and development party) was a frontrunner in that respect. It presented a revolutionary transformation of the typical Islamic platform upholding wholeheartedly to the

notions of democracy, civil state and political liberalism. Moreover, we have a case-study here for an Islamic movement coming democratically to power and running the government uncontested by any other political or ideological rival. No less importantly, Turkey is the country where debates about Islam vs. secularism and authenticity vs. modernity take very acute and comprehensive forms and hold genuine significance to the polity and society of the Turkish community (Onis and Keyman 2003, Yavuz 2002). Morocco is another notable example for a state-encouraged incorporation of democratic Islamists within the newly-initiated political liberalization process. It still remains to explore how The Justice and Development party in Morocco(modeled on the Turkish AKP) would interact with the heavy weight of the monarchical authoritarianism in Morocco traditionally at the center and foundation of its political system(Maghroui 2002). Finally, Hamas and its recent stunning parliamentary win which sent shock waves across the region. Notwithstanding the implications of that event for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, yet it also holds no less significant impacts on Muslim politics(Gereish 2006). Also, it would be enlightening to compare the performance and development of the democratic profile of a movement under foreign occupation and operating under a no-state circumstances in variance from the heavy-state legacies in Egypt, Turkey and Morocco

Conceptual framework

This paper is inspired by an important body of research done on the Islamic movements since the 1990s, and despite different vantages and approaches, it converges on the conclusion that the Islamic movements are experiencing a fundamental metamorphosis in ideology, approaches, and practices from within and without creating a new “Post-Islamic” condition borrowing the wordings of Olivier Roy(1994)¹. Different tacks on that issue, though coming out with different conclusions,

¹ See also (Kepel 2002, Diamond and Brumberg 2003, Feldman 2003, Nasr 2005, Abou al-Fadl 2003, Baker 2003 , Burgat 2003, Eickelman 1996 , Hefner 2004, Fuller 2003 and Takeyh 2004).

probe the noticeable shift in strategies and behavior by Islamists across the Middle East starting from the second half of the 1990s. For some like Gilles Kepel *Post-Islamism* depicts the end of Salafi and Jihadi doctrines and the departure of Islamists into other approaches and strategies(2002). Olivier Roy posits post-Islamism as an analytical category. He identifies mainly the privatization, deterritorialization and bourgeoisification of Islamism as opposed to Islamization of the state which has been the centerpiece of the Islamist doctrine previously, as major changes in the strategies and scope of action of Islamism(Roy 1994 and 2004). Finally, we have another approach to post-Islamism which is reluctant to raise it as an analytical category and prefer instead to deal with it as an empirical observation manifesting a historical end of a previous epoch. An example for that would be Assef Bayat's work(1996) on post-Khomeini Iran during the heydays of the reform movement that brought Muhammad Khatami to power in 1996.

According to Roy, the necessary reliance on modernity left the Islamic movements prey to its intrinsic contradictions which heralded its failure. These contradictions are in the relationship of Islam to politics. Roy claims that Islamism rejects political philosophy, since it sees no separation between religion and politics (unlike traditional Islamic culture, he is careful to point out, differentiating himself from the Orientalists), it sees no role for institutions, and sees "virtue" or "piety" as the only necessary leadership quality. Thus, Islamism, by self-definition, writes itself out of the very political arena it seeks to enter. "The magical appeal to virtue masks the impossibility of defining the Islamist political program in terms of the social reality" (71). In other words, there can be no Islamic state without pious Muslims, but there can be no pious Muslims without an Islamic state. Islamist doctrine, because it does not match social reality, ends up in self-negation, since notwithstanding their ideational sources, they arise from and rely upon this social reality. The type of Islam propagated and advocated by those Islamic movements was not one in which religion dominates politics as the typical orientalist picture depicts but rather the opposite.

The impetus of political Islam has faltered apart due to the failure of its political project i.e. establishing an Islamic state. Intellectual inconsistencies and failed experiments in Sudan, Iran and Afghanistan derailed the popular support behind the utopian idea of an Islamic state (Takey and Gvosdev 2004). Nonetheless, what the decline/failure thesis advocates fail to comprehend is that logical inconsistencies in the ideas of a political movement do not automatically translate into a death sentence for that movement's ontology, as they presume. Political and social movements usually demonstrate a tendency for pragmatism and syntheticism. They often thrive in spite of problematic ideational underpinnings. Followers make compromises in doctrine and adapt to the compelling social realities, while attempting to stay in touch with ideational inspirations as much as possible. To assume that Islamic movements are behaving monolithically in the same way is not solidly founded by any means. Besides, chastising them for failing to rapidly and comprehensively establish new communities, polities and states, and even to redraw world borders is overestimating their capacities. In other words, it is setting the bar too high. If the bar were set lower, a more in-depth analysis would acknowledge that Islamists have achieved substantial political and social change despite their supposedly contradictory relationship with modernity and the realm of politics.² The political project of the Islamic movements was quite very modern in the way it tackled the problematic of the political versus the religious in Islam. That was unsettling to both traditional conservative religious elites and secularist westernized modernist ones. Achievements and contributions of the Islamic movements can't be underrated.

² There has historically been a de facto independent public space in the Muslim world, a separation between religion and politics, with the ulama and the sharia on one side, and the ruler on the other. This doesn't go with cultural statements that perceive "despotism" as inherent to Islam throughout history. But the paradox, for modern Islamists, is that in pursuing an Islamic state, they break this tradition. By preoccupying themselves with politics, they reject the autonomous space of politics that the ulama accepted, "specifically, the possibility for the state to elaborate a positive law to legislate in areas not covered by the sharia" (64). Thus, they revive politics and push it to the center even as they seek to negate it. For Roy, "no matter what the actors say, any political action amounts to the automatic creation of a secular space or a return to traditional segmentation" (23). In order to demolish the secular space, the Islamists are required to create it. Actually, Roy argues that Islamists compromise with modernity by departing from the positions of the ulama on three issues: political revolutionary transformation (they favor it), the role of sharia (they favor it less than the ulama does, and want to go beyond its limited reach), and the role of women (they are less conservative on that).

My position is that it is a picture of transformations and not decline. Correctly, a lot of critiques have been raised against the term “Post-Islamism” as premature and over-generalizing(Piscatori 2000) Even the term “Post-Islamism” is not accurate as it presumes a monolithic nature of Islamic movements that if departing from it, this means the phenomenon is getting to its end. Decline might be a precise description of the demise of a particular version of Islamism that is the revolutionary militant Islamism. Arguably, we are witnessing a significant transformation in the Islamist ranks which reflect both a condition accentuating change and a new socio-political project to cope with that condition. A condition of exhaustion and failures of Islamist-inspired applications inspired a new project producing new modalities of thought and strategies of action in response to that new condition. In the words of Bayat “Following a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy, and sources of legitimacy of Islamism get exhausted even among its once-ardent supporters. Islamists became aware of their system’s anomalies and inadequacies as they attempt to normalize and institutionalize their rule. The continuous trial and error makes the system susceptible to questions and criticisms. Islamism becomes compelled both by its own internal contradictions and by societal pressure, to re-invent itself, but does so at the cost of qualitative shift. The tremendous transformation in religious and political discourse in Iran during the 1990s exemplifies this tendency” (2005, 5)

As a result, to start with, the mainstream Islamic movements deserted their old utopian project of the transnational Islamic caliphate and accepted the legitimacy of their territorial nation- states. A new agenda is in the makeup, one that is still self-acclaimed as Islamist and not secularist albeit departing from the old Islamist strategies(Gerecht 2004). A new doctrine which still doing politics from an Islamic perspective yet nonetheless bidding to harmonize Islam and liberty, faith and freedom, religious devotion and social responsibility. “It is an attempt to turn the underlying principles of Islamism on its head by emphasizing rights instead of duties , plurality in place of a single authoritative voice, historicity rather than fixed scriptures, and the future

instead of the past. It wants to marry Islam with individual choice and freedom, with democracy and modernity(something post-Islamist stress), to achieve what some have termed “an alternative modernity” ”³(Bayat 2005,5). Furthermore, instead of their previous puritanical objective of the Islamic state, they are now willing to be integrated within the political system and re-establish themselves as political parties. Their objectives are less maximalist in scope. It is no longer the fusion of the religious and political and fundamentally transforming the political and social community. But, rather they are becoming closer and closer to the Christian democratic parties in western Europe in the sense of purporting to promote a moralist and social conservatism which, in the case of those Islamic movements, takes the form of advocating the application of Islamic Shari’a not as a blueprint for a state but only as a framework for public morality. They are becoming less of social movements and more of political parties with more articulated objectives and focused agenda. And popularly speaking, the populace who used to prefer political Islam to state-sponsored official Islam, is now switching to a third alternative: a social Islam.

This preoccupation with public morality is not a depoliticization of the movement if we apprehend that the basis feature of any fundamentalist movement is to pursue a control over public morality or in Salwa Ismail’s words to act as “entrepreneurs of morality”(Ismail 2001). Politics is not confined only to the realm of state and governance but has also to do with the creation of an organizing discourse: values, symbols and meanings undergoing within the social and cultural spheres(Foucault 1980). Besides, championing moralistic causes and coalescing around the cause of the Shari’a is likely to consolidate the Islamists’ power and contest the state hegemony. So, they are not deserting their Islamist politics but rather adopting new strategies of

³ That tendency is not represented only by the mainstream Islamic movements in their new look. Actually, as a matter of fact they were late comers. Many sorts of movements and dynamics pioneered that tendency to develop new social practices and political discourse on freedoms emanating from a religious framework. The list would include civil society organizations, youth and student movements, feminist organizations, intellectual, artistic and cultural tendencies. A perfect case here would be the societal dynamics that swept over the Post-Khomeini Iranian society giving birth to a very dynamic reform movement that manifested itself in the political sphere among others(Menashri 2001, Abdo 2004, Fairbanks 1997 and Roy 1999).

it. Moderate Islamic movements are questioning their conventional long-held Gramscian strategies. Through their Leninist-type political movements (with a primary focus given to organization and state), moderate Islamic movements tended to perform a Gramscian strategy of a war of maneuver and hegemony seeking to establish an Islamic state on lines not very much unlike the models of the Leninist communist state. They are twisting now towards a new strategy in which they posit themselves as social agents working through civil society and engaging with the day-to-day soft politics in the street⁴.

More importantly, however, these social and political changes have also contributed to a fragmentation of religious authority whereby, to put it succinctly, the meaning of scripture no longer needs to be interpreted by a religious institution or orthodoxy but, rather, lies in the eye of the beholder. Many Muslims conventionally would incessantly uphold the idea that the centuries-long development of Islamic jurisprudence and Quranic exegesis/ hermeneutics provides definitive authoritative guidance to the devout Muslims. But this tradition now confronts the proliferation of modern-educated individuals, who have direct access to the basic religious texts and increasingly question why they should automatically always defer to the religious establishment (Esposito and Burgat 2003, Hefner 2005). Pluralism and diversity in actors permeated the Islamic condition recently. It has thus become noticeably uneasy to determine with reassuring finality and decisiveness the clear-cut boundaries between what is Islamic and what is not. The ease with which individuals can presume to invoke and defend Muslim tradition

⁴ On the other hand, the radical Jihadist movements underwent a no-less compelling logic of transformations than the moderate ones. A significant segment of the movement simply declared cease-fire and embarked on a process of doctrinal revisionism ushering into a status of quietism (Rashwan 2002). For the others who refused the logic of quietism, internal Jihad is discarded to the favor of external Jihad. Fighting to oust the ruling impious regimes and replace them with Islamically righteous regimes is no longer a priority. Instead, the primary objective now is to establish a trans-national Islamist-International whose manichean Jihad has no objective but to get rid of the "Infidel" western existence in the Muslim world (Rashwan 2002). That shift in focus and objectives ironically posited them closer to the profile of anti-capitalism and anti-globalization movements with their leftist and anarchist orientations

have allowed all sorts of Islamist mavericks to claim to speak on behalf of Islam. That was a definite consequence of the communication revolution associated with globalization. Fluid, plural and fragmented the Islamist arena right now is far from that monolithic depiction (Piscatori 2005).. Islamist transformations, therefore, appears to have emerged as much from distinctly modern conditions as from the prior experience of unsettling Muslim-western historical encounters (Euben 1999).

Hence, to presume that ideological dogmatism or perhaps incoherence renders Political Islam incapable of real development and thus destined to fail, is far from conveying the truth about it. Another possibility, however, is that the very uncertainty, equivocacy, inconsistency and ideological incoherency of Islamist thought, in addition to providing the pragmatic advantage of satisfying a broad constituency, allows space for the flexible development of talismanic ideas such as the "Islamic state" and redapting them. If this view is taken, then, far from being destined to decline, Islamism is capable of mutations, adaptation and growth. Indeed, Kepel's own analysis highlights an "equivocal" set of ideas that just might evolve into a "Muslim form of democracy." Important to my argument, this hybrid would undeniably be the modern, pragmatic product of a series of compromises and conflicts with regimes reluctant, but impelled, to share power, yet they are also true to the Islamists' doctrinal and historical heritage.

The moderate mainstream Islamic movements discussed in this paper like the MB or the Justice and development party were always ideologically motivated political and social groups that seek immediate political power in order to effect their vision of the political-ideological program they deem preferable for the country and its people. This ultimate goal sharply distinguishes this category from other militant movements, that subscribes to blind obedience regardless of all considerations of wisdom and purpose. Thus, those groups extend their reading of contemporary events beyond the lens of early Islam and the strict application of Qur'anic and Prophetic scriptures, to a perspective that runs the full 14 centuries of Islamic history. As a result,

they are both less literal in their interpretation of many Islamic precepts, more creative in terms of Islamic hermeneutics and more open to many modern Islamic, as well as non-Islamic, conceptions. Islam, to these groups, is an historical- socio- cultural legacy that furnishes the source of their inspiration for political and social reform, combining ideology with political pragmatism. As such, these groups only differ from other left-wing or liberal groups with respect to the specific content of their ideology(Voll and Esposito 1996) ⁵.

Importantly, the opportunity spaces created by changing domestic and external political agendas recently undoubtedly provided an impetus for the Islamists to join forces with other pro-democratic forces. Nonetheless, by transforming their polities that way they are re-invoking to the old Islamist theme of reform. Reform has been always been THE major task for the Islamic movement in its early historical phase before it became obsessed with the theme of identity and the puritanical preservation of it(Hourani 1972, al-Sayyid 1997, Binder 1988, Tamimi 2001, Tibi 1991 and Enayat 1982) . This juxtaposition of themes of **identity** and **reform** in the course of Islamism is central to the conceptual framework of my study of its recent political transformations. In this sense, then, Islamism may have a future, even if extremism and militancy, in Kepel's optimistic view, does not make long-term sense. Islamism is still retaining its constitutive feature as a project calling for an alternative civilizational model based on the Islamic cultural and social values distancing itself from that of the west. Recent transformations are not a departure from that project but rather a perfection of it coping with the changing circumstances. Islamism seemingly is ridding itself quickly from its previous ideological

⁵ This is to differentiate those Islamic groups from the militant radical ones. For the latter scripture enforces a categorical and unquestionable limitation upon the ideological development of these groups and their movement. The Qur'anic scriptures and the Prophetic sayings are the sole authorities guiding patterns of organization, action and behavior rooted in the Islamic legacy of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs. These groups read contemporary events in the Muslim world exclusively through the spectacles of that distant epoch and identify today's players, forces and contradictions according to the reference framework it establishes.

formulations which overstated the importance of the text and meta-ideas to the negligence of the context and practicalities. Islamism in its new phase is giving due concern to the necessity of harmonizing the textual with the contextual realistic. Reform here doesn't mean to negate the authority of the religious revelation because that is the fundamental definitive framework of reference which certainly guide attempts at both rigid dogmatism and reform. If any reform discourse started to question that authority then definitely it ceased to be Islamic any longer. Instead, the new Islamism is reforming the Islamic discourse by accepting that the contemporary time is very much different from other previous ages and importantly the requisites and necessities of that new age should be added to the Islamic framework of reference(al-Sayyid 1997).. The agenda now is focusing on the inter-marriage between the political and the religious doctrinal, and the introduction of micro-politics based on small-scale political achievements tangible with needs and requirements of reality

There are two important features of the transforming Islamist phenomenon in the last decade: the bourgeoisification, and the de-traditionalization of political Islam. Thanks to the new televangelist preachers like Amr Khaled in the Arab world, Fethullah Gulan, and Abdullah Gemnesteyar in Indonesia, some well-off social groups directly connected to processes of globalization and not conventionally characterized in the past as a support base to Islamization, interestingly started to manifest diverse forms of Islamic revival. The second generation of the open-door policy entrepreneurs in Egypt, tigers of Anatolia in Turkey and commercial class in Indonesia. Independent of the clientalist networks of the state, those bourgeois groups accumulated their fortunes rapidly to establish their own political and cultural sphere(Haene 2005). Proving its flexibility once again, as much as Islam was employed to protest social conflict and deprivation by the populist Islamic groups of the now Islam is upheld by the new social elites products of petro-dollars, structural adjustment programs and globalization to do completely different function . That is to mediate or even suppress the social conflict through a

new Islamist discourse that would provide a new framework for capital accumulation⁶

Social movement approach, notwithstanding their valuable contributions to studying Islamist action in terms of identifying the rational resource mobilization strategies of those movements calculated in light of opportunities and constraints, and within some ideational framing(Wiktorowicz 2004 and Meijer 2005), yet in my opinion they fail to account for 3 important facts. Islamism did provided sites for social and cultural protest mobilizing wide segments of socially deprived and culturally discontented popular segments. It was not just site of providing services for and by the middle classes. Second, as mentioned above, Islamism is a very flexible framework that can be used to protest, suppress and mediate social conflict implying different layers and agents(Bayat 2005 and Beinir 2005). Third, , some analysts may prefer approaching the issue through the perspective of modern Western social sciences, which lend greater weight to factors such as disparity in social origin, variations in the nature of the leadership or modes of political performance, political economy or differences in the geographical-social context in which the groups emerged and developed. Yet however enlightening these factors may be in categorizing the Islamic movements , they do not occlude the fact that the most suitable criterion for classifying and distinguishing between these groups

⁶ Ironically, the western capitalist world self-evidently the object of Islamist militant wrath arguably can come to terms with the mainstream moderate Islamic movements right now primarily for their ideological complementarity. The two discourses of globalized neoliberal capitalism and Islamism are not conflictual, but are rather complementary if we realize how identity discourses and multiculturalism(dear to the American public imagination historically) can be of service to the management processes of neo-liberal capitalism.. The ideology of American “communitarianisms” being popularized by the global media overshadows the conscience and social struggles and substitutes for them so-called collective “identities” that ignore and marginalize them. This harmless ideology is therefore perfectly manipulated in the imperial strategy of capital domination because it transfers the world struggle from the arena of real socio-economic contradictions to the imaginary constructed world of collective identities that is said to be cultural, trans-historical and absolute, whereas “Political Islam is precisely a communitarianism.”⁶(Samir Amin 2003)

remains, above all, the ideological factor, an element which inherently carries a greater validity due to the particular nature of these groups, and the Islamic movement in general ⁷.

The long historical record of Islamic groups and factions, dating back to the first Fitna (the civil war for control of the Muslim community that lasted from 656 to 661), can serve to identify several recurring patterns, trajectories and features which we may combine to formulate a paradigm for the study of modern Islamic movements. Definitely, the 14 centuries of continuous socio-political doctrinal activity and the uninterrupted resurfacing of certain traits during this long span of time should offer academically legitimate bases for the delineation of a more valid and reliable paradigm than one derived exclusively from a study of the contemporary Islamic movements and factions.

Paradigms, if they are to have any empirical validity in the study of social phenomena, should be established upon the historically-extended observation of episodic traits or dynamics or patterns. The centuries-long history of the Islamic movement offers this possibility. This is not to say that the study of contemporary Islamic movements and their variations should depend solely on the analytical models we can induce from Islamic history and legacy. Nonetheless, unquestionably such a study would gain significantly in depth and precision with the introduction of additional analytical tools beyond those available in the conventional stock of the modern social sciences.

⁷ . “Some scholars may argue that all political and social movements are founded upon an ideological vision for change that constitutes a framework for organization, action and development. That, however, does not preclude the supremacy of ideology for the groups in the Islamic movement, upon which the fulfillment of the religious enterprise imposes a "sacred bond" that must be implemented in its entirety. Moreover, because of the very religious nature of this quest, it is driven by significations that have a far deeper and more powerful impact than those conveyed in the ideologies of non-religious socio-political movements. The influence of religious ideology extends to all aspects of the Islamic movement, from symbols and terms of reference to tactics and strategies, a factor which alone distinguishes this movement in general from all other social and political movements, however similar they may appear on the surface” (Rashwan 1999,15)

Simultaneously, the analytical models derived from Islamic history would become more fertile tools of inquiry if supplemented by contemporary social science methodology. In other words, my reluctance to rely exclusively on modern Western methods of inquiry and observation is not a reflection of any “ideological” or even “epistemological” hostility towards Western social science, but rather an expression of my quest for the greatest degree possible of empirical precision in the study of the contemporary Islamic movement. This can be furnished in my opinion by relying effectively on the specificity of Islamic history -- the context in which these groups developed as a definitive context that shaped their formation and later development.

That is why I would introduce the sociological history of ideas approach to complement the social movement one. That will contextualize the recent transformations within an endogenous culturally-specific path for political modernization and intellectual development. Thus, the development of the ideologies and doctrines of the Islamic movements will be approached by the sociology of groups perspective instead of the culturalist or rational choice ones.

This paper consists of two parts:

A) Islamic movements and process of democratization:

First, it will explain the reasons and conditions under which the contemporary Islamic movements can play both a positive and negative role in the processes of democratization and civil society-building in the specific cases which I am investigating. In doing so, one needs to address the following questions:

(a) what role does Islam as a set of idioms and norms on one hand and the Islamic movements as political and social actors on the other play in modern life in those Muslim middle eastern societies (construction of identity and ethics) and why? What is the connection between Islamic networks and civil society? How do Islamic networks shape the democratization processes? When and how do Islamic movements foster peace and cooperation or conflict and disorder?

What are the patterns of interaction between Islamic movements and democratization in different Muslim societies? In contemporary societies notions of the sacred continue to be vital yet ever changing. Across the globe in places such as India, Poland, Brazil, Israel, Iran, and not least the United States, religious traditions and the norms derived from them continue to play a prominent and contentious role in their respective societies(Marty 1991) . Arguably, one of the major forces of the 21st century will be socio-political Islamic movements based upon a religious understanding of the public sphere and political reasoning. It may be that *reconstruction* is a better word than *rediscovery* or *revival* to understand these religious ideas, organizations, and processes in a given polity.

When and under what conditions are Islamic movements likely to hinder or promote civil society and democracy? In order to answer this question, one should examine several liberal, moderate, traditional and radical Islamic movements, placing particular emphasis on Turkey and Egypt and its rich history of past and present . Turkey is important in this respect because it can be taken as a shadow case which not only exhibits the tensions that exist between the religious and the secular, tradition and modernity, but also the possibility of cohabitation, change, and compromise. Importantly, it helps discern the conditions under which Islamic political and social movements may achieve compatibility with liberal democratic norms and modernity (Cinar 2005, Ozdalga 1997, Jenkins 2007, White 2002, Yavuz 2003, Yavuz 2006 , Howe 2004).

My main hypothesis here is that the incorporation of the moderate Islamic movements within political system and civil society will dramatically enhance the prospects for democratization provided they would depart from the exclusivism, universalism and monopoly over religious truth that long characterized most of them and instead adopt the values of pluralism, tolerance, multiplicity, inclusion, compromise and moderation in ideas and behavior. That shift lies at the heart of the current

wave of metamorphosis my research will endeavor to explicate. So, provided that shift went smoothly , Islamic movements would be helpful to the cause of democratization in two main respects.

First, it will provide the necessary mass support to it and

Second, it will help consolidate the long-sought historical legitimacy bloc or the

“civic pact” behind the would-be established new political system.

One of the usual allegations trying to explain the dismal record of democratization in the Muslim world is referring to mass apathy and lack of popular political participation which in its turn is to be explained by referring to other factors(L. Anderson 1986, Bayat 2002, Korany, Brynen and Noble 1995, Norton 1995, Salame 1994 and Diamond 1996). Yet, those arguments run from a wide-spread myth that democratizations necessarily requires a continuous mass activism and mobilization. As a matter of fact, a careful historical overview worldwide would reveal that strategies of popular uprisings were always exceptional anecdotes in the histories of different societies and peoples. Peoples employ different strategies of political and social activism that are not necessarily identified with popular mobilization, and over most of the time those strategies are led by active minor sections of the people(Polanyi 1957 and Barrington Moore 1993) . In our case studies, so the question should not be: why the masses are not intervening for the sake of democratization? But rather when the masses intervene and to whom's favor? As a matter of fact, Egypt for example wasn't different from many other authoritarian countries worldwide in this respect and it witnessed a significantly active ideology of protest against its authoritarian regime led by a sizeable fraction of the people. But, unfortunately, that ideology was itself non-democratic i.e. the ideology of political Islam. The decades if the 1980s and 90s witnessed a noticeable degree of political activism by moderate and radical Islamist movements cultivating the support of wide social networks deeply implanted within the Egyptian society against the vicious authoritarian policies of the ruling regime. Such activism is no less significant in commitment, sacrifices and endurance than those known in the societies of Eastern Europe for instance in the 1980s(under comparable conditions of authoritarian regime policies) bearing in mind the latter societies are much more economically developed and culturally

sophisticated which gives more credit to the case of the Islamic activism in Egypt. This ends up with two arguments in this context:

- 1) The main form of political opposition in Egypt during that period, which was never politically apathetic and inactive as some analysts might imply, was the Islamist political opposition. In other words, the objective historical socio-economic conditions and subjective psychological popular cultural dispositions during the previous decades lent its weight behind that form of political opposition which happened to be non-democratic. Or to rephrase it; the interaction of Egyptian political sociology and psychology then produced that outcome. And accordingly democratic activism remained always secondary during that period
- 2) That rocketing phenomenal rise of Islamic political opposition in Egypt unintentionally had ostentatiously adverse effects on the movement of democratization because it absorbed huge sections of the Egyptian activist youth into the Islamist agendas defined by the religious, cultural and ideological priorities of the Islamic movements. Otherwise, a potent source of support would have fanned more flames to the democratic cause and agenda with its different type of economic, social and political priorities. The Islamists championed wrong sets of priorities (from the perspective of democratization), yet it was much in commensurate with the socio-economic, psychological and political conditions at that time (Zubaida 1992 and Norton 1993).

Accordingly, the recent rapprochement between the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the secularist opposition forces (Kefaya movement and the opposition parties) was ostensibly instrumental to emboldening the movement for democratization and accentuating the pressures on the regime (Shahine, November 2005).

Secondly, the incorporating of the Islamic movements within the movement of democratization will provide it with its indispensable long-missed critical mass or its historical bloc in the Gramscian term (Tamimi 2000). Nevertheless, this requires a no-less important far-reaching

intellectual and doctrinal transformations within the Islamic movements that can help build societal consensus around the project of establishing a modern democratic civil state(that is to be discussed in the second part of my research)(Binder 1988 and Ruedy 1996). This ever lacking democratic historical bloc deemed necessary in countries like Egypt and Morocco whereby authoritarianism is based primarily on depoliticizing the major bloc of the society and controlling it through the all-encompassing patronage networks and clientalism(Ayubi 1995, Kassem 2002, Crystal 1998 , Bellin 2004 and Entelis 1997)

B) Transformations of the Islamic Movements

The second part of the paper will examine the dynamics, pillars and processes of change the Islamic movements selected as case-studies are undergoing getting them closer to adopting democracy as a political objective and agenda. The generational clash, organizational incoherencies, the absence of a sufficiently charismatic leader and the ongoing pressures exerted by the state have combined to foment the end of the Muslim Brotherhood as it was known throughout the 20th century. This is not to suggest that the original perception of a Muslim Brotherhood as formulated by Hassan El-Banna will have lost its validity, for the Egyptian Islamic movement has yet to formulate a comprehensive alternative. One can predict, however, that the unified organization may disintegrate into an assortment of political, civic, syndicate and community organizations only loosely connected with the original concept of the Muslim Brotherhood⁸.

⁸ According to some modernists in the Brotherhood, this will be a positive development, for it will enable the pursuit of what Hassan El-Banna believed was the only course to Islamic revival, which "begins from the reform of the individual, passes through the family, the community, the government and then to the Islamic state, the Caliphate and mastery of the world." There is a trend among the younger generations to adapt ideas from other cultures, and to seek inspiration from contemporary Egyptian intellectuals sympathetic to the Brotherhood, in an attempt to bring the Brotherhood closer to the profound changes that are taking place at the end of the 20th century(Baker 2004).

Accepting democracy in this context means accepting democracy (both as a process of decision-making and popular participation and as an ideal political system) defined as (1) equal citizenship rights to all citizens including minorities and women, (2) establishing a mechanism by which governments are peacefully alternated through a popular electoral mechanism with a universal franchise and this entails removing all legal and extra-legal restrictions against political voting, candidacy, organization and propagation and the assertion of the sovereignty of the people over the political process (3) Inalienable citizens' rights that are immutable against any arbitrary state intervention.

Commitment to democracy according to this understanding involved transcending beyond the typical arguments about the westernized secular potentials of democracy and its debatable compatibility with the authentic Islamic concept of Shura and no less importantly accepting the temporal relativistic nature of politics. Futile "are they really democratic or aren't they?" debates about the intentions of the Islamists will be sidelined. Islamists are to be perceived as political actors struggling for recognition, support, relevance, ideational power and advantage.

However, this does not mean necessarily that my research will perceive the Islamist ideology as mere instruments for the imperatives of the Islamists' political action. To the opposite, I would argue that the recent democratic transformation of the Islamists is another stage in an ongoing long history of changing Islamic intellectual agenda. So, in other words highlighting Islamists as political entrepreneurs (the same like other non-Islamist opposition parties) does not mean that they are refracting from their definitive ideology but it rather means they are NOT upholding to a nonnegotiable version of that ideology. And it will try to contextualize the new democratic profile of those movements within a broader dynamic of transformations. Such dynamic has its historical authenticity as part and parcel of the long history of Islamic politics in the modern age, and albeit it holds the imprint of the opportunities, constraints and motivations that are brought forward by the new variables of the contemporary era. The new democratic profile of those Islamic movements belongs to a 4-fronts comprehensive process of metamorphosis of the Islamic movement in the

Muslim world. As said above, the main concern is becoming reform and not identity. Hence, instead of a puritanical obsession with preserving identity against cultural invasion, the focus now is on changing course to be on 1) religious and jurisprudential renewal, 2) strengthening and modernizing the mechanisms of the Islamic Umma and its solidarity , 3) political reform and liberalization reinvigorating the existent state institutions in terms of their efficiency and representation ⁹, and 4) enhancing the understanding of the modern age and its knowledge. In other words, this research is less concerned with the theoretical controversy of the position of Islamic jurisprudence, theology and belief system towards democracy than with contextualizing the rise of democratic political Islam within a broader process of transformation of the Islamist politics. Cases are the Justice and Development party (AKP) in Turkey, Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt, Hamas in Palestine and Justice and Development party in Morocco.

What are the causes and dynamics behind those transformations?

Its objective is **analytical** trying to put those transformations in perspective. So, one needs to draw a general picture identifying general causal mechanisms that cut across the different selected cases and induce the movement of transformation synchronically. On that part, I will focus on four main variables (measured in a cross sectional time series) as causal factors behind the transformations:

⁹ That in itself is crucial for Islamic religious and jurisprudential reform. The successful political and economic state made by Mahatir Muhammad in Malaysia for example helped dilute the possible support in Malaysian society of Islamic radicalism, in contrast to the developmental failures in the rest of the Muslim world which helped ignite Islamist radical wrath. Wrath here results from fear that a weak, inefficient and unsuccessful state would fail to preserve the Islamic identity against cultural invasion. Besides, an impotent, illegitimate and unpopular state is perceived by the radicals to be not a difficult target to hit on. So, to sum up, the reforming of the existent state repression and failures is a *sin quo non* to deprive the radicals of a *raison d'être* that bolsters their argument in the modernist/radical debate within Islamism (al-Sayyid 1997, Esposito 2003)

- a)The external factor and the pro-democratic foreign pressures with its transnational network of dissent, opportunities, constraints and solidarities¹⁰;
- b)The changing survival strategies of the robust authoritarianisms in those movements' countries and the resultant effect on the Islamic movements ¹¹
- c)Movement of renewal in Islamic political thought
- d)Changing social constituency of those Islamic movements and impact of logics of political organization and exigencies of electoral participation ¹²

¹⁰ The globalization of means of communication fosters the internationalization of national political conflicts and struggles, free flow of information, images and ideas and forging solidarities that cut across national boundaries(Events like the Orange revolution in Ukraine, the Zapatista revolutionary movement in Mexico and the 1989 downfall of communism in Eastern Europe are no longer local or even regional events). Furthermore, international political pressure by the governments(notably the US and the EU agenda for political reform in the Middle East), civil society and super-state institutions(civil society and human rights organization, UN organizations and charter and international criminal court) holds significant impact on domestic politics. It is very likely that they can accelerate movements for political change within the non-democratic individual countries like those of the Middle East. According to Bayat, "with the decline of legitimating identities, e.g. nationalism and socialism, contenders express their resistance against the global network society by forming autonomous communities around ethnic, cultural and religious identities(resistance identities). These formations may not even remain defensive but may even develop into a new identity that defines their position in society and by so doing seek the transformation of over all social structure, what Castells calls "project identities" "(2005,9). So, to sum it up the international system nowadays creates a drive for social revolutionary change YET conducted by new types of agents that are commensurate with the new realities of globalization underwhich capital and neo-liberal logic are hegemonic over all aspects and sectors of society, individualization and social fragmentation are dominant (Harvey 2005). Under those conditions, the new agents of change would be the marginal spaces in the system like social movements representing household economies, informal sector, socially marginalized groups and in addition movements representing reviving cultural and ethnic identities and solidarities. Islamic movements can count here

¹¹ According to Mainwaring, in an authoritarian/democratic hybrid regimes(like those of Egypt and Morocco) opposition parties tend to play "a dual game": an electoral game with the avowed goal of wooing the votes of the electorate, and a regime game exerting a pressure on the regime either to delegitimize its foundations or to push it to further the democratic transition(Mainwaring 1999). The MB operating under an authoritarian/democratic hybrid regime performs those two games simultaneously creating a lot of internal factions-creating debates about priorities and how to balance the two games in light of the regime's changing policy(Report of religious situation in Egypt, 2001).

¹² Examples for how such factors shape the behavior if ideological parties with supposedly revolutionary political scope abound. The Imperatives of organization usually imply a minority dominance over the organizational decision making(Michels' iron law of oligarchy). Also, electoral participation urge upon conventional ideological and class-based mass parties, in pursuit of vote-maximization, to put aside their ideological discourse , purge out the radicals and adopt flexible towards-the center, streamlined platforms that can win the sympathy of the median voters(Kirchheimer 1966 and Downs 1957).

Creating a) opportunity spaces, b)cognitive habits and c) decision-constraints, the four variables will lead into a single causal intermediary variable (I will call it Locomotive for transformation), which influences the final dependent variable (Adopting a democratic agenda).

TURKEY: Transformation of Islamism as a cumulative outcome of previous developments

Most of the studies on issues of religion and politics in Turkey are giving overstated importance to the state/sultanate/caliphate/Kemalism debates i.e. the development of the Turkish state since the fall of the caliphate passing through the Kemalist era and how it supervised the construction of the new public sphere in the country entailing the role of religion in that sphere. Notwithstanding its importance, yet too much focus on the state undermined the no less importance due to the social actors with all their complexion and dynamics whether before or after the establishment of modern Turkey. Different variables are to be considered here

A) Formative sources of Turkish Islamism:

Turkish Islamism came from different and diverse sources and passed with different phases; a)religious cultural associated with Sufi naqshabandi orders b) educational Islamic preaching institutions (al-Nur movement) and c)political partisan on the other(the movement of). Interaction between those different sources held its positive effects on the structure Turkish Islamism

And even the political partisan phase underwent different stages:

- 1- The spontaneous phase: More of reactive to the Kemalist secularism than a genuine political project

- 2- Conservative intellectual maturity: The National salvation movement later renamed as welfare then virtue party. The latter which participated in different government coalitions and formed the government itself in 1997 helped developed a legacy of pragmatic flexible policies , political openness, socially-varied electoral constituencies, and within-movement political diversities. That was the backdrop for the subsequent ascendancy of the AKP(Yavuz 1997, Nis 1997, Gulalp 2001)
- 3- Pragmatic political maturity: the AKP or Justice and Development party with its discourse of positive critical engagement with western modernity and its package- value systems of democracy, free-market and human rights on one hand and with the Turkish reality on the other . Though still committing itself to Muslim tradition, yet this political and intellectual discourse ruptured with the conventional Islamist concepts of the civilizational conflict and western conspiracies against Islam . And a link was built between the two levels of engagement i.e. critically integrating within the western modern system will enhance the need and necessity for internal development of the Muslim tradition and society economically and politically¹³.

¹³ In this context, the AKP ironically stands itself as more liberal and closer to European democratic values and standards than the secularist Kemalist establishment whose well-known positions regarding the rights of minorities and intervention of the military in politics left it playing the role of the politically conservative in the new Turkish set up. An interesting case in this context is how the AKP present a new interpretation of secularism closer to that in Europe, in contradistinction from the dogmatic laic secularism of the Kemalist establishment. Finally, the AKP is trying to compromise its Islamic discourse with the Kemalist legacy of the civic state, secularism and rule of modern civil law and the Turkish state institutions on the other hand. Importantly, its objective is to repudiate the conventional picture about Islamists as carriers of a revolutionary project that sought to topple the state structures altogether and replace them with a new one commensurate with its ahistorical utopian holistic vision of an alternative state. Instead, it upholds to a different type of project: a project of moderation and reconciliation(Mecham 2004) That new ideology by the AKP is labeled as “conservative democracy“ . In 2004, Recep Teyyib Erdogan the Turkish prime minister and head of the AKP party gave a lecture in the American enterprise institute about his vision of the justice and development party’s project in Turkey and its “conservative democracy”. According to him, “conservative democracy” is a socio-political system which harmonized modernity with tradition , faith with humanism, and revelation with reason. It accepts renewal and change and in the same token does not downgrade the traditional, ancient and indigenous. It respects the other yet maintaining its

B) Pluralism: Non-conflictual pluralism within Turkish Islamism: Though not cooperative or integrative necessarily, yet, Islamism in Turkey was distinctively plural i.e. it displayed a pattern of multi-dimensional and multi-layered activism, a condition unparalleled in any other case in the Muslim world. This was effective in two respects. First, the political partisan Islamism was allowed to develop its own genuine political mechanisms institutionally and mentally independent from other channels of Islamist activity which are not essentially acquainted with the tactics and methods commonplace to the political sphere by default. This deemed crucial if we differentiate it from the Egyptian case where the MB still face the problems of the unclear boundaries between its nature as a socio-cultural preaching movements and its presumed role as a political party (al-Ghobasy 2005, Abed-Kotob 1996). On the other hand, the cultural, social and economic Islamist channels were not correlated with the political ones. Consequentially, greater institutionalization and more organizational and legal sophistication for those channels shielded it from the rampant spillover effects of politics and facilitated its reformist efforts in its respective fields i.e. becoming more free-handed, less constrained and more institutionally efficient in fulfilling its roles. Accordingly, the case of Turkey is a real Islamic avant-garde in the sense of developing further differentiated forms of Islamism: Islamist parties, Islamist social movements, Islamist civil societies and Islamist economic institutions and enterprises

specificity. Conservative democracy rejects any political discourse or organizational buildup based on dualities that impose a singular ideological or ethnic or religious or political perspective to the neglect of any other. The state should confine its role to the management of the society with all its diversities and augment positive healthy interaction among the different orientations in society without any polarization or exclusiveness. Accordingly, the conservative democracy of the AKP sought to promote political liberties, secure free fair elections, activate the role of civil society, enhance popular political participation and respect division of powers and institutional checks and balances. In that context, the project of the AKP will help prove the lack of any substantive contradiction between Islam and democracy (Erdogan 2004).

- C) Feedback to political variables: Quick and adaptive in the case of Turkish Islamism¹⁴
- D) Effect of the political system: The influence of the general overall politico-cultural condition in modern Turkey, structurally different from other cases in the Middle east, on its varieties of Islamism can't be underestimated. Important to delineate differences with Islamism in other countries, it is conducive to explicate the mutations within the liberal and leftist political ideologies and movements in Turkey and how their interactions with kemalism and the military regime left its impact on the continuity and change of Turkish Islamism¹⁵.
- E) National specificity: Attention to the specificity of the Turkish domestic context and minimizing the external influence of other experiences of Islamism in other countries
- F) Political experiences: The experience of political governance by the Turkish Islamists is a golden opportunity to examine how can Islamists approach politics not as an ideological political movement any longer but as ones in control over state decision-making and whose political worldview is less attentive to right/left ideological politics nor religious/secularist cultural politics as much as to the *raison d'état*.

¹⁴ A significant section of the Turkish Islamists cooperated initially with the CUP in the pre-independence era (mainly the sufist Naqshabandi and Nursi orders) before it got alienated by the secularist Kemalism adopted by the CUP afterwards. Turkish Islamists managed to survive the anti-Islamist banning policies of the early Kemalism through techniques of secret societies at one time and focusing on cultural activities that are not associated with organizations or parties. Later on, it maintained that distinctive responsiveness to political variables by coping with the climate of political openness in the 1950s and 60s and joining the membership of the socially conservative parties perceived as closer to their social-cultural outlook. And finally, with the consolidation of political pluralism and democracy by the 1970s they established successive Islamist political parties that succeeded the other in response to outlawing the existent one (Yavuz, 2005)

¹⁵ The overall development of the Kemalist ideology and practice and the movements of reform and renewal evolving within it over time- as a result of interaction with other political and ideological forces (the non-Islamist liberals and leftists among them) can help explain why notions of national reconciliation, moderation and compromise became commonplace items in the political marketplace in Turkey to be favored by different political forces, Islamists no different. Degree of political freedoms and liberties secured and pluralism promoted by the system held its impact as well. Turkish Islamists discarded the political and ideological polarization as a political strategy, and gave high priority instead to national interests while building their political standpoints. The assumption here is about the effect of different contexts in creating different varieties of Islamisms.

Those six variables , arguably, are causally behind the following two outcomes:

A) Political Platform : The Justice and Development party(AKP) deserted the meta-politics or the grand puritanical- type political projects(for example the talismanic notions of the Jacobinist “Islamic state” building the good Muslim citizen) to the favor of micro-politics i.e. minor-scale political objectives and programs (like community development, economic reform, administrative efficiency, civil society empowerment, reforms of laws and regulations organizing the political process) and those are the type of issues on the agenda of the AKP party whether in its political platform or in its actual political discourse while it is in power. To say it in other words, applying the Islamic Sharia’, while not completely forgone, yet it was backstaged and good governance is now at the center-stage of the political agenda of the party¹⁶.

B) Methods of activity: Preference given to the approach of gradual doses of Islamization, postponement of controversial principal subjects and giving a priority to less-conflictual operational and subsidiary issues thereby fulfilling the requirements of integration within the existent political system(even if departing from some of the values of the movement). In this light, it is explainable when the AKP leaders identify their party as a socially and morally conservative civil secularist party that reconciles a positive perspective of Muslim history and tradition with an embracement of modernity. It is a kind of *political taqqiya* under which democracy holds priority over the application of

¹⁶ In addition, external objectives that are very likely to elicit a national consensus are used facilitate the internal agenda of the AKP. For instance, a key issue like the Turkish accession to the European Union is operationalized by the AKP government to approve its plan for respecting minorities’ rights, withdrawal of the military from politics, improving human rights record and implementing many other political, economic, legal and social reforms. Controversial Issues like veil and religious education for example which conventionally tended to be favorite topics for the Islamists in Turkey are ignored by the AKP postponing it to a latter stage, and if being involved into discussing it, they do it rather flexibly and compromisingly.

the Islamic Shari'a for instance. Nonetheless, they sought incorporation within the system but not dissolution within it

EGYPT : Transformation of Islamism to escape its crisis and uncertainties

In contrast to the AKP in Turkey and even the Justice and development party in Morocco, the Egyptian MB are stuck with the problematic of how to coexist with the regime implicitly accepting it(as the only possible option; the lesser of the two evils as the other evil is the comprehensive confrontation) and in the same token still maintaining its reluctance to recognize the legitimacy of the regime(which constitutes the *raison d'être* of the movement to start with). In other words, how to devise a method of activism tolerated by the regimes while still maintaining the original orientation and method which rejects the foundation of the regimes altogether?¹⁷

a) Formative sources

1-The historical legacy of the MB : Incoherence between its principal nature as a socio-religious movement for doctrinal preaching and its de facto engagement with politics. In spite of a very active political profile, yet the MB didn't posit itself as a political party with its well-known associates and requisites. Whether the MB was a preaching group or social movement or political party and whether it should keep its nature or transform it is a key question in the debates of transformations ¹⁸(al-Nafeesi 1989, Abed Kotb 1996). Unlike the cases with other

¹⁷ In Algeria for instance the MB(under the acronym HAMAS) gave a lot of concessions to the regime assuming that this was the only possible way of action under the given status-quo. And that risked compromising with a lot of the movement's foundational principles and hence tarnishing its credibility in the eyes of its followers(Willis 1999)

¹⁸ The MB perceives herself as a social preaching and missionary movement that can't reduce her existence just to politics. Her political profile is only one aspect of her bigger multi-faceted project. And even more,

countries, the relationship between the movement of the MB and the party it can establish is still very hazy and controversial. This is not the same in other countries. For example, in Jordan the party (Islamic action Front) was totally separated from the group, in Yemen they were completely unified, while in Qatar the movement simply cancelled itself.

2- The front-like form of the MB makes them encompass different Islamist

Currents with significant political and intellectual differences¹⁹.

2-The weight of the conflictual intellectual legacy of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid

Qutb's conceptions²⁰ as the foundation of the political outlook of the

movement(which obviously is not the case in Turkey) (al-Nafeesi 1989)

they still perceive and deal with politics in moralist and ethical terms i.e. as a tool to implement their moralist objectives and not an independent social public sphere. The MB acquired its huge credibility and popularity in the Egyptian street mainly due to its preaching, missionary and social activism over many decades which provided her with a huge social capital that other opposition parties envy them for (Rameeh 1998). Furthermore, there is the option of being legalized as a social association (the legal ceiling that the regime can tolerate for the MB) yet the limited functions of a social association by definition would be strange to a movement which didn't use to put any limits neither on its objectives nor its functions nor the scope of its goals and practice which extends to include the whole world.

¹⁹ The MB umbrella is so broad, and hence it includes Salafists Azharites, followers of Islamic traditional social and religious associations, ex-Jihadists, Islamist modernist-oriented intelligentsia, politicians, civil society activists and huge segments of peasants, petty-bourgeois and workers who are not politicized necessarily. Unity or even harmony in intellectual vision and political outlook is lacking, and bonds are so loose, except for the religious bonds (Abded Kotob 1996).

²⁰ Legacy of al-Banna: Openness to the society, interaction with the existing political reality building on it and not negating it, accepting relativism in politics, differentiation between short-run and long-run objectives, means-objectives rationality, middle of the way solutions, consensual seeking, realization of the complexion of the political reality, gradual approach to change and reform, practical concerns vs. Legacy of Qutb: Ideological puritanism, isolation from the existing political reality and refusal to integrate, absolutism in politics, radical approach to change, exclusivist universal grand meta-theoretical concerns

b) Pluralism within Islamism

The Islamic arena in Egypt is no less plural than Turkey but characterized by a lot of fragmentation, mistrust and non-cooperative relations. Arguably, this puts a ceiling on how far the MB can change its discourse for fear of alienating their religiously-oriented popular bases to the favor of other more radical or/and conservative Islamist contenders. Islamist pluralism in this case hinders political development of the MB which can't really change except if they make sure the Islamist society can accept their new message²¹.

c) Feedback to political variables

Feedbacks are inconsistent, random and don't display any regular pattern.

d) Effect of the political system

-Intense ideological polarization in Egypt

-Institutional rules of authoritarian electoral politics in Egypt have induced both ideological and organizational change within the MB²²

²¹ An illustrative example for that, the MB in Kuwait sided with the tribes in their reactionary traditional position against women's political voting and candidacy rights in the parliamentary and press debates. This was the case although the official theoretical position of the Kuwaiti MB on the issue was completely different from that(al-Hayat 2003)

²² Authoritarian polities like that of Egypt detrimentally narrows the dimensions of political experiences and obstructs the potential political consolidation and maturation of the political movements in Egypt. Lacking any guarantees for an autonomous civil society, sanctity of pluralism and real institutional division of power and checks and balances, effective power is exclusively centralized to be the monopoly of the executive presidential institution(Springborg 1989, Ayubi 1995 and Kassem 2002). Accordingly, conflict over power in the sense of having control over that one-and-all important institution became an issue of life or death for warring political factions. Thus, Islamic movements became essentially preoccupied with how to get to power directly without any introductory steps or stages. Fatally, and as a result Islamists are left with minimal chance to be educated about the political process itself including negotiations, mediation, compromise, reconciliation, decision-making, alliance and pact formation, and developing procedural rules for power exercise(Fuller 2003). Islamists need to formulate political tactics and rules related to the political reality as their general principles wouldn't suffice for that. Yet, the authoritarian nature of the regime deprives them from the opportunity space provided in the case of Turkey under which the Islamists had the privilege of moderating, disciplining and developing their political mindset and practical experience through interacting with the relatively speaking democratic socio-political domestic context. This deemed necessary to guarantee a democratic development of the movement and also to preclude any sudden abrupt transformations that can be too much for the absorptive capacity of the polity and society.

-Legal restrictions against the MB in specific and political Islamic activism in general

-The regime is not positively responding to the democratic transformations within the ranks of the MB(Berman 2002). ²³.

- The phenomenon of protest votes in the parliamentary elections

e) National specificity

-Unlike Turkey the MB 's project was always indecisive between a national territorial focus or an Islamic internationalism(manifested in the international organization of the Muslim Brotherhood)²⁴.

f) Political experiences

1- The major crisis in the MB thought is how to transform from a comprehensive social movement into a political party whose functions are confined to the political realm 1)without sacrificing the *doctrinal* idea of the comprehensiveness of Islam which inspired their movement from the very beginning as a movement that encompass all life spheres. 2) In addition to this doctrinal commitment, this comprehensiveness yields *tactical* political advantages as it posits

The case of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria in the early 1990s and also the excesses of the Iranian Islamic revolution illustrated that lesson.

²³ The consolidation of those transformations require a more politically liberal climate which is not the case in Egypt. Ironically, the more the democratic current within the MB are expressing a stronger commitment to democracy, the more the regime is deliberalizing the polity and noticeably repressing and discriminating against that democratic current within the MB in specific. Most of the detainee MB leaders in the major governmental security crackdowns on the MB in the 1990s(1995, 2000 and 2005) belong to the 1970s generation i.e. the middle aged activists who achieved notoriety and influence through their spectacular success in the syndicates, civil society and parliament in the 1980s and early 90s and who are throwing greater weight behind the democratic new look of the MB compared to the more reluctant older generations(Tamam 2005).

²⁴ -Whether to remain at the helm of the Islamist international of the Muslim Brotherhood or to cut this link politically and organizationally and confine it to cultural and intellectual exchange , the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood are not in an easy situation of choice. Historically, the Egyptian MB were the founding fathers of the international organization and uptill today still retain the lion-share of its leadership and control. The democratic Yuppies within the MB are calling for a break in the organizational ties and clearly defining the Egyptian MB as a territorially-defined Egyptian political organization.

the MB in a more competitive position compared to other political parties (being able to produce appealing discourses for mobilization and provision of social services).

2 -Wavering between two approaches in dealing with the regime: cooperation and

Rectifying on one hand and confrontation and change on the other. And this wavering was not across time periods i.e. the movement didn't limit its options in dealing with the regime in any time period over its long history since 1928

3-Since the MB came back to life in 1971 under President Sadat it gave greater priority to the mobilization and organizational buildup than to intellectual and doctrinal development, to operational procedural matters than to substantive strategic issues, to imitation and blinded acceptance than to critical thought which subsequently left the movement suffering a profound structural crisis in its strategic thought. Features of this crisis entail :

4-Crises of stagnant recruitment, ageing membership, collapsing discipline and the over-inflation of the group (Tamam 2005)²⁵.

5- The MB, overconfident about its organizational and social clout especially if compared to others, posits itself as an entity that is bigger than any other party, an organization in the middle between a state and a party. As a result, they don't consider other parties as equals not to talk about mistrusting the whole political process. This attitude largely obstructs ideas about integration within the political system (El-Ghobashi 2005).

²⁵ The MB is a group with massive membership extending on a large space geographically and historically with wide disparities in the background of its cadres and supporters and entrenched dualities in its mentality and behavior like the missionary vs. political, secretive vs. public and national vs. international. It is organizationally very risky to embark on wide far-reaching doctrinal transformations (declaring the movement as a party is not an easy one by any means) because it would not be acceptable by all. Very hard to achieve in general, a consensus about a new policy line is even more difficult in the case of the MB regarding its organizational and constituency diversities.

6-Detrimental to the cause of an elite-inspired democratic renewal within the MB, the nature of the elite-bases relationships in the MB is rigid to a large extent(Campagna 1996)²⁶.

7- The effect of the electoral politicking by the MB in the 1980s in the professional syndicates and parliamentary elections(Weckham 2002 and Langohr 2001).

Those six variables, arguably, are causally behind the following two outcomes:

1)Political Platform:

a)A lot of transformations, far-reaching and not limited in scope or relevance by any means, in discourse on the questions of democracy, women, Copts and the west, were governed by the logic of day-to-day spontaneous responses without consciously embarking on major comprehensive strategic revisions that can calculably elicit broad constituency support behind the new standpoints. Consequentially, a lot of significant transformations on those issues took place, yet that was not part of a broader organizational and ideological development. A lot of confusion and indecisiveness can be discerned on the leadership level in the MB through a content analysis of the recent discourse of the MB leadership(on important issues like Post-Mubarak political succession, methods and agendas of political change and reform, and national unity, issues which necessitate a clear vision and credible choices) during the 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections and the tumultuous period which preceded them(full of political protest championed by social movements, opposition parties and civil society organizations), full of unexplainable incoherencies, contradictions and inconsistencies to say the least(El-Ghobashy 2005).

²⁶ Although the decision-making is by far very elitist yet with their very limited size the MB are very reluctant to take any initiative for new policy or idea that might be premature and unaccepted by the masses of the movement, still lagging behind as more backward in their political orientation. Afraid of misunderstanding or risking undermining credibility among the masses, the elites self-realize the limits of renewal they ought to consider in their action. Hence, and ironically the MB is suffering from the cons of being an authoritarian organization and yet not reaping its benefits!

b)2- Less religious and more political: Realizable pragmatism, quietism and de-radicalization in the MB's discourse on recent incidents with an obvious Islamic religious relevance, compared to the standpoints taken by other Muslim actors across the Muslim world²⁷. This further tarnished the diminishing religious preaching credentials of the movement and signaled the receding of the religious to the favor of the political on the agenda of the movement

2) Methods of activity

a) Confusion between “opposing the regime” and “conflicting with the regime”(Campagna 1996)²⁸

b) Confusion between strategy and tactics

c) Splits along generational lines(Tamam 2005)

d) Internal debates about strategy and the suggested ideological plank from politics

as a sacred mission and vocation to politics as the public contestation between different rival interests²⁹. The MB lacks coherence in ideology now between the offices responsible for preaching, propagation, acculturation and internal education who largely shape the consciousness of the members of the movement and mobilize them behind its policies(such offices are still largely controlled by the non democratic old guard) and the PR and political offices with the representation of the

²⁷ Incidents to be covered here are:

- **Quran desecration at the US naval base in Guantanamo bay in May 2005**
- **The Danish cartoons row in December 2005**

²⁸ The case of the Syrian MB when they entered into an unnecessary whole-scale confrontation with the Baathist regime in the early 1980s illustrated that dilemma. Fatally, the mere survival of the Syrian MB was the cost for their contentious strategy(Al-Nafeesi 1989).

²⁹ The story of al-Wasat party in 1996 epitomized the last two points (3) and (4) (Rameeh 1999, Madi 2005, Norton 2005 , Stacker 2002)

democratic yuppies in its ranks³⁰. There are many legitimate questions whether democratic MB yuppies like Dr. Abdel Mon'em Abu al-Fetou' and Essam al-'Eryan represent a mainstream position within the gigantic machinery of the movement(Weckham 2002)³¹.

e)The depletion of its strategically-minded intellectuals

f) An ikhwani McCarthyism expelled out successive generations of critically-minded intellectuals from the group including the 1996 al-wasat people³² and the 1997 political bureau resignations³³

g)Lack of interest in incorporating the work and effort of prominent Islamic thinkers and activists who are either ex-ikhwan³⁴ or non-Ikhwan independent Islamists³⁵ in addition to the

³⁰ In this context, most of the socialization , acculturation and political education programs and curricula organized by the offices of propagation and internal education emphasize the concepts of unity, compliance, groupness, obedience, patriarchy , submissiveness and downgrading diversity in opinions as inviting fragmentation and divisiveness. Hardly, you can find any highlight on the notions of relativism of political truth, pluralism in opinions and tolerating disagreement which are no less established in the Islamic religious tradition than the first package (Madi 2005). Moreover, still politics is perceived within that discourse in religious terms as a contention between right and wrong, and good and evil and political mobilization of the rank and file of the movement to participate in elections or demonstrations is done a) firstly in top-down fashion with the minimal initiative to participate from the grass-root level and b) using religious vocabulary and terminology(al-mesryoon 2005). Accordingly, still the political culture of a lot of the MB is not a participatory. Members participate only in obedience to the commands and directions of the top leadership when it chooses to give it, and that obedience is coined in religious understanding as an acting of doing religious good.

³¹ Importantly, the MB is still interested in keeping its old non-democratic religious discourse(with concepts of the caliphal state, dhimmi status to non-Muslims, control over women, no right for non-Muslims and women to occupy political leadership and others central in that discourse) to garner the support of the traditional and conservative sectors in society which long used to be mobilized behind such discourse. To mention as examples, there are the people of al-Azhar, traditional religious associations like the Muhammadan-Sunna supporters association and al-Gam'eya al Shar'eya and others. Their credibility is at stake here(Arafa 2005).

³² Among them were Abu al-'ela Madi, a dynamic MB activist in the civil society and political life in the 1980s and early 90s, Gamal Sultan and Salah Abdel Karim

³³ A group of the brightest young MB intellectuals and academics resigned from the political bureau in 1997 after being accused of al-Wasat sympathies and other McCarthyist- type discriminations. Among them were Hamed Abdel Maged, Hisham Ja'far, Muhammad Mos'ad and Ibrahim al-Bayoumi Ghanem

³⁴ This group includes prominent jurists like Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawy(probably the most prominent jurist in Sunni Islam nowadays) and al-Muslim al-Mo'aser periodical group(Gamal al-Din 'Atteya, Muhammad Fathy Othman, Abdel Halim Abu Shuqqa and Mahmoud Abo al-Se3oud)

³⁵ This group includes prominent intellectual figures like Tariq al-Bishri, Muhammad 'Emmara, Fahmy Howeiddi, Abdel Wahab al-Messiri, Muhammad Selim al-'Awwa and the International Institute of Islamic Thought intellectual academic group headed by Abdul Hamid abu Sulayman and Taha Jabir Ellwani.

marginalization of the novel contributions of some non-Egyptian MB thinkers ³⁶ (Tamam 2005, El-Ghobashy 2005, al-Shobaky 2005)

³⁶ Like Munir Shafeeq, Fathy Yakan , Rashid al-Ghannoushi and Abdallah al-Nafeesi

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