The Middle East Unrest and the New Development of Islamic Parties

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Abstract: Islamism forces have risen rapidly after the unrest in the Middle East, and the Islamic parties based on them have initiated political participation one after another. Some moderate Islamic parties, such as the ones in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, have become the ruling parties in these countries through parliamentary elections. The Justice and Development Party (AKP), an old Islamic party in Turkey has played an important role in the unrest in the Middle East. Islamic parties have had significant changes in fields of ideology and political practices. Despite their various performances in facing complex situations both internally and externally, Islamic parties all face tough challenges. The Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt’s failure just after its one-year ruling marks the biggest setback of Islamic parties.

Key Words: Middle East Unrest; Islamic Parties; Egypt; Tunisia; Morocco; Turkey

As of April 2014, the Middle East unrest has lasted for over four...
years. Moderate Islamic parties, which have risen accidentally, have also suffered from the complex and continuously changing situations both internally and externally, and have changed ideology and political practices. Therefore, this article aims at analyzing these changes and the challenges brought out by such challenges ahead of the moderate Islamic parties represented by the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, the Islamic Revival Movement Party (Ennahda) of Tunisia, the Justice and Development Party in Morocco and the Justice and Development Party in Turkey, in the Middle East unrest.

A Brief Introduction to the development of Islamic parties

A political party is a political organization made up of people who share similar ideas with certain social groups, with the primary objective to gain political power (Wang, C., 2009: 52). Several elements, including the ideological foundation, the party platform, organizational principles, organizational structure and party members, jointly make it possible for the establishment of a political party. A religious party is a kind of political party that is established based on specific religious political ideas by specific religious groups. Such parties pursue two goals at the same time — both religious and political, and the deep-rooted objectives are to safeguard the interests of specific religious groups and exert influence on social development through participating in national politics. In the final analysis, essentially, a religious party is a political party with the political participation instead of preaching as their top priority, trying to achieve their goal of sharing political powers through making use of the social powers of the religions. However, at the same time, religious parties are also characterized by their distinct religious identity and most of their political programs are ideologically based on religions.
Generally, religious parties always appear in countries with quite health church-state relations (Liang, L., 2008: 122).

The main difference that distincts Islamic parties from secular parties is the theoretical basis of the Islamic parties — Islam. Islamic parties are religious parties which advocate building the countries by Islamic principles, maintain Islamized ethics, and try to gain political powers by political participation.

Islamic parties are widely distributed in the areas including the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. They are a special kind of religious parties that appeared in the Islamic world since the 20th century. Most of them regard the modern Islamism as their ideological foundation and insist to build the countries according to Islamic principles based on the revival of Islamic culture.

Based on the differences in their religious and ideological tendencies, Islamic parties can be divided into two groups — moderate ones and radical ones. The moderate ones advocate to carry out various social, culture and political activities within the limits of the laws, trying to exert influence on governmental decisions and promote the political process toward a direction which is conducive to their political purposes. Whereas the radical Islamic parties hold that Islam is a perfect system and it should be full accepted without any reforms. Members within these parties want to overthrow secular regimes, establish Islamic countries based on the Sharia law and promote full implementation of Islamization in political, law and culture aspects. Based on the scope of activities, Islamic religious parties can also be divided to the ones within the system and the others outside the system. The former is approved by the government that can participate in the politics through parliamentary elections while the latter cannot do that because their status as legal political parties has already been deprived. For instance, Egypt’s Muslim
Brotherhood was declared as an illegal organization by the government in 1954 and its legal status as a political party has not been restored until the taking effect of Egypt’s new constitution on March 28 2011. Similarly, the Islamic Revival Movement Party of Tunisia has also been quelled by the government in 1992 and it has not returned to power until 2011. The targeted objects of the analysis in this paper are mainly the moderate Islamic parties which were extremely active during the Middle East unrest, such as the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, the Islamic Revival Movement Party of Tunisia\(^1\), the Justice and Development Party in Morocco\(^2\) and the Justice and Development Party in Turkey. Islamic parties originated in the Islamic countries with parliamentary democracy and the Muslim Brotherhood founded by Hassan al-Banna was their earliest representative. Stages have been experienced by Islamic parties are as follows:

During the period between early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century and 1980s, Islamic political organizations actively engaged in independence and liberation movements in their countries. However, soon after that, differences have increased between Islamic parties and secular ones, and the former then gradually developed into political oppositions. Besides some Islamic parties in Turkey, most of the Islamic organizations have been quelled by the governments and had few

\(^{1}\) Tunisian Islamic Revival Movement Party was founded under the name of “The Movement of Islamic Tendency” in 1981. It was prohibited to participate in the elections after it changed its name to the current one in 1989. During the Ben Ali regime, the Islamic Revival Movement Party was repressed by the government and many members were arrested. It was banned by the government in 1992 and had not restored its legal status until March 2011.

\(^{2}\) The Justice and Development Party of Morocco was centered on the history of the “Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement” founded in 1978. It later changed its name to current one in 1998. The Justice and Development Party is a moderate Islamic party who advocates monarchy, opposes violence and terrorism, and prefers to carry out social reforms through gradual approaches.
experience of political participation, which made some radical sects turned to pursue violent activities. For instance, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has actively assisted the “Association of Free Officers” led by Gamal Abdel Nasser’s coup against King Farouk during the 1950s. Then it began to gradually oppose the Nasser regime due to the differences between the two on the founding of the country and other aspects. In October 1954, the Muslim Brotherhood was suppressed by the government in large scale due to its assassination of then Egyptian president Nasser and lots of members were arrested. The Muslim Brotherhood hereafter gave rise to many extreme organizations that have made many terrorism attacks including the assassination to another president Anwar El Sadat.

During the period between 1980s and late 20th century, especially after the end of the Cold War, social situation of Islamic parties have gradually improved with the better democratic environment, the acceleration of the globalization, the end of the bipolar pattern and advancement of democratization process in the Middle East. Some Islamic organizations began to participate in politics through legal means such as parliamentary elections, and even took power in some countries. However, because of the oppositions from the secular forces and the changes in regional situations, Islamic parties were unseated from the power finally. Let us once again take the Muslim Brotherhood as an example. In 1984, Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood was the first time allowed to run candidates for the Wafd Party and won 9 seats. Three years later, it formed an Islamic alliance with Socialist Labor Party and the Liberal Party and won 31 seats (Yang, X., 2011: 24). Similarly, the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria has won the parliamentary elections for two times respectively in a local parliamentary election in June 1990 and a national parliamentary election in December 1991; however, finally, it has not come to power
due to the intervention from the army. In Jordan, the Islamic Action Front, which is the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, has been the biggest political group in national parliamentary elections in 1989 and 1993. Besides, the Welfare Party of Turkey\(^1\) has participated in elections in 1987 and 1995 and has won 158 seats out of a total of 500 seats in December, which made it the biggest political party in Turkey at that time (Li, Y., 2013: 74). It has cooperated with other political parties and formed a coalition government. However, it was finally banned due to its attempt to change the secularized development direction of Turkey. The Justice and Development Party in Morocco has also obtained 14 seats out of a total of 325 in Chamber of Representatives (or lower house) in November 1997 (Wang, J., 2004: 55).

As the unfolding of the new century, since the 9/11 attacks, the US has put more efforts in fighting against extreme Islamic groups in the Middle East. Governments of the Middle East countries also took this chance to suppress Islamic forces. Against such backdrop, Islamic organizations have been further differentiated: many Islamic parties took a more pragmatic attitude to participate in politics through methods such as democratic elections so as to express their political demands, while the radical groups in some Islamic parties transformed into more extreme violent terrorism organizations. Meanwhile, with the running high of anti-American sentiment among Middle East people, coupled with poor performance of secular regimes in ruling the countries and developing economics, public support and political influence are continuously growing. The Justice and Development Party in Turkey is a typical representative of that. It

\(^{1}\) The Welfare Party of Turkey was found in July 1983 with religious overtone. It publicly opposes the secularization and advocates to rule the country according to the Sharia law. In terms of foreign policies, it holds to maintain the national interests and national independence of Turkey.
has won the parliamentary election in 2002 and became the first Islamic party which can seize the power alone. The seats that the Justice and Development Party of Morocco got in legislative elections in September 2002 have increased substantially. As many as 42 seats were got by the Justice and Development Party, which made it emerged as the third largest party in the parliament. It has gained even more supports after US waging of the Iraq war in 2003 due to people’s opposition to US policies (Wang, J., 2004: 55). In the parliamentary election in December 2005, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has obtained 19% of the votes and 88 seats out of a total of 454 seats, and become the biggest opposition party (Yang, X., 2011: 24).

Public protests in Arab countries have provided favorable chances to the development of Islamic parties since the beginning of the Middle East unrest. Moderate Islamic parties become the ruling parties in transitional Arab countries one after another, such as the Islamic Revival Movement Party of Tunisia which has won the parliamentary election, the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt which has won both parliamentary election and presidential election, and the Justice and Development Party which has got victory in parliamentary election in Morocco. However, The Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt’s failure just after its one-year ruling marks the biggest setback of Islamic parties.

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\(^1\) The Justice and Development of Turkey was established based on the Welfare Party of Turkey which has been banned in 1990s. However, the party denied its religious overtone and calls itself as a conservative democratic party, advocating combining Islam and democratic politics, modernization and national states, recognizing pluralism and pursuing economic development and social justice. It has won the parliamentary elections for three times in 2002, 2007 and 2011.
New Developments of the Moderate Islamic Parties after the Middle East Unrest and Their Features

The Middle East unrest has provided golden opportunities for the development of Islamic parties. By this chance, many Islamic parties began their political participation and some of them even became the ruling parties.

In Tunisia, the Islamic Revival Movement Party that had long been suppressed by Ben Ali’s regime won the constituent assembly election on October 23, 2011 by getting 41.47% of the votes and 90 seats of the 217 assembly seats. It became the biggest party in Tunisia and formed a ruling coalition with Congress for the Republic and Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties to share the three highest positions in state and make new constitution for the country (Zhang, Y., 2011: November 29).

After the downfall of the Mubarak regime, a new electoral law was introduced in Egypt which provided opportunities to the Muslim Brotherhood to set up the Freedom and Justice Party and restore its status as a legal political party. In November of the same year, the Freedom and Justice Party achieved landslide victory in people’s assembly elections with 235 of a total of 235 seats, which account for 47.2% of all assembly seats. Mohamed Saad Tawfik El-Katatni, the secretary-general of the party, became the first Speaker of the People’s Assembly. Chairman of the Freedom and Justice Party, Mohamed Morsy, was elected as the President of Egypt on June 24, 2012, but then he was deposed by the army one year later.

In the parliamentary election in Morocco on November 25, 2011, the Justice and Development Party has obtained 27% of the votes as well as 107 of the total 395 seats. It became the biggest party within the country then and formed a coalition government with the
Independence Party, the People’s Movement and Party of Progress and Socialism. Abdel-Ilah Benkirane was appointed as the prime minister of Morocco by the Moroccan King (Lin, F., 2011: November 27).

The influence of the Justice and Development Party, an old Islamic party in Turkey, has increased a lot after it began to rule the country alone in 2002. It has won the elections for two times respectively in the year 2007 and 2011. Especially in 2011, the party has gained 49.91 of the votes and became one of the most influential Islamic parties in the Middle East (Wang, L., 2012: 33). Turkish Justice and Development Party took the chance of the Middle East unrest to expand its regional influence, actively exerting its influence on regional affairs revolving Libya, Egypt and Syria, so as to make the “Turkish model” an object to be followed to transitional Arab countries.

Despite the differences, two notable features can be found throughout the performances of moderate Islamic parties in the Middle East unrest:

First, on the relationship between Islamization and secularization, Islamic parties mainly prefer to adhere to a governing philosophy that combined their Islamism party-building principles and secularized statecraft.

Many Islamic parties in transitional Arab countries got on the political stage through democratic elections and held the banner of Islamism while they did not fulfill their promises to full implement the Islamization. Instead, they just promote the moderate Islamization on the one hand and maintain the secularized development direction on the other hand. Several reasons have contributed to that: Firstly, transitional Arab countries have already been quite secularized. There are a number of powerful secular elites and middle class who fight
against full-range Islamization of the countries. Secondly, the top priority faced by Islamic parties after taking power is to resolve the livelihood and development problems, the ignorance of which may lead to public discontents and even a “second revolution”. This is the deep-rooted reason for the failure of the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt. Finally, Islamic parties have long been suppressed and controlled by the governments; hence, they have already adjusted their early radical Islamism ideas and replaced them by pragmatism in clothes of Islamism.

During their ruling process, Islamic parties in Arab countries have taken their cue from the successful experience of Turkish Justice and Development Party that combined the Islamization and secularization. The Justice and Development Party, which came into power in 2002, positioned itself as a democratic and conservative party, stressing universal and democratic values, insisting secularized development direction and advocating the separation of church and state. After its taking power, the Justice and Development Party continue to insist its Islamic values and meanwhile adopt modern political ideas such as parliamentary democracy and political pluralism as a part of their governing philosophy. It advocated constitutional freedom, carried out political reforms, supported the development of political pluralism and multi-party alternation of power and put efforts in fading its religious color through reforming practices. The successful experience of the Justice and Development Party is without doubt of referential significance to Islamic parties in Arab countries.

After getting victory in the election in October 2011, the Islamic Revival Movement Party of Tunisia denied its religious nature and referred it as Islamic character. It stressed that it will not pursue to overthrow the secularized politics in Tunisia. Also, the party advocated the multi-party democracy, called for learning from the
“Turkish model” and carrying out moderate Islamization instead of extreme Islamism, so as to combine the Islam and modernity together. Leaders of the party have expressed for many times that there’s no room in Tunisia for the Sharia law and Islam is compatible with modernization. They promised to support the political pluralism and govern the country to develop toward a modernized and secularized country with multi-party democracy (Wang, F., 2013: 100). The Justice and Development Party of Morocco also stressed Islamic identity and Muslim unity on the one hand and advocated to combine Islam and modernization and pursued economic development, democratization process and socialism on the other hand (Li, Y., 2013: 75).

Chairman of the Freedom and Justice Party Morsy has also expressed that the Party was neither a party with religious nature nor an Islamic party in the traditional sense, instead, it was a non-theocratic civic party; the Freedom and Justice Party advocated the political pluralism and different parties’ alternation of power; it advocated to cancel the emergency law, restore public freedom, safeguard the freedom of the formation of political parties, freedom of the press and freedom of speech; it advocated to maintain Islamic values and meanwhile carry out constituent assembly and political reforms; it insisted on the secularized developing direction and would like to carry out social reforms through incremental approaches (Wang, F., 2013: 100-103). However, due to the lack of ruling experiences in its realistic ruling process, the Freedom and Justice Party and former president Morsy have not properly handled their relationship with the secular forces including the army and judicial departments, coupled with other reasons such as their pursuit of monopoly power, the Freedom and Justice Party failed with only one-year ruling experience.

Second, on the methods of their political participation, Islamic
parties have gradually abandoned their former political practices of violent struggles, and attached more importance to political participation through legal means.

In the political reforms of transitional Arab countries, Islamic parties have changed their radical Islamism policies, abandoned extreme anti-West slogans and attempt to violently overthrow secular regimes, and turned to participate in politics through joining legal elections to express their interest demands. As the main beneficiaries of the Middle East unrest, moderate Islamic parties all deliberately made a clean break with extreme Islamism organizations including Al-Qaeda. There are several reasons for that: On the one hand, Islamic parties have suffered a lot in their long time contest with the governments. After paying painful price, they gradually realized that it is too difficult to seize the power through violent means (Quan, X., 2012: 52). On the other hand, the democratization represents the development trend of the politics in the Middle East; hence, rulers of the countries cannot permanently exclude Islamic forces from the regimes. With the further development of the political reforms in the Middle East countries, democratic elections will become the most feasible way for Islamic parties to express their demands. As long as the transparent and open elections have been carries out in these countries, increasingly Islamic parties will give up violent means and tend to comply with the rules of democratic politics, and compete with other secular groups for the national power.

**Challenges ahead of the Islamic Parities**

For now, the so-called “Arab Spring” has not brought out the results as Arab countries and their people expected. On the contrary, many countries came to civil unrest, turmoil and recession. In terms of
the politics, new political orders have not been established yet. Different political fractions coexist at the same time and contradictions among forces become even more prominent. In terms of security, law and order situation within countries are worsening rapidly, terrorist activities and violent incidents occur frequently and Islamic extremist forces come back by taking this chance. In terms of economics, due to the worsening of domestic investment environment, economical pillar industries, including energy exports and tourism, have been undermined seriously. Even some countries in which economics were quite healthy have fallen into economic stagnation. Rates of domestic unemployment and inflation remain high and livelihood of the people has not only failed to improve, but also be worsened seriously.

As the transformation of Arab countries is entering the deep-water zone, severe challenges are ahead of Islamic parties who lack rulings capability and experience. After the Middle East unrest, many Islamic parties transformed from oppositions to authorities. They were expected to resolve the problems of unemployment and corruption and achieve economic growth, livelihood improvement and educational progress. However, they have no experience of social management and crisis response as rulers of the countries, which create them multiple crises.

1) Most Islamic parties have not enough ruling experience and capability

Throughout Islamic parties that rose after the Middle East unrest, besides the Turkish Justice and Development Party, all of the rests are quite new to the political circle. Prior to the unrest, most of the Islamic parties were oppositions and had long been suppressed by the government. They have few opportunities to participate in management and decision-making process of the country. Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Islamic Revival Movement Party in
Tunisia were declared as illegal organizations by their governments respectively in 1954 and 1992. Most of their activities were carried out secretly and many of their backbone members and leaders were jailed or exiled. In such a case, they could not grasp the trends of domestic political situations or give proper response. For instance, Mohammed Khairat Saad el-Shater, vice president of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, has been jailed by the government for almost 20 years, from 1992 to 2011; Hamadi Jebali, prime minister of Tunisia, has spent as long as 16 years in prison since 1990 (Qin, S., 2012). Because of having long been excluded from the domestic political circles, leaders of the Islamic parties could not develop guidelines that meet the real needs of their countries in short time after the victory of the “revolutions.” The policies Islamic leaders have raised were quite radical, whimsical, capricious or erratic, which can neither meet the needs of the countries nor deal with the complex and changing situation internally and externally after the Middle East unrest. Besides, before their coming to power, Islamic parties were just political oppositions which have little chance to participate in ruling practices. Their drawback — lack of ruling capability — was somehow covered and has not been exposed until they took power. That’s why Islamic forces have been criticized of “good at criticizing while poor at ruling” after they got on the front of the political stage.

2) Severe challenges from secular forces ahead of Islamic parties

Most of the transforming Middle East countries are quite secularized ones with lots of middle class and powerful secular forces such as the army and the liberals. Although these forces joined together with Islamic parties to overthrow the former regimes, it does not mean that they would like to accept to be governed by Islamic parties. Instead, they kept a wary eye on Islamic parties and prepared for direct or indirect intervention as long as the ruling practices of
Islamic parties went out of their tolerance range. Once an action of Islamic parties was regarded as intolerable, secular forces represented by military officials would intervene the situation directly or indirectly. Maintaining the countries’ secularized development direction through military intervention has a long historical tradition in the Middle East. For example, since the founding of Turkey, the army has staged three coups to overthrow then regimes so as to maintain the secularized development from 1960s to 1980s. Although military forces have been seriously undermined by the Justice and Development Party regime currently, their influence and power still cannot be overlooked. Once the policies of the Justice and Development Party go beyond their tolerance range, it is very likely that the army may cooperate with other forces to overthrow the government.

In July 2013, military intervention, which have repeatedly staged in Turkey, happened in Egypt. To safeguard the secularized development, the army promoted to sack the government led by Morsy and once again showed the power of the army as a defender of the secularization. In addition, other political forces, including religious conservatives, have been gradually alienated from the ruling alliance led by Islamic parties due to differences in political opinions, which will definitely stand in the way of the future political participation of Islamic parties. In February and July of 2013, two left-wing opposition leaders were assassinated in Tunisia. Although the provisional government has established an investigation committee to deal with them, there’s still no clear answer even till now, which further stimulates the strong dissatisfactions from the oppositions and protests from the people. Meanwhile, the formulating of the new constitution and new electoral law, which should have been carried through in one year, remains unfinished. Complaining voices can be heard from all sectors of the society toward the delaying
of the constituent assembly and provisional government’s hindering the Tunisian democratic transition process.

3) Islamic parties lack the wills and capability to promote political reconciliation

After taking power, some Islamic parties have not put efforts in promoting political reconciliation and easing the political tension, moreover, they attached more importance in competing with their old enemies while was bound to impede the political reconciliation.

The Freedom and Justice Party of Egypt tries to expand their power at all costs and undermine the opposition forces such as the army and secular forces through methods including revising the constitution after its victory in presidential elections of 2012. Soon after his victory, Morsy promised to establish a coalition government and appoint a woman as one of his vice presidents and a Christian as another. However, viewing from his later ruling practices, Morsy has not completely fulfilled his promise but only indulged in expanding his power. He firstly announced a new constitutional declaration, claiming that “All constitutional declarations, laws and decrees made since Morsy assumed power on June 30, 2012 cannot be appealed or canceled by any individual, or political or governmental body until a new constitution has been ratified and a new parliament has been elected. All pending lawsuits against them are void.”(Egypt Independent, 2012: November 22). Then, Muslim Brotherhood formulated a draft constitution and the constitution was passed with a turnout of only 33% votes. Besides, the Muslim Brotherhood also placed its members into cabinet and the judiciary departments, which was criticized by the oppositions as making the Egypt “Brotherhood-ized”. The Freedom and Justice Party carried out Islamization nationwide, which intensified the inherent contradictions between religious and secular forces and led to large-scale protests all
over the country. Many people in Egypt withdrew their support to the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian army intervened the situation on July 4, 2013. Morsy was deposed and his government was announced to be sacked by the Muslim Brotherhood on October 9.

In Tunisia, a politician with cohesiveness and centripetal force has not appeared yet since the deposition of Ben Ali. Coupled with the Islamic Revival Movement Party of Tunisia’s lack of ruling experience, domestic security situation has worsened rapidly. Struggles for interests between religious forces and secular forces, between ruling parties and opposition forces, occurred repeatedly and drew the domestic political situation into turbulence. Meanwhile, the Islamic Revival Movement Party of Tunisia has not fulfilled its promise of improving people’s livelihood, punishing corruption and developing economics. Clear and detailed methods on anti-corruption issues remain non-existing. Also, the party tried to introduce the Law for the Protection of the Revolution to eliminate political dissidents. Moreover, it attempted to improve its image by controlling the media, which caused strong dissatisfaction from the public.

4) Constraints from multiple forces to Islamic parties

During the ruling process, differences in political opinions and ideology between Islamic and secular parties constrained the healthy operation of the coalition government, which challenged the provisional governments led by Islamic parties. Throughout all ruling Islamic parties, besides the Turkish Justice and Development Party that had won the elections for three times and had the experiences of ruling alone, all other Islamic parties have just comparative advantage instead of absolute advantage. Hence they had no choice but to compromise with others to form a coalition government.

In Morocco, although the Justice and Development Party have won the elections with 107 of a total of 395 seats, because the seats it
got has not achieved the majority required, it had to form a coalition government with the Independence Party, the People’s Movement and Party of Progress and Socialism. As a monarchy country, Kings in Morocco enjoy great power. Although the new constitution issued in 2011 has already limited the power of the kings, they still have veto power on many political resolutions. In addition, political parties have long been controlled by the kings, which made them quite weak compared with other forces. Therefore, the new government should not only cooperate with secular forces in national governance, but also try to breakthrough the constraints of the oppositions to get the support and recognition from the king.

Similarly, in Tunisia, the Islamic Revival Movement Party of Tunisia has not got the majority-required seats and had to form a coalition government with Congress for the Republic and Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties. Differentiation in Tunisian political forces is serious present day, and the situation is braced by three political pillars: the ruling coalition led by the Islamic Revival Movement Party, the Tunisian General Labor Union and the oppositions. These three parties play games revolving the abolition of provisional government, the constituent assembly, the formulation of new constitution and new electoral laws and the future presidential elections. One of the pillars, the oppositions, asked to sack the parliament and the provisional government, and resolve the problems on cabinet forming and the constitution through holding national political dialogues. The Tunisian General Labor Union, another pillar, demanded to restructure the provisional government and form a government of national salvation consisting of a committee to finalize the constitution, present it for referendum, and prepare for elections. It also called for the national political dialogues to ease the contradiction between the ruling party and oppositions. However, the ruling Islamic
Revival Movement Party only agreed to expand the provisional government but insist to keep the constituent assembly, advocating establishing a national coalition government which can accommodate political forces to promote the democratic transitional process (Sun, J., 2013: August 27). Finally, under the pressure, Islamic Revival Movement Party made concessions and agreed to hold national dialogue to resolve the political crisis. The provisional government led by it promised to formally resign three weeks after the dialogue, creating a technocrat government led by an independent figure. If the national dialogue goes smoothly, the Islamic Revival Movement Party will lose its status of the ruling party and have to prepare the parliamentary elections for the next year.

Although the Justice and Development Party is the only ruling party in Turkey, it also face challenges from other parties especially ones from secular forces. For instance, Turkey has barred female flight attendants from wearing red lipstick and proposed alcohol restrictions, which have been interpreted as Islamization and conservatism by secular forces. The protests in Taksim Square can be regarded as people’s venting their discontents on the full-range Islamization to a large extent. In terms of Turkish diplomacy, the Justice and Development Party vigorously advocated the “policy of zero problems”. However, due to its radical policies toward issues related on Libya, Syria and Egypt, its one-sided support to oppositions such as the Muslim Brotherhood in some countries, as well as its efforts in promoting the military intervention to Syria cooperated with the US and GCC countries, Turkish diplomacy has fallen into a passive position. Factors, including the impact of the refugees, turbulence around borders and the complication of Kurdish problem, have had negative impact on Turkey and led to strong criticism from domestic secular forces.
5) Islamic parties’ ineffective performance in improving economics and people’s livelihood

Economic and livelihood issues are the main causes of the Middle East unrest. However, problems within these fields have got even worse after the coming to power of Islamic parties.

In Egypt, during its one-year ruling, the Morsy government’s policies were helpless in resolving the problems including the weak economic growth, budget deficit, inflation and unemployment. After the fall of former Mubarak regime, influenced by the sharp drop in foreign investment and depression in tourism, the rate of Egyptian economic growth has plunged from 5% in Mubarak period to 2%, which means that there’s even no growth in per capita GDP. The foreign exchange reserves of Egypt have dropped to less than $13.5 billion, which can only maintain the import for three months. Because of the depreciation of the Egyptian pounds, the import costs for food and energy increased continuously. According to the IMF, it has expected Egypt’s budget deficit to widen to 11.3% of gross domestic product in the fiscal year, far more than 3% of the international warning line. Consumer price index in Egypt has increased by almost 8% to 9%, and the government’s subsidies to basic necessities were as large as about one quarter of the annual expenditure (Wang, D., 2013: July 5). Tourism, as the important source of Egyptian foreign exchange earnings, has come into recession. Also, the withdrawing of the foreign investment caused the close down of many factories and worsened the unemployment.

During the ruling of Tunisia provisional government, unemployment has worsened a lot and the budget deficit has increased continuously. The income of the pillar industries, such as foreign trade and tourism, has sharply declined, investment growth has slowed down and the inflation rate has increased. Tunisian
economics has the 1.8% negative growth in 2011, which increased only by 2.7% in 2012. Present day, the average unemployment rate has reached almost 20% (it was only 15% in 2010). The foreign exchange reserves of Tunisia in late 2012 could maintain the import for 119 days, while it plunged to $10.29 billion in May 2013 which can only maintain the import for 95 days and has almost reach the international warning line (Tunisia: a Second Egypt – Turbulence Again Two Years after the Revolution, 2013). The Justice and Development Party of Turkey has maintained the economic growth in recent years. However, under the influence of the civil war in Syria, substantial financial resources have to be used to aid more than 600,000 refugees from Syria. This will definitely cause dissatisfaction of other parties and pose challenges to the ruling of the Justice and Development Party (Zheng, J. & Li, M., 2013: October 21).

6) Islamic parties face many security threats including the rebound of terrorism

Turbulent internal and external security situations as well as the increasingly rampant terrorism attacks are huge challenges to Islamic parties. For now, although provisional governments have already been established in transitional Arab countries and the processes of political reconstruction have accelerated, the future of security situations within the countries remains not optimistic and violent and terrorism attacks still occur frequently.

In Egypt, continuous turbulence has provided favorable environment for extreme forces. Extreme forces in Egypt have carried out many terrorism attacks and caused large number of casualties and property losses, which triggered public protests. Taking the chance of the unrest, Al-Qaeda actively engaged in activities such as recruiting members, preaching its ideology, and launching terrorism attacks. In many areas of Egypt, especially in tribal areas in the Sinai Peninsula,
large number of terrorism attacks has been launched since 2011. Egypt’ Interior Minister Mohammed Ibrahim was nearly be killed in a bomb attack on September 5, 2013 which have left two deaths and more than 20 people injured (Yang, T., 2013: October 28). On the relationship between the turbulence in Egypt and the return of Al-Qaeda, Bruce Riedel, senior fellow in the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, points out that “in case anyone needed reminding, the recent global terror alert illustrates that, 15 years after its first attacks on America, Al-Qaeda is thriving. The coup in Egypt and the chaotic aftermath of the Arab awakening is only going to add more militants to this army of radicals. Failed revolutions and failing states are like incubators for the jihadists, a sort of Pandora’s Box of hostility and alienation”. “After 15 years, there is no end in sight to Al-Qaeda. And the new generation — AQ 3.0 — may be with us for years to come” (Riedel, B., 2013: August 7).

Even in Tunisia, where the security situation is better compared others, threats, such as people from neighboring countries’ moving in due to the turbulence in Libya, Mali and Egypt, expanding of the Islamic extreme groups and terrorism organizations, and increasing terrorism attacks, also challenge the security and stability of the country. In February 2013, the general secretary of the secular Tunisian Democratic Patriots Party Chokri Belaid was assassinated. In July of the same year, Tunisia’s opposition leader Mohamed Brahmi was killed. These two assassinations led to a wave of protests which seriously affect the political stability of the Tunisia. Currently, terrorism activities in Tunisia are somehow upgrading. The active areas of them are expanding to center areas and coastal zones with developed economics and large population. People in this country have long been living in the panic, which further foster people’s discontents toward the provisional government.
Conclusions

For now, although ruling Islamic parties’ performances are less than satisfactory, the rise of Islamic forces in the Middle East has already been indisputable fact. The political environments in these countries have been changed to some extent. Due to their long history and their long-term efforts, Islamic parties will still play an important role in transitional Arab countries in a foreseeable future for reasons as follows: firstly, the Middle East is the cradle of Islam. Most of the people in this region believe in Islam and Islam has tremendous influence to them. Secondly, Islamic parties have quite long history. They have already established vast networks with lots of branches, which have laid solid social foundation for Islamic parties. Finally, it is easier for Islamic parties to win hearts and minds from the people because they attach more importance to the independence of the country compared with the former pro-Western regimes and the secular parties. However, because every country’s political environment is unique, the future development of Islamic parties cannot simply be stereotyped predicted.

The so-called “Turkish model” has been example for Islamic parties in other countries to emulate after the Middle East unrest. However, the “Turkish model” is the product of the unique soil of the national conditions in Turkey and the outcome of long-term accumulation in fields of history, culture, religions and politics in the country. It is unique and cannot simply be copies by other countries. After decades’ development, Turkey has already been one of the most secularized countries in the Middle East and several laws have been formulated in the country to limit the expansion of full-range Islamization. Such environment is unique and unmatched. Besides, the Ottoman Empire, the predecessor of current Turkey, has ruled the
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Arab world for almost 400 years. The rancor left by the Ottoman Empire led to Arab countries’ instinctive rejection to Turkey. In short, simply emulating the “Turkish model” is helpless. Islamic parties should pursue a development model with their own characteristics in according with their actual conditions.

Although it is of contingency and particularity, the stepping down of the Freedom and Justice party from the ruling position, caused by the deposition of Morsy, has sounded an alarm to Islamic parties. The term “Islamic” is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is helpful in gaining more votes and supports from the public. On the other hand, provided that Islamic parties one-sidedly pursue full-range Islamization and unable to resolve the deep-rooted challenges such as political reconciliation, economic and livelihood problems, they are likely to follow Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s footstep.

In short, future development of Islamic countries will be characterized by the interaction between Islamization and secularization instead of the Islamization itself. With the transitional Arab countries entering the deep-water zone, there will be increasing challenges ahead of the ruling Islamic parties.

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