

İnfitah politikasıyla başlayan süreç liberalleşmenin birinci evresini -ekonomik-, 2011'den beri yaşanan demokratikleşme yönündeki gelişmeler -siyasal liberalleşme- ise ikinci evresini oluşturmaktadır. Mısır toplumunun modern dönemdeki gelişimi içerisinde birbirini takip eden iki gelişme İslamcı hareketin gücünü zayıflatmıştır ve bu yönüyle birbirini tamamlamayı görmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mısır, Arap Baharı, İslamcı Politika, Ekonomik Liberalleşme, Ortadoğu.

1. Introduction

Islamic politics is such kind by which political actions are justified through religious references, mostly with an emotional discourse.¹ Those movements upholding the vitalization of Islamic principles with political aims are called “Islamic movement”.² In Egypt Islamic politics in this sense reached at its peak at the beginning of 1950s when the Muslim Brotherhood was on the edge of getting political power. At this time the organization was aiming to construct an alternative society and state to the western type. According to its plan this was the only solution to the problems of the Muslim society. New society would be based on the fundamentals of Islam. Because of this reason the movement was a prototype of modern Islamic movements. The organization was outlawed by the nationalist regime of Nasser after the middle of 1950s. Nationalist regimes regarded Islamic movements as backward political formations whose ideals are against the development of modern society. In most of the Middle East the relation of Islamic movements with state had run on this way in the whole era of the second half of the last century. Post-colonial states projected to develop society in line with the western ideal, while Islamic movements reacted, legally or illegally, to this attempt. At this early time the organization had a popular base within society, whose members covers all social segments. This social popularity made it a serious alternative to the post-colonial regime.

However *İnfitah* (opening) policies applied by President Sadat after 1973 war with Israel made a breakthrough in the course of Islamic politics. *İntifah* was the first wave of liberalization in the Egyptian society, which covers economic sector. By opening policy Egyptian economy had been liberalized and cooperation with the West developed. Inflow of foreign direct investment was allowed, tourism was encouraged and outflow of Egyptian workers to oil-boom countries of the Gulf was permitted. After this policy coherence within the Muslim Brotherhood was scattered. Professionals and

¹ Cihan Tuğal (2009), *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press), p.10.

² See for diverse concepts to describe Islamic movements Davut Ateş (2009), “İslam Köktencilığı: Kökeni, Genel Nitelikleri, Tanımlar ve Sınıflamalar”, *Akademik Orta Doğu Dergisi*, 3 (2), p. 63-96.

middle class members of the organization were accommodated within liberal economy. They started to search for profit and wealth. At the meantime members of the organization coming from rural base and low level of income were radicalized.³ This split resulted in the emergence of so-called Islamic terrorism. Radicals, called *ihadists*, thought violent actions against society and regime as a way of imposition of fundamentalist version of Islamic politics.⁴ In the first wave of liberalization of Egyptian society there emerged a class-based division within the Islamic movement. Assassination of Sadat in 1981 was the outcome of this development.

Terrorization of some parts of the Islamic movements in fact was the demonstration of the decline of Islamic politics to a certain degree. Iranian revolution in 1979 encouraged somehow radical elements to get political power through violent means. At this stage there started to divide conceptualization of Islamic politics as well between pro-Islamic revolutionary radical parts called “extremists” and accommodative parts called ‘moderates’ that was cooperative with the existing political structure. Moderates were gaining wealth within liberal economy and had suspicions vis-à-vis revolutionary aims and means of the extremists. This was like a social contract among the parties. Egyptian regime was to sustain, moderate wing of the movement was to be integrated within market economy and radical wing was to be excluded from the contract and marginalized and squeezed later on.

On the other hand, it was very usual that economic liberalization would have some political impact on the long run. Arab Spring seems to be the normal result of the course of economic liberalization, coinciding with other factors too. The main theme of the Spring was ‘democratization’, that is political liberalization. If this argument is true, then modernization theory is right in arguing that political development is followed by economic and social development. Nevertheless someone should have to be cautious in accepting Arab Spring as a sign of democratization demand, which is very totalizing social discontents. Rather umbrella of “democratization” demand should be allocated among the participant social segments to get really what is going on. It is very critical to determine which social parts are active in mass demonstrations and what they want. Within this framework it seems so important to reconsider the role of Islamic movements in people’s revolts in Egypt. Their presence or absence or level of their participation signifies something particular for the future of Islamic politics in the country.

For the aim of testing the power of Islamic politics in this paper it is argued that the Arab Spring in Egyptian case is an indication of declining

³ See Davut Ateş (2005), “Economic Liberalization and Changes in Fundamentalism: The Case of Egypt”, *Middle East Policy*, 12 (4).

⁴ Dalal Bizri (2011), “Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood and the 25 January Revolution”, *Perspectives*, Special Issue, 2 May (Heinrich Böll Stiftung), p.153.

Islamic movement, although so-called Islamic parties have won majority of votes in recent parliamentary elections and a member of the Brotherhood was elected as new Egyptian president. Main argument is based on the evolution of socio-economic structure in Egypt particularly starting from the beginning of 1970s. Changes in economic policies, integration with the world economy and resulting class differentiation within society undermined the power of Islamic movement to a certain extent. Currently demand for political liberalization constitutes to the second wave in depreciation of Islamic politics further. In the second wave most probably the winner of the first liberalization wave is going to get the political power as well. But it is very ironical that as far as the Islamic movement approaches to political power, as much as “Islamic” nature of its discourse decreases. The main problem is not whether the Islamic movement is going to get the power, but whether the government of the Islamic movement is to sustain what kind of “Islamic politics” in Egypt and what the possible implications for the future of political liberalization are.

2. Main Aspects of the Arab Spring

Before going over the analysis of the second wave it seems necessary to overview main dynamics behind the Arab Spring, so that current developments are likely to be linked to the main argument of the paper. Peoples’ revolts that started in the autumn of 2010 against authoritarian Arab regimes throughout the Middle East resulted in change of rulers in some Arab countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. Civil war is still continuing in Syria. It is possible to classify main factors behind popular discontents under four topics in Egyptian case; social, political, technological and economic.⁵ Obviously all these factors, more or less, are related to each other. But it should be accepted that the prominent one is the economic and none of them is related to the Islamic rationale.

Social Factor: *Infitah* policies in the second half of 1970s encouraged foreign and local investments in the country, which resulted in rapid urbanization. A great portion of Egyptian population consists of young people.⁶ Majority of them are unemployed and living in poor conditions. As a result of rapid urbanization after 1970s, poor, unemployed and young population tries to hold on to major cities. There has been a severe discrepancy between economic growth and population rise. Moreover young people living in urban areas are educated and informed about the external world through communication technologies. Social factor has no base within the Islamic politics. It is the result of the normal run of social change in Egypt.

⁵ Nurullah Ardiç (2012), “Understanding the ‘Arab Spring’: Justice, Dignity, Religion and International Politics, *Afro Eurasian Studies*, 1 (1), p.10.

⁶ Fawaz Traboulsi (2011), “Revolutions Bring Down Ideas As Well”, *Perspectives*, Special Issue, 2 May (Heinrich Böll Stiftung), p.14.

Political Factor: For many decades the Arab world existed in a state of false political stability. Autocratic regimes were legitimized through “Arab exception”, “incompatibility of Islam with the Charter of Human Rights”, “lack of democracy”.⁷ During this stable political context Arab regimes lost their legitimacy because of two important developments. *First*, liberal economic reforms created severe disparities among population. Deprived portion of society was alienated from the regime.⁸ *Second*, Palestinian problem perished as one of the basis of regime legitimacy, as Egypt signed Camp David Accords with Israel in 1979. External legitimacy of despotic regimes was based on “Islamic dread”.⁹ Because of this fear despotic regimes had been financially supported by the West which enhanced alienation further. Also high level of corruption is another factor damaging the legitimacy of the regime. Although old generations were well accustomed to this alienation, it is not so easy for the new generation, whose members were born in 1981 when Mubarak came to power are thirty years old when Mubarak had to step down in 2011. New generations seemed not be trapped between extreme alternatives, such as tyranny versus Islamists, stability versus chaos.¹⁰ As it is seen during the mass riots, Islam is not anymore a source of illegitimation of the regime in Egypt. For this reason political factor is not primarily relevant to the Islamic politics too.

Technological Factor: Young population got well use of modern communication technologies, for instance mobile phone, satellite channels, internet and social media.¹¹ Particularly satellite TV channels like Al-Jazeera Arabic played significant role in the galvanization of popular uprisings.¹² And social media played critical role in gathering people in Tahreer Square. New communication technologies have two significant roles in the Spring. *First*, Arab masses became well aware of the outside world. *Second*, it helped social segments to organize in protests against the regime. Using technological means for political purposes has nothing to do with the Islamic politics.

Economic Factor: The Arab Spring was, in large parts, triggered by the sense of relative economic deprivation, unemployment, unjust distribution of income and poverty.¹³ In Egypt half of the population finds economic

⁷ Mohammed Ali Atassi (2011), “What the People Want”, *Perspectives*, Special Issue, 2 May (Heinrich Böll Stiftung), p.29.

⁸ Mouin Rabbani (2011), “The Arab Revolts: Ten Tentative Observations”, *Perspectives*, Special Issue, 2 May (Heinrich Böll Stiftung), p.10.

⁹ Traboulsi, “Revolutions Bring...”, p.18.

¹⁰ Atassi, “What the People...”, p.30.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.32.

¹² Aref Hijjawi (2011), “The Role of Al-Jazeera (Arabic) in the Arab Revolts of 2011”, *Perspectives*, Special Issue, 2 May (Heinrich Böll Stiftung).

¹³ See Rodney Wilson (2011), “Economy: The Roots of the Uprising”, In *The Arab Spring: Implications for British Foreign Policy*, Conservative Middle East Council, p.49-52.

conditions very bad, and 41 % of the population is buying things only for survival. The mass uprisings mainly were reaction to small wealthy ruling elite.¹⁴ Arab high schools and universities are incubators for hatching unemployed graduates.¹⁵ Although Mubarak's economic policies contributed to economic growth, this didn't translate into human development and rising standard of living.¹⁶ "Bread, freedom and social justice" are among the prominent slogan of the Egyptian revolution.¹⁷ High growth rate of GDP didn't lead to an equitable distribution of wealth between rich and poor.¹⁸ For example, Egypt's Gross Domestic Product almost doubled in four years, \$78 billion in 2004 and \$162 billion in 2008, and foreign direct investments increased more than sixfold, from \$2 billion in 2004 to \$13 billion in 2008.¹⁹ Free market policy is not guaranteed as many young Egyptians think that economic policies of Mubarak era including liberalization and openness to foreign capital enriched small elite around Mubarak.²⁰ Many university educated youth are skeptical of neoliberal economic policies.

Deepening of capitalist social relations occurred with a radical increase in the use of coercions and violence by the Egyptian state.²¹ First liberalization wave resulted in more repressive government. Emergency law put following the food riots in 1977 was valid until the Arab Spring. Moreover repressive situation was further deteriorated by enacting anti-terror regulations after 2001. Mass riots during the Arab Spring, in a sense, were a reaction to kleptocracy backed by state violence.²² Increasing political oppression has been coincided with rising unemployment. As a result of Structural Adjustment Programme signed with International Monetary Fund in 1991, prices and rents were further liberalized. Until 2005 the government sold of 209 of the 314 public sector companies required by IMF Program.²³ Privatization in the economy contracted further possibility of youths' efforts to find employment. As a result great labor protests and strikes occurred during 2006-2008. Although it is not certain to determine the effects of global economic crisis on people's revolt in Egypt

¹⁴ Susanne Tarkowski (2011), "After the Arab Spring: From Kleptocracy to Capitalism?", *Stockholm Free World Forum*, No 3, September, p.1-2.

¹⁵ Traboulsi, "Revolutions Bring...", p.16.

¹⁶ Tarkowski, "After the Arab Spring...", p.6.

¹⁷ See Ardic, "Understanding the...".

¹⁸ See Chatham House (2011), "Egypt's Economy in the Transitional Period", MENA Programme: Egypt Dialogue Workshop Report, September, www.chathamhouse.org.

¹⁹ See David B. Ottaway (2010), "Egypt at the Tipping Point?", Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Middle East Program, Occasional Paper Series, Summer.

²⁰ Tarkowski, "After the Arab Spring...", p.7.

²¹ Angela Joya (2011), "Egyptian Protests: Falling Wages, High Prices and the Failure of an Export Oriented Economy", *The Arab Revolt Against Neoliberalism*, Centre for Social Justice, December, p.5.

²² Tarkowski, "After the Arab Spring...", p.4.

²³ Joya, "Egyptian Protests:...", p.5.

because of the lack of specific economic indicator, it is very probable that popular discontents²⁴ starting from 2008 were, to a certain extent, culminated as a result of economic crisis that negatively influenced Egypt as well. As a developing country Egypt is highly dependent on export, tourism and foreign economic aid, all of which were deteriorated during the crisis.

The Arab Spring is likened to workers' revolt in Europe in 1848 because of its economic dynamic.²⁵ If it is so, in a similar way social rights should get significance in near future. Education, minimum wage, land redistribution, social policies, regulations with regard to rights and obligations of workers and employers are among proposed reforms to remove economic factors of the Spring.²⁶ But it is not certain whether those suggestions could be enacted in the middle range. Moreover the Muslim Brotherhood Organization is expected to be more favorable to free market economy, as they are already accustomed to have medium and small sized business network.²⁷ Most probably middle-class members of the Organization is going to get integrated more with global capitalism and search for opportunities to expand their business. The contradiction between the Organization's tendency to free market economy and popular demands of people is going to be one of the basic debates within the Egyptian politics in near future.

Economic factor, the most significant impetus behind the Arab Spring in the Egyptian case has no relevance with the Islamic politics too. Social, political, technological and economic reasons culminated in mass uprisings in Egypt, none of which are, fully or partially, distant from the Islamic rationale. Even this conclusion *per se* demonstrates that the power of the Islamic politics is rapidly declining in Egypt. Although Islam, more or less, was a critical factor in the Arab revolutions of 1920s and 1950s Islam, it is not in the revolutions of 2010s.

3. The Second Wave: Political Liberalization

Although modernization theories are often outmoded in explaining changes in developing countries, Egyptian revolution of 2011 shows it is still functional for describing the current situation. Economic and social developments result in political modernization where democratization is the main indicator. Main problems of Arab democratization are traditionally summarized as “absences”; Arab model, democratic thinker who is going to impose on policy makers, democratic elite, democratic culture and so forth.²⁸ In

²⁴ See Davut Ateş (2010), “Global Economic Crisis, the State and Foreign Policy”, *International Journal of Human Sciences*, 7 (1).

²⁵ Rabbani, “The Arab Revolts:...” , p.10.

²⁶ See Chatham House, “Egypt’s Economy...”.

²⁷ Tarkowski, “After the Arab Spring...” , p.3.

²⁸ Hussein Yaakoub (2011), “Revolutions for Democracy”, *Perspectives*, Special Issue, 2 May (Heinrich Böll Stiftung), p.40-41.

this conventional formulation there is no room for economic and social changes. But it is clear that democracy is not a commodity people can buy whenever they want. It is a process whereby social and economic changes run and prepare convenient circumstances for it. In this sense economic liberalization policies in Egypt in 1970s had deep social and economic impact which ultimately resulted in people's demand for political liberalization. Furthermore "democratization" is an umbrella concept to describe whole demands of people. An important part of it, as it is analyzed in the former section, is still economic factor. Notwithstanding it is currently not clear the second wave is going to work properly in providing full political liberalization, it is highly possible to develop to a certain extent as the process continues. Within this framework three points is to be debated further to understand how much the second wave will go further: Demands of people in political terms, mutually constructive relation between liberal economy and democratization, and regional implications of political liberalization this is very critical for the course of democratization process as well.

3.1. Democratization Demands

Arab revolutions of 2010 and 2011 are deemed as the sign of democratization demands.²⁹ Main indicators of the process are searches for self-rule with democratic governance and the reclaiming of national and individual dignity.³⁰ However Egyptian revolution of 2011 was not a surprise or a sudden result, rather culminated by many developments earlier. The country in recent years has witnessed the rise of the Kefaya movement, which challenged Mubarak family rule in the years before the election of 2005; the judges' movement for the rule of law; human rights and voters' rights movements; the April 6 Movement, which emerged from the 2008 labor strikes; the vibrant opposition press led by the start-up newspapers; and thousands of young bloggers who spoke on the Web when they were not allowed to speak in public. Such determined activism for freedom, democracy, and the rule of law has occurred in almost every Arab country over the past two generations.³¹ All these social movements created an indispensable element of democratization that is popular organization, notably informal. Popular organizations in time turned into political movements which became capable to put press on the Egyptian regime.

There mere challenge to modernization theories in Egyptian case could be raised through asking "who are the proponents of political liberalization?". Under normal conditions middle class is primarily expected to demand political liberalization. The largest and important supporters of liberal economic policies

²⁹ Ibid., p.35.

³⁰ Asef Bayat (2011), "A New Arab Street in Post-Islamist Times", *Perspectives*, Special Issue, 2 May (Heinrich Böll Stiftung), p.50.

³¹ G. Rami Khouri (2011), "The Long Revolt", *Wilson Quarterly*, Summer, p.46.

seem to be the Muslim Brotherhood representing Egyptian middle class (Tarkowski, 2011:8). So everybody asked where the Organization is during uprisings. This point is significant to describe truly the content of democratization demands which came mainly from lower classes. In the first wave of economic liberalization there was a well-defined alliance between oppressive regime and middle class which is happy with the current status-quo. But lower classes composed of workers, farmers, unemployed youths and women raised their voices for “justice” and “equality”. In the mainstream global media mass uprisings were presented as democratization demand under the rubric of “representation, fundamental rights and freedoms”. Those points were interpreted in a way as inclusion of middle class to political power and freedom as the continuation of liberal economic priorities, all pointing somehow to the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. So where are justice and equality? For that reason the skepticism of the youth and support of the Organization for liberal economy might create a serious tension resulting in further polarization of the Egyptian political spectrum. Demands of Egyptian people were manipulated. Democratization was filled with the values favorable to middle class and the West.

3.2. Liberal Economy and the Prospects of Democratization

Upon putting first the middle class priorities further liberalization measures particularly in economic and trade relations are proposed as underpinning democratization process in the Arab land.³² This means further integration of Egyptian economy with global economy. This point represents how the ideals of revolution are constructed in a certain way favorable both to domestic and international actors. In other words revolution of the Egyptian people is in a process of being stolen. It is not surprising to witness that once the popular discontents come to the scene, it is shaped and manipulated by certain actors. Even if the Egyptian case is such, still it is an important step toward further political liberalization in the country. Liberal economy implemented by oppressive regimes in the past deteriorated economic conditions of the masses which resulted in popular uprisings in 2011 in Egypt. Currently the country is in the eve of new political regime that is elected through democratic procedures. New democratic regimes are going to continue to implement liberal economic policies, which will bring little opportunities for the solution of economic problems. Most probably the same revolutionary rationale of the economic factor is going to exist thereby further democratization will be demanded. Liberal economy is an important momentum in furthering democratization.

³² Uri Dadush and Michele Dunne (2011), “American and European Responses to the Arab Spring: What is the Big Idea?”, *The Washington Quarterly*, 34 (4), p.143.

Economic outlook in Egypt has been poor since the revolution began in January 2011; GDP has dropped by 4 percent and manufacturing by 12 percent. Revenue from tourism has seriously reduced. Official reserves have fallen by \$9 billion during the first half of 2011. It is estimated that Egypt will further face an external financing gap of about \$11 billion in the second half of 2011 and the first half of 2012.³³ Another important sector is tourism that is very critical for the country too. The sector employs almost 2 million workers, produces 11 percent of GDP, includes half of services exports, provides 20 percent of the sources of foreign currency.³⁴ Political instability and fragile economy is currently discouraging foreign and domestic investors.³⁵ It seems that economic situation is going to get worse in short run because of political hesitations of the government to collaborate with international financial institutions. For example, as IMF was an object of public mistrust during the revolution, the transitional government rejected to get loans from IMF and the World Bank.³⁶ All these developments and figures show that new democratic government of Egypt will have serious difficulties in providing solutions for economic problems. Even though political liberalization is attained to a certain extent, it is very fragile for the majority of the population. Social and economic changes in the path of democratization don't take place in vacuum. It is a process that develops in parallel with local and regional developments.³⁷ So as further liberalizations in the field of economy take place, there will be further demands for democratization.

3.3. Regional Implications of Political Liberalization

Political liberalization generally in the Middle East and particularly in Egypt is going to have some regional implications too,³⁸ as the country has still a central role in shaping regional politics. Regional aspects might be analyzed under three topics: Inter-Arab relations, Iran and Israel.

Political liberalization in some Arab countries in the region seems to crack further in the ideal of so-called "Arab unity". In the past there was some consensus between oil-rich monarchies and other autocratic Arab regimes at least on the terms of "how to rule". Particularly former kinds of regimes in the Middle East are strictly protected by the western powers.³⁹ Either monarchy or

³³ Ibrahim Saif (2011), "Challenges of Egypt's Economic Transition", The Carnegie Papers, November, p.3.

³⁴ See Giorgio S. Frankel (2011), "The Economy in the Arab Uprisings: Difficulties and Transformations", The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Policy Brief, September.

³⁵ Saif, "Challenges of Egypt's..." , p.6.

³⁶ Ibid., p.12.

³⁷ See Tareq Ramadan (2011), "Egypt: Transition to Democracy", In The Arab Spring: Implications for British Foreign Policy, Conservative Middle East Council, 13-15.

³⁸ See Ardiç, "Understanding the..." , p.34.

³⁹ See Salman Shaikh (2011), "Gulf States: The Challenge of Reform", In The Arab Spring: Implications for British Foreign Policy, Conservative Middle East Council, p.28-31.

autocracy adopted similar way of government. This common point was making easy for them to reach some tacit agreements. Autocratic leaders wouldn't disturb monarchies and in return monarchies would provide financial support to the autocrats. On this account while oil-rich Arab countries have some interest in political stability in revolutionary Arab countries, they may see democratic transition as an implicit challenge to their own legitimacy and stability.⁴⁰ However oil-rich monarchies can't stay out of the situation as well, as they would like to shape the course of the revolutions. In this respect they pledged, together with developed countries and international financial institutions, to give billions of dollars foreign aid to Egypt. This shows that monarchies are going to deal with post-revolutionary regimes on the same terms: "Don't disturb us, get financial aid". But it is highly doubtful that this conventional agreement is going to work smoothly, as the new Egyptian regime will have democratic responsibilities and be open to democratic checks. On the contrary popular demands might force new governments to question further the position of oil-rich Arab monarchies. And such a development is going to lead more and serious problems in the Arab world.

Political liberalization in some Arab countries in the region is going to challenge the monopolistic position of Iran within the Islamic rationale. Putting aside for a while some sectarian differences, Iran has been benefiting from a monopolistic position in terms of Islamic politics for a long time, as no other country in the region did base its legitimacy on Islamic rationale having popular support. In this respect the Brotherhood's coming to power in Egypt and adopting political liberalization is going to have serious outcomes for Iran. Iran is characterized as Islamic in terms of political regime, but it is not liberal. The Brotherhood's presentation of the liberal face of Islamic politics is going to decrease further the attraction of radical face of Iran for the masses in the region.⁴¹ This development will transform the competition between Iran and the Arab countries from whether having Islamic government or not into what kind of Islamic government.⁴² Consequently sectarian basis of Arab-Iranian relations seems to be enlarged as a result of political liberalization in some Arab countries.

Palestinian problem and the relations with Israel has been one of the strongest bases of Islamic opposition against autocratic regimes in the past. Political liberalization and following change of government in favor of Islamic movements in general and of the Brotherhood in Egypt in particular is going to have serious implications for Palestinian issue and Israel.⁴³ The Brotherhood,

⁴⁰ Dadush and Dunne, "American and European...", p.135.

⁴¹ M. Ali Ansari (2011), "Iran: Domestic Discontent and Regional Ambition", In *The Arab Spring: Implications for British Foreign Policy*, Conservative Middle East Council, p.40-43.

⁴² See Jane Kinninmont (2012), *Bahrain: Beyond the Impasse*, London: Chatham House.

⁴³ Daniel Levy (2011), "Israel-Palestine: New Pressure for Peace", In *The Arab Spring:*

while it is in opposition, was free in criticizing the policies of autocratic Egyptian government vis-à-vis Israel. And because autocratic governments didn't have political legitimacy, Palestinian problem didn't take place in a true negotiation process. Israel was happy with this situation. For that reason the main concern of Israel is the replacement of friends with enemies in Egypt as a result of the Arab Spring. Particularly Muslim Brotherhood's possible coming to power is a source of fear for Israel.⁴⁴ However the Brotherhood government is going to run not in an atmosphere of opposition but of responsible government. So the Palestinian problem seems to be subject to a real negotiation between the parties. Of course if Israel has an intention to negotiate. The irony is that threat perception of Israel is not anymore coming from autocratic and oppressive regime, but possibly from democratically elected government of Egypt.⁴⁵ In the past Israel had used the lack of democracy in the region to justify its actions.⁴⁶ From this point of view both Israel and democratically elected governments of Egypt will face serious difficulties to convince their supporters to negotiate with each other. It could be argued that new Egyptian governments will feel pressure from outside world to go to negotiation as well. And as the responsible rulers searching for international legitimacy and acceptability they are going to prefer to negotiate and to force Palestinian side too to negotiate with Israel. If negotiation starts between the parties, international community would have more reasons to be optimistic, as the real parties would be running a real negotiation process. Otherwise there could be highly dramatization of the Middle East problems, continuing tensions and possibly wars, which none of the parties currently want to experience.

4. Decline of the Islamic Politics

After analyzing different aspects of the Arab Spring and the second wave of liberalization in the Egyptian case it might be argued that there are numerous factors resulting in declining Islamic politics defined in terms relating politics with religion or legitimizing – criticizing current status (government or opposition) with religion. Decreasing tone of relating politics to Islam means the decline of Islamic politics. It is possible to classify those factors under six topics.

First is the rise of market liberalism. In the first wave liberalization of economy had resulted in split in the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. Middle class members started to search for material gains and subaltern groups started to search for welfare. While the first group became more moderate, the

Implications for British Foreign Policy, Conservative Middle East Council, p.36-39.

⁴⁴ Byman, Daniel (2011), "Israel's Pessimistic View of the Arab Spring", *The Washington Quarterly*, 34 (3), p.124.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.126.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.129.

second got radicalized in its actions. In either case the rise of market liberalism particularly following the end of the Cold War the attraction of Islamic rationale tended to diminish. In this respect absorbing the Islamic challenge to capitalism might be defined as a process of passive revolution.⁴⁷ The Muslim Brotherhood's current political program points to some ambiguities representing that it doesn't have willingness or ability to build a solid alternative to current regime.⁴⁸ This shows that middle class members of the Organization are happy with economic status-quo. Even this point is going to further depreciate Islamic reason in politics.

Second is the expansion of political liberalism. The Arab Spring signifies the second wave of liberalization in Egyptian society, which focuses on democratization and freedom. Public demonstrations in the Arab world seem to decrease the effects of extreme organizations, like Al-Qaeda whose popularity has been already declining.⁴⁹ Those kinds of organizations, even more moderate ones like the Muslim Brotherhood, were not active in the revolutionary stages. People's participation in the downfall of so-called tyrannical regimes is going to de-legitimize violent revolutionary ideas of radical groups. While people's revolutionary power increases, power of violent revolutionary ideologies decreases. Together with other opposition groups during the mass riots the Muslim Brotherhood champions the protection of individual freedoms, free elections, freedom of speech, the right to fair trial and equality before law.⁵⁰ For example 2004 unrest in Egypt is seen also as indicator of post-nationalist and post-Islamist vision.⁵¹ At this time a large segments of Egyptian society joined in *Kifaya* movement demanding ending of emergency law, freeing political prisoners and removing torture. Again general strike of textile workers in 2008, following peasants' organizations and cooperative movements demanding social justice and economic welfare⁵² demonstrated the absence of the Islamic opposition. References to democratization and freedom show that the power of Islamic rationale is declining. People tend to take into account more other value than those of Islam.

There are deep suspicions in the West with regard to whether the Brotherhood is really democratic or not.⁵³ But this suspicion is remarkably

⁴⁷ See Tuğal, *Passive Revolution:...*

⁴⁸ Daniela Pioppi (2011), "Who is Afraid of the Islamists?," The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Mediterranean Paper Series, p.50.

⁴⁹ See Yoram Schweitzer and Gilad Stern (2011), "A Golden Opportunity? Al Qaeda and the Uprisings in the Middle East", *Strategic Assessment*, 14 (2), p.29-40.

⁵⁰ Uriye Shavit (2011), "Islamotopia: The Muslim Brotherhood's Idea of Democracy", *Azure*, No: 5772, Autumn, p.43.

⁵¹ Bayat, "A New Arab Street...", p.51.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.52.

⁵³ Shavit, "Islamotopia: The Muslim...", p.44.

embedded with the conventional interest of the West. Any strategy of the West, as it is proposed, to permit the Brotherhood to run in the elections but not gain the power,⁵⁴ creates great vagueness in the policies of the West which endanger democratic rise in Egypt. This means also a possibility of confrontation, which is going to endorse the view of the Islamic radicalism that the West conspires to undermine the identity of the Muslim world.

Third is that liberalization is going to deepen the class differentiation. Some segments of society are deprived of liberal gains in material sense, by which Islamic ideal is going to lose its essence. Arab revolts during the Spring seem to be secular in character.⁵⁵ Even at the beginning of uprisings Muslim Brotherhood didn't want to be in alliance with popular discontents.⁵⁶ Secular character is going to direct more people to material gains and losses. Because of this reason class differentiation could be further clarified. As people focus heavily on welfare and material reason, fascinating promises of the Islamic reason lose its power. Consequently Islamic politics declines. In post-revolutionary period there is possibility of further division within the Brotherhood.⁵⁷

The conventional description of the Islamic politics in the West means that there are only “white or black” alternatives in the minds of the Islamists.⁵⁸ However this is not anymore true, as there emerges deep social and economic changes in Egypt. The Arab Spring revolutions brought to the surface the “gray” areas within the boundaries of the Islamic politics. Gray areas are going to increase with deepening class and interest differentiations. Also the Muslim Brotherhood is going to find itself competing with other rivals coming from within itself and from outside as well.⁵⁹ The Muslim Brotherhood is not still a coherent political organization, but rather a sum of different political trends that might split into different political organizations or parties in liberalized political context.⁶⁰ Moreover endemic debate about the relation between Islam and politics has no end. Instead of focusing on the Islamic politics, we need to scrutinize the transformative capacity of different social classes, middle class, educated young people and entrepreneurial side of the Islamic movements including the Muslim Brotherhood.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.55.

⁵⁵ Rabbani, “The Arab Revolts:...” , p.13.

⁵⁶ Traboulsi, “Revolutions Bring...” , p.18.

⁵⁷ Ardıç, “Understanding the...” , p.32-33.

⁵⁸ See Shavit, “Islamotopia: The Muslim...”.

⁵⁹ Pioppi, “Who is Afraid of...” , p.60.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.51.

⁶¹ Dietrich Jung (2011), “Unrest in the Arab World: Four Questions”, *Insight Turkey*, 13 (3), p.9.

Fourth is the existence of the Islamic experience at power. So-called some Islamic parties' coming to power and their experience is another important factor in decreasing the power of Islamic reason. Within this context a comparison between Egypt and Turkey in terms of economy and politics implies some considerable results. Both countries experienced statist economies, then liberalization. Again in both countries Islamic radicalism had been perceived as serious threat to the established regimes for a long time. In the Turkish model there was a peaceful transition from secular military to so-called Muslim civilian rule.⁶² Moreover political liberalization in Turkey has a longer history than in Egypt which was unable to initiate political liberalization because of Mubarak-centered autocracy. In Turkey there had been radical liberalization policies in the field of economy at the beginning of 1980s under the military government. As economic liberalization gets strength, there was serious political crisis after the second half of 1990s between former conservative capitalists and newly emerged Anatolian tigers. This was a crisis between higher classes. However it worked for further political liberalization with the support of other factors in the Turkish case, like EU accession process. At the beginning of 2000s political liberalization prepared convenient conditions for AKP's (Justice and Development Party) coming to power in 2002 whose leaders came from the tradition of the former Islamic parties. AKP is currently well working within the country and comfortable with international community. It seems to be the champion of transition period from liberal economy under military tutelage to liberal economy under democracy.

It is true that there are significant differences between two countries. But AKP's coming to power in 2002 in Turkey and possible formation of a government by the political parts of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2012 in Egypt is worthy to compare with their possible political and economic results. In the Turkish case, *first*, Islamic movement is integrated into the political system. *Second*, proponents of AKP are benefiting from economic fruits of the political power. *Third*, Turkey under AKP governments has still serious democratization problems. *Fourth*, AKP is exploiting well the absence of a true leftist opposition. *Fifth*, it is highly probable that AKP is going to split between political factions of higher and lower classes, following the end of Erdoğan's charismatic leadership; as the leftist opposition is coming from the Islamic circles of the Turkish society. *Sixth*, discursive language and activism of the Islamic politics, partly represented by AKP, dramatically declined. As they experience political power, Islamic movements in the Turkish case tended to distance themselves from the Islamic politics. It is open to discussion whether the same results are attainable in Egypt, but it represents some similarities. At least as far as the main point, that is decline of the Islamic politics as a result of

⁶² Ottaway, "Egypt at the...", p.5-6.

economic and political liberalization, is concerned; Egypt has passed the first stage by a certain degree of the declining Islamic politics. It is currently experiencing the second one that seems to consolidate the tendency in the first stage.

Fifth is that the dialogue with the West is going to run on the terms of liberal principles, economic or political. Prominent figures of the Muslim Brotherhood are trying to convince the world that the organization doesn't reject democratic and liberal ideals.⁶³ Spokesmen of the U.S. administration declared that they welcome dialogue with the Brotherhood as long as the organization keeps itself away from violent means.⁶⁴ Islamic politics might still have some room to form opposition against moderate governments on the ground of sharing the wealth. Leftist tones of Islam might arise. This tendency carries the risk of turning to state economy. But this is not going to be similar to Ba'athist regimes rather Islamic alternative with leftist tone is going to try to force mainstream governments to tame savage capitalism.

Sixth is the possible negotiation process in the Palestinian issue. Negotiation alternative would be another important factor in declining Islamic politics. Not solution but a true negotiation is going to contribute to the further decline of Islamic politics further. Negotiation is also a serious opportunity for the new governments to be accommodated and accepted within international community. At the beginning of the mass riots Islamic movements including Muslim Brotherhood neither led nor tried to get the fruits of revolution.⁶⁵ This created a serious question about the power of Islamic movement. Furthermore the Organization tried even to distance itself from the mass mobilization at the beginning of January 2011. After a certain time it started to join the demonstration with caution, but without stepping forward.⁶⁶ This action shows that there is still a serious hesitation in the Brotherhood to enter the politics. However as its accommodation process is smoothly completed, the organization is going to take serious responsibilities and initiatives in *realpolitik*. By this way Islamic tone in its discourse is going to decline.

5. Conclusion

Egyptian society experienced first wave of liberalization that is the economic one at the beginning of 1970s following *Infitah* policies of Sadat. With the rise of the Arab Spring in fall of 2010 Egyptian society started to experience the second wave of liberalization that is the political one. Two developments are complementary to each other in some sense of the modernization theories. When people start to act freely on the market and

⁶³ Shavit, "Islamotopia: The Muslim...", p.37.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.38.

⁶⁵ Ahmad Beydoun (2011), "The Revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt: The People without Populism", *Perspectives*, Special Issue, 2 May (Heinrich Böll Stiftung), p.23.

⁶⁶ Pioppi, "Who is Afraid of...", p.53.

interact with welfare and wealth, they tend to define different kinds of priorities in the realm of non-tangibles, which means that economic development and liberalization is followed by political one. By this way developing country becomes more familiar with the fruits of modernization and development in the path of the western style. Obviously transformation of the Egyptian society is still continuing and political turmoil seems to sustain for a while to find its political balance under the new situation.

Economic and political transformation of the Egyptian society has crucial implications for the Islamic politics, which is deemed a modern phenomenon for a long time. *Firstly*, with regard to economic liberalization, the forerunner of the Islamic politics in the country that is the Organization of Muslim Brotherhood had undergone to drastic changes. Middle class members tended to deal with the market thereby they reached wealth and other economic instruments. This segment of the Organization set a tacit contract with regime on the terms of the market. On the other hand, members of lower classes within the Organization became more radical and tended to resort to terrorist actions. Alongside this development radical groups got marginalized. In overall outlook the power and coherence of the Islamic politics began to decrease as a result of economic liberalization.

Secondly, with regard to political liberalization, Egyptian people started to demand freedom and democracy, which implies that autocratic regime is irrelevant to the current situation. During the first days of the mass riots the Organization was silent, because it didn't want to risk tacit agreement with the government. Only when it became clear that Mubarak is toppled from the power, the Organization began to appear and join people's demand of freedom, democracy and rule of law. And the Organization didn't raise any element of the discourse of the Islamic politics at any stage of the revolution. This development shows that Islamic rationale is not either adequate or convenient to mobilize and manipulate the masses for political goals.

When the main aspects of the Arab Spring are taken into account, it is also obvious that Islam or any element of the Islam politics is not among the determinant factors. Social, economic, political, technological factors played main roles in the Spring. Existence of unemployed young population within the cities, their search for welfare, their demand for political change and freedom, and the facilities of modern communication technologies culminated in the revolution.

There are many factors behind the declining of Islamic politics, such as economic and political liberalization, differentiation of the society in terms of socio-economic classes, experience of Islamic parties at power, need for dialogue with the West and possibly changing relations with Israel.⁶⁷ All these

⁶⁷ See Maha Azzam (2011), "Islamism: Extremists or Democrats?", In *The Arab Spring:*

factors somehow contribute to this trend. Under the new circumstance the crucial issue is not whether Islamic parties or groups come to power, rather whether the West is ready to change its perception of Islam and Islamic politics. In the past autocratic regimes in the Middle East were allies of the West, as they were deemed guarantors against the Islamic movements. In this perception Arab people are not familiar with the western values thereby they were left under tyrannical regimes of autocrats. Because of this conceptualization and policy making, the anger of the Islamic movements directed against both autocrats and the West. However under the situation former Islamic movements are becoming legitimate rulers of their countries through democratic elections. By coming to power leaders of those movements have responsibility to meet the demands of their people. In order to fulfill these demands new governments are partly dependant on international community where the western powers are critical. Consequently political liberalization in the Arab world is going to destroy mutual fears and mistrust between Islamic movements and the West. The politics and bargaining between the parties will not run over the Islamic ideals, rather over the problems and issues of *realpolitik* of the world.

In this context it should not be a source of fear that majority of Egyptian Parliament is composed of Islamic representatives coming from any version of Islamism, or that an Islamic personality came to the position of presidency. These developments are formal consequences of procedural democracy, but not signs that Islamic politics is going to be revitalized in conventional terms. Rather new leaders are going to feel a great responsibility not to danger their current political victory. To this end it should be expected that they will become more open to rational communication with the West. Also lower income segments of the society is another challenge in due time for the stable rule of middle class Islamists. In sum so-called Islamic oriented leaders are going to tend, first of all, to stabilize their rule by avoiding extremism both inside and outside. And as the time passes in power, not Islamic but political and economic problems of a liberal-democratic society are going to come to the agenda of the masses.

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