Islamist parties and social movements: cases of Egypt and Tunisia

Nora Medhat Abdelkader

Department of Political science, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to shed light on the previous ideological stands of the newly established Islamist parties in terms of the idea of party formation, and different models of their relations with the social movements from which they emanated through focusing on some case studies, namely, Egypt and Tunisia, with an attempt to study their impact on the parties’ paths by concentrating on two dimensions: the decision-making process and alliances’ building.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper is written according to the comparative case studies approach and Huntington’s new institutionalism.

Findings – The research findings proved that, in the light of the two case studies, there are two different models of relations exist between the Islamist political parties and the social movements they emanated from, and despite that both parties had come out from social movements or took the form of a movement in their beginnings and were established within the same context, they showed different perspectives in dealing later on with the new institutional and political context and their rising challenges. These perspectives affected the parties’ decision-making process and alliances’ building, as well as their institutional legitimacy and determined their political future.

Originality/value – In the end, this paper attempts to deal with the degree of institutionalization these parties enjoyed, based on how the movements they emanated from had dealt with the dilemma of party building and the party-movement relations.

Keywords Social movements, Alliances building, Decision-making process, Islamists parties, Movement parties, Popular uprisings, Institutionalism, Freedom and justice party, Al-Nahda

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The topic of the so-called movement parties, the political parties that emerged out from social or political movements and their relations with such movements is a topic of increasing importance in the field of comparative politics.

In the past decade and after the popular uprisings in the Arab world, many Islamists parties were established. These parties had emanated from large social movements and managed to reach power in a number of Arab Countries, like the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, AL-Nahda Party in Tunisia.
This paper aims to study the relation between the way these parties were established, their former stands concerning party establishment, their relation with their mother social movements on one hand, and their performance after reaching power on the other hand. The main research problem of this study can be formulated as follows: What are the main reasons behind the different political courses that the FJP and Al-Nahda party had followed after seizing power in their countries. Despite the two parties were established within the same context, the rule of Muslim brotherhood in Egypt lasted only for one year (apparent failure), while Al-Nahda party in Tunisia managed to adapt with the changes and challenges on the political arena and was able to maintain its image as an important actor on the Tunisian scene sharing power with other political actors there and avoiding the same fate of FJP in Egypt (relative success).

Based on the research problem, the main hypothesis here is: whenever the social movements the party emanated from was based on ideological stands or literature refusing or resisting the idea of party formation and political pluralism, and in cases of high degree of party attachment and dependence on the social movement it emanated from, the result will be increasing the possibilities of party failure in carrying out its main functions in decision-making and building alliances with other powers. This entails that the party will lose its legitimacy and will inevitably lead to its fall, especially if it’s in power.

1.1 Literature review
There are a number of studies that focused on the phenomenon of movement parties, and many of them attempted to examine the reasons behind the rise of this new breed of political parties.

In his study, Kitschelt (2006) had focused on what he called the three vehicles of interest articulation and intermediation, talking about the defining boundaries between them mainly by focusing on the functional and institutional criteria. Then the author moved to the circumstances under which social movements or interest group take the decision to change the institutional settings they are operating in, i.e. turning into partisan electoral competition and accepting to pay the cost of organizational compliance, stating that when a political entity take the decision to start mobilization around complex by focusing on more complex interdependent objectives they turn to political party. An important part of this study was dedicated to the problems of movement parties like; they lack the culture of investing in a formal organization of party structure, they are formed and depend on a group of social and political activists in the absence of paid professionals, and the institutional problem in building party’s infrastructure or organs able to take binding decisions.

Dontella della porta (Porta et al., 2018) was from the most important names that focused on movement parties and the reasons behind the rise of this type of parties and in this regard she talked about austerity politics.

There were other studies that recognized the transformation of social movements to political parties as a result of changes in political regimes after overthrowing authoritarian governments and starting a transforming process to towards democracy. Zöllner (2016) in her study focused on democratic state building. Stated that after the uprisings in the Arab countries, a change happened in the political arena which became more open and free, and this encouraged many social and political movements to take a step toward institutionalization by turning to political parties considering this a part of building the structures of this new democratic state.
Some other studies tried to examine such phenomenon in particular regions. In their study, Prentoulis and Thomassen (2018) had considered the emergence of movement parties one of the reasons behind the financial crisis and the crisis of representation, and they focused on many examples in Europe, especially emerging from the far right movements. And they studied the different types of movement parties and marked the dilemma of how some social movements that believed in radical politics can convert to political parties engaging in the formal political institutions.

1.2 Methodology
This paper uses two approaches:

(1) *The comparative case study approach*: According to Lijpart, we can use a small number of cases to provide a framework to generate useful data analysis and to test the hypothesis of a given study (Collier, 1993). This paper will use this approach to study the areas of similarities and differences between the two cases, and how despite witnessing the same historical context in regard to party formation they showed different reactions to the opportunities and challenges on the surrounding political scene and thus ended up with two different courses.

(2) *New institutionalism*: Huntington in his new institutionalism focused on the importance of developing political institutions after changes taking place within any society; including modernization, increasing political awareness, demands, and widening the scope of political involvement, as these changes challenge the existing political system and it’s institutions and create a rising need to move further towards institutionalism and introducing new political institutions that combine legitimacy with effectiveness. He assumed that if what prevails is a negative relationship between the rates of political participation and those of political institutionalism this will lead to a political gap followed by political instability and disorder and a fall in legitimacy, i.e. rapid social and political changes which might include rapid entry of new groups into politics should be accompanied with high level of institutionalism and developing the art of associations. Samuel set four dimensions to study the level of institutionalization in any political system which are autonomy, adaptability, complexity and coherence (Huntington, 1973).

These main sayings of new institutionalism can be used in this study to test to what extent the two parties had succeeded in two main aspects:

(1) to be the source of their decisions (independence); and

(2) to adapt with the changes happening in their context, face the challenges and make the best use of the rising opportunities, and build the structures that will help them in this regard (flexibility).

1.3 Theoretical framework
Social movements can rarely convert to pure and simple political parties; also it’s not an easy task to build a party-movement relationship based on clear independence and dividing lines between the party and the movement. In this regard, this paper will focus on two theories that can describe movement-party relations, and they can be displayed as follows:

The Helicopter-parents: This theory was best explored by Nathan J. Brown and he meant by Helicopter-parents “those who hover closely over their grown sons and daughters, monitoring their choices, offering unsolicited advice, and intervening in their daily
interactions”. He talked about more than an ordinary close relationship that exists between the party and the movement, as the movement is micromanaging the party and controlling every aspect of the party ranging from choosing the party leaders to determining its stands in different situations. The movement is monitoring the choices of the party making sure that it is acting in accordance with the movements’ instructions and revolving in its orbit (Brown, 2011). In this regard, we can say that the party is acting like the center giving no autonomy to the periphery which is the party.

Hybrid movement parties: Which constitute a new breed form of parties, distinct from ordinary parties, these parties combine the attributes of movements and parties at the same time (porta et al., 2018), they are formed of social and political activists belonging to social movements and trying to apply their strategic and organizational tactics in the arena of party politics (Kitschelt, 2006, p. 4). The process of transition to movement parties isn’t an easy one, and it might be reversible. Moreover, while some may succeed in achieving fully transition to party politics others may fail or just try to make a balance between tactics of social movements and party politics (Gattinara, 2019).

We can add to this theoretical framework, theories explaining the transition from movement to movement’s party (Kitschelt, 2006, pp. 5-6):

Political learning through trial and errors: This happens when social and political activists decide to focus on more complex interdependent objectives and to enter the partisan electoral competition.

The game-theoretical model: it takes place whenever the movement has informative advantage over the existing political parties, about the size of certain constituency and the movement’s appeal there, so it decides to enter the competition on the seats of this constituency through forming a party that can benefit from the public appeal and support to the movement it emanated from.

Movement turns to party politics only when it realizes that the barriers and the electoral laws are limited so it has a high possibility of success.

Spatial theory of party competition: when there is a newly mobilized constituency that lacks the representation in the existing party system so this constituency turns to be an area of interest for the movement and encourages it to turn to movement’s parties.

2. Stands from party formation

In Egypt, the Brotherhood was established in 1928 with the leadership of Hassan Al-Banna who was against the idea of party building, and viewed it as the reason behind the fragmentation of the society, which interest as a whole should be a priority, even viewing such fragmentation equivalent to atheism (Brown and Hamzawy, 2011). This vision controlled the MB for a long time.

Despite Al-Gamma’a prohibition and the great restrictions on its activities the MB managed to preserve itself a role in the opposition and presence in the professional syndicates and parliamentary elections. In 2000, it secured 17 seats in the parliament through running the election as independent candidates, and this encouraged the movement to direct its resources to the domain of electoral competition and in 2005 it was able to achieve its greatest victory in the parliamentary elections before the uprising by winning 88 seats in the parliamentary elections (Al-Ghaffar and Hess, 2018). In addition to that, it was also present through its wide social networks by providing social services and focusing on charity activities (Obaid, 2017).

In 2007, a document belonging to the Brotherhood was leaked. It included their vision concerning political reform and in a part of it they talked about party formation. Many had
considered this document as the program of the party the movement wants to establish; however, due to the difficult political circumstances the program wasn’t completed and then was disregarded by the movement (Brown and Hamzawy, 2011, pp. 36-38). Then came the popular uprising on the 25 January 2011 to mark the first real and explicit step of the movement to establish a party, as it submitted an official request to establish the Freedom and Justice party, which was established in 2011 (Al-Anani, 2011).

Although the context of Al-Nahda party establishment in Tunisia was similar to the Egyptian case; the willingness of Al-Nahda movement to establish a party was previous to that of the Brotherhood in Egypt. “Al-tawagoh Al-Islami” (later known by Al-Nahda) had tried to form a party in 1983, just after 12 years from its establishment (Saleh, 2012, Vol. 47, Issue 188).

Al-Ghannushi had a different vision compared to Al-Banna concerning party formation, as he considered it the best solution for strengthening the Islamic Society against the ruling authority (Al-Ghannushi, 2012), and he reached a further point stating that these parties will provide a socialization ground to the so-called “the lord’s politicians” who will not infringe on people’s rights. Moreover, these parties will teach the citizens their divine duty citing Quran: “You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong” (Ali’Umran: 110). And he added that these parties will be saturated with justice, monotheism, and truth, he even said that establishing Islamists parties had come as an order from God in Quran: “And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good” (Ali’Umran: 110) (Al-Ghannushi, 2012, pp. 156-158).

All attempts by Al-Nahda to establish a party had failed under the authoritarian regime there, until the popular Uprising in 2010 as the political situation became convenient for the establishment of the party which was established in 2011. And here both the Egyptian and Tunisian cases met in regard to the context of establishment, i.e. the popular uprisings.

3. Two models for the relation between parties and social movements
Blumer was one of the most significant authors who focused on social movements and their evolution. Despite Blumar’s vision that there is a typical inevitable cycle for the development of social movements, starting with social fermentation passing through popular excitement and formalization, till it finally reach the stage of institutionalization (Christiansen, 2009). Reality shows that there is no specific organizational course for the cycle of social movements. The social movement may decide to move in a specific moment to a new stage which is more institutional by establishing a political party, or it might reject this choice and take the path of secrecy and political violence (Beshendy, 2018).

In this part, the paper focuses on the relation between each of the aforementioned parties and their mother social movements, as it is very important to understand the features and nature of this relation and its impact on the party’s progress.

3.1 The Egyptian case
The relation between the Brotherhood and FJP was characterized by ambiguity and confusion as it is difficult to separate between the two. Despite the vision that empowering the movement to establish a party after the constitutional amendments in 2011, might be followed by a decision to dissolve the Brotherhood, it ended up with retaining the movement without legalizing its status according to the laws of associations and civil society organizations. The experience of FJP in power emphasized the pivotal Concept of Al-Gamma’a, to which the Brotherhood attached priority over any other frameworks, and refused to disclaim in favor of the idea of a Political party (Parahat, 2014, Year 24).
In this relation, the political party seems to be the weak element, as it was always subjected to Al-Gamma’a on both the organizational and intellectual levels and this might be due to the party’s novelty, and the great organizational strength that Al-Gamma’a enjoyed, as it was known by its pyramid hierarchy at the top of which is the guidance bureau, which had a full control over the organizational issues and by the compliance of those in the lower levels with the “listen and obey” principle (Brown and Dunne, 2015).

The best description of the nature of this relation was that of Nathan J. Brown, as he described it by “Helicopter parent”, and he meant by this that the movement acts as the guardian who controls and interferes in all choices, daily decisions and interactions of his child (Brown, 2011).

This nature of the party-movement relation was enhanced by the historical dispute on the necessity of establishing a political party for the Brotherhood, as a significant segment of Al-Gamma’a believed that political participation should be done through the movement not the party. And even if it is necessary to have a party, it won’t be their reference as it will just be one of the tools used by the movement to achieve its political targets (Al-Anani, 2005). That was clearly stated by Al-Shater when he said that the duty of Al-Gamma’a is to achieve the revival of the Unmum based on the Islamic reference, Islamization of the society, and empowering God’s rule on Earth, and that the FJP is one of the tools used by Al-Gamma’a in this regard, just like any other tool, such as syndicates and charity associations. (Farahat, 2014, Year 24, pp. 28-29).

The practices of the Brotherhood after reaching power revealed that they prefer the type of relation in which the party is just a political arm or bifurcation of the movement. Also, it was clear that there was a number of members in the party that combine between their membership in the party and the movement at the same time, as the leading figures of the movement became the well-known faces of the party (Shalata, 2017).

3.2 The Tunisian case
On the Tunisian side, Al-Ghannushi, the leader of Al-Nahda party, was distinguished by his enlightened vision and his clear strategy from the beginning, which was based on the attempt to prevent the crises and falls that other movements of political Islamism had witnessed in countries like, Egypt, Sudan and Algeria. The main objective of Al-Ghannushi was to secure being a part of the authority with the least losses (Belhag et al., 2017).

The party-movement relation here is distinct, as it establishes a different model. Al-Nahda tried to combine between being a movement and a party at the same time, as the party was not established as an independent organizational entity separate from the movement, there were no clear defining lines between them, and as a result it was named the party of Al-Nahda movement. In fact, the movement works as a party that has a network of local and regional offices and at the same time it preserves for itself an active base as a popular and social movement which has charity associations working under its flag, that’s why sometimes the movement declarations combine between the ideological and political commitments and it merges its Islamic reference with its national Tunisian identity (Marks, 2014). In addition, certain members of the movement were uncomfortable because of what happened sometimes when the targets and principles of the movement were substituted with political pragmatic targets, fearing that the politicization process and concentrating on the party building will hold back the movement and transform it to a political club that ignores its ideological roots (Marks, 2014, pp. 16-18).

These fears were accentuated in the 10th conference of Al-Nahda, when the party announced a major ideological transformation by separating religion from politics and declaring itself as a national democratic party. Furthermore, Al-Ghannushi stated that the
modern state shouldn’t be based on any ideological premises, but on policies and practical programs, which reflects a great level of maturity (Affan, 2016), in addition to his striking declaration saying that there is no more reason for the existence of political Islamism, which emerged to face dictatorship, and secular extremism, as they no longer exist in Tunisia. Such transition was compatible with what the Tunisian Islamist figure “Said Fergany” stated that Tunisia is in a critical phase which might last for 20 years, and this requires it to enhance the transitional process, along with the principles and values of democracy even if this will irritate conservatives (Dar et al., 2017).

This step marked the attempt to eliminate the confusion of being a party and movement at the same time, by outweighing the idea of being a national democratic party that confines its activities to politics (Khareegy, 2011). It is worth noting in this regard, that this is an important step but its seriousness will take a time to be verified.

4. Decision-making process
No entity can reach the stage of institutionalism and start its work within the state’s political institutions without achieving certain requirements, as this depends on institutional development, political maturity, and social and cultural awareness (Moktader, 2013). The more the party is institutionalized in its work, the more this will positively affect the workflow inside the party according to its internal regulatory system, and its ability to face internal and external challenges (Al-Gharabyah, 2016).

The decision-making process in any institution or party reflects the balance of power inside it and its institutionalization degree. This part in the study focuses on how the party’s formation and the pattern of its relation with its mother movement were reflected on the decision-making process.

4.1 The Egyptian case
In Egypt, Al-Gamma’a represented in the guidance bureau had full control over the decision-making process and that was obvious in many practices. Firstly, the Freedom and Justice party was formed at an order from the Shura council of the movement. And this council, which had no official relation with the party, had chosen the party’s top leaders in a non-transparent secret manner, which emphasized that the movement tried to impose its guardianship over the party from the very beginning (Al-Anani, 2011). During its formation, the party’s top leaders weren’t chosen according to democratic mechanisms or through fair public elections within the party, as the movement decided that the selection of the party’s leaders is a genuine right for the guidance bureau, and they should be in a strong connection with it, and by this they violated the party’s statute which stipulated that the party leaders are chosen through elections held in the party’s general assembly (Ban, 2014). The party’s Secretary General and its executive bureau in each governorate were chosen by the movement’s administrative and consultative offices in this governorate, and by this the party turned to be the movement’s party not a party that was established by the movement (Shalata, 2017, p. 73).

Secondly, the movement, not the party, had not only put the electoral program for running the elections but also put its own touch on the party statute which was affected by the movement’s language (Brown, 2011). And it was the one who proposed the project concerning the electoral alliances before 2011 parliamentary elections (Farahat, 2014, Year 24, pp. 27-28).

In February 2012, the movement, not the party, had assigned to Al-Shater the task of setting a developmental and renaissance program for Egypt which was known by the “Renaissance project”, despite that assigning a duty with this political nature is a part of the
political responsibilities of the party (Farahat, 2014, Year 24, pp. 27-28), noting that Al-Shater did not hold any official position in the party or the state.

After Morsi was sworn in as Egypt’s president in June 2012, conservatives and reformists inside the movement tried to control the choices of the general assembly in the first election to choose the party’s president and secretary general, by imposing their wills and narrow ideological orientations (Ban, 2014).

Even after the movement’s attempts to administratively separate the highest party’s structure from it and to find separate party’s leaders, this appeared to be just a nominal separation, as the party’s figure remained the same movement’s figures (Shalata, 2017, p. 73).

The Brotherhood tried to connect their members with marriage and kinship relations and to use these connections to control all the party posts and those of the legislative and executive branches (Helmy, 2016), for example:

- Essam Al-Hadad, one of the guidance bureau members, was also responsible for foreign relations in the party, and then was the President’s assistant for foreign relations.
- Saad Emara, the member of the defense and national security committee in the shura council was at the same time a member in the guidance bureau and the movement shura council.
- Essam Al-Aryan was a member in the guidance bureau and Shure council and at the same time the vice president of FJP (Mogib, 2015).
- It was obvious that the criteria of choosing the executives was based on the membership and loyalty to the guidance bureau not the efficiency, and we can refer in this regard to the following names:
  - Mohamed Ali Beshr who was nominated as a governor for Al-Monoufiya governorate and was later on the minister of local development was a member in the guidance bureau.
  - Mahmoud Ghouzlan who was a member in the national council for human rights was a member in the guidance bureau and one of the spokesmen of the movement (Mogib, 2015, p. 58).

Moreover, applying promotion to active member inside the party depended on the member promotion within the movement. There were many rising fears inside the movement that the party might seek separation from the movement, and that’s why it took some precautionary measures to guarantee the continuity of the party’s dependence on the movement. These fears pushed the movement to form a secret parallel party structure to introduce it to the political scene in case any split between the party and the movement happens in the future, as affirmed by the movement members who joined the camp that was formed in January 2013, under the movement’s political committee and with the participation of the responsible figures of the movement’s families and sectors who were not affiliated to the party and who provided assessment for the party’s performance while opening the door for proposing any new visions that the movement can count on in case of political crises (Shalata, 2017, pp. 75-76).

The party did not try to employ more cadres and experts in the partisan and electoral works to benefit from its establishment, as it left these tasks for the preachers and social figures in the councils of the movement’s regions who were very active during election times, which reflects the level of movement interference in the party’s main tasks (Shalata, 2017, p. 78).
Thirdly, the party was not able to take any decision concerning the talks and coordination with other political actors on the political arena without returning first to the guidance bureau (Ban, 2014). According to Abul Ghar, the leader of Social Democratic Party, before Morsi’s decision to rule by decree in November 2012 there were promising talks between Morsi and members of other political forces concerning the constitution and he showed his willingness to reach a compromise to save Egypt and promised to finalize the deal on the next day. Surprisingly, Morsi came out next day with emergency decree which showed, according to Abul Ghar, that the decision isn’t in his hand; it’s in the hand of the guidance bureau (The Guardian, 2019). Then the guidance bureau took the decision with the shura council to go down the streets to support the president against the opposition, and this ended in obvious polarization on the Egyptian political scene and led to bloody street fights with Morsi’s opponents (Mogib, 2015, p. 57).

There were other clear evidences on such overlap between the president, the party, and the movement, as Morsi himself stated in one of his meetings with the Muslim brotherhood that there is always a coordination with the bureau before any meetings with the American officials and that he is working according to the bureau’s decision regarding Egypt’s international conventions (a leaked video for a secret meeting between Morsi and the members of Al-gamma, 2013). In addition to that, Essam el Aryan in his televised interview in one of the talk shows in Egypt mentioned that there are strategic decisions that should be taken through coordination with the movement like nominating the president, the rule or the government. And he announced that concerning Morsi’s decision to dismiss Tantawy he searched for Al-morshid who was in seclusion for prayers (Itikaf), and he was surprised how shall he leaves the country in such critical situation that requires critical decisions and goes for Itikaf (AlAryan: Morsi searched for Al-morshid before Al-mosheer dismissal, 2012).

Finally, the movement took the responsibility of responding to all the criticisms directed to the party and the government. And it directly dealt with all reinterpretations (ijtihad) done by any party member which it had seen as contrary to the main stream of the movement, and that to reinforce its symbolic and administrative control over the party (Shalata, 2017, p. 73). The role of the general guide and his control was obvious to the extent that the protestors came out to the streets calling for ousting him (Ban, 2014).

### 4.2 The Tunisian case

Although the establishment context of Al-Nahda party was the same as that of FJP in Egypt, yet both examples gave different models in their relations with their movements, their decision-making process, and their internal democratic structure. There are different interpretations for that, first Al-Nahda movement had witnessed a lot of serious attempts to legalize its status and to launch its party before 2011, in addition to what was reflected in its literature from serious faith in the importance of establishing a political party to be its channel for participating in politics, in contrary with the hesitated and non-tangible steps of the Egyptian’s Brotherhood in this regard and their unclear vision about forming a party. Second, the character of Al-Ghannushi, who was exposed to the Western culture and enjoyed a considerable weight of enlightened thought, with the ability to comprehend the reality and adapt with the opportunities and challenges it provides, and finally the strength of the Tunisian civil society.

Al-Nahda Party, which combined the characteristics of both the party and the movement in one entity, appeared to have a good organizational level. It also had a clear internal democratic structure confirmed by a number of observations; the Party leader was elected by direct secret ballot during the General Conference of the Party and in accordance with its Statute. The Party’s statute also stipulated that no member may hold the post of the party’s
leader for more than two consecutive terms, which is a credit to the party and its democratic practice. The leader chairs the executive office and is entrusted with running the party's executive structures. The President shall have the right to propose the names of the executive office leaders; a secretary-general and one or more deputies of the members who meet the conditions stipulated in the party's statute, but must be recommended by at least one-third of Shura Council members who are elected via direct secret ballot. The Party’s Shura Council is composed of 150 members, two-thirds of whom are elected at the National Congress of the party, and the last third during its first session. The head of the Shura Council is elected after the completion of the members of the Council by direct secret ballot within the Council (Al-Nahda official website). The Shura Council, which represents the highest organizational level in the party, makes decisions on the basis of one person, one vote (Marks, 2014, p. 1). The party’s commitment to hold its national conferences periodically and in a disciplined way thus reflects the party’s high organizational and operational capacity. This is indicative of the high openness and transparency within the party, as the political, administrative and financial performance of the party is discussed in these conferences, with party’s general policies of the next stage (Al-gharabyah, 2016, p. 189). The party conferences were preceded by many lengthy sessions and debates at the local, regional and sectorial levels so as to achieve direct communication between these levels and unify their visions (Khareegy, 2011).

It was also obvious that the internal structure is characterized by representative bodies at the regional and local levels linking the activists with the party leaders (Al-Nahda official website). Although the party leaders had been explaining their positions in the Shura Council, they had often returned to mid-level and grass-roots activists throughout the country to convince them of these positions, which is a democratic practice that reflects the level of transparency within the party. There was even respect for the few voices within the party that were not suppressed or silenced; on the contrary, collective debate was open to them in sensitive and pivotal matters. Al-Ghannushi, as the movement’s leader, did not seek to impose his views with regard to Shari’ah, but rather the decision to debate this issue and to enable others to clarify their views and what they adopt of interpretations of Shari’ah. This was criticized by some people who accused Al-Ghannushi of extreme hesitation and inability to impose a single opinion (Marks, 2014, pp. 1-2, 8).

Al-Nahda had remained capable of adhering to its institutional unity, despite being exposed to some crises as the differences within the party were not unruly and did not lead to splits or the formation of new parties. Despite the rumors that emerged about the formation of a new party by one of the party’s leaders “Al-Makki”, but he completely denied this and stressed that there is no possibility of splits within the party, although the existence of some institutional difference as they are not that acute and there is a high degree of commitment to the party’s basic line (Fouad, 2018).

The party adopted the mechanism of holding meetings for the party’s members in the National Constituent Assembly in the form of small external groups to discuss views and reach an agreement on the topics that will be debated at the committees of the National Constituent Assembly. As for the important and controversial issues, they were discussed and voted on within the Shura Council of the party, which has the largest representative group in the party after first being presented to the subcommittees which classify these subjects as important and then have them transferred to the Shura Council. All this helped the Party’s performance in the process of drafting the constitution seemed consistent and made the party appear as a unified and homogeneous entity (Marks, 2014, pp. 8-10).

It is worth noting in this respect that after declaring Al-Nahda Party a national party not belonging to political Islamists till December 2018, there is no concrete evidence of a real
separation between religion and politics or organizational distinction between the party and the movement, and there has been no decisive end to the confusion between being a political party and a comprehensive social movement; it was limited to the party’s attempt to redefine itself and its priorities and to advocate for its specialization in political, and developmental issues, away from religious ones, reflecting the pragmatism that the party started to adopt (Khareegy, 2011). But this doesn’t mean that the party has totally given up its Islamic reference.

5. Building alliances
Before discussing the cases of Egypt and Tunisia regarding the ability of Islamist parties to build alliances with other political forces, it should be noted that the process of building alliances for newly formed parties in the wake of periods of popular uprising against tyrannical regimes is not an easy process. It represents the greatest challenge to the various forces and organizations. Despite the state of cohesion and unity that maybe was created by popular uprisings at the beginning, differences in perceptions about how the democratic process will proceed will soon arise, reflecting the complexity of the process of change and future shaping, especially with the existence of multiple formulations on the construction process progress scenarios (Fahmy, 2018). Part’s establishment in such exceptional circumstances often push it to start the process of incursion and focusing its control in state institutions in an attempt to achieve an overwhelming electoral victory leading it to monopolize power.

5.1 The Egyptian case
Although FJP initially attempted to appear to be understanding of the principles of democracy and political and partisan pluralism, it was unable to maintain much of this appearance. It did not take time to observe and comprehend the new state of affairs of Egyptian society; instead, it hastened to reap a set of quick material fruits. It also did not seek to create a state of consensus or real cooperation with the forces that want a real political change in Egypt, and then the clash with the other and failure to build alliances was its reign feature. Thus, the crises created by the party occurred successively; the referendum crisis on the constitutional amendments on March 19, 2011 with the civil and revolutionary forces: The Brotherhood transformed this clash into a religious conflict, using religious symbols and quoting Quranic verses, and succeeded in altering electoral behavior by claiming that the referendum is on Islamic legitimacy, which prompted one of the young Islamists to say in evaluation of the Brotherhood practices at that stage: “We failed to build on the deep values that emerged during the revolution, and instead of taking the time needed in the transitional period, we chose to find superficial political solutions”. Another Islamist added, “Moving towards elections so quickly was problematic, because many parts of the revolution were not represented in the political process” (Brown and Dunne, 2015).

Before the first parliamentary elections, the Brotherhood launched a project on the formation of an electoral coalition, called the “Democratic Coalition”. The idea was initially promoted by 12 political parties and then increased to 40. The coalition included parties such as the Arab Democratic Nasserite Party, Al-Adl Party, Al-Wasat Party, Egypt Freedom Party, Al-Karama Party and other various political parties in Egypt. After a short period and with the desire of the FJP to have the hegemony and control of electoral lists, the electoral coalition failed with the withdrawal of a large number of parties (Farahat, 2014).

The party not only controlled the parliament but also sought to accelerate its control of the executive power, by exercising pressure through the Parliament on the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to push the dismissal of the cabinet and the formation of a new one satisfactory
to the party. This reflected the party’s desire to take up the reins of government and state institutions, which led to the congregation of political forces opposing it (Al-Beshery, 2012). Following this crisis, the party breached its promises not to nominate a candidate for the presidential elections (Abdelfatah, 2013). The main reason behind this decision was the MB feeling that despite their victory in the parliamentary election it will not be able to have a full dominance over the lawmaking process in the aftermath of the constitutional declaration of March 2011 which limits the power of the parliament, leaving it with no real legislative power or supervision power on the government; besides, the implicit threats by the military council to dissolve the parliament (Jaraba, 2014, pp. 71-72). In the light of the attempt to justify this decision, Morsi said that MB does not have a lust for power, but the problem is that despite of their holding of the majority in the parliament they cannot carry out their duties (Pargeter, 2013). It was clear that the movement decided to run for the president to establish its control over the various political networks by filling any political vacuum, and it declared this decision in a joint statement with the FJP, which was an evidence on the real infiltration of the movement in the party and its decisions (BBC, 2012).

The FJP hastened to antagonize many political forces, which cost it a lot and led to the failure of its governance experience. This has escalated accusations against the Brotherhood that it betrayed the revolution and overturned it, as the FJP sought to marginalize the “non-Islamists” contributions to the constitution and isolated itself from the rest of the political forces; this might be largely due to the culture of the Brotherhood which is based on establishing a dividing line between its members and non-members, and seeking to make relations within it a closed family affair; a culture that evidently moved to the party due to the tight control of the movement on the party (Brown and Dunne, 2015).

The FJP sought to have its members prevail in the Constituent assembly established for the drafting of the constitution, and insisted that the representation of the Islamists to the civil stream in this committee be 55 to 45 per cent. This led many representatives of the civil parties to withdraw from the last meeting to set criteria for the formation of the Constituent assembly, such as the Free Egyptians Party and the Egyptian Democratic Party (Abdellateef, 2012). The Brotherhood tried to impose its views on the Constituent Assembly, which led to the withdrawal of representatives of Al-Azhar, the Church, parties and civil forces (Al-Deen et al., 2014).

After Morsi came to power, his policies led to political and religious polarization, and to intensify differences and divisions with the opposition (Al-Deen et al., 2014, p. 176) as was stated in the previous section.

The crisis of the constitutional declaration issued on November 22, 2012, in which he sought to gain further control for the Brotherhood and immune his decisions, not only led to a wave of anger and rejection by the parties and civil forces, but the crisis escalated to the extent of the resignation of many of the President’s advisers to confirm their protest against this declaration (Awad, 2014). Even in his relationship with the Islamists, although at the beginning it was indicative of a degree of convergence, but it soon entered a new phase in which there was a freeze of relations between the two sides, and even reached to hidden clash sometimes with Al-Noor Party, despite being ranked second in terms of parliamentary representation, as the presidency and the FJP ignored it and disappointed its expectations in getting an influential share in Kandil’s government or in the governors and city councils nominations (Shalata, 2017, pp. 79-81).

Tension returned again in the relationship between the FJP with Al-Noor, which accused the Brotherhood of seeking to control the top executive positions and giving the rest of the Islamist forces only honorary posts. Clash was heightened when Khalid Alam Eldin was dismissed from the advisory body and accused in a corruption case, and the Salafist Bassam
al-Zarqa, leader in Al-Noor Party and the President’s adviser for political affairs, resigned as a protest against the situation within the presidential institution (Shalata, 2017, pp. 79-80).

And what widened such polarization and antagonism and accelerated the fall of FJP what happened in Morsi’s famous speech at the stadium, celebrating the victory of the 6 October, as he responded to the critics that were directed to his government accusing it of spending around 3 million pounds on Gomaa prayers, including the expenditures on guarding the prayer, transfer fees, aeroplanes monitoring if there is any threat, by accusing them that they don’t even know the Fagr prayers. Besides, the paradox that resulted from the provoking and shocking presence of the terrorist figures behind the assassination of Al-Sadat in such celebration, while the real heroes of such victory from the armed forces were absent from the scene (Hussein, 2013).

5.2 The Tunisian case

The Egyptian and Tunisian cases had not only set different patterns in the decision-making process inside the Islamists parties but also set different patterns in the Islamists parties relationship with other forces for the same aforementioned reasons, while focusing on an important reason that affected the performance of Al-Nahda Party and its adherence to the option of national consensus, which was the effect of the fall of Islamists rule in Egypt in 2013. Thus, the features of Al-Nahda Party’s rule regarding its relationship with other forces can be summarized as follows: Since the early days of the rise of popular protests, consensus and adherence to national dialogue prevailed on the rhetoric and political practices of Al-Nahda, a language that it retained after that and never give it up. In December 2010, the Movement announced, in a statement after the outbreak of popular demonstrations, its solidarity with these protests and called on all political forces to hasten participation in national dialogue to face the escalating crisis in the country (AL-Nahda statement” Implications of burning nation”, 2010).

In early 2011, Al-Nahda called for the formation of a Constituent Assembly, representing all political trends and civil society institutions, and carrying out the task of drafting a democratic constitution for the country, laying the foundation of the parliamentary system and distributing power at the widest level. It also called on all opposition political forces to participate in a national dialogue aimed at laying the foundations of the new democratic societal project of Tunisia (Al-Nahda statement: Al-Nahda determines its stand from what’s happening in Tunisia, 2011). The fact that Al-Nahda Party sought to establish a mixed system in Tunisia with the expansion toward parliamentary system was a plus step for the party, as this system gives some degree of political protection against attempts to monopolize power (Al-Shobaky, 2016).

In February 2011, Al-Nahda called for starting to form a transitional national unity government supported by all political and social forces and after a series of extensive consultations in which no party is marginalized (Al-Nahda statement after the resignation of Al-Ghannushi government, 2011).

Al-Nahda Party in Tunisia did not seek at the beginning to seize all higher posts in the State, as did the FJP in Egypt, but preferred to share these posts with the moderate liberal and leftist forces. It did not participate in the presidential elections in which Marzouqi of the Congress Party for Freedom was a candidate, and left the post of the chairman of the Constituent Assembly of the Constitution for Mustapha Ben Jafar of the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties, while it took over the presidency of the government through Hammad Al-Jabali (Al-Shobaky, 2016, p. 137).

Unlike the FJP, which witnessed many crises in its relationship with the other, Al-Nahda’s elites succeeded in overcoming many crises with other parties’ elites, especially
liberals, which enabled it in 2014 to release the new Tunisian constitution with a semi-general approval (Al-Deen et al., 2014, pp. 178, 180). Al-Nahda’s experience in dealing with society reflected a real understanding of the nature of the societal context in which it existed, which was closer to secularism and far from being religious and conservative. It did not seek to be strict with the society or to impose a certain religious and moral system that might clash with the Western culture in which it existed and did not try to enter into confrontation that would lead to hostility with the society and political forces, by trying to conform to the general trend in the state and society (Saleh, 2012, Vol. 47, Issue 188, p. 22).

The party refused policies of exclusion, rejecting what was known as the political isolation law. Such vision represented an understanding of democracy and its mechanisms, as it considered that people will judge the symbols of the former regime through ballot boxes, not by exclusion, and that in contrary with the Egyptian case. Moreover, Al-Ghannushi made a statement prior to the elections, that even if he obtained parliamentary majority, he would form a coalition government and will not seek to control government for Tunisia’s interest, development and stability (Al-Shobaky, 2016, p. 126, pp. 128-129).

The experience of the coalition government (Troika) led by Al-Nahda is the first experience of participatory rule witnessed by an Arab state between Islamists and secularists. The belonging to the revolution’s objectives combined the two different streams, with political consensus as their slogan (Solaymani, 2017; Al-Shobaky, 2016, p. 126).

Al-Nahda Party, under the judicious leadership of Al-Ghannushi, managed to feel the tension in Tunisia’s internal political scene and the protests in June 2013 against the Brotherhood’s rule in Egypt, and realized that the experience of the Islamists in government became at stake after its popularity subsided and faced reverse repercussions due to policies of authoritarian substitution, the survival foundations of the Islamist parties in power began to fall across the Arab countries, and the survival of these parties as a legitimate political faction became threatened by emulative linkage equations (AbdelSalam, 2014). As a result, Al-Nahda responded to its opponent bloc that demanded its abdication of power (Fakir, 2017). Therefore, the government of Ali AL-Areed was formed and did not last much as the assassination of the opposition leftist MP Mohamed Brahmi in July 2013 revived the crisis, escalated demonstrations against Al-Nahda, and the opposition withdrew from the Constituent council (Al-Deen et al., 2014, p. 179).

Then came the second response of Al-Nahda when Al-Ghannushi met with the head of Nidaa Tunis movement, who was leading the calls for the departure of the Troika and the dissolution of all the institutions ensuing of the elections of the Constituent Council (Solaymani, p. 5). Then Al-Nahda Party accepted the quartet’s invitation, sponsored by the Tunisian General Labour Union, the Tunisian Confederation of Industry and Trade, the Tunisian Bar Deanery and the Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights, for the participation of the Troika and the Tunisian opposition in launching a national dialogue, and Al-Nahda accepted the outcome of the dialogue, i.e. Al-Nahda Party agreement to renounce power in January 2014 in favor of a government of technocrats that would prepare for the subsequent electoral merits (Al-Shobaky, 2016, pp. 49-50). Al-Ghannushi declared his acceptance of the political partnership with other political forces in Tunisia and that the concern of the Al-Nahda is not occupying higher posts but for the party to be influential and a partner in the situation in Tunisia and achieving stability in the country (Al-Ghannushi, 2016), which reflected that the party prevails national interest over its own interests. It also reflected the party’s understanding that, apart from electoral legitimacy, there was a legitimacy of achievement that it could not achieve through the Troika coalition.

At the elections, the party managed to get second place with 69 seats, after Nidaa Tunis party received the first place with 85 seats (Al-Shobaky, 2016, pp. 50-51), that is, the party
managed to continue as a partner in the Tunisian political scene and to retain a place within the new coalition government despite the difficulties that can be envisaged in an alliance between two forces that had such extent of political tension, especially as Nidaa Tunis led the sit-in against Al-Nahda, which is a plus point for Al-Nahda and indicates to which extent it has become flexible in terms of the formation of political alliances, capable of adapting to the political scene shifts, and believing in an important political principle: “yesterday’s enemies might become tomorrow’s allies”.

The party has expressed its desire to save the experience of consensus and participatory governance to a large extent, by accepting that its share in the government be, despite holding the second-place parliamentary bloc, only one ministerial portfolio and 3 Secretaries of State, while this government was formed of 40 members (23 ministers, 3 accredited ministers and 14 Secretaries of State). It is a symbolic and insignificant participation that does not match its weight within the parliament, and thus the second ruling coalition in Tunisia was established (Solaymani, pp. 5-7).

Regarding the presidential elections held in September 2014, the party decided not to nominate a candidate for the electoral competition on this seat and declared that it allows its members to choose the right candidates they believe could lead the democratic path in Tunisia (Al-Sayed, 2016). With this, analysts of the situation in the Arab region started to distinguish more precisely between Al-Nahda in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Marks, 2014, p. 7).

In July 2016, the parliament withdrew confidence from the government led by Al-Habib Al-sayd after the Tunisian President Bej Al-Sebsi announced his intention to form a national unity government, thus bringing the Tunisian political scene and political forces into a state of confusion. Following the announcement, a series of consultations led by Al-Sebsi began to form the government. These consultations ended on 13 July 2016 with the declaration of the “Carthage Document”, which included the signing of nine political parties and three national organizations. Al-Nahda succeeded in retaining a place in this document, thus remaining an effective component in the new political order (Solaymani, 2017, p. 7).

6. Results

The way in which the political parties were established, their relationship with the Social movements from which they emerged and their previous stands from party formation have institutional consequences on the political party. Parties formed under exceptional circumstances, such as popular uprisings and the resulting partisan liquidity, are less respectful of law and more willing to achieve rapid and huge electoral victories to reach power. Moreover, it is necessary to achieve functional and organizational separation between the party and the movement it emerged from so that the party can manage and conduct political work in an independent and flexible way and to be able to read the current balance of power. If not, it often ends with the party’s failure to rule, eroding its legitimacy and collapsing.

It seems that Al-Nahda party had managed to escape the fate of the MB in Egypt and learnt the lesson behind its one-year-rule experience. And it was able to determine that its main target is to achieve political survival and to secure its active presence on the political arena by showing its capabilities to adapt with the changes and challenges in the surrounding environment, its flexibility in making compromises and building alliances with other political powers and the necessity of creating dividing lines between the movement and the party even if this will result in losing some of its supporters.
References
Al-Beshery, T. (2012), From the Papers of the 25th Revolution, Dar Al-Sherouk, Cairo.
Al-Ghannushi, R. (2012), Public freedoms in the Islamic State(part 2). Dar Al shrouk, Cairo.
Al-Nahda statement after the resignation of Al-Ghanushi government (2011), available at: www.enmahda.tn/%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%87%D8%B6%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8% (accessed 23 December 2018).


Christiansen, J. (2009), Four Stages of Social Movements. Research Starters, EBSCO Publishing Inc.


Fahmy, S.M. (2018), The Change in the Political Opportunity Structures in the Time of Revolutionary Mobility: A Study of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Faculty of Economics and Political science, Cairo University, Cairo.


Khareegy, I. (2011), “Al-Nahda experience in separating politics from religion: historical change or a dangerous game”, available at: www.sharqforum.org/2016/09/26/%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%B5%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%81%D8%B5%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8-%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%BA/?lang=ar (accessed 31 October 2018).


Further reading
Al-Nahda (2019a), Al-Nahda official website, available at: www.ennahdha.tn/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D9%85%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%AD%D9%87-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A4%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%B1 (accessed 11 June 2018).

Al-Nahda (2019b), Al-Nahda official website, available at: www.ennahdha.tn/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%89 (accessed 16 May 2018).


Corresponding author
Nora Medhat Abdelkader can be contacted at: nora.kawser@feps.edu.eg

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website: www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm
Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com