Abstract

Political Islam has been present in the Middle East for a long time. However, the critical yet tumultuous political situation that started in Tunisia in early 2011 and then spread to many Arab states like Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria provided a significant period of opportunity for the development of political Islamic power. This paper focuses on the following issues: whether Arab states will seek extremism or embrace democracy, and what political direction will Arab states take in the future?

After the collapse of the Mubarak regime, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has completed a remarkable transformation from the suppressed to the ruling party by winning the parliamentary and presidential elections successively. Generally recognized as the ideological framework of Middle East Islamic organizations, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is considered integral to Political Islam in the region. Scholars look at the Muslim Brotherhood’s reputation, political course, ideas and future trends.

This paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides full introduction to the background, organizational structure, capital resources and military organization of the Egypt Muslim Brotherhood as well as the doctrine of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s founder Hassan al-Banna. The second chapter explores Muslim Brotherhood’s history and political course from 1936-2010 and the Muslim Brotherhood’s relationships with Faruq Royal, Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak are explored. Chapter Two also focuses on the transition of the Muslim Brotherhood from moderate to radical, then rectification to current integration into the existing regime. Chapter Three explores the internationalization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and selectively introduces the branches of other Arab Brotherhood in the Middle East, Europe and the US. Chapter Four focuses on analyzing Egypt Muslim Brotherhood’s role and strategy adopted in the January 25 Revolution as well as conflicts with the military, judiciary and secular parties. The conflicts center on power, the constitution, and Islamic Democracy as advocated by the Muslim Brotherhood after taking power.
As the conclusion, Chapter Five provides an overall survey of Middle East Political Islam after reviewing the history of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

This paper demonstrates that for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, moderates always play the leading role and pragmatism is a consistent position. However, its goal of practicing Islamic Law and establishing an Islamic state will invariably continue. Due to external and internal factors, it is unlikely that the state will go for extremism, therefore it is biased to accuse them of supporting terrorism. The links between Egypt’s head office and branches are overstated. In terms of the Middle East as a whole, the ruling class and western scholars are critical of Political Islam and either distort or ignore Political Islam’s effort for legal participation. Islamic Democracy may be suitable to the development of the region, but the rise of Political Islam reflects the distinct signs of the times in the region. Whether or not Islamic Democracy will succeed and how long the trend of Political Islam will last are issues subject to many internal and external factors.