Abstract

The Crisis of Political Islam Movements
In the Arab World

The present book reviews the proceedings of a specialized symposium titled Crisis of Middle East Political Islam Movements, held by the MESC on November 17, 2013. It was joined by a number of specialists and Jordanian and Arab personalities interested in political Islam movements. Several critical issues were discussed, such as whether such groups do have a crisis as well as the nature and its repercussions to the region. Another topic was the significance of 'contextualizing' the dilemmas so that their consequence to one country may not impact the entire ideology. Finally, there was the role of the "deformation" campaigns, wondering why they were absent during the uprisings, in contrast with the situation later and whether such groups can restore their positive image.

Although these issues are seen to have positive backgrounds rather than being crises, going through crises is normal in the post-uprising stage. Such dilemmas need to be accurately identified, away from the exaggeration of the media, which would help determine the priorities of effort for the stage. Islamists are also asked to admit their crises along with other political movements, instead of escapism to the future, which the previous regimes used to follow.

According to the book, the most difficult crisis is that that which comes from the inside. For instance, there are still voices in the leadership of these groups which demand for refraining from the elaboration on democracy. This shows a crisis in the making of the project and vision to satisfy their own members. Thus, straightforward, conclusive answers need to be provided on various issues like women and freedom according to ideological, cultural and realistic factors. If this happens, such movements would determine its current stage, targets and means, away from the discourse of the 1940's which adopted an emotional rather than intellectual approach.

On the external level, political flexibility and the participation of other movements represent the responsibilities of the current stage regardless of the ballot results. As for the lack of experience, it is believed to be

compensated only by political practice. On the other hand, their basic challenge is to find solutions to the heavy legacies of corruption and weak planning. These are essentially attributed to the absence of the partnership culture between various Arab political parties, the problem of the Islamist groups' discourse and all these movements' surprise by the brisk shifts faced by their modest popular presence in spite of their elite influence.

The book also investigates the backgrounds of such crises. For example, the various Arab political and social movements have been living in a state of conflict for more than a century over many issues such as 'identity'. Thus, the resulting current stage is likely to take long until the conflict comes to an end. It is exclusion and dictatorship which are to blame for close-mindedness and the various movements' deprivation of preparing and evaluating their own serious political and economic programmes by means of practice and then correcting them, as well as by their cooperation in their common interests. Furthermore, all of them, among whom are the Islamists, constitute part of a failure political, economic and social system at all levels. Therefore, if they are to reach the success of the decades-long stable parties in the West, that would require extended time and effort.

With respect to the challenges, there are those of Israel, the US and other big countries, in addition to the armies, parties and political movements associated with the previous regimes. According to the book, the agreement of all these to violently counter the Islamists indicates the latter's success, or at least their possession of a project likely to advance in a great way.

It is also argued that the best thing the Islamists have gained in Egypt, despite the destruction, is the coup. Their leaders have shown extraordinary steadfastness – in spite of their pursuit – along with their broad public support – in spite of the excessive use of force by the military.

In conclusion, a number of recommendations are made at intellectual and structural levels as well as solutions to political and social problems. Some of these need responsible decisions, some could be treated in the short-run and some require long years' hard work until tangible change is found.