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MUSLIM POLITICS WITHOUT AN
“ISLAMIC” STATE:

CAN TURKEY’S JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY
BE A MODEL FOR ARAB ISLAMISTS?

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MUSLIM POLITICS WITHOUT AN “ISLAMIC” STATE: CAN TURKEY’S JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY BE A MODEL FOR ARAB ISLAMISTS?

INTRODUCTION

In September 2012, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) organized a major congress to celebrate its decade-long rule in Turkey. In his address, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan noted that his party “showed everybody that democracy can work very well in a country with a Muslim-majority population” and thus was “an example for all Muslim countries.”² At the congress, speeches were given by Egyptian president Muhammad Morsi and Hamas chief Khaled Meshaal – just two of several Islamist leaders in attendance. Indeed, there has been growing interest, in both Muslim countries and beyond, in the AKP’s leadership as a model for governance. In the wake of the Arab Spring, influential figures ranging from former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to noted Islamic philosopher Tariq Ramadan have promoted the idea of “Turkish model” for new Arab regimes.³ It is an idea that also has resonance in the Arab world. In a recent poll, 44 percent of Egyptians said that they would like their political system to resemble that of Turkey; France, meanwhile, scored 10 percent, Saudi Arabia eight percent, and Iran only one percent.⁴

An “AKP model” has been proposed by those, in both the West and the Middle East, who fear that Arab Islamists will turn their states into Sunni versions of Iran – intolerant, authoritarian, and anti-Western. With Islamists rising to power across the region, such debates have become more important than ever.⁵ Critics, however, have dismissed the prospect of this model being taken up by Islamists in the Arab world, arguing that the AKP’s defense of secularism makes it an improbable source of in-

spiration. This paper proposes the opposite. The AKP’s success in practicing “Muslim politics”⁶ without seeking the establishment of an Islamic state – a state whose constitution declares *sharia* to be the source of law – makes it an appropriate and worthy example for Arab Islamists.

ROLE MODELS: BEYOND SEMANTICS

Discussions of the Turkish or any other “model” can get bogged down in semantics. To avoid conceptual confusion, it is worth keeping certain points in mind. First, the term “model” does not imply carbon copying or cloning. Turkey’s political system can inspire Arab neighbors without necessitating a wholesale adoption of its model. Second, the idea is not that the historical experience of a model country must be repeated; it is the end product that is of primary interest. Historical tensions or socioeconomic differences between Turkey and the Arab world, therefore, need not be an obstacle. Finally, countries do not have to actively export their model for it to have an impact; rather, the ideas involved can be transmitted through a variety of channels, including political parties, NGOs, universities, the media, and broader cultural exchange. This interplay of ideas, then, extends well beyond the realm of Turkish foreign policy.

Skeptics argue that the unique aspects of the Turkish case mean that it cannot easily be taken up as model. It is worth noting that other supposedly “exceptional” cases – the United States and France, for instance – have often become models for others. Moreover, Turkey’s exceptionalism – in terms of

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the shape of the country’s civil-military relations and the strength of its secularist tradition – is more myth than reality. In many other countries, the military enjoys a similar role as the most trusted among the state’s institutions.⁷ There are 19 other countries, meanwhile, that combine a nominally secular state with a Muslim-majority society.⁸ A recent moderation of Turkey’s secularism and a growing role for Islam in the public sphere have also somewhat diminished perceived differences between Turkey and its neighbors in the Arab world.⁹

Turkey has provided different “models” in different spheres, depending on the time period in question.¹⁰ Some of those – such as assertive secularist state policies or military tutelage over elected politicians – are no longer relevant given the state of the country today. In the contemporary context, Turkey’s economic and socio-religious models (e.g. the “Anatolian Tigers” and the Gülen movement¹¹) often draw interest. In the context of the Arab Spring, the AKP – Turkey’s pro-Islamic ruling party and the winner of the country’s last five national elections – provides the most relevant political model. This paper, then, focuses primarily on the AKP as a model for Islamists in the Arab world.¹² It argues that the AKP’s pragmatic understanding of Muslim politics, which is compatible with “passive secularism,” can provide important lessons for the Islamist parties that are now the rising power in the Arab world.

THE AKP MODEL: PASSIVE, NOT ASSERTIVE, SECULARISM

During a three-country tour in September 2011, Prime Minister Erdoğan’s call for a secular state in Arab countries became his most controversial message. Erdoğan began his visit to Egypt with an interview on a popular television talk show. He stressed that “there are multiple interpretations of secularism,” and that his party defines the secular state “as being neutral toward all religious groups.” He argued that in the process of democratization, “Egypt will consider that a secular state is not anti-religious but guarantees religious freedom.” He noted that “the state should respect and protect even

an atheist.”¹³ A spokesman of the Muslim Brotherhood criticized these remarks as an intervention into Egypt’s internal affairs.¹⁴ Erdoğan repeated the same message in Tunisia and Libya, stressing that “a Muslim can successfully run a secular state.”¹⁵ His emphasis on secularism became a lightning rod for critics arguing against the applicability of the AKP model in the Arab world.¹⁶ Indeed, the gap between the AKP and groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood may at times appear too wide to be breached; the Brotherhood and others regularly declare their outright opposition to any notion of secularism. It should be recalled, however, that concepts of “secularism” vary significantly; as recently as 2008, the AKP itself was defined by a majority in Turkey’s Constitutional Court as being “anti-secular” and only narrowly escaped a move to have it shut it down on those grounds.

In order to clarify the picture, it helps to identify two types of secularism. “Assertive secularism” requires the state to play an active role in excluding religion from the public sphere and making it a private affair. Countries that embrace this form of secularism include France, Mexico, and, until recently, Tunisia. “Passive secularism,” on the other hand, requires the state to assume a passive role in accommodating the public visibility of religion. It is the dominant paradigm in the United States, the Netherlands, and Senegal, among others.¹⁷ Assertive secularism has been dominant in Turkey for the great majority of the past century. Recently, however, pro-Islamic forces, especially the AKP and the Gülen movement, have succeeded in moving Turkey toward passive secularism by defeating assertive secularists in elections and pushing them back in civil society, the media, and the bureaucracy.¹⁸ What Erdoğan defended on his visit to Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya was passive, not assertive, secularism, which is neutral toward citizens’ diverse religious identities.

The secular state (whether assertive or passive) in Turkey and elsewhere has two main pillars: it demands that no religious institution supersede the state’s executive, legislative, and judicial bodies and that there be no official state religion. The first measure is critical to democratic principles of pop-

ular sovereignty, representation, and accountability. Even the procedural minimum definition of democracy insists on “the absence of nonelected ‘tutelary’ authorities (e.g., militaries, monarchies, or religious bodies) that limit elected officials’ power to govern.”¹⁹ If Arab Islamists establish unelected religious institutions with the authority to strike down legislation based on their understanding of sharia, then this institution will in effect supersede elected bodies. Constitutional references to sharia need not, in themselves, limit the people’s ability to legislate freely, which is central to any democracy. A degree of flexibility can be maintained by allowing diverse interpretations of sharia. Giving an institution the constitutional role of defining Islamic law, however, represents a significant blow to the foundational tenets of democracy.

The second pillar of the secular state – that there be no official religion – is less important for the effective functioning of democracy. There are many democratic regimes with established religions, including England, Denmark, Greece, Israel, and Bangladesh.²⁰ Even outwardly secular states often favor particular faiths without officially establishing them as “state religions.” France, for example, offers advantages to members of its majority faith that are not available to others.²¹ Turkey, meanwhile, has a governmental agency (Diyanet) that represents Sunni Islam and employs imams in mosques. As long as non-Muslim minorities are not discriminated against, constitutional declarations of Islam as the official religion should not be an obstacle to the emergence of passive secularist democracy in Arab countries.²²

It is worth noting that the semantic debate about secularism often becomes a sticking point in the Arab world. Due in large part to the history of secular Arab autocracies, “secular state” and “secularism” have negative connotations in many Arab countries, and especially among Islamists. Other terms such as “neutral state” could, therefore, be used to replace references to secularism in legal texts or daily discourse. In fact, according to an analysis of the constitutions of 166 countries around the world, only 27 use the term “secular” when defining the state.²³ As many as 13 out of 46 Muslim-majority

countries, meanwhile, use the term “secular” to define the state in their constitutions.²⁴

Observing the relationship between Islam and the state in various countries reveals an assortment of different models. At one end of the spectrum are those states that have declared themselves to be secular (e.g., Turkey) or that declare Islam to be their official religion without mentioning sharia (e.g., Tunisia). Others, which could be described as different kinds of Islamic states, refer to sharia as a source of law (e.g., Egypt before 2012) and sometimes grant a religious institution the role of interpreting Islamic law (e.g., Egypt after 2012). In the most extreme cases, religious institutions have authority to strike down legislation and even veto candidates in elections (e.g., Iran).

In order to illustrate the ways in which the freedom to legislate may be frustrated in the different cases, it helps to consider a scenario in which a new civil law that promotes gender equality (and contradicts orthodox interpretations of sharia) is proposed. In the first and second models there will be no problem. In the third model – where sharia is referred to as a source of law, but its definition remains vague – such legislation could still be possible so long as the country’s constitutional court did not try to stop it. In the fourth model, passing such legislation would be extremely difficult, as the religious institution in question would be likely to oppose it. In the fifth, the legislation would be nearly impossible, as religious authorities would themselves have the power to prevent it.

The first model – that of the AKP – demonstrates the possibility of pursuing Muslim politics without establishing an “Islamic state.” Even if the constitutions of new Arab regimes declare Islam as their official religion (following the second model) or choose not to use the term secularism in their legal lexicon, they will still be closer to the AKP model than the Iranian model so long as they do not recognize a religious institution with a monopoly over the meaning of sharia. The crucial issue is whether the final word in the law-making processes of new Arab regimes rests with elected bodies or with unelected religious institutions.

THE AKP MODEL: MUSLIM, BUT NOT ISLAMIST

Another key characteristic of the AKP is its pragmatic understanding of Muslim politics. It is this understanding which allows the party to comfortably occupy a position somewhere between assertive secularism on the one hand and Islamism on the other. According to this perspective, Muslim individuals and groups can promote their Islamic views in a democratic system through legislative processes, participation in political or judicial institutions, and engagement with civil society and the media.²⁵ They can reflect Islamic ethics by, for instance, fighting corruption and nepotism, or promoting justice. Islamic parties can also promote their diverse understandings of sharia through free and democratic processes. In this way, there is no need to formally name the state “Islamic” in order to promote Islamic principles in politics. After all, there are many outwardly “Islamic states” that in reality fail to uphold what many would perceive to be Islamic principles in their everyday politics.

On its critical stance toward Islamism and the need for an “Islamic state,” the AKP is in agreement with other major religious actors in Turkey, including the influential Gülen movement. According to public surveys, although seventy percent of Turks are practicing Muslims, only nine percent of them support a sharia-based state.²⁶ Polls reflect much higher levels of support for sharia law in Arab countries. The same Arab world surveys, however, also indicate overwhelming support of democracy, pointing to a belief in – or at least a desire for – compatibility between democracy and their religious sensitivities.

Criticisms of Islamism among Muslim groups in Turkey (such as the AKP and the Gülen movement) generally see it as being too formalistic. They often argue that Islamists focus disproportionately on issues related to criminal law and restrictions of women’s rights in ways that actually undermine Islam’s moral principles and ethical goals.²⁷ For example, they would argue that given Islam’s emphasis on the importance of cleanliness, it is inappropriate for a country to debate the place of sharia in its constitution while its major cities struggle to

dispose of their garbage. These critics also argue that by defining the state as Islamic, rulers may want to use religious legitimacy as an instrument to avoid accountability or justify unpopular actions. In such contexts, these rulers’ mistakes may open Islam itself to criticism. Putting God’s name into a state’s flag, they add, does not honor Islam; instead, it sacralizes the state. Finally, they point out that the visions of utopia invoked by Islamists in opposition have largely failed to provide sufficient freedoms in the few instances where they have come to power (e.g., Iran, Sudan, and Afghanistan).

Secularists in Turkey and Arab countries have made similar criticisms. Those criticisms, though, are all the more powerful when they came from the AKP, given the party’s own experience dealing with these issues. The party’s founders explicitly renounced their old Islamist ideas when founding the AKP. In the face of domestic and internal pressures, they acknowledged the problems that their Islamism brought with it, on both theoretical and practical grounds. Skeptics have asked whether the AKP has genuinely embraced secularism or whether this shift was more a result of institutional constraints. It is an important question to ask when considering whether the AKP’s passive secularism can be replicated in the Arab world, where those institutional constraints do not exist to the same degree. The short answer is, “both.”

There is always a link between ideological transformation and institutional constraints. The shift of AKP leaders from Islamism to passive secularism involved a complex process, which will only be described briefly here.²⁸ Three structural factors were important in encouraging this transformation. First, Western countries and institutions with strong ties to Turkey did not want to see an Islamist regime emerge there. Second, the Turkish military used its tutelage of politics to curb any attempts to stray from the country’s secularist tradition, resorting to direct coups when necessary. Finally, the majority of Turkish society in fact shared the criticisms of Islamism summarized above – likely a result of the country’s secularist tradition, the strength of moderate interpretations of Islam there, and the experience of observing so-called Islamic states else-

where in the region. Turkey’s history of multiparty elections since 1950 had shown that a truly Islamist party would struggle to receive even a quarter of the national vote. AKP leaders realized that under these circumstances, they could not rule Turkey with an Islamist ideology and thus embraced a new democratic and passive secularist discourse. This stance eventually allowed them to overcome barriers imposed by the military while maintaining relatively good relations with the West. The party is now the strongest in the country and received 50 percent of the vote in 2011’s parliamentary elections.

It is important not to overemphasize the structural dimensions of the AKP’s transformation while ignoring the agency of the party’s leaders, especially Erdoğan, now President Abdullah Gül, and now Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç. As the party shifted from Islamism to passive secularism, these figures demonstrated leadership and succeeded in persuading their followers of the party’s new course. After more than a decade in power, they have shown no plans to take country in the direction of a sharia-based state. The 2008 case mentioned above, which accused the AKP of anti-secularism, was only able to refer to the party’s efforts to lift restrictions on wearing the headscarf in universities, improve opportunities for graduates of the Islamic Imam-Hatip schools, and expand the teaching of the Quran. Furthermore, AKP politicians have been much more successful than their assertive secularist predecessors in terms of expanding the rights of Christian and Jewish associations – for instance, in helping them to recover properties that had previously been confiscated.

It is worth noting that despite the structural constraints referred to above, other Islamist parties in Turkey did not undergo a similar transformation and have remained on the margins as a result – again pointing to the importance of leadership and agency in bringing change. Regardless of the “genealogy” of the AKP’s transformation, then, its decade-long experience of rule in Turkey can inspire Arab politicians.

As already mentioned, a country need not repeat another country’s historical experience to look to

it as a model. A closer look does reveal, however, that Arab states share a number of the structural factors that led to the transformation of the AKP. The financial, political, and even military support of Western countries and institutions is crucial for the consolidation of democracy in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya.²⁹ Needless to say, Western actors would prefer not to see sharia-based states in these countries. It is certainly true that in Arab countries the military does not, as in Turkey, play a role as the guardian of secularism and that there is far greater popular support for sharia in the Arab world. Yet each of these countries has conditions of its own that provide incentives for Islamists to transform and moderate their ambitions. Egypt, for example, has a Christian minority that constitutes ten percent of its population, while in Turkey only one percent of the population is non-Muslim. In Egypt and Tunisia, the military and security services that formerly oppressed Islamists still hold considerable power. In Morocco, a monarchy that enjoys significant popular support is a major institutional constraint for Islamists. While Turkey does have a uniquely strong secular elite, several Arab countries, particularly Tunisia and Egypt, also have “secular” elites that enjoy a position of some strength, including remnants of old autocracies, liberals, and young revolutionaries.

While Turkey’s military certainly played a role in shaping the AKP’s transformation, its importance should not be exaggerated. For one thing, repression of the sort practiced by Turkey’s generals does not always lead to moderation. In cases such as the Shah’s Iran and Algeria in the 1990s, for example, repression resulted in further radicalization of Islamists. Today, the Turkish military has lost its political supremacy over politicians.³⁰ In fact, around 400 military officers, including 72 active duty generals and admirals, have been arrested for planning secularist coups against the AKP. Despite the declining strength of the secular establishment, however, the AKP continues to reject the application of Islamism and even calls on Arab states to embrace its own example of passive secularism.³¹

THE AKP MODEL: PRAGMATIC, NOT RADICAL

The AKP has acted pragmatically on various policy issues, including the relationship between Islam and secularism. It regularly considers the balance of power in Turkey, as well as in world politics, prior to taking a stance on any given issue. The official party document elaborating its “conservative democratic” ideology provides further insight into this pragmatism.³² With the term “conservative,” the party seeks to highlight its prudence and emphasis on gradual change while rejecting any type of radicalism (be it assertive secularist, Islamist, socialist, or liberal). In its criticisms of French Jacobinism and rationalist radicalism, the party’s conservatism refers to thinkers such as Michael Oakeshott and Edmund Burke.³³

Arab Islamist parties are likely to take the AKP’s pragmatism seriously given its success on several fronts. Domestically, the party’s policies on economic development, universal health coverage, and housing projects have played a big part in ensuring its victories in five national elections (three parliamentary and two municipal).

Internationally, the AKP has succeeded in convincing the United States and European countries that a party with roots in Islamism can be a reliable ally. One could argue that the AKP experience in the 2000s is one of the reasons why Western countries are today more tolerant toward Islamists in states affected by the Arab Spring. Western governments’ relatively warm reception of democratically elected Islamists after 2011 contrasts strongly with their hostility toward Islamist groups in the 1990s.³⁴ Erdoğan has shown unprecedented flexibility in his foreign policy, pursuing often paradoxical and risky policies. For example, he has strongly criticized Israel³⁵ while maintaining good relations with the United States, and he rejected new sanctions on Iran in the United Nations Security Council while accepting the deployment of NATO’s anti-Iran radar system in Eastern Turkey.

Among other things, then, the AKP presents a model of how a Muslim-majority country can engage with

the West in a friendly but critical way. Reacting to German and French opposition to Turkey’s membership to the European Union, as well as to rising Islamophobia, Erdoğan has never shied away from criticizing European countries; yet he has also been committed to Turkey’s membership in NATO and other Western institutions. Maintaining warm relations with Western countries has been central to the AKP’s successes in promoting economic growth and development.

In addition to providing a formula for addressing the relationship between Islam and politics, the AKP model can show Arab Islamists that a similarly pragmatic approach to domestic and international politics (rather than insisting on uncompromising or inflexible policies) can bring important dividends.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE AKP: OVERCOMING LIMITATIONS

As mentioned, there are a number of limitations to the idea of the AKP as a model for Islamist (and non-Islamist) parties in the Arab world related to Turkey’s particular historical experience (including a longstanding democratic process, free-market economics, and membership in Western organizations). Beyond this, there are certain areas of the AKP experience that require further attention from the party itself if it is to crystallize its model and act as an example for Arab Islamist parties.

In terms of encouraging Turkey’s shift from assertive to passive secularism, the AKP can claim several achievements. Among them, as previously cited, are expanding legal rights and returning properties of Christian and Jewish foundations, an end to discrimination against graduates of Imam-Hatip schools,³⁶ and the lifting of a ban on teaching the Quran to students under 12 years old. Nevertheless, there are many areas in need of further reform. The headscarf ban is still in effect in various realms of Turkish public life, although several universities have *de facto* abolished it. The Diyanet should become an autonomous entity with a budget supplied by religious foundations, instead of through government funding. A board of trustees should be

responsible for appointing its president, not the government. Official restrictions on Alevi rituals and certain Christian and Jewish institutions, such as the Greek-Orthodox Halki Seminary, should also be removed.

The new Turkish constitution presents an opportunity to address some of these problems. In 2011, all four parties in Parliament agreed on the need to draft a new constitution and established a specific committee for the purpose. Beyond those issues related to secularism, various social and political groups expect the new document to reform civil-military relations and to guarantee the cultural rights of Kurds.

On the question of Muslim politics, many would question whether the AKP has really been able to reflect Islamic ethics and values on crucial issues such as fighting corruption and nepotism; promoting meritocracy; and resolving ethnic conflict, for instance in the case of the Kurdish question.³⁷ Another area of criticism has been the party's record on ensuring freedom of expression and association. The AKP still has a long way to go on these issues.

The AKP model also suffers from a lack of sufficient articulation, due to a scarcity of theoretical works on the party and its views on secularism and the state. Among the reasons for this is the legacy of Turkey's 80 years of assertive secularism, during which discussions and publications related to Islamic political thought were either banned or marginalized. Muslim actors in Turkey have had to focus on practice rather than theory. Erdoğan's charismatic leadership, meanwhile, has also prevented other party members from making intellectual contributions and engaging in ideational debates. To some extent, a strong emphasis on the leader's charisma has deprived the party of a culture of intellectual activism and dynamism.

To provide a clearer, more attractive model for Islamists and non-Islamists in the Arab world, the AKP must foster greater intellectual engagement with Arab audiences. Aside from the book on conservative democracy cited above, there are very few AKP documents with intellectual depth in Turkish, let alone in Arabic. One source of information is

the pro-AKP think-tank SETA, which has recently become more active in producing publications on Arab politics. SETA has begun to publish an Arabic-language equivalent (*Ru'ya Turkiyyah*) of its academic journal *Insight Turkey* and has started organizing conferences in Arab countries.

CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ISLAMISTS: PERSUASION AND STRATEGY

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk became the president of Turkey in 1923 and launched his assertive secularist policies a year later. In the following decades, similarly secular leaders led other major Muslim-majority countries – Reza Shah in Iran, Muhammad Ali Jinnah in Pakistan, Sukarno in Indonesia, Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, and Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia. Decades later, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 ushered in a new wave of Islamist republicanism. Although they came to power in only a handful of countries, Islamists often became a major opposition force and pressure group across the Arab and Muslim world. There is now a middle ground emerging between the assertive secularism of Turkey's past and the marriage of state and religion seen in Iran today. Some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Senegal) and Southeast Asia (e.g., Indonesia) have recently shown that democracy, passive secularism, and Muslim political activism can coexist. Through the leadership of the AKP, Turkey has become the first successful example of this coexistence in the Middle East.

The AKP is providing Islamist and non-Islamist Arab parties with a model of Muslim politics in a passive secularist, rather than Islamic, state. This formula also promises a critical dialogue with Western countries. The three pillars of the AKP model – pragmatism, Muslim politics, and passive secularism – are interrelated. The party's pragmatism encourages it to pursue policies for their substantive, not ideological, worth. At the same time, a commitment to promoting Islamic values allows the party to pursue Muslim politics in a secular state.

The most likely followers of the AKP model are mainstream Islamist parties, including al-Nahda of

Tunisia, the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in Morocco and, to a lesser extent, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in Egypt. Regardless of their ideational persuasion, strategic calculations may also encourage these parties to lean toward the AKP model, given their political struggles with both secularists and Salafis. Tending toward the AKP model could be a good strategy for contesting both secularists, who fear (and manipulate the fear of) sharia, and Salafis, who seek to impose radical interpretations of Islamic law. The pragmatic, democratic discourse exemplified by the AKP would allow these parties to both reassure liberals and challenge Salafis from a position of strength. Mainstream Islamists cannot compete with Salafis on the strict interpretation of sharia; their only hope for sidelining these groups is to present a discourse that is based on democratic freedoms but does not compromise Muslim values. If moderate Islamist groups fail to consolidate their control of this middle ground, it is likely that other parties (such as the Strong Egypt Party, led by former Brotherhood leader Abdel Moneim Abul Futouh) will rise to challenge them for it.

Among mainstream Arab Islamist parties, Tunisia’s al-Nahda and Morocco’s PJD seem closest to the AKP model. Neither of these parties calls for a constitutional reference to sharia. Since 2007, the PJD has toned down its emphasis on sharia.³⁸ Instead it has stressed the fight against corruption, socioeconomic problems, and the “protection of Morocco’s Islamic identity in the face of globalization.”³⁹ In a recent speech, al-Nahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi stressed that there is no inherent incompatibility between Islam and secularism. He defended a degree of separation between political and religious affairs, saying that “it is not the duty of religion to teach us ...governing techniques, because reason is qualified to reach these truths through the accumulation of experiences.” Religion, however, is supposed to “provide us with a system of values and principles that would guide our thinking, behavior, and the regulations of the state to which we aspire.”⁴⁰ Since they are now in power, the current challenge for PJD and al-Nahda is to translate these ideas into everyday politics.

Both the PJD and al-Nahda have referred to the AKP model, at least in front of international audiences. Asked in 2006 how he would “explain his party to an American audience,” the secretary-general of the PJD, Saad Eddine al-Othmani, responded that it “was similar to the AKP in Turkey.”⁴¹ Similarly, Ghannouchi has made several positive references to the AKP. He has cited Turkey as a model for the new Tunisia,⁴² while in other statements he claims credit for his own intellectual contributions to the transformation of the AKP itself.⁴³

Egypt’s FJP, however, defends sharia as a primary source of law and is more distant from the AKP model. The country’s recently passed constitution, drafted by a body in which the FJP played the leading role, grants al-Azhar’s senior scholars a consultative role in interpreting sharia (Article 4). The document also explicitly stresses Sunni Islam while elaborating on the meaning of sharia (Article 219). FJP leaders may defend their policies, arguing that they are “pragmatically” responding to the demands of their conservative constituents. On certain issues, however, it may be that representative democracy requires that leaders convince publics of policies that are not initially popular. The extent of domestic polarization in Egypt makes it clear that the FJP must respond to the concerns of other groups, such as liberals and Copts, rather than simply focusing on the demands of its own constituencies. The need for support from Western governments seeking a “reliable” partner may also encourage the Brotherhood to adopt a more pragmatic approach.

In the future, Arab parties may consolidate their fledgling democracies and formulate their own – possibly more advanced – methods of negotiating the relationship between Islam and the state. There may come a time when we refer more frequently to the “al-Nahda model” than the AKP model. What may emerge instead, though, is a generic, shared model. As Arab politics develop, it remains to be seen if the combined Turkish and Arab experience produces what could best be described as “Muslim politics without an ‘Islamic’ state.”

NOTES

1. This paper is based on the author's interviews and conversations in Istanbul in August 2012, Doha in October-December 2012, and Cairo in January 2013. Kuru is thankful to Shadi Hamid, Salman Shaikh, Samuel Plumbly, Nader Hashemi, Robert Hefner, Nathan Brown, Sinan Ülgen, Hasan Kösebalaban, Berna Turam, Hakkı Taş, Stefano Torelli, Zeynep Şahin, Feriha Perekli, Burhanettin Duran, Salim Çevik, Mustafa Gökçek, Renat Shaykhtudinov, Kadir Yıldırım, Ahmet Yükleyen, Eid Mohamed, and Turan Kayaoğlu for their helpful comments.
2. "Başbakan Erdoğan'ın AK Parti 4. Kongresi Konuşmasının Tam Metni," Justice and Development Party, September 30, 2012, <<http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/basbakan-erdoganin-ak-parti-4.-olagan-buyuk-kongresi-konusmasinin-tam-metni/31771>>.
3. Tariq Ramadan, "Democratic Turkey Is the Template for Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 28, no. 2, (Spring 2011); Stephen Kaufman, "Clinton Says Turkey Can Be Model for Emerging Democracies," *International Information Programs*, U.S. Department of State, July 16, 2011, <<http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2011/07/20110716132122nehpets0.2954783.html#ixzz2AmplY7T0>>.
4. Responses to the question, "If Egypt's political system resembled that of one of the following countries, which one would you prefer it to be?" Shibley Telhami, "Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey," University of Maryland, 2011, <<http://newsdesk.umd.edu/pdf/2011/telhamipoll2011.pdf>>.
5. See Shadi Hamid, "The Rise of the Islamists: How Islamists Will Change Politics, and Vice Versa," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011, 40-47.
6. By "Muslim politics" the author means politics conducted by pious Muslims who consciously seek to reflect their Islamic values and principles without pursuing the idea of an Islamic state. This usage is slightly different from that of used by Eickelman and Piscatori in their influential book that mainly refers to Muslim politics as "the politics of Islam... in the daily lives of Muslims." Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
7. Ahmet T. Kuru, "The Rise and Fall of Military Tutelage in Turkey: Fears of Islamism, Kurdism, and Communism," *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 2 (2012), 41-43.
8. Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 259. Also available in Arabic (Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2012).
9. A decade ago Ömer Taşpınar rightly stressed that Turkey could not be a model for the Arab countries given its assertive secularist policies that alienated even its own citizens; Turkey, however, has changed substantially since then. Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit? The 'Turkish Model' and the Arab World," Analysis Paper no. 5, Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World, August 2003, 7.
10. Sinan Ülgen, "From Inspiration to Aspiration: Turkey in the New Middle East," Carnegie Papers, Carnegie Europe, December 2011. See also Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey: The New Model?" in *The Islamists Are Coming: Who They Really Are*, ed. Robin Wright (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2012).
11. The phrase "Anatolian Tigers" refers to industrial cities in central Turkey that have been important drivers of the country's economic growth since 1980. For more on the Gülen movement see M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, eds., *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003); Ahmet T. Kuru, "Globalization and Diversification of Islamic Movements: Three Turkish Cases," *Political Science Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (2005), 253-274.
12. The focus of this paper is limited to the AKP model as it relates to the issue of Islam and secularism; it only touches secondarily upon issues related to democratization and human rights.
13. Prime Minister Erdoğan, interview with Mona Shazly, *Al-Ashira Masa'an*, Dream TV, September 15, 2011.
14. "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Criticizes Erdoğan's Call for a Secular State," *Al Arabiya*, September 14, 2011.
15. "Müslüman Laik Devleti Yönetebilir," *Sabah*, September 16, 2011; "Erdoğan'dan Libya'da Önemli Açıklamalar," *Hürriyet*, September 16, 2011.
16. Stefano Maria Torelli, "The 'AKP Model' and Tunisia's al-Nahda: From Convergence to Competition?" *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 3 (2012), 77-8. For a more nuanced critique, see Feriha Perekli, "The Applicability of the 'Turkish Model' to Morocco: The Case of the Justice and Development Party," *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 3 (2012), 85-108.
17. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies*, 6-39.
18. Kuru, "The Rise and Fall of Military Tutelage," 37-57.
19. Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5-6.
20. See Alfred Stepan, "The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democracies and Autocracies," in *Rethinking Secularism*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan Van Antwerpen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
21. For example, 20 percent of French students attend Catholic schools and their teachers' salaries are publically funded; about half of French public schools have Catholic chaplains; and on Fridays public schools serve fish rather than meat due to Catholic sensitivities. Yet there are no publically funded Muslim schools, and no imams or provisions for *halal* meat in public schools. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies*, 110.
22. See Ergun Özbudun, "Arap Devrimleri İçin Laik Öneriler," *Star Açık Görüş*, October 23, 2011.
23. Jonathan Fox, "Out of Sync: The Disconnect between Constitutional Clauses and State Legislation on Religion," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 1, 69.
24. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies*, 259-260.
25. Alper Dede describes Muslim activism in Turkey as being "bottom-up, where religiously motivated individuals seek to Islamize their environments through grassroots activism and solidarity by forming social networks, emphasizing education (both religious and secular), entrepreneurship, and use of the media. This bottom-up connection also includes operating within the

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- boundaries of democratic rules.” Alper Dede “The Arab Uprisings: Debating the “Turkish Model,” *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 2 (2011), 27.
26. “A&G and Milliyet Survey,” *Milliyet*, May 31, 2003; Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak, *Değişen Türkiye’de Din, Toplum ve Siyaset* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2006), 19.
27. *Zaman*, which is affiliated with the Gülen movement and the most circulated newspaper of Turkey, has recently published several essays discussing Islamism. For an example of a critique of Islamism, see Uğur Kömeçoğlu, “Geçici Dönemsel Bir İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılık: Üç Nesil Hipotezi,” *Zaman*, August 17, 2012.
28. See for example Kuru, “Globalization and Diversification of Islamic Movements”; Ahmet T. Kuru, “Changing Perspectives on Islamism and Secularism in Turkey: The Gülen Movement and the AK Party,” in *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement* ed. İhsan Yılmaz (London: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, 2007), 140-51. See also İhsan Yılmaz, “Influence of Pluralism and Electoral Participation on the Transformation of Turkish Islamism,” *Journal of Economic and Social Research* 10, no. 2 (2008), 43-65.
29. For more on the role of international actors see, for instance, Salman Shaikh and Shadi Hamid, “Between Interference and Assistance: The Politics of International Support in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya,” 2012 U.S.-Islamic World Forum Papers, Brookings Doha Center and Project on U.S. Relations with the Muslim World, November 2012.
30. Kuru, “The Rise and Fall of Military Tutelage.”
31. The role of the European Union accession process in encouraging a transformation from assertive to passive secularism in Turkey should not be exaggerated. The European Court of Human Rights in fact supported assertive secularism in Turkey with its crucial decision in the Şahin case (2004) which justified the headscarf ban at universities.
32. Yalçın Akdoğan, *Muhafazakar Demokrasi* (Ankara: AK Parti, 2003). Akdoğan drew heavily on Bekir Berat Özipek’s PhD dissertation on conservatism while writing this book.
33. Ibid.
34. Western media have been particularly appreciative of Erdoğan’s pragmatism. See for instance, Helene Cooper, “In Turkey’s Example, Some See Map for Egypt,” *New York Times*, February 6, 2011; Nicolas Bourquier, “Erdogan le pragmatique,” *Le Monde*, May 7, 2003.
35. Erdoğan’s criticism of Israel is another reason for his popularity with Islamists. Ahmed M. Abou Hussein, “Evolution of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s Rhetoric Regarding Turkish AK Party,” *Today’s Zaman*, October 9, 2012.
36. From the 1997 military intervention until very recently, graduates of Imam-Hatip schools were assigned a lower coefficient when calculating their scores in the nationwide university entrance exam.
37. Critics of the AKP, such as the liberal *Taraf* newspaper, generally depict the AKP as too nationalistic on the Kurdish issue. Political scientist Şener Aktürk, however, argues that the reforms the AKP realized have been based on its understanding of “Islamic brotherhood” between Turks and Kurds, as well as the party’s “Islamist multiculturalist new thinking about ethnicity.” Şener Aktürk, “Regimes of Ethnicity: Comparative Analysis of Germany, the Soviet Union/post-Soviet Russia, and Turkey,” *World Politics* 63, no. 1 (2011), 151.
38. Perekli, “The Applicability of the ‘Turkish Model’ to Morocco,” 100.
39. Ibid.
40. Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (CSID), “Rachid Ghannouchi’s Speech at the CSID Conference in Tunisia,” March 2, 2012, <<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs093/1102084408196/archive/1109480512119.html>>.
41. Nathan J. Brown, *When Victory Is Not An Option: Islamist Movements in Arab Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 34.
42. “Ennahda Takes Turkey as the Model for Democracy,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, October 27, 2011.
43. “AK Partiye Çok Yakınız,” *Hürriyet*, January 24, 2011.

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