Political Pluralism from the Perspective of the Islamic Parties: Study on Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in Egypt

Ahmed A.M. Atawna, Mohammad Redzuan Othman and Abu Hanifah Haris

Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract: After the Arab spring new influential parties have emerged in some Arab countries. Most of them are Islamic parties who announced that they adopt and practice democracy. The focus of this paper is the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) - The Muslim Brotherhood’s political arm in Egypt - the most important among these parties; Due to its great attendance and influence in the political, economic and social life of the Egyptian people. Muslim Brotherhood (MB) “the mother of FJP” is also the largest and most spread Islamic movement in the Muslim world; it has branches in about 80 countries. Since its foundation in 1928 MB has been working constantly to fulfill its famous slogan (Islam is the Solution) and implement al-Shari’ah (Islamic law). Specifically, the paper aims to explore MB and the FJP positions on the principle of ‘diversity and political pluralism’ as it is one of the major democratic principles and political rights. To achieve this purpose, qualitative research methods were utilized. Literatures, platforms and internal regulations of MB and FJP were analyzed. Interviews were conducted with some MB and FJP senior leaders. The findings indicated that MB and FJP respect diversity and the right of the people to form their own political parties, provided that these parties respect the constitution which affirms that Islam is the state religion and al-Shari’ah is the main source of legislation. This condition appears to be problematic for non-Muslims and non-Islamists, which resulted in strong rejection of FJP political vision and rule.

Key words: Political Rights · Pluralism · Political Islam · Muslim Brotherhood · Freedom and Justice Party · Egypt

INTRODUCTION

As an Islamic party with religious background, Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in Egypt, believes that diversity is a natural fact. God has created people in different forms. Certainly, you cannot find anyone who looks like the other not only in terms of (shape, style and color) but also in the soul and mind; no one can think or believe in the same way. If you asked for a description of an object, you would have many different opinions or descriptions. Consequently, the efforts of combining all people in the same framework will not succeed. The prudent behaviors require to adopt or compatible with the nature of the humans. The understood of this phenomenon is very clear in FJP literature. Many of FJP leaders affirmed that their party believes that all the attempts to enforce people to live in the same style have been failed. A good example is the Soviet Union which collapsed in 1991.

For those who believe in God, they should know that the lord has created and designed the universe with a very wide diversity in everything, including humans, animals, plants, water and so on. Nothing in the universe looks like other things. It is a lesson for the humans that diversity is a part of their nature. FJP accepts this vision, but its implementations are problematic. For those who do not believe in God and those who believe in anything else, they only need to look around themselves to be aware about that they are living in a world with a huge style of diversity.

Corresponding Author: Ahmed A.M. Atawna, Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.