‘Revolution and Revolt: Understanding the Forms and Causes of Change’

The “AKP Model” and Tunisia's *al-Nahda*: from Convergence to Competition

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This paper analyzes the characteristics of the Turkish AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, the Party for Justice and Development) and the Tunisian Harakat al-Nahda in a comparative perspective. This analysis follows the recent rehabilitation of the Tunisian Islamist party after the fall of former President Zine al-Abidine Ben ‘Ali and its emergence as a leading political force in Tunisia, after the elections for the Constituent Assembly held in October 2011. The aim of this analysis is to demonstrate that the alleged “Turkish model” - proposed by many scholars and analysts as an example that Tunisia and other countries affected by the regime change as a result of the so-called Arab Spring could follow - is not easily replicable in such a context. The case study of Tunisia is taken into consideration because this country is in the most advanced stage of the transition after the end of the Arab Spring. There are two main reasons why the Tunisian case can be compared with the Turkish model: it is a country in the midst of a democratization process and it has a majority party that belongs to the area of political Islam.

The Tunisian and the Turkish case studies are tackled on three levels. First of all I will take into consideration the historical and structural contexts of the two countries; secondly I will analyse the two models of political Islam that have been developed in Tunisia and Turkey, noting that any particular way of interpreting a given culture or religion is conditioned by the socio-political reference system; finally, the two different views of the social, political and economic life proposed by al-Nahda in Tunisia and by the AKP in Turkey will be compared. Next, my purpose will be to show that the two models cannot be assimilated; on the contrary, they could even be seen as in competition. The AKP in fact could be perceived as an actor who tries to expand its influence on the new contexts of the post-Arab Spring, rather than as a model for their democratization processes of. At the same time, al-Nahda could be regarded as an alternative model to the AKP for the Arab countries, especially in the region of North Africa.

1. Turkey and Tunisia, two different histories
It is impossible to study and to analyze the evolution of Islamic-inspired parties that are now operating in Turkey and in Tunisia without taking into due consideration their historical and cultural backgrounds. These backgrounds affect the formation of their ideological model of reference. From an historical point of view, the fundamental distinction that can be traced in the
The evolution of these two countries concerns the experience of European colonialism. While the current Turkish national State inherited from the Ottoman Empire was never subject to any kind of direct foreign domination, Tunisia has achieved independence only in 1956, having been a French colony since 1881 and, before that, having been subject to the dominion of the Ottomans themselves. This historical background has inevitably had an impact on the national political movements that developed in Tunisia, in the direction of a more pronounced anti-Western sentiment. The process of modernization and Westernization of the country was considered as imposed from abroad, and political Islam parties identified the influence exerted by the West as the main cause of the supposed decline of Tunisian society and of the model on which its customs and traditional Arab-Islamic values were based.

Unlike Tunisia, since its creation as a modern national State Turkey has voluntarily accelerated the process of Westernization, evolving in quite a different way if compared to the States born in the Arab world as a result of the decolonization process. The assimilation of values such as secularism, laicism, and the importance of the individual into the society have permeated all the institutions and the political movements in Turkey, not least those that were Islamic-inspired. The relationship between State and religion in Turkey has been managed by institutions so as to control all the activities related to Islam, relegating this aspect of the Turkish culture in the private lives of citizens. Movements and parties inspired by the values of Islam have existed in Turkey since the Fifties\(^1\), but were not granted a public space, in compliance with the Kemalist ideology upon which Turkish Constitution was forged. However, Islam has not been repressed and persecuted, rather it has been marginalized from the political scene\(^2\). Although Turkey’s history has witnessed moments of tension between institutions and political parties or movements inspired by Islam, the progressive liberalization of the country - especially since the first civilian government led by Turgut Özal after the military coup of 1980 - allowed all the social actors to become part of the political landscape\(^3\). Also the movements who based their values on Islam were among the new political subjects that could benefit from the climate of openness to civil society and to its diverse souls. It has been through this process that, over the past decades, the presence of the parties inspired by Islam in the public sphere has become increasingly important until reaching the current

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\(^1\) The reference is to the advent of a multi-party system after years of one-party rule led by the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), founded by Mustafa Kemal.

\(^2\) In some phases of the country’s history the State has made use of Islamic elements in an instrumental way, in order to gain advantages in its internal struggle against leftist and Marxist movements, mostly between the Seventies and Eighties.

situation where the AKP governs, thanks to a well-established popular support, and has been confirmed in its place for the third time at the 2011 elections.

Coversly, after the era of colonialism and Westernization imposed from above had finished and the country had attained independence, Tunisia has continued to suppress any form of internal dissent against the regimes that have succeeded at the head of the country – those of Habib Bourguiba and of Ben ‘Ali. Although there have been some concessions to the Islamic movements, especially during the first two years of the Ben ‘Ali era4, the religious element has always been prevented from interfering with the public life, as opposed to what happened in Turkey until the Nineties. Furthermore, in Tunisia the State systematically suppressed Islamic movements. This political strategy was part of the nature of an authoritarian regime that did not allow the emergence of any opposition and was directed especially against the Islamic component of this dissent. The colonial legacy, that had its main reflections in the establishment of a relatively secular system, combined with the fear that an Islamic political movement could pick up a broad popular consensus, urged the regime to act in order to remove this potential threat to its legitimacy5. In doing so, Ben ‘Ali has used a rhetoric aimed at accusing al-Nahda of conspiring against the State with the goal of establishing an Islamic regime. Consequently, members of al-Nahda were arrested and then forced to self-exclusion from the Tunisian political and social system, as demonstrated by the voluntary exile to London of their leader Rashid al-Ghannushi in May 19896. Al-Nahda became, thus, an anti-systemic political force due to the joint effect of government censorship and because of its reaction to a system that did not allow its existence and activities.

The two different historical paths that have marked the political evolution of Turkey and Tunisia are indeed the basis behind the different ways to intend and interpret Islam emerged in both countries. This consideration stands both when considering the intermingling of Islamic culture and religion in the private sphere, and when studying those movements which most resemble the so-called political Islam.

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4 In 1987, when Ben ‘Ali came to power, he promised to include the Islamic Tendency Movement, the forerunner of al-Nahda, and the ranks of political parties in Tunisia as part of a wider process of democratization. The romance between political Islam and the regime was, however, brief, before the partial success of Islamists in the elections of April 1989 (17% of the votes obtained by Islamist candidates, who ran as independents) convinced the former Tunisian President to return to suppress the movement. More of this in M. E. Hamdi, The Politicisation of Islam: A Case Study of Tunisia, Westview Press, Boulder, 1998, p. 61-74.

5 According to estimates elaborated by Amnesty International, between 1990 and 1992 more than 9,000 members or followers of al-Nahda were detained and tortured.

2. The two models of Islam compared

Assuming that Islam, as a cultural and political phenomena, is in constant dialogue with the political and social environment that surrounds it\(^7\), we can easily identify the elements that distinguish the two forms of Islam-perception that developed in Turkey and in the Maghreb countries, and moreso in Tunisia. Only through this preliminary analysis, it will be possible to understand the characteristics of the AKP and \textit{al-Nahda}. As earlier stated, although it acted in a context permeated by the ideals of Kemalism and secularism, Turkish Islam has historically managed to forge its own unique personality. The result is a synthesis between the context in which it has operated and the values of Islamic culture. From the Seventies onwards, mainly due to the figure of Necmettin Erbakan, political Islam in Turkey began to organize itself into a more structured way of approaching the public sphere\(^8\), while in the period before it has worked through the support of parties and movements related to the center-right conservative tradition\(^9\). Even at this early stage of formation of Turkish Islamic political thought, we can identify some factors that make it \textit{sui generis} compared to the Arab-Muslim world. For instance, the ideology behind the Erbakan’s MNP, the \textit{Milli Görüş} (“National Order”) contained clear references to the Turkish nationalism. It is obvious that such a though was influenced by the political and social environment in which it emerged. On the other hand, it also adapted itself to that context, although it did raise questions over some of its features, including its distinctly pro-Western nature\(^10\).

By contrast, the political message of the \textit{al-Nahda}’s leader al-Ghannushi was immediately in sharp contrast with the Tunisian regime. With the founding of the \textit{Harakat al-Ittijah al-Islami} (Islamic Tendency Movement, ITM) in 1981, the Tunisian political Islam created a breakaway movement with the institutional context in which it operated. This factor led to its immediate identification as an anti-systemic actor. The origins of this difference between the Turkish and the Tunisian political Islam are to be found precisely in the historical and structural features above mentioned. The repressive action suffered by Islam in Tunisia and the absence of a space for dialogue and interrelation for Islamic opposition with the Tunisian regime are in fact two of the


\(^8\) Erbakan founded the first Islamic political party, the MNP (\textit{Milli Nizam Partisi}, the National Order Party). This movement mimicked the positions of the Islamic groups acting in the country since the Fifties: the very word “Order” contained in the party name was used to emphasize the desire to establish new political and social standards, more respectful of Islamic values.


\(^{10}\) For a discussion on the ideology of the basis of \textit{Milli Görüş} see a F. Atacan, “Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad: AKP-SP”, \textit{Turkish Studies}, Vol. 6, n. 2, June 2005, pp. 187-199.
factors that explain the diverse nature of IMT and subsequently of al-Nahda. Consequently, the rupture of the Tunisian Islamist party with its institutional environment led to the vanish of such a movement not only from the political and public scene, but also from the country’s social and private life. Al-Nahda identified the root of Tunisia’s political, social and economic problems in the cultural values imposed by the West and by France in particular. This assumption is a typical feature of all Islamic movements emerged during the Twentieth century in the Arab countries of North Africa as opposed to the influence of European values and institutional models: the call to a return to the basic values of Islam and to the origins of Arab-Islamic culture. Interestingly, this element in not present within contemporary Turkish Islam. This feature can be attributed to the historical experience of countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, since the process of Westernization that has begun during the colonial period was identified by political Islamic parties as the main factor behind the supposed decadence of the two countries in the second half of last century. At the same time the message of ITM and al-Nahda, as evidenced by the foundation Manifesto of the Harakat Ittijah al-Islami (1981) and the al-Nahda’s Statute (1988), is not directed to Tunisia alone. The reference to the Arabic language and to Arab-Islamic identity requires an almost natural extension of the revival ideals espoused by al-Ghannushi to the entire Muslim community, and is especially directed to the Maghreb countries, united by a common history of colonial occupation and “cultural infiltration” by the Western world. In this sense, the scope of the political message of al-Nahda, despite it is primarily directed to Tunisia, differs from that of Turkey, as the AKP and its predecessors addressed solely their national interlocutors.

Since from the birth of the Kemalist Republic, Turkey has embarked on a path that led it to move away from the cultural and ideological basis that al-Nahda instead wants to regain. The evolution of Turkish and Tunisian political Islam moves then on different lines and gives rise to two different worldviews. Following a constructivist view of political science, we could say that Turkish model of Islam has been able to adapt itself to the context in which it operated, using the “opportunity spaces” that it gradually gained. With this in mind we can understand some unique features of Islam in Turkey, which in formulating its identity was being careful not to overstep certain symbolic boundaries that would compromise its very existence and its social and political development. It is indeed true that the Turkish Islamic-oriented parties still had a chance to act

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11 In 1988, the ITM changed its name to Harakat al-Nahda, since the new electoral law in April 1988 prohibited the explicit reference to religion by any political party. However, the content of al-Nahda’s message remained substantially unaltered compared to that of IMT. See M. E. Hamdi (1998), pp. 66-67.
12 Consider for example the reference to the Arabic language, abandoned by Kemal after the founding of the Republic of Turkey.
within their own institutional framework, while the level of repression suffered by al-Nahda during the Eighties and the early Nineties was not such as to allow it to perform any activity. For this reason, Tunisian political Islam can not be compared to the one developed in Turkey in terms of adaptability to the environment in which it used to act, for this context has denied it any kind of interaction with institutions and with society itself. As a consequence, al-Nahda developed a particular breakaway policy with its context, differently from Turkish political Islam, which instead has put itself in continuity with its institutional reference system. Essentially, due to the different genesis of political Islam in Turkey in opposition to the model represented by the Muslim Brotherhood and in particular by al-Nahda, the latter and the AKP occur with different characteristics with regard to their political program, their terminology, the basin of consent which they address, their vision of the State, their economic policy and not least to their goals and their very nature. The AKP is a typical conservative political party with a clear structure and action of government, while al-Nahda still oscillates between movementism and politics, resulting as an actor who deals with society, rather than being a part of the institutional world.

On this regard, I must stress that the founder of al-Nahda has been absent from Tunisia for more than twenty years and has not been able to operate directly in the political landscape of the country. This factor, along with al-Ghannushi’s education in previous decades\(^\text{14}\), has meant that he presented itself as an intellectual-activist, rather than as a political leader, in the wake of other thinkers of contemporary Islam like Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. The latters have set themselves primarily as Islamist reformers of the political and institutional contexts in which they operated through an action from below, rather than as having a political program designed and suitable for the exercise of power. Al-Nahda presents the characteristics of an Islamist movement that is making a move towards a structured party, acting thus more on the social level, rather than on the political-institutional one. By contrast, the AKP was already born as a real party able to make policy’s proposals on the most important issues on the political agenda. Both Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül have a history of militancy in the Islamic-inspired parties led by Erbakan, but the process of evolution and adaptation to the Turkish environment has led them to promote a different political idea. In this way they distanced themselves from traditional Islamism, by assuming a more neutral position and by providing programs that are more suitable to the institutional reality of modern Turkey\(^\text{15}\). Thus it is possible to understand another characteristic of

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\(^{14}\) For a reconstruction of the ideological and political education of al-Ghannushi, see A. S. Tamimi (2001), pp. 3-62.

\(^{15}\) In 1998 the Constitutional Court dissolved the Refah Party (Welfare Party) led by Erbakan, which had led the Turkish government between 1996 and 1997. It was at this historical moment that the party felt the need for a change. The older generation, led by Erbakan and anchored to a still very conservative idea of political Islam, founded the
Turkish Islam: the emphasis put on the individual dimension, rather than on the community one, taking advantage of the opportunities arising from the market-liberalization reforms. The process of socio-economic openness has not been yet brought to an end in Tunisia. Consequently even the Tunisian political Islam has not developed an individualistic conception, remaining indeed anchored to another fundamental concept of classical Islam: the *umma*, seen as the community of believers. The change proposed by Turkish Islam is indeed relevant and makes it a particular model of Islam in which “[...] new forms of individualism of Muslim actors replace Islamists’ communalism”16, with all the consequences that this different way of living its relationship with religion will bring from a political and economic point of view, as it will be shown.

From all these factors, one can evaluate the uniqueness of the AKP and the impossibility to replicate this type of model outside Turkey’s borders, unless it occurs a strong structural change not only in Islamic movements, but in the political, social and economic dynamics behind them. The example of Turkey, in fact, seems to tell us that the development of a particular form of political Islam is determined from the evolution of the respective environment in which political parties operate, rather than the opposite.

3. The politics of the AKP and of al-Nahda

At first glance, and given the different historical path that the two parties have left behind them, al-Nahda is without any doubt an actor still looking for a definition of a clear political agenda and for a day of reckoning with its past. This condition is understandable given the historical moment that the Tunisian Islamist party is facing, in the midst of a redefinition of the institutional and political effects of the so-called Arab Spring in the country that most of all others seems to have made some significant progress in terms of discontinuity with the previous regime. If the AKP features can be clearly inferred from the action of government of the last ten years, in order to analyze the movement of al-Nahda both in terms of ideology and political programs, I decided to start from its two founding acts: the founding Manifesto of the IMT17 and the al-Nahda’s Statute18. Besides these two primary sources, included among the documents that bear the thought of al-Nahda in its official

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website, it is possible to analyze the thought of al-Ghannushi thanks to his work as a thinker and writer, in addition to interviews released after his return to Tunisia.

The first element that differentiates the two parties is the terminology used in expounding their political thought. This element calls into question the same relationship that the AKP and al-Nahda have with the Islamic culture and religion. Although undoubtedly inspired by the cultural and moral values of Islam and although its formation directly comes from the movements and political parties that drew in a much more militant Islamism using an ideological rhetoric, the Turkish Party for Justice and Development declares itself just a “conservative democratic” party. This means that it has taken a step that led him to be much more inclusive compared to the previous realities and to hold positions of greater openness, particularly on the issues of foreign and economic policies. The vocabulary used by al-Ghannushi in describing his party’s objectives is instead borrowed directly from some key concepts of Islamic culture. The first of the political objectives that the Tunisian party says it wants to achieve is that “[...] implement the principle of popular sovereignty and to establish shura”. The term used is shura, a Koran-derived word indicating the consultation of believers within the Islamic community regarding the temporal affairs of their society. In contemporary Islamic thought it is a kind of “Muslim version” of the National Parliamentary Assembly. In the fifth paragraph of the same document it is also stated that another political ambition of al-Nahda is that “to promote the spirit of Arabic and Islamic unity and awareness of the fundamental issues of the umma, so as to put an end to hostilities, divisions and secession; to concentrate our efforts on our most decisive issues; to strive to bring about comprehensive unity and to support all serious steps toward this; and to give supreme importance to the unity of the countries of the Arab Maghreb”. In this passage is not only clearly evident the use of a typically Islamic terminology, but also the desire to address only the Muslim community as a whole and, above all, to the Arab North African one. Moving on, in the fourth part of the al-Nahda’s Statute – the one related to the cultural sphere – the first point calls “to assert and to reinforce the Arab-Islamic identity as one of the condition for its revival; and to accord it the status it deserves by implementing the requirements of the country’s constitution and laws, in respect of the fact that Islam is both a set of values for civilisation and a way of life, and that Arabic is the language of national culture”. From this sentence we can deduce two other elements that characterize al-Nahda’s message: the appeal to a form of nationalism that transcends Tunisian boundaries becoming a larger Arab nationalism and the implicit reference to shari’a as a means of regulating the life of the community. The reference to the Arab nation comes from the fact that Arabic is the vehicle of the Islamic message. From this point of view al-Nahda seems to be
characterized by a greater ideological connotation, while the AKP presents itself as a political force with a clear and defined program in the various administrative areas, exclusively referred to the Turkish context, without ethnic (as al-Nahda does for the Arab element) or religious (Islamic) basis.

With regard to the reference to the Islamic values in the organization and the management of public life, we enter in a crucial issue for the exercise of power and the ideal of the State that the two parties embody. On this point the official documents of al-Nahda, such as the positions expressed directly by its President al-Ghannushi, are not entirely clear. Surely the views expressed by the Tunisian party before the fall of Ben ‘Ali were partially remodeled with the entrance of al-Nahda in Tunisia’s political landscape, as a result of its rehabilitation. In the abovementioned article of the Tunisian movement’s Statute, Islam is referred to as a “way of life”, implying that the religious element should not be relegated to the private sphere, but that it should even be the term of reference for the State’s Constitution. During the years of its voluntary exile, al-Ghannushi has repeatedly expressed his thoughts about the role of religion within the State, stressing that “[...] we reject your [Western] conception that is to separate religion from social life”.

When judging the Tunisian Republican Constitution of 1988 al-Ghannushi said that only two amendments would be sufficient in order to make it adaptable to the political view of al-Nahda: one that said that all State’s laws must be compatible with the shari’a, and another that established an Islamic Council so as to ensure the compatibility of the laws passed in Parliament with the Islamic law. In his work al-Hurriyat al-’amma fi al-dawla al-islamiyya, al-Ghannushi defines his idea of the State as an “Islamic democracy”, in which the characteristics of democratic systems such as free elections and popular sovereignty, alongside factors such as respect for shari’a as “the supreme legislative authority” and the revitalization of the role of the mosque as the center of popular mobilization. This is in stark contrast to the Turkish AKP position on the issue. The very model of Islamic democracy could be an alternative to Erdoğan’s conservative democracy in Turkey. Al-Ghannushi has always insisted on the need for a collective effort in establishing the Islamic government and these distinct basic ideas lead to two different visions of the State by calling into question the principle of secularism on which Turkey is founded. This principle is not only respected, but has

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19 The party was legalized on 1 March 2011.
22 Ibid., p. 102.
also been promoted by Erdoğan himself during his visit to Tunisia and Egypt in the aftermath of the riots that led to the fall of the old regimes of Ben ‘Ali and Hosni Mubarak\textsuperscript{24}.

It is from these bases that come, therefore, the potential of competition between the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood, of which \textit{al-Nahda} is part, and the so called Turkish model. Erdoğan’s calls to “\textit{neo-laicism}” as the basis of the new constitutional and institutional set up in Tunisia, was implicitly rejected by al-Ghannushi. Although the latter has expressed support to the establishment of a democratic Republic respecting all the country’s souls and has made clear that he has changed some of his viewpoints with respect to his writings dating back to the period of his London exile, in the months following the fall of Ben ‘Ali he argued opposing views to those coming from the AKP. Against Erdoğan’s call to the adoption of a secular form of State, al-Ghannushi argued that an important part of Tunisia, as Islamic culture certainly is, can not be excluded in the post-Ben ‘Ali Tunisia\textsuperscript{25}. Consistent with this assumption, he added that in Tunisia a \textit{“mild form of shari’\textasciiacute{a}”} would be preferable rather than the neo-laicism proposed by the AKP\textsuperscript{26}. While acknowledging that Turkey represents the closer reference model to Tunisia’s case, al-Ghannushi stressed that these are two different contexts and that there is no need for a secular model in Tunisia\textsuperscript{27}. Even in the evaluation of secularism, \textit{al-Nahda}’s position compared to that of the AKP derives from the different historical legacy: al-Ghannushi does not say he is against the idea of secularism of the Anglo-Saxon systems, that is a system neutral towards religion (and which he attributes also to the Turkish system), but rather condemns the French declination of secularism which, not unlike the Marxist ideology, is an anti-religion one. The latter was introduced into Tunisian and Egyptian systems precisely because of the influence of France during the colonial era\textsuperscript{28}.

Drawing from the historic colonial opposition to Western influence and legacy, there is also a kind of Third-worldism in \textit{al-Nahda} ideology. While Turkey in recent years has embarked on a foreign policy that is more autonomous from traditional Western allies, the AKP does not seem to go through this alternative route to Western positions. Rather, it presents itself to its electorate as the only pro-Western party in Turkey, within a political landscape in which the nationalist element seems to push towards a greater detachment from Europe. Although al-Ghannushi didn’t put himself in open contrast with the West, his rhetoric might suggest a foreign policy of different mold

\textsuperscript{24} “Erdoğan offers ‘Arab Spring’ neo-laicism”, \textit{Hürriyet}, 15 September, 2011.
\textsuperscript{25} “Ghannouchi: State does not have right to monopolize Islam”, \textit{Today’s Zaman}, 23 September, 2011.
\textsuperscript{26} “Tunisian Islamist in favor of mild Shariah”, \textit{Hürriyet}, 7 October, 2011.
\textsuperscript{27} “No need for secularism in Tunisia: Ghannouchi”, \textit{Hürriyet}, 24 December, 2011.
\textsuperscript{28} “Tunisian Islamist in favor of mild Shariah”, \textit{Hürriyet}, 7 October, 2011.
than the Turkish one. The greater attention paid to the construction of a framework of solidarity and cooperation with other countries of the Arab Maghreb has a much more ideological basis if compared with the AKP’s rapprochement with the Arab world. The so-called process of “neo-Ottomanism” undertaken by the Erdoğan’s party, in fact, is not driven by a common belonging to the same system of cultural and religious values\(^{29}\), but is dictated by a realistic and pragmatic approach of Turkish foreign policy and by strategic and economic reasons. In this sense, the formulation of the political agenda of the two parties stems from different assumptions and highlights the different cultural bases of al-Nahda and the AKP.

Finally, the Turkish model of development is not only a political but also an economic one. The sustainability of the AKP’s model is based on a level of economic growth that is unmatched in the whole area of the Middle East and the Mediterranean. This is undoubtedly due to Turkish historical and structural characteristics, but also depends on the adaptation of Turkish political Islam to its environment. While we have highlighted the social repercussions of the individualistic character promoted by the AKP, it is from the economic point of view that this peculiarity became more evident. The appeal of Fethullah Gülen\(^{30}\), the most important ideologue of Turkish Islam, to exploit the opportunities offered by economic liberalism in order to be integrated in the best possible way in the Turkish system, has resulted in a higher degree of business ability from many individuals adherent to the message of Turkish Islam. At the same time, the AKP has been able to convey the potential of small and medium-sized businesses in a major political and economic development programme, fostering their growth. The most dynamic force that supports AKP in today’s Turkey is made up of the new class of conservative capitalists\(^{31}\). This represent a new element in the Muslim world that led commentators to coin the term “Islamic Calvinism”\(^{32}\), paraphrasing the Weberian idea of interrelation between Calvinism and the development of capitalism in Europe. The AKP’s base of support is made up of this new generation of businessmen, especially in the Anatolian region, as well as of the conservative electorate closer to the values of Islamic culture. Al-Nahda is more popular among the poorest social classes and, because of its Third-World attitude, is also anti-capitalist in a veiled manner\(^{33}\). The reference made in the party’s

\(^{29}\) In this there is a partial change compared to the party led by Erbakan, more connotated ideologically.

\(^{30}\) Gülen is the leader of the most important Islamic social movement in Turkey and is considered one of the instigators of the AKP. For further inquiry, see I. Yılmaz, *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement*, Leeds Metropolitan University Press, Leeds, 2005.


\(^{32}\) See *Islamic Calvinism. Change and Conservatism in Central Anatolia*, European Stability Initiative, 19 September, 2005.

Statute is to a “ [...] strong, integrated national economy, which will rely essentially on our resources” until reaching “self-sufficiency”, as well as to the promotion of a “close co-operation in the Maghreb, and with the Arab-Islamic world”. Despite al-Ghannushi in recent statement manifested his will to promote a greater openness to foreign investment and to Western economies, he has also reiterated the desire to build a stronger economy across the Maghreb and to transform Tunisia in the regional hub of Islamic finance. From the domestic point of view al-Nahda pays much more attention to the role of public economy and primarily to the concept of collective entity, again referring to the Islamic term umma. As regards the economic relations with foreign countries, it seems to give priority to the development of an integrated economy with the other Arab and Muslim countries in the Mediterranean region. The AKP instead gives great importance to private enterprise and promotes investments and trade especially with Europe. It takes advantage of the opportunities created in the Middle East to expand its economy, but not in order to create an Islamic economic front on ideological basis.

Faced with a clear AKP’s economic policy, al-Nahda, especially in the early stages of its activity, does not seem to have developed a real economic vision, apart from some general reference to the pan-Islamic and pan-Arab cooperation and to social justice. This is also the reason why in the Eighties the movement had moved closer to the ideals of Khomeinism, who had managed to “bring in Islamic terms” economic and labor issues, precisely at a time when Tunisia was crossed by troubles related to them. This has led al-Nahda to approach the Tunisian unions and leftist movements, developing a different idea on economic issues if confronted with the AKP’s conservative and capitalist one. Even this trend contributes to create a gap between the reference values of the two political movements, which results in different social and economic conceptions.

4. Conclusions
The factors analyzed allow us to understand how profoundly different are the Muslim Brotherhood movements in the Maghreb and, in this case, al-Nahda in Tunisia to the AKP model. Though apparently two similar expressions of political Islam, a more detailed analysis that takes into consideration the socio-economic and historical-institutional contexts in both countries highlights the presence of different starting points, from which two conflicting visions of Islam - and of its relationship with politics – spring. The evolution of Islam-inspired political parties and movements in Turkey has been longer and more structured within the social, economic and political context if

34 “Ghannouchi: State does not have right to monopolize Islam”, Today’s Zaman, 23 September, 2011.
compared to the Tunisian one. *Al-Nahda* still looks like an Islamist movement in a transitional phase towards a full political maturity, as could be understood from its name (the Arabic word *Harakat* indicates just an associationist movement, being *Hizb* the term used to designate the political party). For this reason there is a substantial difference between AKP and *al-Nahda*. Referring to the first we can speak of a political party inspired by Islam and by its values, while we can still refer to the latter as an expression of political Islam. Al-Ghannushi’s personality is closer to that of the famous Egyptian preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi\(^{36}\), rather than to that of Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan. With its special features from the standpoint of the ideals regarding State organization, the relations with the Arab-Islamic world and the ones with the West, the economic vision of the world and the civil society referred to as *umma* and as a set of individuals, *al-Nahda* may be itself a model for political Islam in the Arab Maghreb.

Much of the future evolution of political Islam in Tunisia and in the rest of North Africa will depend on the institutional framework that will take shape once the wave of Arab Spring will have subsided. While Islamic movements themselves will contribute to the process of formation of new institutional entities, on the other side changes within the reference framework could affect the development of so-called Islamic parties, as happened in Turkey. At the moment, despite *al-Nahda* has made several references to Turkey as a model (hence the apparent convergence), there seems not to be the preconditions for the repetition of the AKP model in Tunisia, at least in the short term. The Turkish party is perceived more as an actor looking to expand its influence in the Maghreb region under the umbrella of its “model”, rather than as a model for *al-Nahda* itself. The statements of al-Ghannushi on secularism and the different socio-cultural contexts of Turkey and Tunisia, while not suggesting an automatic divergence between the two countries and the two parties, seem at least to predict a different application of Islamic values in politics, making competition between the two parties, if not inevitable, at least certainly possible.

\(^{36}\) Of which al-Ghannushi is the deputy chief in the *International Association of Muslim Scholars*. 