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DEPARTMENT
OF POLITICAL
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Islamism & the Arab Spring

A Social Movements Approach

Teije Hidde Donker

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

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European University Institute
Department of Political and Social Sciences

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Summary

This thesis explores the contemporary Islamist project - constituted by those that mobilize to restructure public life according to Islamic norms - in the context of the 2011-2013 “Arab Spring”. The thesis has two interrelated aims. First, it aims to empirically explore changing interactions between Islamist mobilization in politics and in society, and examine the position state institutions have within these changes. Second, it aims to apply insights of studies on social movements and contentious mobilization in the analysis of these interactions.

The thesis’ main contentions are, first, that in their practice Islamist movements face a dilemma in how to react to a context that is ever more strictly divided between a social and political arena: either mobilization is aimed at societal change through organizing as social associations, or it is aimed at maximizing political influence through organizing as political parties. Irrespective of what their ideology is, all movements face the dilemma of how to reconcile a vision of a complete Islamic system with day-to-day realities. Second, I argue that common strategies addressing the perceived “secularity” of state bureaucracies and public institutions can be the basis of a shared goal for mobilization and thereby ensure the unity of the Islamist project. Two specific debates on contentious mobilization - relating to dilemmas of strategic action and the social process of “upward scale shift” - are then used in conjuncture with one another to provide insights into how these state institutions can influence the relation between Islamist mobilization in society and politics.

I substantiate these claims through a paired comparison between Syria and Tunisia. The comparison builds on, first, extensive fieldwork over the course of four years in the Arab world (mainly Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and Jordan) in which around 180 individuals have been interviewed. Second, it draws on a content analysis of primary sources from Islamist associations, state institutions, and individual autobiographies of (Islamist) actors; third, it uses secondary sources from local, Arab and international newspapers as the empirical basis for the analysis.

For all those who became a statistic.
www.vdc-sy.org/index.php/en

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★

In writing these words I catch myself thinking back to the very beginning. In August 2004 I had taken a year off during my undergraduate studies, and traveled from my hometown in the Netherlands by car, boat, train and bus to Syria and started to learn Arabic at the University of Damascus. Throughout the subsequent years, with all its political and social instability, one thing remained: from whatever country, city, religion, religiosity or ethnic background they were, when Arabs met me they saw a young student, trying to find his place in a different world. And so they talked, ate, drank, helped and generally just had a nice time with this stranger. This thesis would never have seen the light of day without them: I thank them all. More specifically, Marlene & Yusif, Ahmad, Fadi N, Gabi, Fadi A, Simon, Mouaz, Souad, Kamiran, Marwan, Mohammad B. and Noura are just a few of those many people that gave color to my years in the region.

More personally, the resulting experiences have ranged from terrifying to wonderful - but always amazing: having weekly private classes on Zakāt by “my” Shaykh (and somehow always ending up talking about Syrian politics); getting caught unawares between Qadhafi forces and the rebels (we didn't even leave Tunisia); with a Kurdish friend being interrogated for hours by the Syrian intelligence services (and still having the interview with that opposition leader); having to run when bullets started flying (but Mohamed Ghannouchi's government *did* fall in the end). In all cases I got in - and out of - trouble with Arab friends on my side.

When I arrived, the Arab world was still known for its authoritarian stability. Needless to say, things have changed somewhat since. Many of my friends, especially Syrians, have scattered across the globe. Others became active in the opposition; remained silent or supported the regime. The following pages

are filled with analysis and necessarily underplay my personal attachment. But never forget what this period has meant for the Arab world: it was the first time in half a century that Arabs decided to take their future into their own hands. As a consequence they have to sort out what that future will be. It means uncertainty, social tensions and bloodshed. This thesis is an analytical description of these dynamics that - for every single day since the start of the uprisings - are fraught with fear, elation, threat and a sense of opportunity.

Thd, September 6, 2013.

Note on Style and Sources

The thesis follows the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) transliteration style. Exceptions have been made for names of individuals, cities and organizations that have a common English transliteration. In practical terms this means that in addition to normal English letters, a few additional signs are used to represent letters that do not exist in the Roman alphabet. “Kh” is a harsh G as in the Jewish celebration of “Hanukkah”; “gh” is a rolling “r” that comes from deep in the throat; the “ ’ ” is a guttural stop. Next to these there are the “ḥ” (a sound between “h” and “kh”), ḏ (a dull round “d”), and ṭ (a dull round “t”). The “ʿ” denotes the “Ayn”: an “a” sound that comes from very deep in the throat. The stress on specific syllables, crucial in Arabic for meaning of words, is shown as a horizontal dash on the relevant consonant, thus “ā”, “ū” or “ī”.

There are three types of written sources in the thesis: primary sources, secondary ones and peer-reviewed academic works. These citations have their separate bibliographies. In the text and quotes primary and secondary sources are cited in footnotes (including translated titles) and they are designated with a “p.” (for primary sources) or “s.” (for secondary sources) before the year of publication. In the reference lists these titles are listed with their transliterated titles, English translations, date of publications, page number and/or url address. This should make it possible for any reader to retrace these sources. Academic works are cited in the text using author-date format. In some instances I refer to specific places in e-books. In these cases I reference a location “l.” instead of a page number “p.”.

Acronyms

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
APC	Association Pour la Sauvegarde du Coran (Association for the Preservation of the Quran)
CPR	Congrès pour la République (Congress for the Republic)
DOC	Dynamics of Contention
EMB	Ikhwān al-Muslimīn al-Maṣrī (Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood)
FJP	Ḥizb al-Ḥuriya wa al-ʿAdāla (Freedom and Justice Party)
GPC	al-Muʿatamir al-Shʿabī al-ʿĀm (General Peoples Congress)
GNC	al-Muʿatamir al-Waṭanī al-ʿĀm (General National Congress)
Hadas	al-Ḥaraka al-Dustūriya al-Islāmiya (Islamic Constitutional Movement)
HuT	Ḥizb ut-Tahrir, Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr (Liberation Party)
HN	Ḥizb al-Nour, Ḥizb al-Nūr (Party of Light)
IUMS	al-Itihād al-ʿĀlamī li-ʿUlāmaʾ Muslimīn (International Union of Muslim Scholars)
JCP	Ḥizb al-ʿAdāla wa al-Bināʾ (Justice and Construction Party)
JN	Jabhat al-Nuṣra (The Victory Front)
LTDH	Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l’Homme (Tunisian Human Rights League)
MB	Ikhwān al-Muslimīn (Muslim Brotherhood)
MTI	Mouvement de Tendance Islamique (Movement of Islamic Tendency)
MP	Member of Parliament
MPD	Mouvement Patriotes Democratés (Democratic Patriot Movement)
NC	al-Iʿtilāf al-Waṭanī l-Quwa al-Thawra al-Muʿāraḍa al-Sūriya (National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSF	Jabhat al-Ikhlāṣ al-Waṭanī (National Salvation Front)
PCOT	Parti Communiste des Ouvriers de Tunisie (Tunisian Workers’ Communist Party)

PDP	Parti Démocrate Progressiste (Progressive Democratic Party)
POS	Political Opportunity Structures
PPA	Political Process Approach
PREs	Politically Relevant Elites
PSD	Parti Socialiste Destourien (The Destour Socialist Party)
RCD	Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (Constitutional Democratic Rally)
RMT	Resource Mobilization Theory
SAF	Strategic Action Field
SHRC	Syrian Human Rights Committee
SIF	al-Jabha al-Islāmiya al-Sūriya (Syrian Islamic Front)
SILF	Jabhat al-Taḥrīr al-Islāmiya al-Sūriya (Syrian Islamic Liberation Front)
SMB	Ikhwān al-Muslimīn al-Sūrī (Syrian Muslim Brotherhood)
SMO	Social Movement Organization
SMS	Social Movement Studies
SMT	Social Movement Theory
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SNC	al-Majlis al-Waṭanī al-Sūrī (Syrian National Council)
SNM	al-Ḥaraka al-Waṭaniya al-Sūriya (Syrian National Movement)
SOHR	Syrian Observatory for Human Rights
SRCA	Jamā'īya al-Islāḥ al-Ijtimā'i al-Khayriya (Societal Reform Charitable Association)
SSNP	al-Hizb al-Sūrī al-Qawmī al-Ijtimā'ī (Syrian Socialist National Party)
UGTE	L'Union Générale Tunisienne des Etudiants (The Tunisian General Students Union)
UGTT	Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (Tunisian General Workers Union)
UNFT	Union Nationale des Femmes Tunisienne (National Union for Tunisian Women)

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Part I

Positioning the Pieces

Chapter 1

Introduction

It all started on December 17, 2010. A fruit seller in the town of Sidi Bouzzid, central Tunisia, set himself alight. The man's suicide would be the start of a mobilization wave, lasting through the years in which this thesis was written, that changed the Arab world more than it had in the 50 years before. The very realization that collective contentious mobilization could prove more powerful than Arab authoritarian political regimes sent shock waves through the region. From Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Qatar, Yemen, and Syria to Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait - all have experienced the fall out of that act of desperation. Though the Arab Spring has not finished yet, one result is clear. In all countries where the Arab spring resulted in the collapse of the political regime, Islamist mobilization - in both society and politics - has gained influence. In Tunisia the Islamist Ennahda party would prove to be victorious in the first free and fair elections. In Egypt a similar scenario played out: the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party and the Salafist Nour party gained almost 70 percent in the first elections. In Syria the Muslim Brotherhood dominated external opposition bodies, conservative shaykhs lighted internal opposition and - as the uprising dragged on - Jihadi groups gained in power. In Libya, even though a liberal party won the elections Salafist movements became increasingly powerful. In these societies tensions between more liberal and conservative tendencies polarized as Islamist social movements became more openly active. The newly "democratic" era in the Arab world seems to be colored by Islamist activism.

Not surprisingly the Arab Spring - as this episode came to be known - revived interest in two topics: collective contentious mobilization and Islamism. This thesis falls at the intersection of the two. It explores the (re)positioning of Islamist mobilization in political and social arenas, before and after the Arab spring. Therefore the thesis has everything to do with the Arab uprisings, and at the same time very little. Do not expect in-depth analyses of the structural backgrounds of the uprising nor of its dynamics. Rather, expect an overview

of how the Arab Spring has changed the political and social context within the Arab world, and how this effects the position of Islam in politics and society.

The thesis formulates a few hypotheses on how, and why, interactions between social and political expressions of the Islamist project have evolved the way they did. My central argument is that analyses should take, next to structural characteristics of social and political arenas, state bureaucracies and public institutions into consideration when analyzing these interactions. This is because, I argue, state institutions, especially those that are positioned at the intersection of political power and social activism, are an ideal linchpin around which the Islamist project can revolve. In light of the above the thesis has three interrelated aims: (1) to provide an empirical overview of issues emerging from the interaction between political and social forms of Islamist mobilization; (2) analyze the role of state bureaucracies and public institutions within them; and (3) apply insights of studies on social movements and collective contentious mobilization in this analysis.

★

Much has been said and written about Islamism in the Arab world within political science and sociology. These debates range from terrorism and security studies, to democratization studies and the sociology of religion. All of these academic fields have their own approach. Often they are influenced by overt normative goals (“Is Islam conducive or unfavorable to democracy?”, “Does Islam support womens rights or not?”), an overt focus on the formal political level (“Will the Muslim Brotherhood implement Sharia or not?”, “Are ‘moderate’ Islamists true democrats?”), or on the (scriptural) ideological debates among Islamic scholars (“Does Yusuf al-Qardawi’s [a leading Islamic scholar] religious interpretations support democracy and/or religious pluralism?”). Often these approaches are critiqued for some kind of western bias, and/or lack of appreciation of the dynamic position of Islam in politics and social mobilization thereby underestimating how religion is strategically used by stake holders.

In the present study I choose to draw on a theoretical debate that is largely disconnected from the above studies. The conceptual and theoretical framework draws on political-sociology, specifically studies on contentious mobilization and social movements. It thereby implicitly shows that the relevant structural characteristics of politics and society, related to strategic considerations and resulting in mobilization processes are not, as such, specific to the region nor its prevalent religion. The aim is to show that a theoretical debate and related conceptual framework concerning collective mobilization in a very different context (often Western liberal countries) can help to provide new insights into this crucial phenomenon in the Islamic Arab world. These studies are ideal for studying the issues describe above, as they focus on the structural conditions,

social mechanisms and activist strategies of collectivities that become mobilized around social and politically relevant goals. They therefore focus on the interaction between social collectivities and how they interact with political forces.

The thesis substantiates its claims through a comparison between two countries, Tunisia and Syria. In doing so, the historical development of the Arab state within society, the development of the religious sphere and the eventual conflict between Islamists and the political regimes (between the 1970s and 1990s) in both countries are discussed. Additionally, the thesis examines the very practical issues resulting from reemerging Islamist activism today: tensions between various Islamist movements, tensions between activism aimed at social and political arenas, and the specific position that state institutions take in these conflicts. Though these very fundamental issues emerge in both countries, the specificities of how they evolve are very different. The thesis, then, aims to provide an overview of how - both historically and contemporarily - Islamist mobilization has evolved in both contexts.

1.1 A Puzzle and Research Questions

The above issues can be viewed in light of two post-Arab spring observations that together create a puzzle to be solved. The observations build on a traditional political science approach to viewing the resurrection of Islamist parties in the region after the Arab Spring and lead us to an approach that transcends it.

Islamism, in its ideological foundation, does not accept the boundaries between the political arena, state institutions and society. Therefore its practical mobilization has always had strong revolutionary currents, arguing for the creation of an Islamic state in which Islamic norms would be imposed on society through state laws. But we can observe that in recent decades multiple movements - most notably the Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahda - appear to have accepted the rules of pluralist democracies. They openly support the rule of law, separation of powers and accept contemporary differentiation between social and political spheres. As a result and in light of the Arab Spring, it has become necessary to differentiate between these movements' "political" and "social" activism. In Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood created the Freedom and Justice movement, Salafists created the Nour party; in Syria the Muslim Brotherhood stated they would do the same, in Tunisia the Ennahda movement transformed into a political party - and the list goes on. These practical choices led some commentators to state that the Islamist movements had finally become "secularized".

Of course these movements do not have the monopoly on Islamist political activism. Islamism is rather a "movement family" that consists of a multitude of smaller movement elements. One well known group is the so-called Salafist

movements (which in themselves can be further subdivided) that retained their goal of creating a pure Islamic state that abolishes the division between social and political sphere. Following the Arab Spring, another surprise was that many of these movements accepted the rules of party politics. They turned into, or created, political parties which seemed contradictory to their religious and political views. In some countries these parties proved popular (for instance in Egypt, though not the majority) in others they lost (in Libya, while in Tunisia they were barred from formal participation and lost as independents). But in all cases many Salafists attempted to play along with the political game.

In society a similar process seemed to emerge. Though some Salafist movements were (very) vocal and their use of a (violent) mobilization repertoire helped them make headlines, it did not hide the fact that most social Islamist mobilization was a-political. That the “apolitical” nature of this activism can be questioned is part of central contentions of this thesis, but it is striking to observe that the large majority of reemerging Islamist movements explicitly accept and remain out of the formal political arena. From new religious schools and charitable associations to contentious mobilization against any (perceived) threat or insult to Islam. All this showed the continued salience of Islam as structuring forces of public life, but often people would explicitly state they were active within (civil) society. Their demands - to call individuals to live a more truly Islamic life appeared to be far removed from demanding Islam to rule all of society and politics. Therefore, considering the above, we can ask ourselves:

Why do Islamist movements, including those traditionally opposed to party politics, increasingly accept and organize along a formal division between political and social arenas?

Next to their acceptance and organization along the contemporary political “rules of the game” the supposedly “secular” nature of their political program is striking. With “secularization” of their political program I mean to say that few of these political Islamist parties are outright demanding the implementation of religious rules and norms through policies. They might demand that new laws are “tested” not to stand opposed to *sharia*’ (religious legislation) but they almost never argue for the outright implementation of certain specific religious laws on society. What is striking is that in some countries, notably Egypt, laws were already tested (formally at least) on their religious character by the religious institute of al-Azhar in Cairo *before* the revolution. The specific articles in the constitution dealing with religion often remain unchanged, for instance in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. In Syria the Muslim Brotherhood, in addition to multiple (also often more conservative) other Islamist movements, have explicitly stated they demand a civil state that is not based on Islam.

These movements and parties were active in a post-revolutionary context where Islam became increasingly visible in society through citizens' mobilization. When talking to people the overall idea of Islamism - that Islam should structure all of society and politics, that it should stand "above" all worldly structures - was still powerful. When talking to conservative Muslims from various backgrounds in Tunisia and Syria - but also many other countries around the region - it is clear that the idea that Islam should have a crucial influence in structuring public, social and political life is still very powerful. Many, and probably the majority, of Muslims in the Arab world are explicitly non-secular. They see Islam as something that has influence in public life, playing an essential role in structuring society and therefore the political sphere. These conversations demonstrated a continued salience of the combined social and political message of Islam. Additionally, there is continued support from these social Islamist movements for their political Islamist representation. The allegiance to particular parties may shift due to socio-economic considerations, but the essence of a "normal" Islamist party that acts pragmatically in the name of a vaguely defined "Islamic source" garners immense support.

One would expect that support for the Islamist project would falter as it is increasingly challenged by the practicalities of daily life and represented by "secularizing" Islamist parties. This thesis is written to show that does not have to be true. The secularized programs of these parties do not necessarily indicate a "failure" of the overall resonance of the political Islamist message. Nor did it seem to indicate a "break" from their mobilized base within society. These parties were still deeply embedded and connected to Islamist movements in society. It is therefore puzzling how the above observations can be combined. Considering the above, we can ask ourselves:

Why is this increasing Islamist acceptance of day-to-day realities not matched by a general weakened salience of Islamist ideologies?

I propose that the answer to this question is rather simple: because the position of the state (apparatus) in mainstream Islamist political ideology has developed from the goal of Islamist mobilization to, in recent times, a tool for this project. In other words, a secular state is often perceived as part of, instead of antithesis to, the political Islamist project. This shift has enabled a divergence in Islamist mobilization between mobilization aimed at political influence and mobilization aimed at societal change. To ensure the endurance of the socio-political Islamist project, I argue, by fostering access to state bureaucracies and public institutions by politically opening up these organizations to social Islamist movements. The role of Islamist parties may not be to enforce certain Islamic norms and values in society, but to create the context in which Islamist mobilization from below will be successful in doing

so. It implies Islamization of society not through setting policies, but through enabling a context in which Islamist movements can become hegemonic.

I will argue that, in the context of the way in which Islam is embedded within society in Arab countries, this implies altering the position of state institutions vis-à-vis social Islamist mobilization. In other words, Islamist parties “open up” state institutions from above to be encroached by Islamist movements from below, in an aim to have these institutions better reflect, and represent, Islamists in society. This implies a focus on pressuring or purging civil servants within ministries and public institutions, supporting freedoms for creating Islamist public spaces within these institutes in addition to fostering informal links between Islamist parties and social organizations. As a consequence I argue that specific claims made by both political Islamist parties (which can be to a large degree similar to many non-Islamist parties) and Islamist movements (that can be to large degree politically quiescent) cannot be understood correctly without taking state bureaucracies and public institutions into consideration. Of course there is great diversity between these groups. On the one side, some political parties are more openly arguing for democracy and human rights; others argue that these are just Western inventions and demand sharia laws. But overall, the mainstream within Islamist thought has shifted away from demanding the creation of an “Islamic state” forcefully implementing Islamic laws from above.

The fact that the position of the state in Islamist ideology has changed is, I argue, not the most interesting one. I am not a theologian. What is more interesting to a political sociologist is what this means for the interaction between political Islamist parties, Islamist mobilization on the ground and their relation with state institutions. Thus, for instance, we can explore how the perception of particular bureaucracies and public institutions have changed before, during and after the Arab Spring - and see how they have influenced the relation between political and social mobilization within the Islamist project. We can explore what structures, causal mechanisms and mobilization strategies are at the basis of these changes in Islamist mobilization after the Arab Spring. And we can explore how they are a continuation of or divergence from what happened before. In doing so we can analyze what influence previous relations between politics, state and society have on Islamist mobilization today. We can subsequently generate hypotheses on the interrelations between social and political forms of Islamist mobilization, and what role state institutions can have in these. The possible autonomous role of state institutions has traditionally been neglected in social movement studies. This thesis aims to explore this issue.

Introducing Tunisia and Syria

The present study explores the contemporary Islamist project through a paired comparison between two countries affected by the Arab Spring: Syria and

Tunisia. In both countries Islamist movements are present and interacting with a (secular) state apparatus. In Tunisia, for instance, the Islamist Ennahda won the post-revolution elections by a landslide: they secured three times as many seats as the runner-up. They had made clear they were democrats, supporting the rule of law, and would not attempt to change the nature of the constitution if they would rule the country. At the same time social Islamist mobilization soared and tensions between Salafist Islamist movements and secular groups gained in salience and gradually became more polarized. In this context struggles emerged not only on the political level (concerning the drafting of the new constitution) but specifically also on the “secular” nature of state institutions. State media, various ministries and formal religious institutions became a battle ground for secular and Islamist movements fighting each other and themselves.

In Syria the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad’s rule gradually, and painfully, transformed into a civil war. In this context a plethora of Islamist movements became active. Some mainstream movements adhered to a civil agenda on the future of Syrian rule - also during the uprising. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood had, for two decades at least, argued for civil rule; as did newer Islamist movements such as the Syrian National Movement. Although (foreign) Jihadi fighters gained a prominent role within the uprising itself - and many of them argued for an outright Islamic state - most of the Sunni Syrians themselves are wary of such an option. At the same time, the popularity of Salafist shaykhs and activists ‘*ulamā*’ (religious scholars) is testament to the popularity and legitimacy of religious authorities. It is clear that if the Bashar regime falls, or Syria disintegrates, a new state has to be built on the remnants of previous Ba’athist state institutions. It is also clear that, in the context of severe sectarian tensions, this will involve key questions on what the role of (Sunni) Islam is in the state, especially as these institutions embody a national identity of multi-sectarian Syria. It is a struggle that lies in the future, the outlines of which can already be discerned in “liberated” areas around the country.

Historically, we will see that in the late 19th and early 20th century various reformist Islamist currents emerged. Often in direct conflict with established traditional religious authorities and as direct reaction to Western influences, they argued for a reformation of, or a return to, Islam. Different approaches within this reformism developed, and they would eventually prove to be the foundation of a politicized project aimed at (re)Islamization of society and politics as an answer to, in their view, the weakness of the Islamic world. Although these movements mostly emerged during the first half of the 20th century, they became increasingly powerful throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. This accession was cut short in most Arab countries by a regime crackdown in the 1980s and 1990s. In Syria following the 1982 uprising, in Tunisia in the early 1990s. In both cases Islamist movements were banned and driven underground. With

the repression (and perceived failure) of these movements, the victory of secular authoritarian regimes seemed to be complete in the late 1990s and 2000s.

The subsequent success of *daʿwa* movements, calling for the (public) adherence to religious norms, put in doubt the totality of this Islamist failure. Islam became an increasingly vocal force within the public sphere in what was to be called *al-Ṣaḥwa al-Islāmiya* (“The Islamic Awakening”). With it came (political) power - even in seemingly strong authoritarian regimes. The failure had been in the political, often revolutionary, message of these movements; not in the resonance of the image of Islam as structuring society and politics. Through decades of activism these movements continued to search for a *modus vivandi* with the authoritarian regimes that were ruling the societies in which they had to operate.

The emergence of Islamist movements had left its mark on the traditional class of *ʿulamāʾ*. Initially criticized for their general incapability to provide a vision for public Islam in the modern world, they began to increasingly adapt to the new religiously mobilized environment in which they found themselves (see also section 3.1). Scholars like the Egyptian Yusuf al-Qardawi gained a huge following, as did Ratib an-Nabulsi and al-Buti in Syria. Inadvertently, many religious authorities became closely intertwined with the Islamist project. As we will see, in Syria it was (and often still is) impossible to make a strict distinction between traditional religious elites and Islamist movements. In Tunisia the president of the main Islamist movement, Ennahda, is also a prominent member of the global *ʿulamāʾ* organization of Yusuf al-Qardawi. In Syria, numerous Salafist *ʿulamāʾ* are closely aligned with Islamist movements in the country. As such, though analytically a division can be made between the religious authorities of the *ʿulamāʾ*, in practice the position of the former in the latter needs to be taken into account to properly understand the contemporary Islamist project.

It is obvious that as a result of the Arab Spring many political regimes in the region have been left in shatters. When a revolution emerges, as it did in Tunisia, the political regime breaks down and a new regime will emerge - but the state and the layout of religious institutions remains. In Tunisia this has meant that the political sphere is in the process of being democratized and at the time of writing dominated by an Islamist party. Additionally, repression of Islamic (and Islamist) activism has been lifted and all types of movements have re-emerged in society. In Syria, as a direct consequence of the uprising, Islamist movements have become more publicly active, though often in either “liberated” regions or abroad. But all movements have had to take a position within the uprising - as have institutionalized Islamic authorities present in the country itself. As such, the relation between politics, religion and the state has become deeply ingrained within the ongoing conflict against (or in defense of) the rule of Assad.

From this changing Arab reality questions emerge: how will the legacy of decades of repression and control influence the resurgence of public Islamic activism in the post Arab spring context? What will be the role of Islamist parties in this resurgence? How will social schisms, between secular and Islamist, between different sects, and between Islamists of different ideologies influence Islamist mobilization strategies? And, finally, what will be the role of state institutions and their bureaucrats in these questions? The two research questions stated above open an exploration into all of these issues.

1.2 Research Design, Cases and Methods

The moment we go from one case to two, I would argue, we are in the realm of hypothesis-generating comparative study, while also enabling ourselves to examine how common mechanisms are influenced by the particular features of each case; as we increase the number of cases, however, the leverage afforded by paired comparison becomes weaker, because the number of unmeasured variables increases (Tarrow, 2010b, p.246).

Ontology and Epistemology

Where to position this research? A small elaboration is needed to show my position within ontological and epistemological discussions to then explain how the conceptual and analytical framework fits in my research design and methodology. I will not provide an in-depth exploration of these various discussion (for that see Della Porta and Keating, 2008b) but elaborate mostly on my position within them, to clarify choices I made in research supporting this thesis.

Questions on ontology relate to the existence of an objective truth, epistemology relates to the question if (and how) this truth can be known. This research stands far removed from the “natural science” paradigm as invoked by some in the positivist school of social sciences. Reality exists and can, to a certain extent, be objectively observed; but I am doubtful how much these observation can tell us about human interaction. People give meaning to their surroundings, influencing their eventual actions in society. It renders the search for law-like relations between an objectively assessed context and social phenomenon an unattainable goal.¹

This position has implications on the research design and methodology that I adhere to. In my opinion objective quantitative data related to a social environment is almost impossible to retrieved from a social context. As such, these “facts” can only be used as descriptive tools to sketch a context. In my view we are therefore stuck with imperfect solutions in the social sciences: trying to

¹ See for a similar point Elster (1998).

make sense and explain phenomena that can never be completely objectively assessed. I am therefore not searching for a correlation between observation *A* and *B* that somehow would fit a causal relation; nor am I searching for a structural explanation for observed social phenomenon. Rather, this research is aimed at a specific phenomenon (a reemerging interaction between Islamist movements, parties and state institutions) and creating hypotheses about the causes of its dynamics. What remains is to be clear on the approach chosen, be as thorough and comprehensive as possible when acquiring data, gain a “feel” for the field to be explored - and be truthful about any shortcomings.

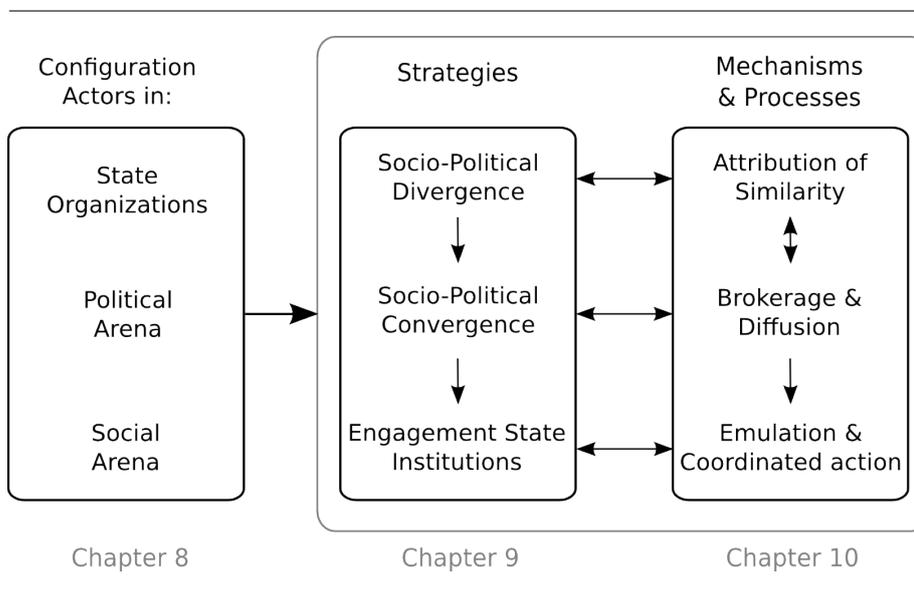
Research Design

Essentially, the research design follows a paired-comparison (as in Tarrow, 2010b) leaning towards a most different case design (Della Porta and Keating, 2008a, chapter 11).² As the quote at the beginning of this section clarifies, a paired comparison enables an assessment of the role and influence of particular characteristics of each case; without the danger of losing explanatory power through an exponential increase in the number of possible relevant variables as the number of cases is increased. A paired-comparison is therefore particularly effective for generating hypotheses concerning a specific social phenomenon. Thus while the cases share a few characteristics that relate to the existence of the phenomenon that is being explored, for the rest they are as different as is practically possible. This enables an assessment of what characteristics are important and/or have a specific influence on the observed phenomenon; rendering it possible to assess the extent to which it is possible to generalize hypotheses. Consequently, in the analysis we are searching for some comparable dynamics within Islamist mobilization between the two differing contexts. The general approach is then, through a qualitative approach, to see how structural differences relate to dynamics in Islamist mobilization in these different cases.

As the research is aimed at interaction with state bureaucracies, and practical Islamist mobilization is by and large aimed at the level of the nation-state, the cases are defined at the country level. This does not mean that dynamics in these countries are explored in isolation and that I imply that they exist without interference outside the boundaries of the cases set. Particularly concerning Islamist mobilization, transnational links are crucial in their ideological and organizational development. While I acknowledge the importance of these

² As Tarrow (2010b) clarifies, the differentiation between a “most different” and “least different” case design is problematic in cross-national comparisons. As the universe of cases is limited, it is impossible to meaningfully select cases on their differentiation. In practice it results in a scholar either over- or understating differences between cases studied. I have tried here to select two cases that were as different as possible, but do fully acknowledge the remaining similarities between them.

Figure 1.1: The Analytical Framework



translational influences, the fact is that the focus of the research lies - for a large part - on national political spheres and state institutions.

The Analytical and Conceptual Framework

The analytical framework of this thesis has three levels; focusing on structural factors, social processes and strategic dilemmas. The question is how specificities in the structural context influence strategic choices and mobilization processes. Figure 1.1 (page 13) is a graphical representation of this analytical framework.³ At the structural level the configuration of political, state and social actors (this would additionally include economic actors, though not at the center of analysis) is the focus of the exploration. It also includes cultural models and international actors as structural factors though not included in this figure. More precisely, I will explore what social and political cleavages are present in social and political arenas, to what extent they reverberate in state institutions, and what position Islamist movements and parties have within them. Pervasive state-led clientelism will have a prominent role as a cultural model, defining the extent to which socio-political cleavages reverberate in state institutions.

Second, there is a focus on mobilization strategies. These strategies emerge around dilemmas concerning identity and state engagement in Islamist movements and parties. The choices available in these dilemmas are enabled or

³ The figure is loosely based on the political process approach. See section 2.2 (page 33) and figures 2.1 (page 36) and 2.3 (page 50).

constrained by existing structures that are interpreted and influenced by actors involved. For instance, a dilemma that is explored is to what extent there is a pragmatic approach to political interests, and (implied) to what extent Islamist ideology will inform practical political decisions of Islamist activists. Another example is to what extent movements choose to have a pragmatic stance vis-à-vis engagement with state bureaucrats. It is a dilemma that is influenced by the extent to which movements identify with (certain bureaucrats in) state institutions. Needless to say, I am convinced that these two dilemmas are related.

Third, there is a level of analysis focusing on mobilization mechanisms and processes. Mobilization mechanisms and processes constitute the interaction between mobilizers (challengers) and members of formal political institutions, state institutions and other social groups. In the analysis I focus on one particular process: “upward scale shift”. This denotes a translation of local social Islamist demands to the national political arena. I argue that this process is constituted by a cognitive mechanism (boundary setting) and two relational mechanisms (brokerage and diffusion). How these three mechanisms interrelate defines, I argue, the extent to which Islamists’ demands are emulated in the political arena.

Having discussed the analytical framework, we now turn to the central concepts of the thesis.

- The thesis firstly relates to the political arena.⁴ The political arena is conceptualized as the social field⁵ in which individuals are actively and meaningfully influencing policy making processes. It consists of those active in formal political institutions, such as parliament and government. But it also includes those with meaningful influence on policy-making through informal relations to political power.⁶
- Secondly, it relates to the social arena. The social arena is conceptualized as the social field of public individual interaction that is outside formal political and economic institutions (but includes religious organizations). It closely relates to either “public sphere” or “civil society”, though these concepts focus more on communication and institutionalized social activism respectively.
- In addition it relates to state bureaucracies and public institutions (also abbreviated as “state institutions”). Following the theoretical discussion below (see section 3.2, page 58) I choose to stay close to Skocpol (1979) in defining

⁴ The thesis uses the concepts of “arena” and “sphere” interchangeably.

⁵ I define a social field using Wacquant (who paraphrases Bourdieu) as consisting of “a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power [and prescribing] its particular values and possesses its own regulative principles” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

⁶ See the related concept of “politically relevant elites”, or PREs (Werenfels, 2007).

the state: a field consisting of “administrative, policing, and military organizations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority” (Skocpol, 1979, p.29). These organizations include, but are not confined to; the ministries and local and regional executive branches of government, the army and police forces, state service provision such as educational (schools, universities) organizations, and state institutions managing religious activities.

In addition, in combination with chapter 2, the key actors emerge. The conceptualizations of the crucial actors reflect both the focus on SMS within the research (see page 33) and the broad definition of Islamism used (see page 31). Within this broad conceptualization of Islamism I choose to define both a (political) party and (social) movement component. These, in isolation, might be argued not to be Islamist; as they do not explicitly combine - in themselves - a political and social project. But I argue that both are indispensable parts of a project that builds on a combination of the two and that their mobilization is therefore always somehow related. I therefore opt to denote both parties and movements as Islamist. That said, the key actors in the thesis are the following:

- *(Sunni) Islamist Social Movement*: social processes, consisting of mechanisms, through which actors engaged in collective actions [1] are linked by dense informal networks, [2] share a distinct collective identity and [3] support and develop the public adherence to Sunni Islamic religiosity (based on Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Generally this denotes Sunni *daʿwa* movements that “call” people to adhere to a proper “Islamic” lifestyle. Mobilization repertoires range from teaching and charitable activities to destroying and attacking individuals and properties that are seen to be “anti-Islamic”. These movements have very different levels of institutionalization: from almost none (for instance *daʿwa wa tabligh*) to highly organized (the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood).
- *(Sunni) Islamist Political Party*: an organization seeking to influence government policy through institutionalized access to policy making, basing its political ideology explicitly on Islam. Generally this denotes the well-known political Islamist parties: Ennahda, Hizb al-Tahrir, the Salafist Nour party and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in Egypt. The relationship to Islamist movements can be extremely close (for instance the Muslim Brotherhood) to the level that organizations themselves do not know what they are yet (the Tunisian Ennahda). But in all cases they are forced - as will be discussed later - to position themselves as either social or political group.
- *The Islamist Project*: the (perceived) combination of social and political mobilization in an aim to create a society and political reality structured along an interpretation of (in this case Sunni) Islam. In general this denotes the

perception that the actors defined above are collectively active to achieve a unified Islamist goal.

- And finally we should mention *(Sunni) Islamic (not Islamist) mobilization*. Activism in name of (Sunni) Islam but which is not part of a larger collective identity and thus movement; solely aimed at enacting religious observance. Generally this denotes activism in the framework of “normal” religious roles, such as non-mobilized Islamic *‘ulamā’*, imams and isolated Islamic associations. These types of activities fall outside the scope of the Islamist project.

This limited set of actors is what this thesis revolves around. I argue that they are the key actors that define the interactions between social and political forms of Islamist mobilization. We can therefore now turn to the case selection and methods used in this research. Subsequently I will describe the main propositions of the thesis.

Case Selection

Why Syria and Tunisia? The phenomenon at the center of discussion is the interaction between Islamist movements, Islamist parties and state institutions - and how this interaction influences Islamist mobilization. This implies a number of common elements between the countries to be studied, defining the universe of cases. These characteristics are that, first, the cases had to be Muslim majority countries. As the interaction between state officials and Islamist movements will be very different in Islamic minority countries, where the majority status of the community often limits the interaction to specific state institutions aimed at minorities. Second, the cases need to have Islamist movements that are, or have been, key conduits for social conflicts vis-à-vis regime incumbents. Third, there needs to be an element of political activity to Islamist movements in the country, both historically and in the contemporary context, to have a “movement” to analyze. These parameters define a specific universe that is focused on Sunni Islamic majority countries in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf Region. In other words: the Arab world. There are, of course, examples outside the Arab world that conform to the first three characteristics: most notably Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan. These countries have not, though, been part of the wave of mobilization that swept through the region in 2011.

The main generalizability of the comparison emerges from differences between two cases. It is therefore necessary to find the most different cases within the universe defined above. I argue that there are a considerable number of structural differences between which we need to find the greatest extent of divergence. First the cases should be in different regions within the Arab world; decreasing the extent to which cases influence each other. Concerning society, the number of sects present, and if there is a traditional religious elite present

should differ; the same with the level of institutionalization of public religion in the country before and after the Arab Spring. Concerning Islamism, the extent to which Islamist parties have been, and are, allowed to run in politics; and the extent to which Islamist movements have been, and are, allowed to mobilize openly should differ between the two cases. Finally, concerning state authority and religion, the relation between regime and religion should differ. These six characteristics embody possible influential conditions for the interaction under scrutiny; by differing the cases on these characteristics we can assess their importance.

Considering the above, I have chosen two countries: Tunisia and Syria. Due to the set “universe” of cases there are some similarities between Tunisia and Syria. For instance, both had experience with Islamist mobilization before: in Syria this was mainly during the Islamic uprising in the early 1980s (Lobmayer, 1995) and in Tunisia in the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s (Perkins, 2004). Also, in both countries the previous regime closely supervised and influenced religious Islamic activities. On other characteristics we wish to see a divergence between the two countries. It is in practice impossible to find two cases that are completely different on all these accounts, but the combination of Syria and Tunisia goes a long way. They are divergent in that Syria is multi-sectarian and Tunisia uni-sectarian; Syria has a strong Islamic sphere which has its own property (and thereby power) in Tunisia none of this exists at present.

Another crucial difference between Tunisia and Syria is how their Arab Spring uprisings evolved. In the former case the uprising took four weeks and resulted in a revolution. In the latter the uprising resulted in a protracted civil war. This has a number of important consequences for observing the position of state bureaucracies and public institutions in the Islamist project. Most importantly, in Syria the regime has lost control over parts of the country and state institutions have largely collapsed. I have chosen to focus on areas that have been “liberated” from government control, for instance the region around Idlib, Jisr al-Shourough and Aleppo in the north; the region around Dara’ and Quneitra in the south, parts of Deir ez-Zor in the east and Ar-Raqqa in the center. In these areas, due to the lack of regime influence, a collapse of service provision has taken place that created an immediate need for some kind of governance. In attempts to create governance structures, we can observe how a cleavage between “Islamic” and “civil” management emerge and how both more social and political expressions of Islamist mobilization intersect. In Tunisia state institutions survived the revolutions intact, but similar issues over the “Islamic”, “civil” or “secular” nature of state bureaucracies and public institutions still emerged. They play out in a context of (attempted) state transformation instead of state rebuilding. We therefore have a paired-comparison that both before and after the start of the Arab Spring tends to a most different case

design; with both countries developing in very distinct ways in the period under review.

Despite these differences between these cases, we will see that a number of similar mechanisms and mobilization strategies within Islamism can be observed. In the conclusion of this thesis a brief overview is given of similar issues in other countries - mainly those effected by the Arab Spring - to assess to what extent lessons learned from this paired comparison also apply to other countries.

Methods

A number of methods have been used to research the above issues. The research mainly builds on a triangulation of (semi-structured) interviews; primary sources from Islamist social movement organizations (SMOs), Islamist political parties and state institutions; and (Arabic) secondary sources. As such, this thesis builds first and foremost on extensive fieldwork over the course of four years in the Arab world. Fieldwork periods include February-May 2009 in Damascus (Syria), June-August 2010 in Syria, Algeria and Morocco, January-April 2011 in Tunis (Tunisia), September and October 2012 in Istanbul and Antakya (Turkey) and Tunis (Tunisia). Needless to say the contexts in which these field trips took place differed greatly: from outright authoritarian repression and constant fear of the *mukhābarāt* (“intelligence services”) in Syria before 2011, via the social and political chaos of post-revolutionary Tunisia to the civil war and exile situations (Syria, Turkey and Jordan after the start of the uprising). Though constrained by the context in which fieldwork took place, in each case I identified relevant actors and organizations through secondary sources and initial exploratory interviews with both secular and Islamist interlocutors. Subsequently I attempted to gain access and interview representatives of these organizations, through a combination of “formal” requests (in practice this often meant knocking on doors of mosques, associations and showing up at ministries) and a form of “directed snow ball sampling” (asking after every interview if people knew individuals close to shaykh x, association y and/or organization z; resulting in access through informal contacts).

In total 189 individuals have been interviewed. Individuals interviewed ranged from secular activists, to Salafi shaykhs; from Arab academics to Islamist youngsters (for an overview of Interviews Cited see the appendix on page 257). Though complete coverage is impossible, these individuals seem to represent a proper cross-section of the political and social organizations discussed in this thesis. Most interviews have been done in the larger cities of countries visited - Damascus, Tunis, Istanbul and Amman - but smaller cities such as Medenine (Tunisia), Gaziantep (Turkey) and Ramtha (Jordan) were also covered. Algeria and Morocco have also been visited in early (pre-Arab Spring) stages of the research. These formal interviews are in addition to hundreds of

observations and casual conversations that have proved relevant to the analysis. All observation that are referred to in the thesis have been recorded - pictures, movies and sound clips - unless otherwise stated.

Secondly, in addition to interviews and observations, documents published by Islamist SMOs and relevant state institutions have been accessed. This happened both via their websites and through field visits and gaining hard copies of relevant documents. The total number of documents is around a hundred. When used in the thesis, they are referenced in a footnote. Concerning secondary sources, for both Tunisia and Syria four main news channels have been selected - The New York Times, France 24 (the Arabic version), al-Ḥayāt and al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ - whose news archives have been systematically checked for news items on Islamist mobilization in Syria and Tunisia.⁷ In addition local newspaper sources have been used as additional resource where necessary; especially concerning events that did not make it into international media. It resulted in an extensive newspaper archive consisting of thousands of articles. Only a small sample of these sources has made it explicitly into the thesis. They are mentioned in the appendix from page 261 onwards.

There is an additional practical reason why methods are mostly qualitative, and heavily aimed at triangulation. The previous and current political and social situation in the Arab world renders it difficult to acquire quantitative objective data: formal research approvals are often hard to come by, which means that ministries, holders of much “objective quantitative” data remain closed; even if ministries are accessible data is often unreliable, especially concerning sensitive social and political issues. Therefore researchers are forced to rely mostly on interviews and archival research as their main methods, making a qualitative approach more or less the only viable methodological choice. In an attempt to improve reliability I collected a large body of primary and secondary sources, along with interviews, to improve methodological triangulation.

If we look in more detail and follow the analytical framework described in figure 1.1, we can see that the different methods have a different role in the three analytical parts of the research. Concerning structures, I map the formal institutional framework vis-à-vis religion in both Syria and Tunisia and analyze commonalities and differences. For instance concerning what ministries have portfolio’s related to religion, what state initiated organizations exist and what formal religious roles have been institutionalized.

Concerning socio-religious organizations, I explore the extent and organization of the religious sphere in both countries. This exploration is build on primary sources and (some) quantitative data from relevant ministries and state

⁷ The selection of these four channels was aimed to maximize differences between them, to minimize bias. The New York Times is a US focused source; France 24 is French; al-Ḥayāt Middle East; and al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ is Saudi/Gulf focused.

institutions, in addition to information from political parties and electoral results (post-revolution). In addition I interviewed state officials and politicians. Also, interviews were held with representatives from relevant/Islamist political parties and religious organizations (mosques, Islamic schools). Finally, newspaper articles and other news sources are used to provide a general up-to-date picture of changes within these contexts.

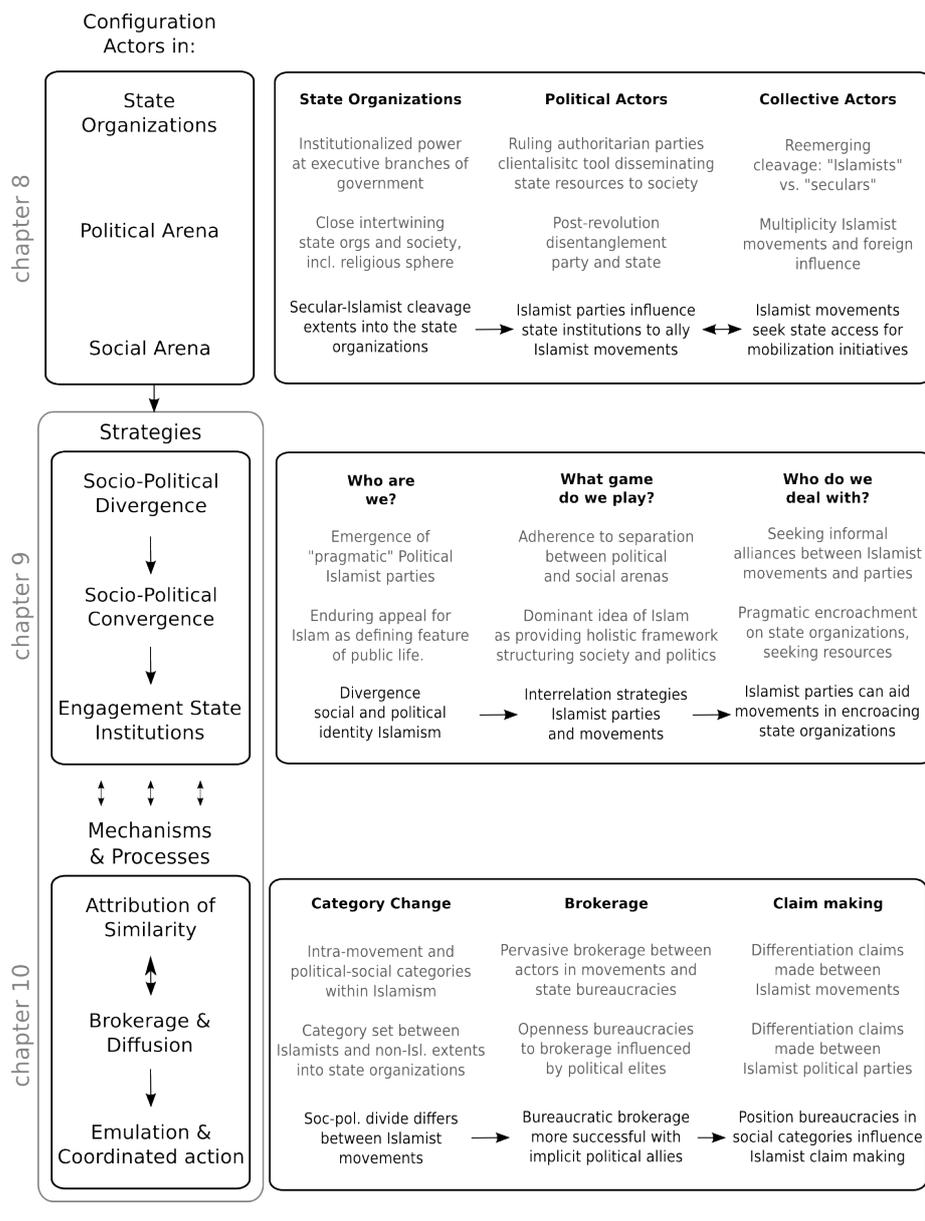
Concerning the foci on strategies and social mechanisms, methods revolve around exploring and analyzing specific mobilization strategies by Islamist actors in response to perceived threats and opportunities through mostly qualitative methodologies. The research focuses on mobilization strategies of individual Islamist activists and asks how these strategies are influenced by and involve interaction with state actors. Methods mostly used are semi-structured interviews with actors in state institutions (specifically the regional level) Islamist organizations and Islamist activists. Additionally Friday speeches, websites of relevant organizations and Shaykhs are used to gain an understanding of choices faced and strategies chosen by Islamist activists. Also occasionally, if relevant, newspaper articles have been consulted.

1.3 Propositions and Thesis Outline

Having discussed the conceptual framework and research design it is time to put forth three propositions. The propositions all focus on ways that Islamist-state interactions are evolving - and why. They show that certain dynamics and strategic considerations in Islamist mobilization, between two very different cases, share a number of striking similarities. These propositions will be the practical guide to the analysis: they emerge from the argumentations supported by the paired-comparison between Syria and Tunisia. Part II provides an in-depth historical and contemporary exploration to provide an overall picture of how the propositions emerge from the Tunisian and Syrian practice individually. Part III, then, will provide the explicit paired comparison between the two cases to explore the following propositions. An overview of the argumentation and propositions is given in figure 1.2 (page 21).

- There is *an increasing divergence within the practical application of Islamist mobilization between social and political arenas*. Through decades of experience, there are now fewer Islamists that believe in negating all existing social and political institutions and creating a true Islamic system that governs all. Though a minority is still present (and very vocal) in the daily practice of Islamist mobilization the large majority accepts - either implicitly or explicitly - existing boundaries between political and social spheres. As a result a divergence has strengthened between mobilization aimed at societal change and mobilization aimed at maximizing influence in the political arena. The

Figure 1.2: The Analytical Framework and Thesis Argumentation



extent to which this divergence is internalized within Islamist groups differs, but all are confronted by it. Concurrently, I argue, there is *an enduring basis for convergence*. Social and political divergence has not weakened Islamism as such. A large group of (Sunni) Muslims - in Syria a clear majority, in Tunisia still a sizable group - believe Islam is not only something of the private sphere, but has something to say about how society and politics should be structured and they are actively mobilizing to implement this view in real life. This brings up questions of how (and if) Islamist mobilization in political and social arenas relate to each other. It is a question that has come to the fore as a direct result of political openings (and the related political opportunities for Islamist movements) during and after the Arab Spring. In this context, either Islamist movements can be pragmatic (accepting a split between social and political activism) or continue to follow a more ideological, combined, approach. This would mean neglecting any day-to-day divisions between politics, society and state, and attempting to create an Islamic system that governs all. I argue that in practice the first option is increasingly prevalent. But the question then is how to combine practical divergence with continued ideological convergence within an Islamist project.

- I argue there is an option to *focus on Islamization of state bureaucracies and public institutions* instead of implementing religious norms through state laws. Historically Arab bureaucracies have been closely intertwined with society and politics: through an explicit political strategy of ruling elites, politics and society were dominated by, and coalesced through, state bureaucracies. In a context of close interrelation between political and economic elites, state institutions were not only implementers of policies, but also holders of critical resources used in clientelism. As result of these years of state induced clientelism, state bureaucracies and public institutions can be perceived to have a specific position within secular-conservative divides. As both actor and holder of critical resources for (religious) social mobilization, these state institutions can function as a “linchpin” between social and political Islamist movements. Somewhat simplified: there is an option to aim for “Islamizing the state” instead of creating an “Islamic state”. In this “pragmatic solution” both social and political groups share clearly defined, but separated, task: political parties open state bureaucracies and public institutions to “social forces”, thereby enabling bottom-up Islamist mobilization to increasingly influence those that implement policies. In practice it means a focus on Islamization of education, media and (civil servants in) relevant ministries - in addition to pressurizing state bureaucracies and public institutions for more independent and empowered religious authorities. What strategy is chosen differs, but I argue that the “bureaucratic option” has increasingly come forward as a viable Islamist approach following the Arab Spring.

- The above has a fundamental influence on how Islamist mobilization will evolve in the Arab world in the coming decades. In general I argue that *the relation between political and social Islamist mobilization is dependent on the position of state institutions along an “Islamist” social cleavage*. Or, in other words, the perception that state bureaucracies and public institutions are “opposed” to Islamists can lead to a seemingly “secularization” of political Islamist programs. Almost all Islamist movements have created some kind of political party that represents them, or is related to them. The extent to which they diverge in their political and social aims differs greatly between these movements. Drawing on a mechanistic approach in Social Movement Studies (elaborated upon in section 2.2 and chapter 10) I argue that there are two trajectories to translate Islamist demands from Islamist movements to Islamist political parties: through “political scale shift” or “bureaucratic scale shift”. With political scale shift we see that Islamist demands are directly translated into political Islamist ones, leading to demands for the creation of Islamic laws and an “Islamic constitution”. With bureaucratic scale shift we see a focus on Islamizing bureaucracies and public institutions and demands to change specific civil servant in these state institutions. The rationale being that strengthening Islam in society is not just dependent on laws, but on the extent to which the institutional body of the state represents Islam. This approach can decrease demands for outright Islamic laws without weakening the Islamist project as such. I argue that to understand both social and political Islamist mobilization beyond the Arab Spring, we need to focus on the interrelation between mechanisms that constitute these two trajectories and analyze how they influence mobilization within movements across different structural contexts.

Thesis Outline

Overall, the structure of the thesis goes from the specific to the general. After the introductory chapters I start out with an individual discussion of each case, subsequently move to a paired comparison and I end, in the conclusion of the thesis, with a brief comparative discussion across the Arab world and beyond. I opted to write a relative high number, but individually shorter, chapters. All the chapters can be read individually, but chapters within each parts explicitly build on one another.

More specifically, part I (Positioning the Pieces) provides introductory material to the thesis. The current chapter provided an introduction to the research, proposed a research approach and outlined the analytical framework which will guide the subsequent analysis. Chapter 2 introduces and critically assesses the key theoretical debates that this thesis engages with. Chapter 3 provides a

chronological overview of Islam and Islamism, as well as a historic overview of the position of state institutions in the Arab world.

Having explored the general theoretical and historical background, we move on to part II (Playing the Game) which explores the two case studies in more detail. Both are split between a historical and contemporary part. The historical chapters 4 and 6 run from the 19th century until the Arab spring. They explore the role and position of the traditional religious sphere in Tunisia before the 2011 revolution (chapter 4) and explore the role of Islamist mobilization and religious authorities in Syrian politics and society before the uprising (chapter 6). It thereby shows the differences between the cases from a historical perspective. The contemporary chapters 5 and 7 provide an anthology of empirical examples concerning the interaction between social and political forms of Islamism. Chapter 5 does this for Tunisia and chapter 7 explores the Islamist resurgence in Syria just before and after the start of the current uprising. In doing so it sketches emerging conflicts around Islam in society and politics, and the position that state bureaucracies and public institutions can take within them. Part II thereby provides a detailed account of how the propositions above work out in the Tunisian and the Syrian context; thereby showing how the particularities of each national structural contexts influences the practical outcome of the propositions stated above.

Building on this in-depth description of the two cases, part III (Changing the Rules?) is the central analytical part. It applies the three different levels of our analytical framework through a paired-comparison to Tunisia and Syria. It thereby shows that similar mobilization processes and strategic dilemmas emerge within Islamist mobilization in both countries. Chapter 8 uses a structural approach to give an overview of key actors and the alliances and conflict structure between them. It also provides an analysis of the position of state bureaucracies within these structures. Chapter 9 explores strategic dilemmas concerning identity and engagement that Islamist actors face in the structural context, as described in the chapter before. Chapter 10 analyses Islamist mobilization through two different mechanistic trajectories at the basis of emulating Islamist demands to the political arena.

Part IV (Taking Stock) is the conclusion of the thesis. Chapter 11 provides a recap of outcomes from the research and places them in a broader comparative perspective. It includes a comparative discussion that focuses on Egypt, Libya, Yemen and - briefly - other Muslim majority countries to assess if similar issues also play out in these countries. Thereby the concluding chapter provides some ideas on future avenues for comparative research on Islamism in the Arab world and beyond.

Chapter 2

Islamist Mobilization: Theories and Concepts

As clarified in the introduction, this thesis focuses on two questions: why do most Islamist movements, including those traditionally opposed to party politics, accept and organize along a formal division between political and social arenas, and why is this increasing Islamist pragmatism not matched by a general weakened salience of Islamist ideologies? In answering these questions we need to take three academic debates into consideration: concerning the relation between religion and politics; concerning the emergence of collective mobilization and social movements; and - I argue - concerning the position of state institutions vis-à-vis politics and society.¹ I hope to position my exploration in a broader framework than just Islamist mobilization in the Arab world, specifically using Social Movement Studies (SMS) to do this. Many dynamics that can be observed in Islamist mobilization today are comparable to experiences with collective mobilization in other (non-Arab, non-Muslim majority) countries. I argue that by using this framework I enable an assessment that goes beyond the religious sphere and does justice to these movements by enabling a comparison to other types of non-religious collective mobilization.

The following chapter is structured around the above mentioned debates. First, I provide an outline of academic discussions at the intersection of sociology of religion and political science and how the debate on political Islam

¹ Some parts of the current chapter have appeared in published articles before, though most have been edited beyond recognition. A first article is *Enduring Ambiguity: Sunni Community-Syrian Regime Dynamics*, was published in *Mediterranean Politics* (Donker, 2010). Second, a part was used in a chapter that was published in the edited volume *Middle East Authoritarianisms: Governance, Contestation, and Regime Resilience in Syria and Iran* Donker (2013). Also an earlier version of the discussion on Islamism was used in a forthcoming article in *Mediterranean Politics* (mid-2013) *Reemerging Islamism in Tunisia: Repositioning Religion in Politics and Society*.

can be position within them. We will see that over the last decade debates on secularization in Europe and debates on political religion in the Arab world have moved closer together in recognizing the continued endurance and relevance of religion in public life. Second, I provide an overview of the relevant debates within Social Movement Studies (SMS). These debates both provide a framework to explore and analyze politically relevant social (and religious) mobilization outside the framework of Islamism studies, and provide a diverse and well developed corpus that relates to both political science and sociology. We will see that in recent years debates have moved away from a structural dominance to a include more mechanistic and strategic approaches. I then argue that an analytical framework building on insights from these various SMS debates can provide a rich understanding of the interrelations between structures, social processes and mobilization strategies - and the dynamics in (religious) mobilization they produce. Thirdly, I will touch upon debates on the position of the state - specifically its bureaucracies and public institutions - vis-à-vis politics and society. Through these discussions I provide the theoretical basis to show how the position of politics, state institutions and collective mobilization in relation to one another influences the ways in which mobilization in political and social arenas interrelate.

2.1 Debates on Religion and Politics

[Islamism is] the brand of modern political Islamic fundamentalism that claims to re-create true Islamic society, not simply by imposing *sharī'a*, but by establishing first an Islamic state through political action. Islamists see Islam not as a mere religion, but as a political ideology that should reshape all aspects of society (politics, law economy, social justice, foreign policy, and so on) (Roy, 2006, p.58).

Religious Ideology versus Worldly Practice

Much has been written about Islam in both political science and sociology. In these writings we can discern a scale from those that focus on religious ideological influence to those that focus on structural (social and political) influences as determinant on the emergence and development of Islamist mobilization. Scholars in the first tradition give precedence in their analyses to the (historically contingent) influence of religion on social and political phenomena in the Arab world and beyond. In other words, how many Muslims perceive the influence of religion on politics and society is dependent on the content of religious debates and on developments in religious doctrine. It is a religious-cultural explanation for a social and political phenomenon. The general tendency in these writings is to gloss over the influence of regional- or country-level specificities as local

socio-political influences are perceived of secondary importance. An example is Brown (2001) who focuses overtly on the early historical development of Islam as religion and socio-political force, and builds his subsequent assessment of the contemporary position of Islam in politics and society on this historical analysis.² These approaches are often linked to the historical development of academic studies on Islam and the rise in the 18th century (and endurance in various forms) of a specific field of study that was aimed at studying the “Orient”. Steeped in the traditional positivist view of social sciences, oriental studies were traditionally aimed at “discovering” specific “defining” characteristics of both Arab culture and Islamic religion that were seen as causing observed social and political dynamics (Volpi, 2010). Parts of these debates were focusing on particularities of Islamic faith and/or doctrine to explain contemporary social and political phenomenon. Famously critiqued by Edward Said (1978), scholars have subsequently tried to steadily build a less essentialist approach to the study of the Arab world, its culture, politics and religion.

Scholars in the second approach tend to do the opposite. They generally give precedence to socio-political structures as explanation for the contemporary influence of religion in society and politics. The clearest examples of this approach can be found among political scientists that study “Political Islam”. Schwedler (2007) studies the moderation of the Yemeni *Iṣlāḥ* party without one reference to actual Islamic debates: her thesis evolves completely around the extent to which internal organization of an Islamist party can (and does) react to changing political circumstances. The same can be said for Brown (2012) who discusses Islamist parties (though discussed as “movements”) and their pragmatic strategies while participating in elections under semi-authoritarian regimes.³ Though these political scientists are the most obvious examples, many other political scientists and sociologists explicitly negate or implicitly ignore the particular influence of religion on the groups studied. They completely negate any particularities by applying a “foreign” analytical framework on a particular Islamic phenomenon. The two debates described here are extremes on a scale. Most scholars balance somewhere between the two.

I count my thesis as also falling somewhere between these two extremes, although it tends to underestimate the influence of religious ideology. As will be discussed later on, this is the result of using social movement studies as the analytical framework to study Islamism. At the same time, it should be noted there is a rich tradition that falls at the intersection of the two debates, showing

² This is not to be understood that these studies are not in-depth or substantial. Some (early) examples of these approaches are extraordinary in their depth and breath. See for instance: Gibb (1972, 1986).

³ Interestingly enough, though somewhat of a side point, Wiktorowicz (2000b) already warns ten years before of the tendency among political scientists to purely focus on political parties and thereby conflate the Islamist project with Islamist political parties.

how religious ideology shapes and is shaped by a contemporary political and social context. A few initial examples are Qasim Zaman (2012) in his study of (political and societal influences on) religious debates among ‘ulamā’ in Egypt, India and Pakistan. Another example is Haykel (2009) in his study on Salafist thought and its position in socio-political activism.

The Political Sociology of Islamism

To be more specific on the position I take within these discussions, we have to revisit the debate in political science and sociology concerning Islamism. Following the definition by Roy (2006) above, simplified, Islamism refers to a political ideology that revolves around the idea that creating an Islamic state is the solution to all contemporary social and political problems. Islamists do not use Islam as only a religion, but also as a political ideology in mobilization against a (national) polity in search for a better, Islamic, state. The definition above emerged from an empirical reality. New religious ideologies emerged in the 19th century as reaction to a weakening Ottoman Empire and, subsequently, the creation of new states in the Arab world by colonial powers. Religious thought developed from reactionary ideology to politicized movements and organizations, such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood that was founded in 1928 (for more information see page 63). It is these movements that were dubbed “Islamist”.

A number of scholars have shown how the socio-political development of the (Arab) world has shaped contemporary religious political ideologies. A small set of French scholars have become particularly well known for this approach: Burgat and Dowell (1997); Burgat (2003); Kepel (1994); and Roy (2006) are the main examples. A few examples of the more general contributions to the political sociology of Islamist mobilization are Singerman (1996); Hefner (2000); Wiktorowicz (2000b); and Tuğal (2009a). Hefner (2000, 2004) focuses in his early work on the relation between political repression and ideological changes in Islamist movements in South-East Asia; and, in his later work (Hefner, 2009; Hefner and Qasim Zaman, 2006) on the politics of religious education in the region. In one of the more recent contributions, Tuğal (2009a) has looked at the Islamist AK party in Turkey and shown how it constructed an “Islamist” socio-political hegemonic project - combining economic liberal politics with an Islamic discourse - to gain hegemony in both politics and society.⁴ Though very different in their approaches, all of these contributions have a common sociological-political approach that means the authors’ propositions can be applied far beyond Islamist mobilization and/or their region of choice. More often

⁴ Another notable, older, contribution is Singerman (1996), who focuses on low level Islamist mobilization in a poor Egyptian quarter. She thereby analyzes the political impact of everyday interaction between social mobilization and local state officials.

than not, they touch on questions that are central in the study of social movements: how and why do people mobilize, what is the relation between social and political mobilization, and how does social mobilization become successful in influencing (institutionalized) politics?

Within this body of academic research a new trend emerged in the late 1990s: post-Islamism. Post-Islamism refers to the gradual disillusionment in Islamist strategies and the move towards a more secular position vis-à-vis religion. The causes of the “coming of the post-Islamist era” are clear: it is mainly due to repression and a failure to achieve practical results. Bayat states that, in the context of Iran, post-Islamism is mostly due to disillusionment with the top-down Islamization project initiated under the Islamic republic since 1979 (Bayat, 1996). Additionally, concerning the Arab world: no authoritarian regime has been toppled through Islamist mobilization (Roy, 1996).

But with the “failure of political Islam” the political relevance of Islam did not fade. It can be argued that this, drawing to some extent on scholars who focus on religion, relates to the strong “societal” inclinations of Islam. Religious authorities have never had to institutionalize separately from society - as is the case with the church and Christianity. These religious authorities have therefore always been very much part of the society in which they exist. Arguably, this has also influenced their religious interpretations: regulations of how someone should structure his or her life are an important part of Islamic faith.⁵ In early Islamic history the political regime was small and disconnected from society, rendering it possible for a religion to be both socially omnipresent and politically quiescent. The growth of the modern nation state has made such an arrangement impossible. As the state is enlarged and encroaches on society (structuring daily life through media, education, large-scale bureaucratic employment, etc) *any* project that provides an alternative to structuring social life becomes inherently political (Hirschkind, 1997). It means that those within society that aim to build a societal project on the basis of their religion (be it Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism, etc) will naturally become politicized as they encroach on the state’s influence over society. Only the relegation of religion to the private sphere can, in this view, truly depoliticize it. In other words: that Islamism failed did not, by itself, mean that Islam would become secular.

This leads us to the second approach, which focuses on the micro-levels of power in the process of forming a hegemonic (socio-political) Islamist project. With the “failure of Islamism” scholars have increasingly recognized that the political impact of Islamist movements in the Middle East is not only in its direct political project, but also in its societal one. Well known proponents are Mahmood (2005) and Ismail (2003). This approach explores the political

⁵ As is the case in Judaism, but less so in Christianity. See Brown (2001).

impact of social Islamic mobilization. The so-called *da'wa* movements, that focus on social mobilization aimed at “calling” people to live more piously and denounce secular lifestyles by “commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong”. These movements are widespread in the Arab world and are successful: the direct result is what many have described as the “religious revival” in the public sphere (Mahmood, 2005). The political impact of these movements is in the fact that they aim to restructure daily life through an Islamic framework. It is a project that has very real political implications, as it can be in direct opposition to an existing liberal-secular regime. As Mahmood (2005) states:

It would be a mistake to dismiss [...] the *da'wa* movement as a preoccupation with superficial distinctions of style and form that have little impact on issues of “real import” (such as economics and electoral politics), or to assume that since piety movements do not confront the state directly, they are apolitical in character. [...] As theorists of the public sphere have come to recognize, regulation of such quotidian practices is of eminent political concern because they play a crucial role in shaping the civic and public sensibilities essential to the consolidation of a secular-liberal polity (Mahmood, 2005, p.73).

Social and religious activism, even though on the surface non-political, might have very real political consequences. To understand contemporary Islamist mobilization, we therefore need look at what political implications various forms of public Islamic activism can have.

Following these debates, we return to the issue of conceptualizing Islamism. As explained above, in this thesis it is recognized that in the contemporary (Arab) world both a social and political form of Islamist mobilization emerges: those Islamists intending to change society from below, and those institutionalized in political movements and parties aimed at changing it from above (see also Esposito, 2003). Concurrently, it should be clear that, first, both forms of Islamism are inherently political and, second, that they are perceived - also by those active “in name of Islam” themselves - as belonging to one overall project. People mobilized in the name of Islam disagree over which course to take, religious interpretation and practical strategies, but activists will always be able to draw a line between those that are, and are not, part of the project.⁶ I argue in favor of using the term “Islamism” (instead of “political Islam”) to describe this common project because it encompasses both, and combines them within one spectrum. Although at the same time “Islamism” has an immediate,

⁶ That the position of these boundaries might differ between who you ask does not negate the point that a common identity exists.

though often implicit, political connotation.⁷ A counter-argument is that “Islamism” has been conflated with Islamist fundamentalism (as argued by Olivier Roy (1996) in *the Failure of Political Islam*). But for lack of a better term, “Islamism” is used in this thesis to denote the project that includes both political and social Islamist movements, of various Islamist and political currents, that strive to structure society and politics along Islamic lines.⁸ Therefore, for both practical and conceptual reasons, I follow the definition of an Islamist as made by Volpi (2010, p.14) rather uncritically as it closely corresponds with what I wish to convey:

An Islamist [is a person] who believes that Islam as body of faith has something crucial to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary [world] and who seeks to implement this idea in some fashion as a matter of priority (Volpi, 2010, p.14).

Arab Particularities?

The realization that many of the dynamics observed between religion, society and politics in the Islamic world can also be observed beyond the region has led a number of scholars to gradually focus on more general topics of the position of religion in the public sphere (for instance Roy, 2010). What is interesting in this context is that the turn to “post-Islamism” was mirrored in Europe and North America by a turn to the “post-secular”. Where in the Arab world the revolutionary religious ideology lost credibility, in Western countries the move of religion to the private sphere was not as complete as previously thought (for instance Norris and Inglehart, 2011). Thus we see multiple articles on the role of Catholicism in politics in Poland, Spain and Italy (for instance Anderson, 2003; Itçaina, 2006); critiquing how absolute the separation between church and state really is (Taylor, 2007, 2011), and arguing for the recognition of the enduring salience of religion in the public sphere (Habermas, 2006; Turner, 2011). In both the Western and Arab world, secularization - here meant as the privatization of religion - is not absolute.⁹

⁷ In contrast, the down side of using a term such as “political Islam” is that it immediately connotes politicization and institutionalization as political parties. In short, it seems to imply Islam as a pure political ideology, while the political relevance of Islamic mobilization does not necessarily have to be through pure political activism - as noted above.

⁸ Last but not least, the notion of Islamists (*islāmīūn* in Arabic) is still widely used by Arabs themselves. I would argue that this is because Islamism is interpreted, also in the region itself, as more than just the Islamic (revolutionary) political ideology. People implicitly tend to follow a wider definition of Islamism when talking about activist Islam: it is the idea that Islam has something meaningful to say about how society and politics should be organized in the contemporary world. See also Meijer (2005, p.289).

⁹ For an excellent discussion on the historical roots of various conceptualizations of secularism and secularization, see Casanova (1994).

But emphasizing similarities should not lead to ignoring particularities of Muslim majority countries. What might be particular is the position of religious authorities vis-à-vis political regimes and state institutions. In authoritarian states in the Arab world, state bureaucracies have been closely fused with the political regime through endemic state led clientelism.¹⁰ It seems that these informal relations between political power, the economy and society have also influenced how relations between political and religious actors evolve in the region. Boundaries between mobilization aimed at personal piety and mobilization aimed at political authority and/or state institutions are often blurred. This is true to a certain extent in authoritarian states (see Donker, 2010) but it might be even more apparent in politically liberal regimes. In Turkey, Tuğal has shown the political impact of restructuring daily routines through the Islamist project in the Sultanbeyli neighborhood of Istanbul (Tuğal, 2009b). In this respect he has demonstrated the “Islamization” of state institutions and the blurring of boundaries between religious activism and political collective mobilization:

The boundaries between society and state are blurred not only at the everyday level, but also at the level of institutions. [...] Islamists in this district use the mosques to denaturalize the secular life instituted by the republic and to naturalize an emergent Islamic lifestyle, which they think should also be reinforced by the state. [...] Hence, the creation of an Islamist identity in Sultanbeyli is not separate from envisioning a different state (Tuğal, 2009b, p.452).

Tuğal (2009b) goes on to theorize that the Turkish Islamist AK party has been successful in bringing about a “passive revolution” in Turkey through a strategy of appropriating Islamist mobilization and blurring the boundaries between political and civil society. It has therefore been successful, Tuğal argues, in creating a hegemonic socio-political program that defines the position of Islam in a modern (capitalist) era. Various other scholars have also noted the close association between political authority, state institutions, and Islamist mobilization. Also using Turkey as a case study, White (2002) discusses the socio-religious context from which Islamist political parties emerge, and how they inter-relate with this context through a process she calls “vernacular politics”. Hefner (2000) focuses on Indonesia, arguing that the emergence of a democratically-inclined Islam in the country is the result of continued interaction between Islam and the political authority. Qasim Zaman (2002) also shows the links between the religious authority of Islamic scholars and political authority in India and Pakistan. For the Arab world, writers such as Ismail (2006), for Egypt, and Haklai (2006), for the Middle East, have made similar

¹⁰ For an early discussion on neo-patrimonialism in Africa, see: Bratton and Van de Walle (1994).

arguments.¹¹ When we discuss Islamism in a broader comparative perspective in the conclusion of the thesis, we will come back to some of these contributions.

This thesis follows a political-sociological approach that takes into account the historical development of both Islamism and the development of the modern Arab nation-states to analyze how, on a more micro level, certain mobilization strategies and mechanisms develop. At the same time, despite the obvious similarities with (religious) mobilization outside the Arab world, this research focuses on the position of Sunni based Islamism and its relation to politics and society in the Arab world. By focusing on a specific region and religion I hope to be able to provide a more in-depth account of dynamics within religious mobilization than I otherwise could. The depth of this analysis would not have been possible if a wider comparative approach had been taken. At the same time, the conceptual and analytical frameworks are explicitly drawn from academic discussions on mobilization *outside* the Arab world, thereby ensuring a conceptual grounding conducive to (later) comparison beyond the region and Islam.

2.2 Debates on Social Movements

[A social movement is defined as] a social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective actions [1] are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; [2] are linked by dense informal networks and [3] share a distinct collective identity (Della Porta and Diani, 2006, p.20).

Background to Social Movement Studies

The present study uses insight from Social Movement Theory (SMT) as a basis for its conceptual and analytical framework. Scholars of social movements are concerned with questions such as why people participate in social movements and why they use specific ways of mobilizing: what can explain the time, the mode and outcomes of specific episodes of mobilization? Over the years these questions, concerning contentious mobilization and social movements, have been addressed from multiple vantage points. Studies on social movements started out as critiques of psychological or relative deprivation explanations for mobilization (e.g. people mobilize out of personal frustration) (Klandermans, 1984). Social movement scholars have subsequently explored the influence of previous social contacts with “mobilizers” in the spread of mobilization;¹² how social

¹¹ A contribution that should be mentioned in this respect, though more general in its outline, is Eickelman and Piscatori (2004). The scholars provide an early outline of the more interactive communication between religion and political authority in their book *Muslim Politics*. Another contribution worthy of mentioning is the edited volume of Hefner (2004).

¹² E.g. The network and social movement debate, see Diani and McAdam (2003).

movement actors gain access to and utilize symbolic, economic, and political resources;¹³ how certain issues are strategically described (or “framed”) by actors as normative problems to mobilize bystanders;¹⁴ and what the influence of the political context is on modes of mobilization and their success.¹⁵ As such, Social Movement Theory is not a theory, rather it is a conglomerate of academic discussions on why, how and when contentious collective mobilization emerges. It is therefore more apt to talk about Social Movement *Studies* (SMS). Increasingly scholars have appreciated the interdependent nature of these various debates in SMS and cross-fertilizations emerge among them (Della Porta and Diani, 2006).

Social Cleavages and their Political Salience

The present thesis touches on a number of fundamental debates within SMS discussing the relation between social cleavages, formal politics and collective mobilization. The first issue is how and why certain social cleavages present in society become politicized and institutionalized in the political sphere - and why others do not. The strength of a social cleavage seems to be conducive to its politicization: most strikingly the level of segmentation from other groups and integration within the group itself (Bartolini and Mair, 1990). The clearer the social distinction from other groups, and the stronger the internal organization within the group, the easier it is to build a salient distinction on which politicization can emerge. Charles Tilly (1978) popularized this insight through his conception of CATNET; or the level to which cognitive CATegory and relational NETwork coincided within a social group. But a clear social distinction is not analogous to political salience. For this, the cleavage has to gain a political consciousness; a salience that renders the social cleavage somehow politically relevant and a boundary around which people mobilize. It relates to how specific conflicts are “framed” around certain cleavages, to get people to go from the “balcony to the barricades” (Benford and Snow, 2000, p.615). Mobilization cannot be sustained without this, in addition to a certain level of organization (Bartolini and Mair, 1990).

A second issue that emerges is the extent to which politicized social cleavages (have) become institutionalized in and interact with formal politics. Within political science a large field of research has emerged to analyze the (dis)continued salience of social cleavages as represented in voter behavior and party structures in various (mostly Western) countries (Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Sartori, 2005). Within the political sociology of the numerous SMS debates, various social movement scholars have pointed to the changing basis for mobilization.

¹³ E.g. Resource mobilization theory, see McCarthy and Zald (1977).

¹⁴ E.g. The discussion on framing strategies, see Benford and Snow (2000).

¹⁵ E.g. This implies a political processes approach, see Tarrow (1998) and Kriesi (2004).

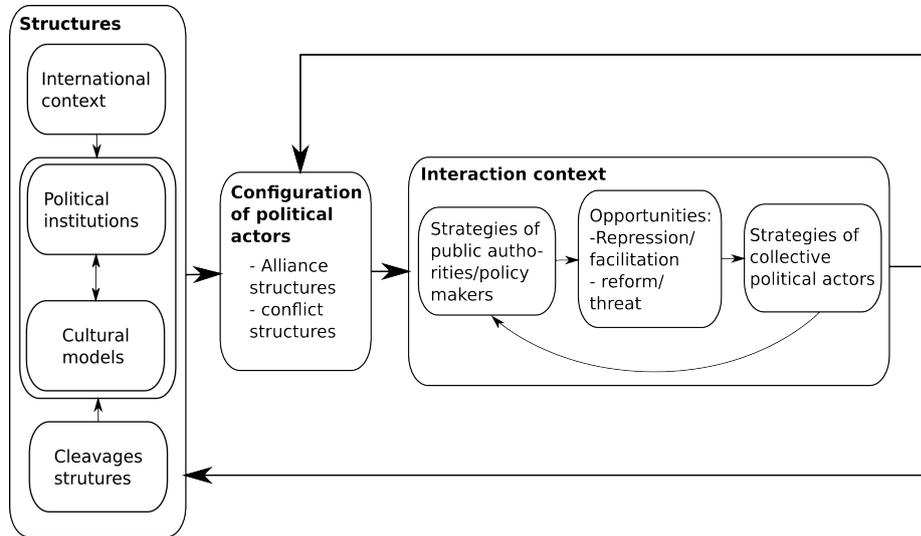
Traditional cleavage structures were transcended as mobilization shifted from material and distributive demands to mobilization around issues of norms, values and other non material issues. A few examples of movements build on these “new” challenges are the ecology movement, the peace movement, and the women’s movement (Kriesi et al., 1995, xviii). These movements were consequently dubbed “new social movements”. The question then was to what extent the political sphere - in which traditional social cleavages had varying degrees of salience - were “open” to social mobilization that might emerge around non-corresponding “new” cleavages (Kriesi et al., 1995). Though it is clear that this newness “point[s] at a specific area of non-material conflicts” around which collective mobilization emerges (Della Porta and Diani, 2006, p.53), the argument has been made that the “newness” of these movements is analytical rather than empirical (Melucci, 1996) as most movements incorporate both “new” and “old” elements. The divergence from traditional social cleavages was often not as extreme as expected (see also Calhoun, 1993).

As mentioned, through these debates attention was given to the extent to which a political sphere was “open” to collective social mobilization. In the nineties this became an explicit focus within SMS through the concept of “Political Opportunity Structures” (POS) and the “Political Process Approach” (PPA). In its most basic approach, POS are described as “open” or “closed” on a number of structural factors.¹⁶ A more detailed research approach concerning the influence of a political context on mobilization, the PPA, is described by Kriesi (2004). Figure 2.1 (page 36) gives his overview of a mainstream interpretation of the PPA. Summarized, the approach describes how cleavage structures and an international context, through political institutions and cultural codes, are translated into a configuration of alliance and conflict structures within the political sphere. Subsequently, the “interaction context” describes what immediate strategies emerge from the political sphere in response to collective mobilization and are implemented through the executive branches of the government (e.g. repression/facilitation and reform/threat). These actions in turn elicit a response from collective actors. Naturally, how collective actors act then goes on to influence political structures and configurations - in effect constituting a feedback loop.

It has been noted that the above approach understates the extent to which boundaries between established political parties and social movements can be

¹⁶ Key contributions in this respect are Kitschelt (1986) and Tarrow (1998). The latter’s influential *Power in Movement* pinpoints the “openings” and “closings” of a political context as the key determinants of increasing and decreasing levels of collective action. Another example is Charles Tilly who conceptualizes POS as follows: (a) the multiplicity of independent centers of power within the regime, (b) the openness of the regime to new actors, (c) the instability of current political alignments, (d) the availability of influential allies or supporters, (e) the extent to which the regime represses or facilitates collective claim-making, and (f) decisive changes in (a) to (e) (Tilly, 2006, p.75). See also Smelser (1967).

Figure 2.1: A Framework for the Study of Political Context



Source: Kriesi (2004, p.70).

diffuse. Movements do not only react to a political context, they also often result from and emerge within existing formal political institutions. Concerning the Italian political sphere and contentious mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s, Tarrow (2012, chapter 6) shows for instance that contentious issues were actually defined by political parties *before* contentious mobilization around these topics emerged. The present study supports these observations by showing how Islamist movements and parties relate to each other, arguing that they should not be viewed as separate entities that somehow represent ideologies. Rather, they are the political and social manifestations of one phenomenon - Islamism - that has a single shared institutional and ideological history.

What is another problem in the above mentioned debates and PPA, I argue, is the underestimation of the autonomous position that state institutions can have in relation to political and social spheres. Maybe not surprising, as it is called the *Political Process Approach* and these debates have always focused on the direct relation between society and the political sphere. But also more generally within SMS there is an incomplete appreciation of the possible autonomous nature of state institutions and its influence on the interactions between movements and politics. Classic in this respect is Kitschelt (1986) who, despite defining POS as constituted by both a legislative and a executive branch of government, fails to appreciate the possible contentious nature of this state autonomy. The executive branches of the government are rendered “output structures” of political legislation; varying in the degree to which they are

controlled by the legislature and the existence of institutionalized methods of citizens' voice in policy implementation processes. But the implied autonomy of the executive is never linked to collective contentious mobilization. Thereby state institutions remain purely professional, in the sense they are not influenced by or possible actor in movements themselves.¹⁷ Only very recently a burgeoning interest in autonomous state institutions as site for and actor in contentious mobilization is emerging. We will return to this later.

I argue that, in some instances, those state institutions tasked with the implementation of government policies (for instance to repress or facilitate collective social mobilization) have an autonomous position in social cleavages. State organizations do not *a priori* have to implement all policy decisions set at the political sphere without their own interpretations of these decisions; and these decisions can take a collective contentious character. This is particularly the case in countries where state institutions have been closely integrated in society through endemic clientelism, rendering the implementation of state policies selective and dependent on personal contacts, rather than general and dependent on objective criteria (see for a further discussion section 2.3). In Arab countries this is often the case. In these countries it matters if you belong to the "right" group within society - if you have the right contact within state institutions - to gain access to state resources. What this thesis will show is that the interaction between social cleavages, their political salience and political parties is changed if state institutions emerge as autonomous actors within episodes of contentious mobilization.

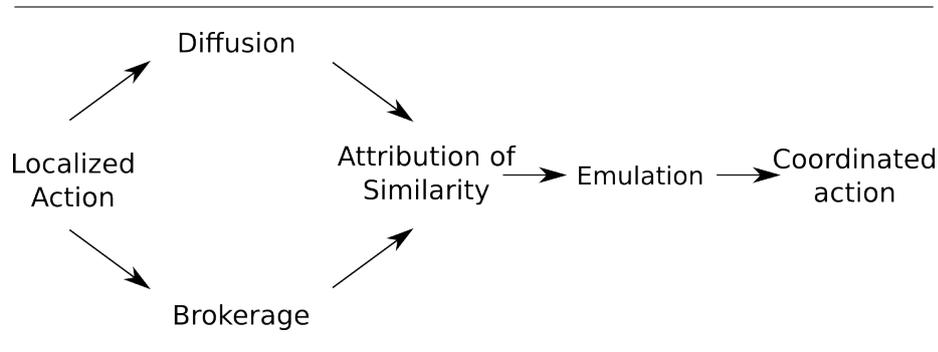
New Approaches

Since the late 1990s SMS have been critiqued more generally on their structural bias and underestimation of the level of agency that movement actors have (see Goodwin et al., 1999; Jasper, 2004). Concepts such as "frames", "resources" and - most of all - "Political Opportunity Structures" were interpreted structurally as to constitute an environment creating the necessary or sufficient conditions for collective mobilization to emerge, to adopt certain mobilization repertoires and/or be successful in the attainment of mobilization goals.¹⁸ The problem was that, after decades of research, no clear relation could be established between any of these structural conditions and any specific mobilization outcome. With this failure the realization dawned that other approaches had to be found that better integrated the agency of actors within a structural context. The

¹⁷ A case in point is the edited volume *statemaking and social movements* (Bright, 1984) in which all chapters on social movements are actually related to policymaking and not to the process of creating state institutions. See a reference to this volume in Tarrow (2012, p.82).

¹⁸ Note that often the original conceptualization of these concepts had been far less structural. This is specifically true of POS. See for instance an early adoption of this model by McAdam (1983) that was close to the Dynamic model discussed below.

Figure 2.2: Scale Shift



Source: McAdam et al. (2001, p.333).

main two approaches that have emerged focus, first, on the processes and mechanisms constituting collective mobilization and, second, on the relation between a structural context and strategic choices that movements' activists face.

Dynamics of Contention. The first approach is represented by *Dynamics of Contention* (DOC) (McAdam et al., 2001). In this book three main scholars of the traditional approach (Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam) made an – arguably brave – attempt at reinventing the study of collective action. In it, they focus on social mechanisms that constitute aggregate processes of social mobilization.¹⁹ The new approach is marked by an increased appreciation of the importance of social construction of identities, perceptions of opportunities and threats, and mechanisms and processes supporting mobilization. It focuses on observing mechanisms, or “a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations” (McAdam et al., 2001, p.24). It then analyzes how varying constellations of mechanisms result in different outcomes on the aggregate level of social processes. Scale shift is an examples of such an aggregate social process. It consists of social mechanisms such as diffusion, brokerage and the attribution of similarity that can interlink in specific ways to constitute scale shift. Figure 2.2 provides a schematic example of how these mechanisms can interrelate in a specific social process (here scale shift). We will come back to the social process of scale shift in chapter 10.

The approach proposed has not been uncontested. Goodwin and Jasper have had a central position by critiquing the continued structural bias in the interpretation of mechanisms (see for instance Goodwin and Jasper, 2003; Jasper et al., 2005). The remark has been made that the “DOC approach” fails to deliver what it promises: bringing back agency into the study of collective mobilization

¹⁹ Interestingly enough this meant a return to the dynamic approach set out by McAdam (1983) in his book *The Development of Black Insurgency*.

and contentious politics (Jasper, 2004). That specific mechanisms and processes, in various constellations, can be observed in many social movement mobilization episodes is beyond doubt. But the appreciation of individuals' ability to initiate and influence collective action is not enhanced as long as they remain passive subjects to these social processes: they are now subjects of mechanisms and processes where they were previously subjects of structures (Jasper, 2004; Tuğal, 2009b). Another problem is that scholars seem reluctant to exchange parsimony of the old, more static, approach for a dynamic but elaborate new one. Though the traditional approach was arguably oversimplified and static, the search for processes and mechanisms was set out without any underlying structure. Koopmans (2003) identifies 44 mechanisms in the DOC alone, and no theoretical basis to assess their relative importance vis-à-vis each other. In their attempt to go from boxes to arrows, and "placing those arrows under the microscope to observe what goes on inside them" McAdam et al. (2001, p.189) have thrown away the baby with the bathwater.

Both these issues relate to another fundamental problem in the DOC. As noted by Koopmans (2003), many of the mechanisms identified by the three are *outcomes* of mechanisms rather than mechanisms themselves. Mechanisms such as identity shift, radicalization, and innovative collective action are things to be explained rather than the explanation. This impedes actual analysis: by interchanging *explanans* and *explanandum* the analysis is caught within the operationalization of specific mechanisms. In other words: the specific operationalization of mechanisms in the DOC means that the dynamic approach is about *observing* that a process is taking place - but makes it impossible to analyze *why* or *how* it is taking place.²⁰

Some solutions to these problems can be found in previous applications of mechanisms and processes. The mechanistic approach was not invented in *Dynamics of Contention*. Rather it is an adoption of a previously existing (and increasingly popular) approach in sociology that draws on biology (see Hedstrom and Swedberg, 1998). These previous approaches provide some solutions to the approach proposed by McAdam et al. (2001). As clarified by Elster (1998), a mechanism can be seen as a certain logic - an explanation - why observation *A* influence observation *B*.²¹ If we apply this insight, while staying true to the interpretation of McAdam et al. (2001), we can say that we should observe a changing relation between social actors, and that mechanisms proposed should provide an explanation - applicable in multiple contexts - as to why the relation has changed the way it did. This is to avoid the pitfall of the DOC as noted by

²⁰ In responses the authors mostly defend themselves behind the line that *Dynamics of Contention* only constituted a first outline. See McAdam (2003b).

²¹ In his own view it is a necessary evil in light of the impossibility of the social and political sciences to find hard data (dis)proving covering laws explaining social and political phenomenon.

Koopmans (2003), and thereby improve overall parsimony of the mechanistic approach in SMS.

Mobilization Strategies. Another reply to the structural bias of SMS has been to propose a strategic approach. This focuses on the strategic mobilization dilemmas that actors have and that are constrained by the structural context in which they exist. A recent example is Fligstein and McAdam (2012b) but an earlier adherent of this approach in SMS was Jasper (2004):²²

Many of our choices are made for us by our social context, woven into our institutions (White, 1992). This is the structuralist insight. And yet, one of the most important moments, and sources of creativity, is when strategic players manage to break with expectations and make another choice, taking their opponents by surprise. This is how structures change, after all. Even when players themselves forget they have choices, we observers (and sometimes advisors) should not. Structures are only important because they shape our choices. We can never delineate structure or agency in isolation from the other (Jasper, 2004, p.7).

The key insight in this approach is that each actor finds itself within a particular structurally defined context that presents a limited set of options between which a choice has to be made (White, 1992). In SMS these structurally defined contexts have been called “arenas” (Jasper, 2004, p.7) or “Strategic Action Fields” (SAFs) (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012a). These choices then influence the structures in which they were taken. These strategic choices also build on each other: each strategic choice defines what subsequent choices are most logical to make (Porter, 1991), thereby adding a longitudinal element.

The particularities of how structures relate to strategies differs between adherents. Drawing on organizational and business studies, Jasper (2004, p.7) shows that strategic dilemmas emerge within individual interaction in specific social arenas and are influenced by the individuals’ resources and skills, their goals and the audiences present.²³ In a later book, *Getting your Way* (Jasper, 2006), he elaborates on the approach and identifies numerous strategic dilemmas that individuals face in personal inter-action. For instance, the “basket dilemma” (to focus on one arena or multiple), the “bandwagon dilemma” (to join a powerful actor or not), and the “money’s curse” dilemma (getting resources often involves “getting your hands dirty” as it forces interaction with

²² Though not new, he argues that the initial “strategic approach” has been overshadowed by the more structuralist approaches of Tilly & co.

²³ Organizational studies focus on the question of why certain (types of) organizations emerge, why some are more successful than others and why organizational change occurs. Business studies focus on the question of why specific strategic business decisions are taken in specific contexts - and why some are more successful than others.

“tainted” individuals or organizations). All these dilemmas recur in various contexts but their particularities are influenced by the structural arena in which they emerge.

More recently the strategic approach has gained more traction; also among the proponents of the DOC approach. In a co-authored book McAdam, for instance, has also argued for a strategic approach. Though the basic premises between the two approaches are rather similar, the conceptual framework is somewhat different.²⁴ Fligstein and McAdam (2012a) stay closer to new institutionalism in organizational theory, using a conceptualization of structural context as “organizational fields” (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; Bourdieu, 1996). Drawing on Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) they show the importance of individual, but culturally defined, habitus: the cognitive and practical tools that individuals have to react to specific situations. Secondly, they argue forcefully for the (varied but always important) interconnectedness of fields.²⁵ Increasing field interconnectedness can be both a strength and a weakness, as it is a source of stability but also increases the possibility of contagion in case neighboring fields collapse. When fields become unstable, “normal” rules cease to apply and space for innovative (contentious) action emerges. These contentious actions then evolve around the above mentioned “DOC” mechanisms and processes. By using the notion of fields Fligstein and McAdam (2012b) provide a preliminary link between the macro structural and micro strategic level of analysis in the study of (collective) contentious behavior. Sadly, specific strategic mobilization dilemmas - and how they are influenced by the particularities of fields-habitus - are not discussed in detail.²⁶

Strength in Fragmentation

As a result of the above discussions, exploring SMS can be quite a schizophrenic experience. On the one hand there are the structural and still influential studies that link a specific (political, social, economic) structural contexts (Tarrow, 1998) to cycles of mobilization and the use of specific repertoires (Tilly, 2006; Osa and Corduneanu-Huci, 2003; Alimi, 2007). On the other hand there are more relational approaches that focus more on the mechanisms and processes underpinning contentious mobilization (Boudreau, 2004; McAdam et al., 2001). Additionally, and more recently, strategic approaches gain currency (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012a; Jasper, 2004).

²⁴ As was admitted by Doug McAdam. Personal conversation, Florence (Italy), May 7, 2012.

²⁵ A field is defined as a relatively stable “set of actors [that] are attuned to interact with one another on the basis of shared understandings [... of] the rules governing legitimate action in the field” (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012b, l. 303-19).

²⁶ It can be argued, in this sense, that SAFs should have stood for *Structural* Action Fields.

The enduring schizofrenia between traditional and modern SMS approaches can be, and should be, seen as a strength. Though continuous attempts at convergence have not provided an overarching theory for collective social mobilization that has been broadly accepted, these attempts have provided an academic environment conducive to integrative approaches. Analytically social movement studies at present provide both tools to create typologies of more structural influences (such as a political environment) and tools to provide typologies for specific mobilization mechanisms and mobilization strategies. As such, as McAdam (2003a) has argued, the approach focusing on structures and the approach focusing on mechanisms are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are mutually reinforcing in the sense that they provide frameworks for the analysis of multiple distinct parts of mobilization - structural influences, procedural mechanisms and strategic dilemmas - that constitute collective mobilization and provide a conceptual toolkit to explore and analyze why and how people mobilize the way they do.

Some initial approaches explicitly combining structural, mechanistic and strategic approaches have appeared (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012b, make a first attempt) but they are still in their infancy. This thesis hopes to show that - without arguing for a completely conceptually integrated approach - these different strand within SMS can be mutually reinforcing, and that a combination can be applied successfully as analytical framework exploring a specific phenomenon of social mobilization.

Despite the combined strength of these approaches there is one weakness that has, I argue, not been resolved. It is the lacking appreciation of the possible autonomous position of state institutions in social conflict.²⁷ This weakness is a direct result of the western focus of SMS; as in western countries state institutions are by and large perceived to be neutral and professionalized, and are rarely perceived as having an explicit position within social cleavages. Even if state institutions are (perceived to be) autonomous, the issue is not a contentious one. I argue that this non-contentious vision of state autonomy in SMS is problematic if we want to analyze contemporary Islamist mobilization. But before we turn to this issue, we need to explore discussions on the autonomy of the state.

2.3 Debates on State Autonomy

What is commonly called corruption is not simply a single individual stuffing his or her pockets with state resources. It is behavior according to dissenting rules, established by organizations other than

²⁷ Though it should be noted that Fligstein and McAdam (2012b, 1.1565-81) make a first attempt at introducing state institutions as fields.

the state. How people are recruited into state jobs is an indication of whose rules of the game are being followed. The issue goes beyond technical monitoring of state functionaries to guard against nepotism or other infringements of state rules. Such transgressions reflect pockets of social control outside of the domain of state leaders, which have been able to shape how the state acts or, at least, how one tentacle of the state acts (Migdal, 2001, p.54).

The Autonomy of the State

In her groundbreaking work *States and Social Revolutions*, Theda Skocpol (1979) showed that the state can be in part autonomous from society and the political sphere. She forcefully showed that due to international ties states often do not represent, or act on behalf of, social forces. Rather, they are to a certain extent “Janus faced”: presenting themselves to one side as implementer of policies on behalf of society, and to the other as having to abide by international standards and rules. This observation has led to a vast field of research, exploring and analyzing the extent to what state bureaucrats can, and do, act autonomously. Many others have followed Skocpol and showed the relative autonomy state institutions can have, not just from social forces but also from the domestic political sphere. In this sense, one can say that there is autonomy from the state when “states conceived as organizations claiming control over territories and people may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society” (Skocpol, 1985, p.9). As such, these are cases where state bureaucrats take decisions and implement them by themselves and have the means to do so.

There have been numerous instances in which this state autonomy came to the fore in practice. On the extreme side, scholars have looked at specific sets of (military) state actors taking over the state apparatus completely (thereby incapacitating the political sphere) and implementing specific authoritarian and corporatist policies (a classic example is Stepan, 1978). But also in less extreme cases state bureaucracies can be observed creating and implementing policies independently. Carpenter (2001) takes a historic approach and shows how three different state institutions in the US had different levels of autonomy.²⁸ Showing that specific “insulated” parts of the US government have been able historically to set and implement their own specific policies; independent from both the political sphere and social forces. More recent example in European cases often relate to the increased (semi-)privatization of state institution, thereby constraining the power of the political sphere, in favor of market forces, in deciding

²⁸ Using the US is somewhat unusually as the US is often perceived as a “weak” state that is open to social forces.

how state institutions function. In the schisms between these two forces, semi-bureaucrats can gain more autonomy (see Peters, 2001). From these examples it becomes clear that there are two sides to state autonomy: autonomous from the political sphere, and autonomous from social forces. Therefore bureaucracies need to be generally “strong” in the sense they are independent from society, and “strong” in the sense they have the internal capacity (mainly knowledge) to devise policies. In addition, state bureaucracies need to be able to implement policies: that they take decisions independently is one, but to be truly independent they also need the capacity to implement these policies on society (see also Skocpol, 1985). In summary, the (arguably vast) analytical program focuses on both the necessary conditions for autonomy to emerge, and/or analyzes its practical outcomes in policies implemented in various contexts and policy domains.

In light of this thesis, the important thing to take from the above discussion is that autonomy of state institutions is possible, and has been observed and analyzed to great extent over the last three decades. But it has to be understood that my thesis is about collective mobilization, not state autonomy. What I argue is that a (perception of) autonomy on the side of state institutions can influence collective mobilization. As noted in the previous sections, what is striking about both the discussion on religion and politics and collective mobilization is the relative lack of incorporation of state institutions and their possible autonomy in analyses. In Middle East studies this is somewhat understandable, as until recently state institutions and political power were closely fused. Politics and bureaucracies were so intertwined that state autonomy was difficult to observe. Concerning SMS this lack has to do with the relative absence of contentious mobilization vis-à-vis state bureaucrats in Western countries, as they are perceived to be “neutral” implementers of state policies. But what is of interest here is not just state autonomy as such. It is the combined perception of their autonomy and positioning within politically salient social cleavages. We therefore first need to see *how* specific state institutions might gain such a position within politically salient social cleavages. If state institutions are not positioned along a salient social cleavage, no collective mobilization against bureaucracies and/or public institutions occurs.

Contentious State Autonomy

It might be useful in this respect to revisit the “state-in-society” approach, of which Migdal (2001) is the main proponent. “Approach” is a bit of a misnomer as Migdal provides mainly a set of practical issues concerning the analysis of state-society interaction. He argues that, specifically in weaker (mostly African) states, state institutions are to large extent embedded in society. This can be particularly true of lower levels of the state apparatus. The implementation of

state policies through local and regional branches of the state can therefore be constrained by social structures and conflicts. State officials are often very much part, he argues, of the society and its social conflicts, in which bureaucrats are supposed to implement policies set by the state. In his own words:

States [...] engage in pitched battles with other powerful figures and groups with entrenched ways of doing things. Sometimes, the power of these other social formations is obvious, as in the ability to withhold badly needed credit; sometimes, it is veiled, as in ostracism in a small community. In either case, the struggles over revenues, other goodies, and which ideas should prevail are fierce and real (Migdal, 2001, p.10).

As a consequence, for Migdal (2001) there are two sides to the state. On the one side, the state is an imagined reality: a unified body that is elevated above, and governs over, its society within a distinct geographic sphere. On the other side, the state is a conglomerate of unruly organizations that *should* govern people “from above”. In reality though, as state institutions get further removed from the center of political authority, they become very much part of society they are supposed to govern.²⁹ The state as organization is part and parcel of societal struggles over structuring society and the daily conduct of its citizens.

When we take a look at the quote at the beginning of the section (page 42) we see that it can often be informal rules and expectations that guide state-society interaction: if you abide by hegemonic informal social rules, you gain access to state power. I would argue that a similar dynamic emerges in many Arab countries in the context of clientelistic authoritarian regimes. Though in this sense not a sign of state weakness as such, but rather a direct result of endemic state-led clientelism that has permeated politics, state and society (see also Ayubi, 1996).

What is therefore particular about many states in the Arab world, is that they have characteristics that correspond both to the “strong” autonomous state implied by the discussions on state autonomy; and they have characteristics implied by the “weak” states as implied in the state-in-society debate. States in the Arab world are generally strong in the sense that they can act and implement policies to large degree independently from society; their bureaucracies, although by far not as capable as western ones, have a level of competency. At the same time, pervasive (state-led) clientelism has meant that both policy implementation and the appointment of bureaucrats is influenced by informal

²⁹ This is all according to Migdal’s definition of a state as: “a field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by (1) the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory, and (2) the actual practices of its multiple parts” (Migdal, 2001, pp.15-16).

relations to political and social cleavages. In other words, state appointments are made not on the basis of merit alone, but also on political and social background. Additionally, policy implementation is not done purely objectively - on the basis of content of the policy - but often (also) on the basis of informal relationships. If you know specific civil servants you have easier access to state resources than someone who doesn't.

The result has been that both before and after the Arab Spring states in the region have had both the competencies to be autonomous and the perception of belonging to specific social and political cleavages. I would argue that they have also been perceived as such. (The specificities of this relation between state-led clientelism and contentious autonomy of state bureaucracies is elaborated in chapter 8.) Therefore, I do not argue against the autonomy of Arab states because they would be overwhelmed by collective mobilization and/or social movements. On the contrary. I argue that the (perception of) autonomy on the side of state institutions, can be a central *aim* for collective mobilization. But two conditions need to be met:³⁰ the autonomy of the state needs to be visible, and it needs to be perceived as being positioned along a specific politically salient social cleavage. All in all, the autonomy of the state implies that social mobilization need not always be fully aimed at the political sphere, but can also be aimed at state institutions and its civil servants.

2.4 Islamism in Social Movement Studies

In reaching for something called “social movement theory,” [scholar of Islamist mobilization] cannot [subsume the phenomenon of interest directly under the theory] for no sufficiently coherent body of theory concerning social movements exists. Instead, the ideas about mobilizing structures, political opportunities, framing, and repertoires on which they draw repeatedly offer them and other students of contentious politics two main services. First, the ideas incorporate a standard set of concepts for the description and comparison of contentious episodes. Second, they constitute a questionnaire to discipline the explanation of contentious episodes. [...] Students of Islamic mobilization and conflict may even promote adoption of [another choice]: concentrating on specific mechanisms and processes instead of broad analogies (p.x-xi Tilly, 2004).

Islamism as Social Movement

This thesis focuses on Islamist mobilization in the Arab world - before, during and after the Arab spring. In exploring these theoretical debates, I focused on

³⁰ Note that all these conditions are about perceptions. Theoretically actual autonomy does not actually need to be present.

debates concerning religion and politics, Social Movement Studies (SMS) and the autonomy of the state regarding politics and society. As has become clear in the preceding pages, I propose a combined approach taken from the structural, mechanistic and strategic approaches in SMS to make an argument that takes its lessons from these three debates. In the following section I show how these debates fit together, by critically positioning my thesis in relation to previous contribution that use a (comparative) political sociology approach to Islamist mobilization. This includes contributions that explicitly apply SMS in their analysis.

Since the early 2000s, there have been a number of attempts to combine the study of Islamist mobilization and social movements. Two early examples are *Civil Society as Social Control: State Power in Jordan* by Wiktorowicz (2000a) and *Mobilizing Islam* by Rosefsky Wickham (2002). Wiktorowicz applies a Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) to Salafist and Muslim Brotherhood Islamist mobilization in Jordan. He argues, in line with RMT, that institutionalization is a prerequisite to obtain resources needed for mobilization and therefore for eventual success. Rosefsky-Wickham also explicitly applies a social movement approach to Islamic movements in Egypt; analyzing how Islamists have found avenues for mobilization in the repressive environment of Hosni Mubarak's Egypt. Another early example is Janine Clark (2004a,c); she also explicitly employs insights from social movement studies in her analysis of Islamist recruitment networks in Egypt; and, later, on alliance structures between Islamist and non-Islamist movements (Clark, 2006). Singerman (2004) has a similar approach, though focusing on informal (horizontal) networks in Yemen. Hafez (2003) applies the Political Process Approach (PPA) to Islamist radicalization in Algeria. Most recently Tuğal (2009b) has discussed the application of SMS on Islamist mobilization in Turkey, Meijer (2009) does the same concerning Salafist movements. Finally, one of the main contribution in the attempts to apply SMS to Islamist movements is the edited volume by Wiktorowicz (2004): *Islamic Activism: a Social Movement Theory Approach*. In this book various contributors apply (insights from) SMS to Islamist mobilization: for instance Hafez (2004), concerning Political Process Approach; Singerman (2004) and Clark (2004b), concerning Islamist networks; and Rosefsky Wickham (2004), concerning Islamist frames and their resonance in Egypt.

Though these contributions have been very successful in showing that Islamist mobilization can be analyzed through a more general analytical lens of political sociology, some pitfalls remain. One key critique in this respect is that these attempts can go too far in their attempt to be "non-essentialist", thereby underplaying the specificity of Islamist ideology vis-à-vis, for instance, leftist Western ideologies. Wiktorowicz (2000a), Rosefsky Wickham (2002) and Clark (2004a) can be said to have a weakness in this area. It can lead to a tendency to assume that Islamist movements are to a large extent similar to

their counterparts in the West; thereby turning a blind eye to actual ideological differences between the two (for a similar point see Meijer, 2005). Or it can lead to a tendency to assume that specific differences are due to factors *outside* the movement, and not due to characteristics of the movement itself (see for instance Tuğal, 2009b). The present study can also be easily critiqued on this point, as through my approach I am exploring the influence of a structural characteristic that lies outside the Islamist project: the position of state institutions vis-à-vis Islamic movements and parties. In focusing on certain dynamics that we might also observe in other regions and other movements, I am drawn to an approach that underestimates the religious specificities of Islamist mobilization. My response is that a focus on state institutions does not imply that there are no specificities to Islamist mobilization. Rather, it implies that I see the value of highlighting a specific structural factor that has been relatively neglected until now in SMS. At the same time, I hope that the thick description in part II shows how these more general influences have varying and specific influences on different movements and countries within the Arab world. This therefore gives voice to regional and ideological particularities.

A last pitfall, specific to the studies that explicitly apply SMS to the study of Islamist mobilization, is that insight of SMS are applied - but little feedback is provided. Therefore the general corpus of SMS has gained little by the recent increased interest in Islamist movements.³¹ This is true, for instance, of the contributions in *Islamic Activism* (Wiktorowicz, 2004). In addition, many of the contributions that explicitly apply SMS to Islamist mobilization use very traditional approaches; seemingly reluctant to explore new - and arguably less crystallized - debates within SMS. Apart from the contributions in *Islamic Activism* this is also true of Clark (2010). Interestingly, Rosefsky Wickham (2002) goes beyond the, at the time, mainstream SMT in her application of Islamist mobilization under Egyptian repression: discussing agents, sites and goals that authorities can target in their repression. But these innovations were not explicitly linked to the larger corpus of SMS. This, specifically in this particular case, is a lost chance as her framework lies close to the strategic approaches that became more fashionable almost a decade later in SMS.

Another key failing of much of the above mentioned literature is the failure to include the clientelist nature of politics, state and society in the analysis how social mobilization evolves. Tuğal (2009b) makes a first step towards this with his observation of the differences in the composition of actors, between Western “normal” social movements and non-western Islamist movements: specifically concerning the position of state institutions in this respect. But these differences are noted in respect to differentiation between Islamist and non-Islamist movements; not in an attempt to add to the general corpus of SMS. Therefore

³¹ An older contributions where this happened, concerning the importance of subjective (instead of object) political opportunities, is Kurzman (1996) analyzing the Iranian revolution.

the above debates have, by and large, not provided new insights in how endemic state-led clientelism influences social mobilization in both authoritarian and democratizing settings. Here lies the key contribution of this thesis to the corpus of SMS.

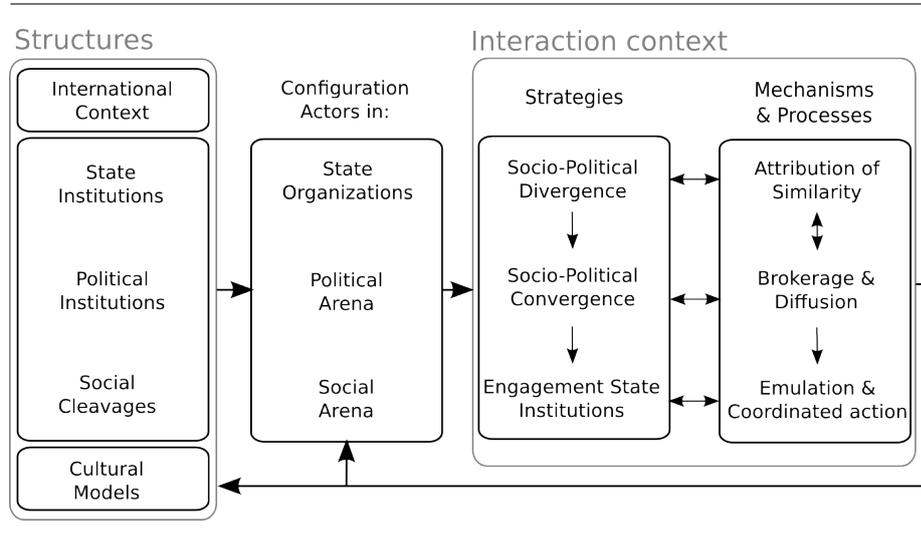
What this thesis attempts is to not only apply insight from SMS on the case of Islamist mobilization, but also to provide new insights on social mobilization more generally. First, this implies taking into account various current debates within SMS and attempting to apply them to the case of Islamic mobilization. Second, it implies an analysis that focuses on questions posed within SMS - and less so in regional studies and studies focusing on Islamist mobilization. It thereby leans to the side of SMS, especially in part III. In part II the focus shifts to dynamics between various religious movements, the public sphere and politics in Syria and Tunisia. Thereby showing how these insights apply in different ways to different actors in the region.

Implications for the Study of Mobilization

Having provided an outline and critique of the three relevant debates, it is time to set out the research approach used in this study. The above critique, proposed solution and analytical framework imply a three level analysis - as is clarified in figure 2.3 (page 50). At the *structural* level an exploration needs to be provided on the necessary conditions of Islamist interaction with state institutions. This involves an exploration of political and state institutions and their jurisdiction over relevant issues concerning Islamic movements needs to be given, including an appreciation of their relative strength in society. But it also implies a critical discussion of the role and influence of clientelist relations between state institutions and society - and the resulting position of these institutions in social cleavages. Finally, as we will see, a discussion of the pre-revolutionary political regime and its influence on positioning state institutions along salient social divides is needed. These three conditions (clientelist relations between state and society, a relatively well developed state apparatus, and a highly salient social divide in which the pre-revolutionary regime had a specific position) are especially prevalent in most Arab countries. What differs between countries are the social cleavages present, the strength of the Islamic sphere and the strength of state institutions following the onset of the Arab Spring. I argue that these differences are not necessary conditions for my propositions to apply, but influence in particular the ways in which Islamist mobilization evolves in the contemporary Arab world.

At the *strategies* level, there are specific strategic dilemmas that mobilizers face in any kind of context (see for a general discussion Jasper, 2004). Strategic dilemmas consist of arenas and are constituted by a set of rules, actors and

Figure 2.3: The Extended Analytical Framework



interactions with those relevant actors. They influence possible options for actions available to the actor; the so-called “strategic corridors”. Dilemmas arise when these options (seem) mutually exclusive. I argue that due to the Arab Spring, Islamists face an acute dilemma of how to relate activism in political and social arenas. Furthermore, that the (perceived) existence of a contentious autonomy on the side of state institutions changes and can help resolve - or at least influence - this issue.

Concerning *mechanisms and processes* I focus on the process of “upward scale shift”, or the emulation of demands from the local societal level to the national political one. Two mechanisms are central in this process: brokerage and category formation. Brokerage is the “linking of two or more previously unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with one another and/or with yet other sites” (McAdam et al., 2001, pp.26, 208). Category formation is understood as creating “a set of sites that share a boundary distinguishing all of them from, and relating all of them to, at least one set of sites visibly excluded by the boundary” (McAdam et al., 2001, p.157). Therefore category formation is the mechanism of creating perceived boundaries; brokerage is the practical action of bringing various (in this case political, state or social) sites in contact with each other. I argue that one can make an analytical distinction between two types of “upward scale shift”, a social mechanisms denoting the translation of localized social demands to the national political ones, constituted by different constellations of brokerage and category formation regarding state institutions. Both these processes are therefore, I argue, central to questions concerning the mode and extent of interaction between Islamic social

movements, state institutions and political Islamic parties.

But before we turn to an analysis of mobilization strategies and social mechanisms, I first provide a general historical overview of state formation and Islamist mobilization in the Arab world. This is necessary for being able to place our two case studies in a wider historic and geographic context, to then be followed by our analytical paired comparison.

Chapter 3

Islam and the Arab World: a Historical Exploration

To understand how Islamist mobilization develops - and relates to the configuration of political institutions, state institutions and social actors - we must explore the historic development of interactions between Islamist mobilization and political regimes. In this chapter I will provide the basics of Islam as religion, discuss the emergence of the modern Arab state and explore Islamist movements that emerged within them. The main contention is that the dynamics within Islamist mobilization in Syria and Tunisia are closely intertwined with the emergence and dynamics of Islamist mobilization in the Arab region as a whole. The position of traditional religious authorities, the emergence of modern Arab states and their political regimes, as well as Islam as social and political mobilizing force are phenomena that have a distinct regional characteristic. Due to a similar Ottoman and colonial history, shared religion, language and culture; mutual influences and interrelations have always been powerful.¹ At the same time, as will also become clear, national particularities have always influenced the outcome of these trans-Arab phenomena in their national practice. This chapter, then, is written to provide the necessary information to assess the position of our two cases in the general Arab context; chapter 4 and 6, then, will provide a more in-depth discussion on the specific national historical trajectories of our two cases.

The chapter starts with a description of the very fundamental backgrounds of Islam as a faith. This is needed as many interaction between Islamist mobilization and the state are structured by these fundamental religious “building blocks”. The chapter then quickly moves into key religious institutions, state formation, and the relation between the two. In the latter half of the chapter

¹ As a side note: this is why it would be nearly impossible to do a quantitative comparative analysis on Islamism in various countries: the degree of cross-influence is too high.

political movements, and eventually Islamism, are described. As such, this chapter is not meant to provide an exhaustive history of the Arab region concerning the emergence of modern political regimes and Islamist movements. Rather, it provides the necessary information to understand the rest of the thesis and give a sense of the relative position of our two cases studies in the larger Arab world.²

3.1 The Basics

Let me make one thing clear: We are not part of any *madhāhib*, political movement or religious color. We refuse all schisms. We are Muslims, and that is all we are.³

The Emergence of Islam

Let us start at the very beginning of Islamic faith and explore a few of the basics of Islam as a religion. The last messenger of God according to Islam, Muhammad, was born in Mecca in August 570AD. An orphan from early age, he became a trader and started receiving revelations from God in 610. These revelations contained the exact words and sentences that constitute the Quran: the words are from God, Muhammad wrote them down. Directly after his death his revelations were reordered and crafted into one holy book: the Quran (Ali, 1935, p.8). Additionally, the life of Muhammad was closely followed by early believers and his action written down. These stories of the life of Muhammad, or *ḥadīth*, are what constitute the Sunna. Today, more than 20 percent of the world's populations is Muslim and follows the belief that Muhammad is the final messenger of God. The majority of those are Sunni Muslims that believe that the basis of their religion lies in the Quran and in the *ḥadīths* of the Sunna.

During his lifetime Muhammad would be expelled from Mecca by the local authorities, subsequently settle in Medina, retake his hometown a few years later and subsequently go on to conquer much of the Arab peninsula. At the end of his life he ruled an area that loosely corresponds to large parts of today's Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Muhammad died in 622; in the five decades following his death the conquest continued and much of the present Middle East (corresponding roughly to Syria, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt) were added to the Islamic caliphate. In the decades and centuries after Muhammad's death Islam continued to thrive and spread. This would be the foundation of what today constitutes the geographical spread of Muslim-majority countries in the world, which now ranges from Indonesia via Pakistan and Egypt to Morocco.

² For an accessible introductory text on Arab history and historical development of religion, see Mortimer (1982). For a more elaborate overview see Lapidus (2012).

³ Interview with Salafi Shaykh Idrissi Khatib, April 6, 2011, Bin Aoun, Tunisia.

The countries with the highest absolute number of Muslims are outside of the Arab world, in descending order: Indonesia (200 million), Pakistan and India (170 million each), Bangladesh (150 million) and, fifth, Egypt (80 million). Syria is 20th with 21 million and Tunisia is 27th with 10 million Muslims.⁴

Though religious and social unity is a central aspiration within Islam, schisms have emerged within the religion since Muhammad's death. This is true both in religious and political fields: caliphates split and religious denominations multiplied. These religious schisms emerged on varying interpretations of religious ascendancy and authority (concerning the Shi'ite-Sunni divide), varying interpretations of religious legal tradition (concerning the Sunni *ma'dhahib*), followings of specific religious leaders (concerning Shi'ite denominations), the extent to which Islam should be spiritual (concerning Sufism), or the level to which individuals can make religious interpretations by themselves (concerning the balance between *taqlīd* - strictly following a religious tradition - and *ijtihād* - leaving the possibility for individual interpretation). I will now explore some of these schisms in detail.

The main schism that emerged was between Shi'ite and Sunni Islam. The basis of the schism is the question of succession after Muhammad. The Sunni believe in the legitimacy of the caliphs that historically ruled over the Islamic community (or *ummah*) following the death of Muhammad. The Shi'ite believe that the cousin of Muhammad, Ali, should have been the successor to Muhammad and that succession should have stayed within his family (Beinin and Stork, 1996, p5, 6). The majority of Arabs are followers of Sunni Islam. These denominations can be further subdivided.⁵ Traditional schisms in Sunni Islam are built on differences in schools of Islamic jurisprudence (in Arabic *ma'dhahib*, sing. *ma'dhhab*). The four main schools of Islamic jurisprudence are: Malaki, Hanafi, Hanbali and Shafa'i (Ali, 1935). These schools have a particular geographic spread today, often related to the historic geographic spread of caliphates. For instance, in the Baghdad-based Abbasid Empire (750-1258) and the later Ottoman Empire (1516-1918) the formal Sunni *ma'dhab* was Hanafi. Today Turkey, Iraq and Syria remain largely Hanafi.⁶ Kairouan, one of the oldest and most renowned scholarly centers in North-Africa, and located in today's Tunisia, follows the Maliki *ma'dhhab*. As a result, Tunisia (and the rest of North-Africa) is overtly Maliki. In the same way, most parts of Saudi Arabia

⁴ Pew Research Center (2011, January). Despite the numerical strength (and rich history of Islamic thought) in central and East Asia, the Arab world is still generally perceived as the center of Islamic (reformist) thinking. See for an academic example the introduction of Nathan and Kamali (2005).

⁵ Within Shia Islam, for instance, there are the Twelvers, Islamilites, and Alawis religious denominations. These denominations have split in principle over questions in inheritance of religious authority.

⁶ In Syria there is a sizable Shi'ite minority as there are Christian ones. The latter is due to the strong presence of pre-Islamic Christian communities in this region.

are traditionally Hanbali. Though legal differences between the various schools are mostly limited, sometimes there are visible differences in the way of praying and religious dress that have become closely related to local cultural norms.

Religious Institutions

From the moment Sunni Islam emerged, a number of religious roles and institutions came into existence. To start with the very basics, there are a number of institutionalized religious positions in Sunni Islamic faith. For instance, there is the imam, or the person leading the prayer in the mosque. The role of the imam can be subdivided between a “daily” imam leading the normal prayers, and the “Friday” imam leading the Friday prayer that (usually) doubles as *khatīb*. The *khatīb* is the person giving the sermon before the Friday prayer. The *mufti* is a person who declares Fatwas, or religious rulings. He bases these rulings on an interpretation of the Quran and the Sunna, following previous religious jurisprudent interpretation by other muftis. Traditionally this is done within one particular *madhhab*. The corpus of the latter is called *fiqh*. The *qāḍī* is a religious judge, in contemporary practice often involved in family-related affairs (Batatu, 1982).

These religious roles have never become organized within an overarching hierarchical organization. What has emerged instead, early on in Sunni Islamic history, is a specific class of ‘*ulamā*’ (religious scholars).⁷ Lacking a formal organization, their claim to religious authority is directly linked to knowledge and expertise concerning debates on Islamic interpretations. As Hourani (2003, p. 115) states: “the ‘*ulamā*’ [are] the men of religious learning, the guardians of the system of shared beliefs, values and practices.” An ‘*ālim*’ (religious scholar, singular of ‘*ulamā*’) is recognized as being schooled in religious thought – through formal institutions (such as the al-Azhar Islamic University in Cairo) or through informal teachings by senior ‘*ulamā*’. From this class of religious scholars, traditionally, the *qāḍī*’s, *mufti*’s and imams were drawn. Thus, traditionally, a religious elite existed that was maintained and was dependent on knowledge of a specific school of Islamic jurisprudence. They were the custodians of religious tradition, tasked with interpreting the Quran and ḥadīth according to one of the four Islamic *madhāhib*.⁸

Because Islam was never “churchified” the main physical site linked to its religion, the mosque, has always been very much part of the society in which it existed. As such, around the mosque, religion, learning and social activism have always been closely intertwined. Islamic teaching, traditionally, takes place at the mosque. The same holds for social activities: historically, charitable activities were fused with religious activism. With the emergence of the modern

⁷ For those working on Iran, in Farsi the ‘*ulamā*’ are called *mullahs* (Beinin and Stork, 1996, p. 8).

⁸ The tendency to follow closely one of the four *madhāhib* is called *taqlīd* (“emulation”).

Arab state, social Islamic activism was often institutionalized in charitable associations that were formed in unison with mosques. Up to the present day you see, especially in countries with a well developed religious sphere, mosque-conglomerates emerge: mosque, school, university and charitable association all combined in one religious “foundation”.⁹

Institutionalized Religion and Politics

As mentioned above, none of these roles and religious authorities were organized within an overarching religious organization as happened within Christianity. Due to the concurrent emergence of Islamic religion and rule, the necessity to organize as an independent organization never emerged. In the early years of the Islamic empire (under the first four *al-Salaf al-Sālih*, or “the rightly guided predecessors” as they are called by many) the religious and political were formally indistinguishable from each other. In practice, though, practical considerations dictated that daily (political) issues were ruled by pragmatism and necessarily devoid of any religious considerations. In practice there has therefore always been a division between the political and religious sphere. Since the days of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, there has been a class of rulers that held political power by military means (Hourani, 1981, p.4). But instead of an institutionalized differentiation between the two, as in the case of Christianity, this difference was dependent on the political aversion of the ‘*ulamā*’. As long as they protected and worked within the framework of Islamic faith, the religious classes (mainly constituted by the ‘*ulamā*’) supported their rule. Additionally, the call for religious and social unity meant that the ‘*ulamā*’ were wary of touching upon questions that were overtly political and practical as schism over these issues could emerge. Thus despite the recognition that religion touches both the divine and the mundane, the practical stance of Islam through many centuries has been marked by political quietism (Brown, 2001).

The position of religious authorities versus the political regime began to be more institutionalized under the Ottomans. Though the principle position of the Ottoman sultan vis-à-vis religious actors resembled that of pre-Ottoman caliphates, these relations were molded into formal institutions. The influence of this institutionalization can be felt throughout the Arab world until the present day. Hourani (1981) elaborates:

With the Turkish talent for clarity and order, it formed the ‘*ulamā*’ into a hierarchy with fixed ranks, official appointments and regular salaries. The heads of the hierarchy [...] and the chief justices, were consulted in the highest matters of state, and the provincial judges, the qadis were the main channels of contact between the central

⁹ For a more extensive discussion Lapidus (2012).

government and the Muslim public opinion of the great cities. The government gave patronage and protection to the Islamic schools of the Arab cities, and itself founded new ones in Istanbul to educate those who would fill the highest posts in the religious service.¹⁰

Not surprisingly, the *‘ulamā’* developed often intimate relations with the ruling class: they were both dependent of the system and the system was dependent on them. Especially in the rural areas this led to the local *‘ulamā’* often having competing public roles (Hourani, 1981, p.12): they were an actor in state institutions, and subject to policies set out by the ruler, but needed to remain independent as representatives of their local communities.¹¹ Despite the practical division between political and religious authority, the close interdependence of the religious classes of the *‘ulamā’* and the political regime resulted in close interconnectedness between the two.¹² Leaders needed religious legitimacy that was in the hands of the *‘ulamā’*, the *‘ulamā’* needed stability that could be provided by the political leaders.¹³

This practical institutional arrangement between religious and political authorities had a profound impact on how political thought developed within Islam. The arrangement worked as long as no clear political theology was developed as this might have pitted religious actors against their rulers (Brown, 2001). At the same time, the very fact that no formal religious organization existed, meant that questions over “what belonged to whom” were never forced on these actors. Where Christianity as faith and organizations were imported into existing regimes (such as under Constantine in the Roman Empire), questions about what the boundaries were between the political regime and religious organizations had to be clearly defined. In early Islamic history this was never the case. Where religious scholars did touch on these topics - for instance with the Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyya (b.1263 - d.1328) arguing that Muslims should hold their leaders accountable on the basis of Islam - they were forcefully silenced.

3.2 State versus Islam

(1) The Syrian Arab Republic is a democratic, popular, socialist, and sovereign state. No part of its territory can be ceded. Syria is a member of the Union of the Arab Republics. [...] (1) The

¹⁰ Hourani (1981, p.8).

¹¹ For a practical example in Hama, Syria, see Weismann (2005).

¹² In addition, they were not just religious elites but also social (and often economic) ones. See Hourani (1993).

¹³ For a discussion on late Ottoman Islamic reform, see Commins (1990).

religion of the President of the Republic has to be Islam. (2) Islamic jurisprudence is a main source of legislation.¹⁴

Tunisia is a free, independent and sovereign state. Its religion is Islam, its language is Arabic and its type of government is the Republic. The Republic of Tunisia is a part of the Great Arab Maghreb, an entity which it endeavors to unify within the framework of mutual interests.¹⁵

Colonialism

With the basics of Islam explored, we now need to discuss the emergence of modern Middle Eastern states and the implications of their emergence on the position of Islam in their societies. As will become clear later on in the chapter, the Islamist project emerged as a direct consequence of the emergence and development of modern Arab states.

During the last century of their rule, recognizing their relative weakness against Russian and European military forces, the Ottoman rulers had set out on a comprehensive reform project throughout the empire. Between 1820 and 1870 the state institutional structure was strengthened and centralized, following roughly the blue print of European states in this so-called *tanẓimāt* period.¹⁶ It would be the first steps in creating “modern states” in the region. The religious roles described in the previous section (see page 57) were institutionalized in this period, in addition to the formal legal recognition of various religious minorities (the so-called *millet* system). Furthermore, a state bureaucracy was formed after the Western example and there were attempts to create a modern army and restructure tax collection. But all to little avail. As western military dominance continued to grow, the Ottoman empire was slowly but steadily taken apart.

The process of colonial incursion, Ottoman collapse, and the eventual emergence of modern Arab states, differed between the Middle East and North Africa. In North Africa the bases of modern states had already been laid during the Ottoman Empire. With Ottoman influence waning at its periphery, local leaders were able to create their own independent regimes that only paid lip service to the Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople (today’s Istanbul). As the region weakened they were taken over one by one by European powers:¹⁷ Egypt was invaded in 1798, Algeria was invaded in 1830 and Tunisia became a French protectorate

¹⁴ Syrian Arab Republic (p. 1973, article 1 and 3) *Article 1 and 3 of the previous Syrian Constitution*, March 13.

¹⁵ Tunisian Republic (p. 1959) *Article 1 and 2 of the previous Tunisian Constitution*, June 1.

¹⁶ Areas that were relatively independent from Ottoman central rule, specifically Tunisia and Egypt, also followed the Ottoman examples and initiated reforms. See also Hourani (1993).

¹⁷ Libya was taken over by the Italians.

in 1869. In the Middle East, much closer to the center of Ottoman power, the colonial period would start only after the fall of the Ottoman empire in the wake of the First World War. As independent states had not formed under the Ottoman Empire, following the secret Sykes-Picot agreement (May 1916) various states were created and subsequently divided between the English and the French (Hourani, 1981, Chapter 13). It was through this agreement that it was decided that Iraq and Palestine would be British, and Syria and Lebanon French.

The colonial period, then, created or further developed the political and administrative institutions around which politics and state would evolve in the future. They increased the pace of these reforms and pushed the Arab world effectively into a Western framework of managing society, state and politics. Under foreign rule the Ottoman religious institutions would remain large intact, but the “modern” Western framework of state institutions and law would be further developed. While the social and political influence of the traditional *‘ulamā’* classes had already diminished during the Ottoman *tanẓimāt* period, under colonialism the formal role of these religious actors was relegated and constricted to the field of family law and religious affairs. It would mean the sidelining of religious authority from the center of society and the loss of most of their original political power (Weismann, 2001). The type of political regime that was introduced under colonial rule differed between rulers. In general, countries under the French rule became republics under direct supervision: Tunisia’s bey was rendered inconsequential as nominal head, Algeria became a province of France, the Syrian Kingdom (1918-20) was turned into a republic as its king, Faysal, was exiled. Countries under British rule were often kingdoms under more indirect rule: Transjordan under emir (later king) Abdullah, Iraq came under the previous Syrian king, Faysel. Morocco was never truly colonized, but transformed its traditional ruling elite family into a royal one. In the Gulf many states also transformed themselves according to the (British) example provided: many became kingdoms.

Due to increased interaction with European powers, the social make up of society changed profoundly. A Western educated elite emerged that had the background in Western nationalist ideologies but were profoundly Arab in their identity (Hourani, 1993). They were often secular and developed a socialist ideology together with an Arab nationalist outlook. These young elites would prove to be the seed of many anti-colonial movements in Arab states. Anti-colonial uprisings were the result, which would eventually prove successful. In Syria an anti-French uprising started in the 1920s, in Iraq and Libya the inter-war period would also be marked by continued anti-colonial struggles. In Algeria a decade-long uprising would start in 1954, Tunisia would follow, but to a lesser (violent) extent. Syria would gain full independence in 1948. Libya (1951),

Egypt (1953), Tunisia (1956) and Algeria (1962) would follow, as would others.¹⁸ The stability of these political regimes following independence from colonial rule was not a given. In Egypt King Farouk was deposed through a 1952 military coup demanding full independence from the British. In Iraq, a 1958 military coup brought down the Hashemite kingdom.

Religion and Institutional Change

In all of these cases the nascent states faced a legitimacy problem: their states had been created by a colonial power and were therefore “alien” entities, governing over a population that harbored almost no nationalistic sentiments to the new regime. A first possible response was to bind social and political elites to the regime through economic patronage: stabilizing the political elite through nurturing their economic dependence on regime stability. But this only addressed the regime’s stability at its core, not its overall legitimacy among the population. National legitimacy for the political regime was created differently in kingdoms and republics (Razi, 1990). In Kingdoms rulers would draw on, and construct, a “traditional” legitimacy to their rule. In Morocco and Jordan, both leaders claim direct ancestry to Mohammad and the Moroccan king also functioned as *al-Amīr al-Mu’minīn* (“the Leader of the Faithful”).¹⁹ In Saudi Arabia, an early arrangement between the ruling house of Saud and the religious *‘ālim* Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab gave the ruling regime its legitimacy and the descendants of al-Wahab power over the religious sphere. This arrangement lasts till to present day (Lacroix, 2011; Selvik and Stenslie, 2011).

Republics, in contrast, drew their legitimacy from a revolutionary struggle against a colonial oppressor. Their legitimacy was therefore not build on a traditional religious authority but on popular mobilization. After the success of their revolutions and the attainment of real independence, this popular mobilization had to be translated in a continued project of social mobilization in order to provide the regime with some form of legitimacy. In most of these republics, not in small part due to the European ideological influences on these young revolutionary leaders, this was translated into national projects to “modernize” society. Drawing on European political cleavages many followed a leftists socialist or communist ideology in which the state was the main instigator of social change. They therefore maintained “revolutionary” legitimacy, while forcefully enlarging a state bureaucracy that embedded itself within all facets of society (Owen, 2004).

The above had clear connotations for the position of religion in these emerging states. In Arab kingdoms religious authorities were made subservient to the

¹⁸ In some states, for instance Jordan and Tunisia, there was more brokered independence.

¹⁹ For an analysis on Morocco, see Dalmasso and Cavatorta (2011); Pruzan-Jørgensen (2010), for Jordan see Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe (2009).

regime, but at the same time regime attempts to draw legitimacy from religious sources proved effective.²⁰ It thereby provided a space for an active religious and political sphere that was formally approved by the religious leader-cum-king. But drawing on “traditional” religious legitimacy these leaders would be elevated, in the eyes of many, above the practical day-to-day political, social and religious struggles. The kings could therefore function as true “king-maker” in the religious and political power play from which they themselves were exempted. In Arab republics, almost without exception, political regimes came into conflict with religious authorities - and successfully repressed them or forced them into a subservient co-optation. It created a political regime that lacked the religious legitimacy Arab kingdoms had. Through the early decades, as their legitimacy was drawn on the secularized modernist revolutionary ideology, many of these leaders did not perceive this to be a problem. But as these these secular socialist ideologies became increasingly stale through the 1980s and 1990s, this deficiency became more pronounced and problematic.²¹

Already as early as the late 1960s, but becoming more obvious during the 1970s, 1980s and particularly the 1990s, there was a failure of socialist revolutionary ideologies. This had multiple causes. At first, and most fundamental, is that a state-led “revolution from above” was very costly: explosive growth of state bureaucracies draws heavily on the expenditure of the state. If there is no form of steady income flowing into the country (such as oil revenues) this is almost impossible to maintain. Second, the effectiveness of these types of policies was debatable: economic growth did not reflect the state’s investment. The first Arab country to reverse its socialist project was Tunisia in 1969. The reason was that economic goals had not been met; growth had been insufficient and debt was exploding. In some form or another all republics trying state-led economic development found their efforts to be ineffective at some point. Finally, the real failure came with the fall of the USSR in 1989 and thus the collapse of the socialist model. It also meant that some Arab states (such as Syria) that had aligned with the USSR lost a powerful patron and (financial) backer.

The general response was one of economic *infitāh* (“liberalization”).²² Though not particular to Arab republics, the consequences were most pronounced there. Starting in Tunisia in the late 1960, and in Egypt in the early 1970s, these policies meant that state-owned businesses were privatized and economic laws reformed, resulting in an improvement in the general investment climate. This was

²⁰ All the more surprising because kingdoms are just as new - they are in no way more “traditional” - than their Arab republic counterparts.

²¹ It was something that many presidents realized and attempted to address later on in their rule - through emphasizing their personal religious credentials for instance, but could never fully resolve. See for Syria Kedar (2005) and more generally for the Arab world Haklai (2006).

²² See on Egypt Moore (1986).

at least the initial attempt. As previously mentioned, many of the post-colonial states in the Arab world have been built on some type of patrimonial relationship to closely tie a ruling elite to its political ruler. These forms of patrimonialism only developed further and became more entrenched in subsequent decades due to these *infitāh* policies. In the context of existing patrimonial relations, political positions were used to obtain exclusive deals: for instance concerning rights in trade legislation and the provision of import licenses (Owen, 2004). Against this backdrop, new bourgeoisies emerged in many Arab countries, owing “their elevated position to their links or partnerships with leading figures in the party, the bureaucracy, or the military, under whose auspices they handle a variety of legal, semi legal, or illegal businesses” (Perthes, 1992, p. 214). The practical result was that ruling party structure, state institutions and economic structures became increasingly interconnected. But where previously political involvement in the economy had been formal through the nationalization of large businesses, it was now built on informal relations between political, bureaucratic (including army) and economic elites.

It seemed that, in the context of a worsening political climate – these political-economic networks provided these republics and monarchies with the necessary political allegiance needed to stabilize their rule (Haddad and Heydemann, 2004; Cammett, 2007). In practice the arrangement put increasing tension on state-society relations, as the state was increasingly viewed as a mechanism for institutionalized corruption by non-elite Arabs in the region. In December 2010 this tension surfaced. Although mobilization quickly spread across the Arab world, from Saudi Arabia to Morocco, it was five republics that quickly became unstable due to the republic’s lack of legitimacy: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria. This thesis will therefore focus on two republics in exploring the questions of how Islamism has been influenced by political changes brought on by the Arab Spring.

3.3 Islam versus State

The main point is: we want a Muslim individual, Muslim family, Muslim nation, Muslim government, and a state that should be able to unite dispersed Muslims, should be able to recover their lost lands, their usurped regions, and their occupied territories.²³

The Revival of Islam

From the 1820s onwards the Arab region has been in constant social and political turmoil. The moment the Ottoman Empire started to decline, and European

²³ Hasan al-Banna (p. Hawwa, 1983, p.43), quoted in Sa’id Hawwa: *The Muslim Brotherhood*.

powers slowly but steadily gained the upper hand, reformist ideas within Islamic thought began to gain currency (Mortimer, 1982). As was recalled above, historically the religious authority of the ‘*ulamā*’ had been based on the prevalence of *taqlīd* over *ijtihād* in preserving religious tradition. Or, in other words, the prevalence of Islamic interpretation within a clearly circumscribed religious school of Islamic jurisprudence (i.e. one of the *madhāhib*: Hanafi, Shafai, etc) over that of individual (re)interpretation of the Quran and the Hadith. In the waning days of the Ottoman Empire the legitimacy of these traditional approaches to religious interpretation lost ground and a movement of religious reform (in Arabic: *islāh*) emerged. From this religious reformism, Islamist movements - those that are at the center of this thesis - would emerge. What I will do here is provide an outline of the relevant religious currents, reformist approaches and movement organizations that emerged during this period and continue to define Islamism in the region today.²⁴ As will become clear, the boundaries between these three categories are not clear cut. But an analytical typology of the historical development of Islamic reformism and its mobilized offshoots will be useful to make sense of the fragmented Islamist phenomenon discussed in this thesis.

Two basic religious currents that need to be discussed before we can proceed to exploring specific reformist approaches are Salafism and Sufism. The central thought in Salafism is the need to return to Islam as it was during the *al-Salaf al-Salīh* (“the rightly guided predecessors”). This is believed to be the period before any schism appeared within the religion and is therefore thought to constitute “true Islam”. In essence, it means a return to the basic text of the Quran and *Ḥadīth* as guide for how to live in the contemporary world (Esposito and Voll, 2001, p. 54). As such, it effectively means the negation of any of the various *madhāhib* schools of Islamic jurisprudence and their cultural markers as it is believed the Quran and the Hadith have direct authority (Haykel, 2009). It is the ideological foundation at the basis of any reformist approach that challenges the authority of the four traditional approaches in Islamic jurisprudence. It is not a modern idea, but it was invoked with new rigor in unison with religious revivalism at the beginning of the 19th century (Haykel, 2009).

The second current is Sufism. Sufism is a religious current that may predate Islam as such and it transcends Islamic religious divisions. You can be Sufi with Sunni or Shi’ite inclinations (Ali, 1935, pp. 455-457). In Sufism the more mystic parts of Islam are accentuated. It has a focus of religion within the self and a meaning of faith that goes beyond the literal meaning of the written words in the

²⁴ The following therefore provides a very briefly summarized overview of the vast changes and discussion that have taken place through the last, say, two centuries among Islamic thinkers and Islamist organizations. For a more elaborate overview of reformist Islamic thinking see Ayubi (1993); Beinun and Stork (1996); Haykel (2003); Kepel (2005); Euben and Qasim Zaman (2009).

Quran. *Dhikr*, the continued repetition of a specific holy text, is a key part of Sufi religious experience (Weismann, 2004, p. 311). Sufi currents are generally organized around *turuq* (sing. *tariqa* and loosely translated as “group”) that follow a specific Sufi saint, often the deceased shaykh that initiated the group. A specific site related to the Sufi saint (often his tomb) then becomes the local site of this *tariqa*, often called a *zāwiya*. It is perceived by some as a “folk” form of either Sunni or Shia Islam by non-adherents (van Bruinessen, 2009, pp. 124-127). Traditionally Salafists are opposed to Sufism as it would propagate forms of worship that are un-Islamic; especially concerning the position and idolization of Sufi shaykhs or saints. To an approach that is aimed at deculturalizing religion, Sufism often stands for those that have let custom overtake religion. From the 19th century onwards Sufism was thought to be in decline - losing out to reformist Salafist currents. In the latter quarter of the 20th century a revival can be seen and Sufism has become generally more respected (Masud et al., 2009).

These two currents provide the general context for the emergence of various religious reform approaches. We can discern a number of main currents within this Islamic reformism. I will describe these currents along three ideal types: modernistic reformism (Arabic: *Islāh*), revivalism (Arabic: *tajdīd*) and takfirism (Arabic: *takfīrī*). This analytical typology does not do justice to the wide variety of Islamic reformist discussions (see for instance Euben and Qasim Zaman, 2009), but here it is sufficient as examples of different answers to the question of empowering the Islamic world through religious reform. More specifically the approaches are:

- “Modernistic” reformism (Arabic: *islāh*) in Islam emerged around the time of Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt (1798–1801), when the weakness of the Islamic world became acute. The central idea was to revitalize Islam by relating Islam to concepts observed in the West. This specifically concerned concepts that were perceived to be at the basis of Europe’s power, such as justice, freedom and (individual) rationalism. These concepts were taken from their European context and placed within an Islamic framework, arguing that in essence they were part and parcel of Islam. This line of thinking was a direct result of contact with Europe: the first generation of modernist reformist thinkers, such as the Tunisian scholar Khair ad-Din al-Tunsi (b.1822-d.1890) and Rifa’ al-Tahtawi (b.1801-d.1873) had visited France and theorized that these specific concepts of European thinking were at the basis of Europe’s success. Later thinkers, such as Muhammad Abduh (b.1849-d.1905) and the young Rashid Rida (b.1865-d.1935), continued on this train of thought but translated it increasingly into a question of religious authority. If the strength of Islam was in its inherent concepts, then the secondary interpretation of

these concepts - and therefore the authority of religious scholars - was void. Religion was, and should be, something between men and their God.²⁵

- Revivalism (Arabic: *tajdid*) is different from the modernist reformist approach in that it turns away from Western examples. It is argued that a return to “true” Islam and the early Islamic caliphate is the solution to the social, economic and political weakness of the Arab world. From a previous focus on foreign powers, so to speak, it turns inwards and takes an Islamic state as the central political entity around which religious discourse revolves. It thereby has more direct political implications than the modernist approach described above. The extent to which an Islamic state is conceptualized differs, but a highly idealized view of Islamic rule is central, drawing on the writings of early Islamic thinkers. The main proponent, and arguably instigator, of revivalism is Rashid Rida. It is the same Rashid Rida who was a proponent of reformist Islam. Following the death of his teacher Abduh (1905), the end of the Ottoman Empire (1922) and its caliphate (1924) he profoundly altered his religious thinking. He returned to early Islamic thinkers such as Muhammad Ghazali (b.1058-d.1111) and Ibn Taymiyya (b.1263–d.1328), often citing their work word by word and making the case for restoring “proper” Islamic rule (Belkeziz, 2009, chapter 4). Rida paved the way for the early Islamic thinkers that other Islamist movements would later build on.
- The name takfirist (Arabic: *takfīrī*) derives from *takfīr* (“apostate”). Takfirism can be summarized as the idea that the weakness of the Islamic world is caused by the fact that Arabs are ruled by unbelieving Muslims. It is therefore a duty of “true” Muslims to rise up against these “apostate” rulers through a *jihād*. It thereby brings the struggle for a strengthened Muslim world directly to political elites in the region. Who has the authority to define who an apostate is (or is not) is left open, thereby creating the possibility for any group to declare their opponents “apostates” and call for a holy war. One of the key names in this respect is an Egyptian Muslim Brother that was hanged by Sadat in 1966: Sayd Qutb (b.1906-d.1966). Qutb (1964) and his *Signpost along the Road* would prove to be the ideological starting point of many Jihadist movements existing in the world today (Zubaida, 2009; Milton-Edwards, 2005).

The above is an ideal typology of reformist approaches within Islamism. Though some currents emerged later than others, all are still in existence and compete over legitimacy of their interpretations. The ‘*ulamā*’, the ones that were initially challenged by the reformist movement, have not been passive. They have often, though to differing degree, taken up some of the criticism

²⁵ This approach was therefore civil in the sense that it argued for taking religious authority away from political regimes and putting it in society’s hands (Belkeziz, 2009, chapter 1, 2).

and reformist strands - at the same time taking care not to weaken their traditional religious authority on which their existence is built. Thus in the early 20th century Rida already interacted with the ‘*ulamā*’ of the Egyptian Azhar institute, trying to reform the most important center of traditional religious authority rather than disregarding it all together. A more recent example is Yusuf al-Qardawi (b.1926) one of the most influential ‘*ulamā*’ at the moment, who tries to stand between religious authority and mobilized Islamism. He explicitly shows he is a graduate from al-Azhar - boosting his religious credentials - while being closely aligned to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.²⁶ An older example is the Saudi Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (b.1703 - d.1792) whose strong Salafist approach has transformed over the centuries, with the help of its Saudi patrons, almost into a new “Wahabi” revivalist tradition. A fifth *Madhhab* of Islamic jurisprudence so to speak. This Wahabi tradition is becoming increasingly influential across the Arab world. As result of these interactions the boundaries between reformist movements and the traditional ‘*ulamā*’ have tended to become blurred.

Islamism Institutionalized

The above are the main debates of modern Islamism which took place throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. From these debates Islamist movements emerged, being the mobilized embodiment of their socio-political religious ideology. These movements include those revolutionary Islamic groups that sought to overthrow secular regimes and replace them by an Islamic caliphate, arguing for “Islamic rule” or fighting Jihad. The main movements emerged around the time that the caliphate ended and revivalist ideology emerged. A critical name in this respect is Hasan al-Banna. An Egyptian school teacher, he would become the person that for the first time translated reformist ideas into a practical plan of political and social action.²⁷ He founded the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. Due to the transnational character of their ideology, Islamist movements have always had the tendency to spread across the Islamic world, but differ in the extent to which they take the modern Arab state as the principle context for mobilization. Therefore we see, in the examples below, that the Muslim Brotherhood is more nationally oriented than *Daʿwa wa Tablīgh* and *Ḥizb al-Tahrīr*. The most important Islamist movements in the region are:

- *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* (“The Muslim Brotherhood”, or MB) was founded in

²⁶ See Qasim Zaman (2009, 2012) for an in-depth description of how reformism has influenced debates among the ‘*ulamā*’.

²⁷ See for the original center piece of his writing al-Bannā (nd). For an (in English translated) commentary to this by a leading Syrian Islamist, see Said Hawwa: Hawwa (1983). For a Western analysis of his writing, see Calvert (2010).

1928 by Hassan al-Banna.²⁸ Revolutionary at its inception and historically involved in violent uprisings against secular regimes such as that of Anwar Sadat and Hafez al-Assad, it has evolved into the main opposition force in many Arab countries - including Syria. Famously the self description of the MB, by al-Banna, was that it was comprised of “the Salafi *daʿwa* [...], the Sunni path and [...] the Sufi truth”. They have had no problem with incorporating modernist strands within their socio-political ideology, while - at the same time - more revivalist and takfiri fringes within the movement have been at the basis of the main jihadi movements that we see today. Branches were founded in Jordan, Syria and Palestine in the 1940s and 1950s (the latter would evolve into *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiya* - Hamas). Currently there are Muslim Brotherhood organizations across the Arab region and the world.

- *Ḥarakat Ennahda* (“The Renaissance Movement”).²⁹ Founded in Tunisia in 1981 and a successor of “the Movement of Islamic Tendency” founded in the 1970s. It has been Tunisia’s ruling party since 2011. The president and co-founder of the movement, Rashed Ghanoushi, is known for his modernist reformist approach and explicitly draws on Western thinkers in formulating his Islamist ideology.³⁰ The movement is specific to Tunisia. Though in its approach close to the Muslim Brotherhood (they are arguably one of the reason why the Muslim Brotherhood has a small presence in the country), the Ennahda approach is generally leaning more to the modernist approach than its MB counterparts. Although, also within Ennahda, more revivalist currents are present. The Ennahda movement will be discussed to in more detail in chapter 4.
- *Ḥizb al-Tahrīr* (“liberation party”, or HuT).³¹ Founded in Palestine in 1953. It seeks to reinstate the “original” Islamic caliphate. Soon after its foundation it sought to do this via (violent) uprising, although in recent decades it has attempted to participate in democratic elections. It has always made clear that in its religious ideology political parties are seen as un-Islamic and therefore would be abolished if the party would gain the possibility to change the constitution of a country (Allani, 2009, p. 258). They lean close to the revivalist approach described above. They have a presence in many countries around the Islamic world. Though in Syria they are a very small group, in Tunisia they are a sizable minority. After the October 2011 elections the Tunisian HuT was granted formal recognition by the Ennahda-led government.

²⁸ See their Egyptian website at www.ikhwanonline.com. The Syrian website is www.ikhwansyria.com.

²⁹ See their website at www.ennahdha.tn.

³⁰ See for instance Ghanoushi (September 2001).

³¹ See their global website at www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info.

- *al-Salafiyūn al-ʿAlmiya* (“Scriptural Salafists”).³² Here I follow a common denotation of what actually is a family of strict revivalist movements that sometime combines this with takfiri tendencies. In other words: they wish to revive an Islamic system as it was in the times of Muhammad and they have a tendency to denounce any Muslim who does not follow this line as an “apostate”. They say they do not participate in party politics as it is un-Islamic. They do not use violence in their mobilization efforts, often using only social *daʿwa* activities to achieve their goals. These movements are present within most Arab countries, and are most often organized around individual shaykhs or *ʿālim*. By and large, these movements do not have a transnational organization, although the leading shaykhs do have an influence across borders. A well-known example of this type of movement is *Daʿwa wa tablīgh*: a strict revivalist movement that actively attempts to use social *daʿwa* to reach its goal of an Islamic state. Another examples is what has been called the *Takfir wa Hijra* movement (see Kepel, 2005). They declare society at large to be infidel and retreat from it as a response, with the aim to of constructing their ideal society in isolation. Though present before, these types of movements have become more publicly present since the Arab Spring.
- *al-Salafiyūn al-Jihādiyyūn* (“the Jihadists”). Again I follow here the common name used for these movements in the region. These movements are actually also a family of strict revivalist movements, but in a clear divergence from the groups above, they are takfiri and violence features centrally in their mobilization repertoire. They are much more international than their scripturalist counterparts, often traveling to battlefields to fight the Jihad. During the Arab Spring, the Syrian struggle against Bashar al-Assad increasingly became a magnet for these types of groups. Many North Africans - including many Tunisians - Middle Easterners and Gulf Arabs traveled to Syria to fight.

Many other movements are not as wide spread and/or well known as the ones mentioned above, and are therefore not explicitly mentioned. Many movements are either small and organized around a specific shaykh, or are specifically national movements with limited international links. But they all mobilize on the basis of a reformist religious ideology. Though very diverse and impossible to describe here in detail, many of these movements, although their ideologies differ greatly, have employed surprisingly similar mobilization strategies. Much more so than was often anticipated.³³ Many have for instance participated in electoral politics - including revivalist movements - and are often to a surprising

³² It actually translates as “scientific Salafists” but this has a different connotation in the English language than it does in Arabic. See also Marks (September 28 2012).

³³ See for instance Rashwān (2007) who divides Islamist groups between those that are institutionalized in social and political institutions (the Muslim Brotherhood) and those “fundamentalists” that do not. It is a mainstream typology within studies on Islamism, implying a strong influence of Islamic ideology on mobilization strategies. The Arab Spring (and pre-

degree embedded in traditional religious authorities. This is for instance true of the Salafist *Jabhat al-Islāh* (“the Reform Front”) in Tunisia, as well as the Salafist *Ḥizb al-Nūr* (“The Party of Light”) in Egypt.

The large majority of these movements have had their period of revolutionary Islamist discourse. Not surprisingly, the 1979 revolution in Iran was an event that incited Islamist mobilization and proved that the creation of an Islamic state was possible in the 20th century. By the late 1990s none of the movements actually managed to take over power, or implement their vision of what a Islamic state should look like. The Islamist project in Iran ended in deception: the Islamic state as envisioned never emerged. In the early 2000s the Muslim Brotherhood seemed so pragmatic that many saw it more as a mere political - rather than Islamist - party.³⁴ In this context the era of Islamism was declared over and the phase of post-Islamism would commence, before Islamism had ever really started (Bayat, 1996; Roy, 1996).

I would like to argue that the “post” in post-Islamism has been declared too soon. As mentioned in section 2.1, in the late 1990s a number of scholars noted the failure of the Islamist project. Depending on your definition of Islamism, it is true that Islamism as a top down project of enforcing Islamic norms on society (see Bayat, 1996) and as revolutionary ideology (see Roy, 1996) has failed. But following Volpi (2010), we might argue that these conceptualizations were too focused on specific types of revolutionary political projects and we need to appreciate the wider meaning given by many in the region to the position of Islam in politics and society. Looking at the Arab world today, it is clear that Islam as a political and social mobilizing force has remained. It has perhaps even strengthened over time. But its practical manifestations adapted to changing circumstances. Simplified, we might say that Islamism as revolutionary project has lost salience. Islamism as an individual and purely social project is falling short of expectations. But Islamism as a driver to Islamize society, state and politics - as all three are seen as intertwined - has never lost out. It begs the question of how these movements will re-emerge after the Arab Spring.

3.4 Conclusion

The Islamic conscience has developed, and Islamists absolutely do not have special demands. We rather believe that faith (*al-īmān*) reaches the people and power, rather than people of faith take over power.³⁵

vious experiences in for instance Yemen and Kuwait) have shown that such a typology poorly reflects actual dynamics on the ground.

³⁴ See also Albrecht and Wegner (2006).

³⁵ al-Khaṭīb (p. 2011, January 31) *The Center for Studies and Research Collapses [Between Bouazizi and the Qardawi fight]*, al-Khaṭīb, January 31.

2011 would prove to be a watershed in Arab history. Whatever may happen in the future, it is clear that the political context in the Arab region has changed profoundly. In Tunisia, the political structures have been brought down and a new political system will have to be build. The same applies to Egypt, though the democratic outcome of its revolution is doubtful. In Libya a complete state needs to be rebuild after decades of Qadhafi rule. To what extent these countries will be successful in quickly rebuilding a stable political regime remains to be seen, but that the coming years will be marked by political uncertainty seems certain. This will have implications on how political influence from Islamist actors will take form.

We have seen in this chapter that the Islamist project has strong trans-national characteristics, at the same time it is clear that its movements and organizations react by-and-large to a national political and social context. The Muslim Brotherhood is present in many countries around the world, but as a separate independent entity in each one. The same holds true for HuT, by all accounts a strong trans-national organization (they have a central transnational organization which the MB lacks) that has created nationally-based political parties, such as the one in Tunisia. How pragmatic national considerations interact with the general socio-religious Islamist project is still an open question and subject to constant negotiation.

★

The aim of this thesis is to assess how Islamist movements mobilize and interact with their national political and social contexts. The rapidly changing political context during the Arab Spring has meant that Islamists have had to reconsider their strategies regarding society and politics. Despite the fact that all national contexts have their specificities, there might be comparable social mechanisms at play, and comparable mobilization dilemmas that Islamists face, due to either comparable characteristics in Islamist ideology or socio-political context. The task at hand, then, is to explore how, in the context of political uprisings and revolutions, Islamism adapts to changing circumstances.

In part II of the thesis we will explore the development of Islamist mobilization in Tunisia and Syria. These two cases will be discussed chronologically, first discussing the former country. These chapters will provide us with the ability to trace the process through which Islamism in each national context has developed in recent decades, and show how contemporary dynamics in Islamist mobilization are dependent on that history. This chronological and country-specific overview will then be followed by part III in which we will become more general and flesh out some of the comparable mechanism and mobilization strategies that we can observe in each case.

Part II

Playing the Game

Chapter 4

Tunisia Repressed Islam

With the research questions clarified and the general background of our topic elaborated upon in the theoretical and historic context, we can become more specific about our two case studies. In the following part I will provide an in-depth discussion of Tunisian and Syrian Islamism. Both case studies are split between a historical chapter - discussing the historical trajectory of relations between political and social sphere, in addition to religious actors - and a contemporary one that provides an empirical anthology of issues emerging when political regimes and Islamist movements interact. In doing so, I will provide brief comparisons between the two cases and show how particular differences and similarities described in (historical) chapters 4 and 6 relate to particular differences and similarities in the (contemporary) chapters 5 and 7.¹

The present chapter explores the emergence of Tunisia as a modern nation state following the colonial period under the French, and discusses how state institutions were historically related to both the political regime and society. Alongside, it outlines the historic development of Tunisian Islamism in direct relation to the emergence of the Tunisian state. The chapter therefore provides the necessary historical information to understand the more contemporary structural background for re-emerging Islamist mobilization in Tunisia before and after the January 2011 revolution. The latter will be the topic of the next chapter.

¹ The result of the above is that chapters 4 and 6 relate more directly to chapter 8 in part III, while chapters 5 and 7 relate more to chapters 9 and 10. Readers can opt to read the Tunisia chapters together, providing an in-depth account of Islamist-related regime-society relations over time and its consequences for post-revolution mobilization dynamics; readers can also opt to read the historical chapters together, focusing more on the comparison between the two cases; or readers can opt to see these four chapters as empirical grounding for the analysis made in part III.

The chapter has three main arguments. First, it argues that Neo-Dustour, Tunisia's ruling party, effectively created a system of party-led patronage, binding large parts of society to the state through the party apparatus. This resulted in the emergence of a particular state-related bourgeoisie, that owed its existence to the new Bourguiba-led state. Second, it is argued that the capability of the Tunisian regime to dominate institutionalized Islamic actors early on in its emergence was crucial in how secular-Islamist divides would develop later on. Specifically, it meant that Bourguiba could institute an effective secular modernization project that resulted in 1) the secularization of the newly emerged state bourgeoisie and 2) the social destruction of the *‘ulamā’* in the country. Third, the above had a crucial impact on how Islamism would emerge in the country. In Tunisia multiple Islamist movements appeared throughout the 1970s, but in the relatively empty religious sphere they came to be dominated by the *Ḥarakat al-Itijāh al-Islāmī* (“The Movement of Islamic Tendency”). Through effective repression and exile in the 1990s they were effectively cut off from social activism and therefore transformed, in practical terms, into a political entity.² All of the above would set the stage for the Islamist re-emergence after the January 2011 revolution: with a limited institutionalized religious sphere, and one exiled Islamist movement-turned-party returning - there was ample space for new movements to emerge.

When we compare the above with the situation in Syria we see comparable endemic clientelism and the emergence of a regime-related social elite. An elite that had both a close relation to the state and a particular position within social cleavages (see chapter 6). But differences between the two cases are ample. Syria is a sectarian country and the political elite had a specific position within them: they are overtly drawn from an Alawi religious group and from one specific clan close to the city of Qardaha. Additionally and related, the strength of the religious sphere differs greatly between the two cases. As we will see in chapter 5 and 7, these structural differences are of crucial importance for how the issues described in part III come to the fore in practice in both cases. In Syria and Tunisia similar dilemmas emerged concerning the role of state institutions in the implementation of an Islamist project. Although in Tunisia these dilemmas emerged in a Sunni majority context that was marked by its weak religious institutionalization, meaning that after the Arab Spring started relations between social and political mobilization had to be created in an institutional vacuum.

² The movement itself has thus been subject to a development that is similar to those in Syria: from initial emergence and mostly *da‘wa* mobilization to large-scale mobilization and politicization ending in large scale repression, and subsequent exile.

4.1 Foundations (1956-1979)

It may seem absurd that the Muslim religion, which has withstood so many innovations, which kept intact its prestige and vitality through the centuries, contains in itself laws and provisions that contribute to its own disintegration in facilitating the hope of a pardon for late desertions and betrayals. Such a religion would be sentenced to die by its own hand.³

The basis for the regime that would rule Tunisia between March 1956 and January 2011, and its position regarding religious mobilization, was laid during the struggle for independence against the French from the early 1930s to the 1950s (Moore, 1965). Both the institutional structures and individuals that would chart the future of Tunisia emerged in this period. The Neo-Destour (emerging as opposition party to French colonial rule with its leader Habib Bourguiba); the national workers union (union Générale Tunisienne du Travail, or UGTT) was founded in 1946; and Saleh bin Yusuf (the socially conservative challenger, within the neo-Destour, to the secular progressive Bourguiba) would all prove to be crucial actors in defining the future of the country. First, the group of young men that led the independence struggle against the French, organized in the Neo-Dustur movement, would eventually transform into the party that would rule Tunisia until 2011. The UGTT would become, next to the Neo-Destour, the backbone of the independence struggle (Alexander, 2010, pp.1041–58) and would always remain the embodiment of the country's strong unionism. In the final years of the independence struggle, an internal conflict emerged between two leaders of the anti-colonial neo-Destour: Bourguiba and Bin Youssef. Bourguiba's secular progressiveness would crystallize through this struggle from which he would prove victorious.

As was the case in other Arab states, the winner of the post-colonial struggle attempted to strengthen its power base within society. As we will see in chapter 6, Bourguiba's position was much more favorable than al-Assad's after the latter's ascend to power more than 10 years later. The independence from France provided Bourguiba with a large amount of popular support and legitimacy in the early years after independence. But his leadership was not uncontested. The traditional ruler of Tunisia, the bey, still remained after independence - though his position had been greatly affected by his support to French rule. The UGTT demanded a greater role in politics due to its role in the independence fight (Vandewalle, 1988, p.605). Those that had supported bin-Yusuf, the Yusufists, still lingered in cities such as Kariouan, Jerba and Tunis. It led many (in Jerba up to 71 percent) to abstain from voting in the first "free" elections

³ Bourguiba (p. 1933, p.367), *The Opinion of the Professors of the Grand Mosque*, My Life and Work, April 20.

in 1956 (Perkins, 2004, p.131). And, last but not least, the religious sphere still constituted an independent space of power outside of the state's influence with its own courts, educational system and property system (Hajji, 2011).

Becoming prime-minister, Bourguiba had to secure his place in both party and government to then be able to implement his vision for social development in his country. A first step was the elections for the Constitutive Assembly, tasked with writing the new constitution after French colonialism. Established just two weeks after the end of French colonial rule, it was built on a list system where entire lists of candidates were elected in a first-past-the-post system. This ensured the dominance of the Neo-Dustur in the Constitutive Assembly: they won all 98 seats. Meanwhile the bey's position was transformed into a presidency, all legislative power was directly transferred and the bey himself set aside in the process. Bourguiba then minimized the powers of the new Constitutive Assembly, while taking on the role of the new president. (He would be formally reelected in 1964 and 1969 - and remain president until 1987.) Former Yussifists were tried and jailed in a newly formed "high court" controlled by Bourguiba (Perkins, 2004, pp.131-3). The UGTT would be pacified by placing a Bourguiba confidant at its helm. Within a few years of taking power, most sites of possible opposition had been pacified.

Bourguiba continued to consolidate his rule. He remained president of the Neo-Dustur party; a party that according to official figures grew from 300.000 to 600.000 members between 1955 and 1957. Additionally, a new 15-member political bureau was created for the leadership of the party. Each member was hand-picked by Bourguiba: none of them belonged to the founding members of the party. The party was quickly turning into an institutional framework linking state, party and society through a vast array of popular organizations that were at the basis of endemic patronage. Membership of the party had gone from being a threat under the French to granting access to a favorable system of patronage. The effect of this patronage was clear more than a decade later with those from the Sahel - where Bourguiba is from - being overrepresented in the government (see table 4.1). On top of this system sat Bourguiba, a leader that was soon unchallengeable within - and outside of - the party (Perkins, 2004, chapter 5). He was at the same time the leader of the party, prime minister and president of Tunisia; the unchallenged leader of the country.

Society, Religion and Regime Power

Bourguiba was the type of president that believed he understood the needs of his people, even though the people themselves might not realize those needs just yet. Education, social services, administration, the economy - state, politics and society as a whole - needed to be reformed from above to face the

Table 4.1: Geographical Background of the Tunisian Administration in 1970

Region	Population ^a	Ministers ^b	Governors	High Functionaries
Tunis	17.4%	25%	24.5%	29.2%
Nord ^c	27%	14.7%	12.3%	25.0%
Centre ^d	17.8%	13.2%	8.8%	0%
Sfax	9.4%	11.8%	5.3%	0%
Sahel	11.5%	28.0%	29.8%	29.2%
Sud ^e	16.9%	4.4%	14.0%	12.5%
Else	0%	2.9%	5.3%	4.1%

^a Population distribution as in 1966.

^b Officials are defined according to the highest office held.

^c This includes Bizerte, Beja and Jendouba, see Larif-Béatrix (1988, p.194).

^d This includes al-Kef and Kasserine, see Larif-Béatrix (1988, p.194).

^e This includes Sidi Bouzzid, Gafsa and the rest of southern Tunisia, see Larif-Béatrix (1988, p.194).

Source: compilation of various tables in Larif-Béatrix (1988, pp.193, 220, 224, 263).

social challenges of the day and those which would emerge in the future.⁴ His leadership was informed by the modernist ideology that was so pervasive in the Arab world during the 1950s and 1960s.⁵ This modernist stance in particular touched upon the “traditional” authorities of the religious sphere. Probably radicalized through his fight with Bin Yussuf in the final years of the independence struggle, as soon as he had gained solid power of the state and party, he set out to “educate” “his” population. He saw himself as the person to reform religion and render it compatible with modernity: positioning himself explicitly opposite Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the former President of Turkey, who had “fought” religious authorities in his country.⁶ Infamously he would drink a glass of orange juice during Ramadan, stating that Tunisians would not have to fast as they were at war - with underdevelopment - and therefore exempted from fasting. Needless to say Tunisian religious authorities begged to differ - but had little sway to do so.

These attempts at social modernization had their institutional implications on three crucial fronts: religious endowments, religious legislature and (religious) education. Almost immediately after securing his position at the political level,

⁴ Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s Tunisia tried a socialist approach to economic development, renaming the Neo-Destur party the *Parti socialiste destourien* or Socialist Destourian Party, PSD. When economic growth had not been as projected and internal PSD dissent emerged, the minister of economic affairs was fired, and policies changed to a more market-oriented approach.

⁵ Not surprisingly he had a very antagonistic relationship with the other pan-Arab champion of this socialist modernist ideology: the Egyptian president, Nasser.

⁶ For an extensive analysis of Bourguibas discourse, see Amal Mousa (2006) and for its French translation (with a different author), see Hajji (2011).

Bourguiba set out to curb the power of traditional religious authorities. He started by weakening the financial foundations of their independence. In Tunisia there were two systems of what in Tunisian dialect is called *Habus* (religious endowments, in standard Arabic: *Awqāf*) providing the financial foundations of the religious sphere. A public one, managed by the Habus Council, consisting of public property providing money for mosques, Quranic schools and Islamic institutions. A private one consisted of Habus properties that were family owned and passed on from one generation to the next. These types of Habus were popular as families could avoid splitting property at the moment of inheritance, as mainstream Islamic jurisprudence demands. In the summer of 1956 Bourguiba nationalized the Habus Council and appropriated all its property to the state, subsequently redistributing much of it. He thereby destroyed the financial foundations of the religious sphere and with it much of the wealth of upper-class religious conservative citizens. Mosques, religious schools and religious institutions were from now on part of the state. In addition, the functions within mosques (of imam, *mu'adhin*, etc) were nationalized and the roles formally became those of civil servants. A year later the private Habus system was also abolished (Perkins, 2004, p.135).

Second, in August of the same year the two Sharia courts (both for a different Madhhab: one for Maliki, the other for Hanafi) were absorbed into the state.⁷ With it, an independent religious judicial system effectively ceased to exist Hajji (2011). This made the drafting and implementation of a new personal status code possible.⁸ The completely revised code would be a radical change for the position of women in Tunisian society: polygamy was abolished, inheritance was equalized between men and women and gender equality codified. It provided the legal framework in which Tunisian society started to fundamentally change, with explicit support from government above.⁹

Third, starting in 1958, Bourguiba set to reform and modernized the entire educational system: in this period the government devoted approximately one-fifth of its budget to these reforms (Perkins, 2004, p.139). Previously the country had two kinds of education systems, a secular (build on a French model) and a religious one (building on a traditional Tunisian model). In reforming and unifying these systems it was decided that the French language would play a large role in education: to maintain and develop contact with the “developed”

⁷ Due to the historical presence of Ottoman officials a sizable Hanafi minority had emerged in the country.

⁸ The personal status code manages family-related issues such as right to inheritance, divorce and marriage. In all countries in the Middle East these family codes are based on religious laws.

⁹ An important organization in this respect was the *Union Nationale des Femmes Tunisiennes* or UNFT. Closely related to Neo-Destour, by 1960 it had almost 14.000 members and 115 branches. It promoted the new personal status code and literacy among women. See Perkins (2004, p.138).

West it was deemed best if the population knew a European language. At the same time Arabic was still the national language. The end result was a bilingual model, in which history, philosophy and religion were taught in Arabic, and other topics in French (Perkins, 2004, p.139). Practically, these reforms meant that traditional (Arabic based) education was abolished in favor of a system that was much more Francophone. With religious and Arabic education diminishing it left few places for graduates from religious education to find a job - the educational system had effectively been secularized. In this context Islamic educational institutes were also absorbed into the national educational framework: the main branch of traditional religious education in the country, at the Zeytuna Mosque, was incorporated into the April 9 University in Tunis in 1956. Education at the mosque itself was terminated.¹⁰ The only exception was religious education to children under the age of six, the so called *katātīb*. General religious education, for older children, was incorporated into a secular curriculum for primary and secondary schools. Though Bourghuibists also perceived this to be part of a general, and inevitable, modernization of the country, it was striking that any type of traditional religious education was forbidden. Education would, from the 1950s on, take place within a secularized state structure in which religion had a limited position.

Bourguiba himself did not wish to “attack Islam”, but wanted to reform it. He intended to relegate religion to the private sphere. By taking up the position of an “Islamic reformer” he wished to secularize Tunisian Islam. Consequently we see that from independence in the 1950s, Tunisia developed as an increasingly secularized country. The Bourghibist secularized modernization project inadvertently also effected the nature of the renewed Tunisian administration. With the renewed administration building on a French model, it also worked through the French language. Those educated in the previous religious schools did not receive French in their education and were therefore automatically exempt from government employment (Amal Mousa, 2006). It all resulted in sidelining those that had received their education within a religious (Zeytuna) framework from government favor. If one wanted a career, one had to become part of the secularized sphere that the state had become. Tellingly within elite political and state circles French would become the language of choice. Hijabs or any other form of religious attire were completely absent. Tunisian society, its state bureaucracies and public institutions, would in the decades after independence appear to become one of the most secularized in the Arab world.

¹⁰ Arguably there had been many problems with Zeytuna education through out the first half of the 20th century, with traditional shaykhs having trouble adapting to the needs of a quickly developing educational sector under French rule. For these issues, see al-‘Ayāshī (2003).

4.2 The Islamic Challenge (1979-1992)

[One of the missions of the Movement of Islamic Tendency is] to support the spread of the Islamic political entity and civilization on the local, regional, Arab and global level until our people and all humanity are saved from their suffering of personal emptiness, social injustice and foreign domination.¹¹

In Times of Bourghiba

Many religious actors did not take kindly to a president that took on *ijtihad*, interpreted religion to suit his own needs and set out to fundamentally reform - and arguably weaken - the religious sphere. The practical results of Bourguiba's rule were clearly that the structure of state, politics and society was further secularized and religion placed under direct state supervision (Halliday, 1990; Esposito and Voll, 2001). The implications would be that the Tunisian religious sphere would slowly but steadily decline as religious authority was not advanced through "real" religious education. Many within the religious sphere argue that Bourguiba had a secular (or using the stronger French term "laïque") ideology and was set on destroying religion in the country. Bourguiba's open disregard of the Ramadan fast angered them even more. But it proved impossible to build a popular movement against him. Elite *ʿulamā'* had been placated through various means and kept silent. With the *Habus* gone, religious education (including the Zeytuna mosque/teaching institute) placed within the secular state structure, and the yussifists jailed or repressed, the religious sphere was not powerful enough to challenge the state in its secularized "modernizing" project. The only practical response to the Bourguibist sidelining of the religious sphere was the founding of the *Association Pour la Sauvegarde du Coran* (Association for the Preservation of the Quran) in 1970 by former Zeytuna students (Perkins, 2004, p.159). The death knell appeared to be ringing for religious activism. Bourguiba seemed victorious.

But things were about to change. In the late 1970s an Islamist current emerged. The general development of this Islamist current in relation to the political regime and other social groups in Tunisia is best described through a series of crises. The first was the bread riots of 1978, which proved to be the setting in which a grassroots Islamic *daʿwa* movement would become politicized. The bread riots were the culmination of liberalization policies after a brief spell of socialist planning in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The practical effect was increased, but unbalanced, growth.¹² Unbalanced both geographically, with the

¹¹ Islamic Tendency Movement (p. 1981) *Declaration of the Founding of the Movement of Islamic Tendency*, Islamic Tendency Movement, June 6.

¹² For a much more elaborate discussion of Tunisian political economy during Bourguiba, see Moore (1988); Perkins (2004).

Tunisian periphery not benefiting from economic development as much as the capital; and unbalanced socially, with those close to the party gaining more than those without preferential treatment who did not have informal relations with regime elites (Vandewalle, 1988, p.606). As a consequence grievances within society were mounting and eventually, in the late 1970s, expressed through a revitalization of the UGTT and its president, Habib Achour. On January 26 1978 the tensions between the UGTT and the government came to a head with the so-called Black Thursday: demonstrators were shot and killed while protesting for better living standards (Perkins, 2004).

Apart from awakening the UGTT, Black Thursday also mobilized a new force previously unknown in the country: the Islamist movement. The movement started as an informal, loosely structured, group aimed at *da'wa* and founded by Rashd Ghanoushi (b.1941) and Abdalfatah Mourou (b.1948). The earlier founded *Association Pour la Sauvegarde du Coran* was one of their strongholds and through their articles written in its periodical, *al-M'arifa* (knowledge), both Ghanoushi and Mourou steadily became more politicized as leaders of the movement (Vandewalle, 1988, p.611). They reacted both to the perceived secular nature of the political regime, and to the perceived secular nature of its unionized opposition (Perkins, 2004, pp.165-6). In the 1978 riots mentioned above, for instance, the movement seemed to support the latter against the secularized unions. Apart from this, they became emboldened by the Iranian Revolution and initially supported Khomeini as the leader of a world wide project to empower the region under the banner of Islam.¹³ In this period of non-institutionalized Islamic activism, Ghanoushi writes:

[We], principally, do not see any wrong in acknowledging that the political is part of the integral Islamic project that directs life. Islam rejects forcefully the western saying of “a separation between religion and state”. The state in Islam has to exist *in support of religion*, by safeguarding it, executing its commands and spreading its words in the world.¹⁴

The rest of the movement would eventually follow on this path of politicization, influenced by the changing context around them.¹⁵

The second crisis was the occupation of the Gafsa mining town in 1980, by Algerian-trained Tunisians, which would prove to be the start of the confrontation between the Islamic group and the political regime of Bourguiba. In the

¹³ See for instance Ghanoushi (p. 1979b) *The Iranian Revolution is an Islamic Revolution*, *al-M'arifa*, February 12; and see Ghanoushi (p. 1979c) *The Leadership of the Contemporary Islamist movement: al-Banna, Al-Mawdudi, al-Khomeini*, *al-M'arifa*, April 1.

¹⁴ Ghanoushi (p. 1979a, p.115) *Islamic Work and Bandits*, *al-M'arifa*, May 15. Italics added by the author.

¹⁵ Ghanoushi (p. 2001, pp.82-93) describes the initial infighting within the movement over the extent to which it would include politics within its program.

preceding year, the loosely-organized *da'wa* movement had become more institutionalized by creating *al-Jamā' al-Islāmiya* ("the Islamic Group"). During its founding conference in 1980, they put an end to the ambiguous position vis-à-vis the regime by clearly stating that the PSD of Bourguiba was their principle enemy. Soon after, the movement - especially its student wings - blamed the regime's (socio-economic) policies for creating the context in which the Gafsa attack could take place. It was their first public stand against the Bourguiba regime (Allani, 2009, p.261). In the same year their underground cells were discovered by the authorities. Supporters of the movement were purged from the *Association Pour la Sauvegarde du Coran* and the regime started to intimidate members and supporters. The movement reacted by deciding to become more openly organized as a political movement and abide by national political rules. They openly distanced themselves from the "Iranian option": the Tunisian Islamist movement would be peaceful. As a consequence they changed their name to *Ḥarakat Itijāh al-Islāmī* ("Islamic Tendency Movement", or following its French acronym MTI) and started organizing at local, regional and national level - and applied for formal recognition. The reaction from the regime was clear: a great number of arrests followed and in the summer of 1981 107 activists were sentenced up to 11 years in prison (Allani, 2009, p.262). By the end of the year the whole MTI was underground.

Generally, in the period before institutionalizing themselves as the Islamic Tendency Movement, their aim to counter the influence of a Christian capitalist West on Tunisian society was very outspoken. In their articles in the periodical *al-M'arifa*, Ghannouchi and Mourou were critical of those reformist Islamic shaykhs (for instance Mohammad Abduh) that were inspired by the West. The pair drew directly on the founders of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood - such as Hassan al-Banna and Said Qutb. In addition, in light of the Iranian revolution of 1979, Ghannouchi saw a relation between the ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Iranian regime and was in support of both.¹⁶ During the years of political formalization, subsequent repression and exile their views became more favorable to the Western example, opened up to Islamic reformists and became (much) more critical of the Iranian example. But changes in the movement were not uniform. Thus Mourou was known to take of a more "moderate" stance within the party. Others were more outspoken in their opposition to the regime and position on the relationship between politics and religion. To make matters worse, multiple movements had always existed - such as *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr* and *da'wa wa Tabligh* - but never gained real strength. In the first period of MTI members' imprisonment, from 1981 to 1984, the absence of the movement in the social sphere meant that these other groups gained more power - adding to the variety of Tunisian Islamist voices (Vandewalle, 1988, p.613).

¹⁶ Ghannouchi (p. 1979b) *The Iranian Revolution is an Islamic Revolution*, al-M'arifa, February 12.

Generally disregarding any plurality among Islamist movements, the government used the internal disputes to state that the movement was “hypocritical” and that they spoke with two tongues - thereby legitimating regime repression.

The bread riots of 1984, the third crisis, brought temporary relief to the Islamist movement. The riots were sparked by a decrease in subsidies for bread. The then Prime Minister Mzali, acting alone as Bourguiba had fallen ill, fired his minister of interior, suspecting him of inciting the riots to weaken his position. He meanwhile harshly repressed the riots. Mzali’s position became increasingly precarious as a result and to shore up his legitimacy he needed to open up politically to the MTI (Perkins, 2004, p.170). As a sign of goodwill Mourou and Ghanoushi were invited to Mzali’s house in July 1984 and subsequently for a formal visit to the government palace in October 1985 (see Mazali 2007, p. 575).¹⁷ The movement immediately became more openly active; organizing a fourth general conference in the capital. During this period Ghanouchi and other leaders in the movement attempted to rebuild the party in an increasingly fragmented Islamic sphere. This was against a backdrop of regime campaigns which described them as radical Islamists intent on creating a second Iran in Tunisia (Vandewalle, 1988, p.612). The temporary period of relief for the Islamists came to an end in 1987 (Vandewalle, 1988), when the government of Mzali fell as Bourguiba had recovered and took over regime rule. Many Islamist activists were arrested - again. After judges failed in Bourguiba’s view to give the Islamists sufficient sentences, in 1987 he attempted to have Islamist leaders - including Ghanoushi - tried and executed. Playing on his deteriorating mental state, Bourguiba was declared unfit to exercise his duties by Interior Minister Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who subsequently took over his position as president and annulled the trials (Noyon, 2003; Waltz, 1986).

In Times of Ben Ali

A new phase in the Tunisian regime seemed to be heralded with Ben Ali’s rise to power. The sense of relief after the clean transfer of power made many hopeful for Tunisia’s future¹⁸ and the first signs were positive. Ben Ali promised elections and with the aim of showing a clear break from his predecessor he renamed the PSD *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (“Constitutional Democratic Rally” or RCD) (Perkins, 2004, p.185). In an attempt to show that he was serious about political pluralism, he opened up the political and social sphere to the MTI. They were allowed to be represented in the newly-created Higher Islamic Council.¹⁹ Furthermore, the movement was allowed to

¹⁷ As in Allani (2009, p.262).

¹⁸ Some academics were no exception, see for instance Anderson (1991). For a discussion, see Sadiki (2002b, p.133).

¹⁹ See Presidency of the Government (p. 2013) *The Higher Islamic Council Of the Republic of Tunisia*, www.pm.gov.tn/pm, January 22.

participate in the 1989 parliamentary elections, create their own union (L'Union Générale Tunisienne des Etudiants, UGTE) and publish a party newspaper: *al-Fajr* ("The Dawn").²⁰ In addition they took part in the high council of late-1988, which created the "national pact" that stated religious parties were not allowed. In response the MTI changed its name to the Ennahda ("Renaissance") movement, hoping to appease opponents by taking a less "Islamic" name and signing the national pact that ensured that the legal equality of women in the country was ensured (Allani, 2009, pp.263-265).²¹

But the first positive signs were soon taken over by more troubling ones. Ben Ali took over as both the president and as the head of the RCD, retaining the symbiotic relationship between party and state. It was clear that the powerful position of the president would remain. Additionally, in the run-up to the parliamentary elections, Ben Ali failed to formally recognize Ennahda as a political party. Attempts by Ennahda to build a power base within the UGTT and to pressure the government to formally recognize the party from there, were successfully thwarted by the government (Perkins, 2004, p.189). In the end Ennahda politicians participated in the elections as independents. Despite having the deck stacked against them, the Ennahda candidates had a strong showing in the 1989 elections. They clearly outperformed the other (secular) opposition parties and showed that they were the most powerful opposition party to the RCD.²² The result also showed that there was a large group of disenfranchised Tunisians that longed to return to an Islamic "authenticity" and were opposed to regime policies (Perkins, 2004, p.190). Ben Ali would not tolerate such a powerful opposition. Soon after the elections Ennahda again attempted to gain formal recognition - and was denied again. In response and anticipating renewed regime repression, Ghanoushi decided to leave the country (Perkins, 2004, p.190).

Repression really picked up before and during the US-led invasion of Iraq in January 1990, at least in part as a reaction to radicalization within the Ennahda movement itself. After Saudi Arabia invited US troops onto its soil as defense against Iraqi aggression which might spill over into their territory,²³ the Ben Ali

²⁰ For a personal description of this period, see: Ghanoushi (1999) *Lessons and Experiences with the 2 April 1989 Elections*, From the experience of the Islamist movement, April 26.

²¹ See Tunisian Civil Society (p. 1988) *National Pact of Tunisia*, Tunisian Civil Society, November 7.

²² Eighty percent of the vote went to the RCD, with 15 percent of the overall going to Ennahda independents. Together the secular opposition parties gained 5 percent of the vote (Perkins, 2004, p.190). According to Ghanoushi in some governorates Ennahda candidates received up to 30 percent of the votes. See: Ghanoushi (p. 1999) *Lessons and Experiences with the 2 April 1989 Elections*, From the experience of the Islamist movement, April 26, p.136.

²³ This effectively meant that foreign - non-Islamic - troops would be stationed in the country housing the most holy places in Islam. This led to a wave of resentment against the US and the Saudi regime all over the Arab world.

regime refused to take a position in the conflict, supporting neither Saudi Arabia and the US, nor the Iraqi regime. In sitting on the fence the Tunisian government ended up aggravating the US, most people within the Ennahda movement and many regular Tunisians. Within the Ennahda movement Ghanoushi was openly supporting Iraq and opposed Saudi Arabia's invitation to the US army, reflecting the majority opinion within the movement. But Mourou - having many links to Saudi Arabia - supported the Saudi's decision. It meant that Mourou, and his "moderate" current, became isolated within his own movement (Perkins, 2004, p.192). More radical groups within Ennahda gained more power as result. In late 1990 a number of Ennahda members were arrested, accused of planning to assassinate Ben Ali. In February 1991 an arson attack on an RCD office in the Bab Souika neighborhood in Tunis left a policeman dead. Additionally, a civil war had started in neighboring Algeria between the Islamists and the government after elections had been annulled by the army following a clear win by the Islamists.

The above series of events led to the first wave of popular resentment against the Islamists and a widely shared feeling of secular Tunisia being threatened by the rise of Islamists (Perkins, 2004, p.193-4). This legitimized a harsh crackdown: the newspaper al-Fajr was banned in December 1990 and the UGTE was dissolved in March 1991 (Allani, 2009). Hundreds of arrests followed, and in 1992 279 members of Ennahda stood trial. Ajmi Lourimi, the former spokesperson of the Ennahda movement, stated that it had been impossible for the movement to go underground in time: the organization had grown too large.²⁴ All received lengthy prison terms, key leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment (Ghanoushi *in absentia*) (Perkins, 2004, p.194). The first prisoners were released around 10 years later having served their sentences, but they remained under daily watch by the political police (Human Rights Watch, 2009b, March 12).²⁵ This put an end to Ennahda operating openly in the country and subsequent general conferences of the movement were held in Belgium (1996) and London (2001).²⁶

The above demonstrates that regime repression was to a large extent effective. In the years immediately following the main wave of arrests the internal structure of Ennahda was largely rendered ineffective. Islamist movements had emerged from an Islamic organization but were generally disconnected from traditional religious authorities - religious authorities that had been severely weakened in the preceding decades. The muted opposition to the widespread and, arguably, harsh repression of the movement was striking. Apart from the

²⁴ Interview with Ajmi Lourimi, Tunis (Tunisia), February 17, 2011.

²⁵ Interview with former minister of religious affairs and *ʿālim*, Cartage (Tunisia), February 27, 2011; and interview with a formerly imprisoned and tortured Salafi Muslim, Tunis (Tunisia), February 21, 2011.

²⁶ At the time of writing there have been a total of nine general conferences.

Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme (Tunisian League for Human Rights, LTDH), that remained outspoken in its opposition to regime repression of Islamist movements, many of the other secular opposition movements remained silent. Many among the Tunisian middle class were the direct product of decades of secular education and saw the rise of Ennahda as a direct threat to their way of life and their comfortable positions in either government administration, public institution or large companies. They turned a blind eye to repression of the Islamists as long as it seemed necessary in defense of the secular nature of society (Perkins, 2004, p.210).

4.3 Ben Ali Rules (1992-January 2011)

I didn't know anything about the real leaders of Ennahda, Amr Laridh and others, until after the revolution. I knew generally of Ennahda and their goals because my godfather told me in secret. He told me about Ennahda and their goals without mentioning any names: because of fear. If a small child would mention the name Amr Laridh before the revolution... her father would be in real trouble. It was that dangerous [to mention Ennahda].²⁷

Consolidating a Regime

Under the rule of Ben Ali authoritarianism was consolidated. After taking office he amended the constitution to limit the duration of presidential rule to two subsequent terms, although the amendment proved meaningless. The constitution was amended again as the second term came to a close to provide the president with a third term (1999 elections). He eventually ran for a fourth (2004) and fifth time (2009, the last two without amendments). A sense of déjà vu descended on Tunisia as Ben Ali began to mimic Bourguiba more and more. Though on paper there were elections, and the Bourguibist single party rule had formally been politically liberalized, a system of pre-assigned seats to opposition parties kept their strength in check - while providing the regime with some democratic credentials. Although secular opposition figures and movements were active, they were effectively sidelined and repressed.²⁸ Effectively both the breadth (participation) and extent (contestation) of a true participatory democracy were absent (Sadiki, 2002b, pp.131,137). Ben Ali was head of the

²⁷ Interview with an Ennahda youngster (and daughter of an Ennahda member), Tunis (Tunisia), October 26, 2011.

²⁸ A few of the key examples of opposition figures and organizations are the LTDH (*Ligue tunisienne des droits de l'Homme*) and the doctor Moncef Marzouki. Both were subject to constant state harassment and repressive measures. Moncef Marzouki spent years in exile in France before returning to Tunisia in 2011 and being elected president.

party and the president; in addition he strengthened the security services of the Ministry of Interior and made them directly accountable to him.

The permeability of boundaries between state, regime and society, set up in the first years of Bourguiba's rule (see page 78) remained and evolved. But whereas Bourguiba had kept his family strictly out of politics (in later years even breaking away from his wife and son in fear that they were trying to take over power), Ben Ali involved his family in government. Economic liberalization had always favored those close to political power, a fact which was especially true for those with personal relations to the president. Thus Belhassem Trabelsi - the brother of Ben Ali's wife - owned the Bank of Tunisia, a range of hotels, an airline, the Cartage TV channel and a large (foreign) car dealership. Sakher al-Matri, Ben Ali's son-in-law, had the Zeituna Bank, the Zitouna FM radio station, Dar Assabah newspaper and Attijari Bank. Marouan Mabrouk, also a son-in-law but married to a daughter from a previous marriage, owned Chams FM, the MonoPrix supermarket chain, Arab International Bank of Tunisia and other companies.²⁹

During the rule of Ben Ali these arrangements became fully ingrained in politics, the economy and society. After decades of authoritarian rule, informal relations between the ruling party and family, the administration and the state descended upon all layers of society. For instance tax evasion was (and possibly still is) endemic in the country. But rather than strengthening state institutions to collect taxes, tax collection became a natural mechanism for control (Hibou, 2004). Anybody who evaded taxes could be caught and forced into negotiations with the relevant administration - a mechanism of submission that was used at all levels of state administrations, with the most infamous cases taking place at the presidential one (Hibou, 2006, pp.198-199). The Tunisian national fund "26/26" (a state managed fund to provide social welfare support) was a rare Arab example of a formalized institution used in cementing informal personal relations between economic, state and political elites. It was used to institutionalize the above economic logic by creating an institution to which money could be given after informal regime pressure, showing allegiance to the regime. But it also worked pro-actively: many entrepreneurs publicly gave large sums to the 26/26 fund to win the good-will of the state, regime and administration (Hibou, 2006, pp.199-202).

This all took place in a strongly secular context. Though during Bourguiba's rule the secularization policies of the government (and the president personally) had often felt imposed (Perkins, 2004), in the era of Ben Ali a generation of secularized citizens was maturing. Those that had an elite position within the political sphere, state administration, or public sphere had to be member of the RCD. In effect they had to comply with the general world view of the

²⁹ For these examples and more see The Economist (s. 2011) *Tunisia: Ali Baba gone, but what about the 40 thieves?*, The Economist, January 20.

party. As Islamic fervor was a personal threat, public expression of conservative Islam all but disappeared. In the context of an authoritarianism that was not only imposed through repression but also entrenched throughout bureaucracies, private and public sectors, secularization was an almost natural process closely related to the authoritarian nature of the country. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was the Islamists - those that had been released - that would suffer the most from the economic isolation described above. They would be fired from their jobs if they had been civil servants and the requirement to present oneself every day at a different police station made employment often near impossible (Hibou, 2006, pp.188-189). Sometimes they would feel that they had been released, but to find themselves in a socially imposed “larger prison”.³⁰

Islamism and Ben Ali

The period after Ennahda’s curtailment in the mid-1990s, and going into the new millennium, were marked by a complete repression of the religious sphere. Those activists that were arrested in the 1990s would often be released in the early 2000s only to be subjected to continuous police attention. Anyone who showed an inclination to more conservative Islam could be subjected to increased attention by the political police. This was especially true of the most institutionalized form of Islamist activism: the Ennahda movement. Ghanoushi, the president of Ennahda, would remark after the revolution that “everybody in Tunisia had felt the fire of Ben Ali’s repression, but the Islamists had been in the oven”.³¹ The practical result was that Ennahda was pushed deep underground and became active outside Tunisia, but only had very limited means of being active inside the country.

Despite the strict repression of Islamic activism, Tunisia began to feel the effects of the “Islamic Awakening” that was emerging throughout the Arab world. In Tunisia this resulted in a highly secretive movement of young Salafis that started to grow from the early 2000s onwards, with the second (2003) US invasion of Iraq acting as an accelerator. It was aided by a populist anti US message and the return of a number of Tunisian laymen-turned-shaykhs - such as Idrissi Khatib.³² The movement eventually became more widely known through an apparent December 2006-January 2007 (failed) terrorist plot.³³ The emergence of Salafism triggered a regime response aimed at bolstering its religious credentials. This response was constituted by building a state-supervised space

³⁰ (s. Human Rights Watch, 2009b) *Tunisia: Revolving Door Shows Intolerance for Dissent*, Human Rights Watch, March 12.

³¹ Remarks made at a presentation at the Tamimi Center, Tunis (Tunisia), March 19, 2011. None of the other (non-Ennahda) attendees disagreed.

³² A well-known Tunisian Salafist Takfiri ideologist.

³³ See al-Usbūaʿī (s. 2011) *The case of the Salafists: Who are they...? Who moves them...? and how do we talk to them?*, al-Usbūaʿī, October 17.

in which Tunisians could be religiously active, providing the regime with a level of religious legitimacy while being strictly controlled by it at the same time (Al-lani, 2009). It included for instance an “Islamic” radio station (Radio Zeytuna), building a new grand mosque by the president bearing his name, the possibility to start religious schools, and the chance to open Islamic banks.³⁴ At the same time, only one (concerning the radio station) or very few (concerning banks) were allowed to operate. The schools were only allowed to be Quranic schools (aimed at memorizing the Quran) and had to formally be a branch of one single organization: the Tunisian Association of Quranic Schools.³⁵ The head of this association was also an advisor to the president. The curriculum was controlled by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and implemented by the association. On the more informal side, there were specific individuals - most notably al-Matri - who became central to newly emerging initiatives. As mentioned above, as Ben Ali’s son in law al-Matri owned both the Zeytuna radio station and the main Islamic bank of the country (The Economist, 2011, January 20). Through his family ties he was the main individual binding newly emerging Islamic activism to the regime.

The Revolution

In December 2010 Mohammad Bouazizi, a jobless street seller set himself alight in protest against a police arrest and his subsequent mistreatment by the authorities. This violent act of desperation sparked anti-government street protests that quickly engulfed the nation. On January 14 2011 Ben Ali left the country for Saudi Arabia, not to return. The result was complete regime collapse: a revolution had begun.³⁶

Institutionally, the revolution resulted in both the collapse and reform of state institutions that managed the religious sphere. In pre-revolutionary Tunisia, two ministries were key to governing religious activism: the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Interior. There was a mufti of the republic, who had little influence over society, based inside the First Ministry.³⁷ On a regional level, there were deputies for religious affairs that functioned below the governor but were often in direct contact with the Ministry of Interior. There was also a *wa’idh*, a religious representative, at the regional and local level, who had a more religious function. As religious activism was to large extent dealt with as a security issue, power was held by the Ministry of Interior and its political police. The deputy for religious affairs at the regional level, together with

³⁴ Interview with daily-imam in Binzerte, (Tunisia), February 24, 2011; and interview with member of Ennahda executive council in Kairouan (Tunisia), April 2, 2011.

³⁵ Interview at association of Quranic Schools, Tunis (Tunisia), November 16, 2011.

³⁶ For an extensive discussion of dynamics and actors central in the 2011 uprisings (in Tunisia and beyond) see Khosrokhavar (2012).

³⁷ Observation at Ministry of Religious Affairs and conversation with a Civil Servant at the Ministry, February 11, 2011, Tunis.

the political police, had the most clout in how issues concerning religion were handled.³⁸ With the onset of the revolution, the Ministry of Interior stopped functioning and the political police was disbanded.³⁹ These changes meant in practice that oversight over the religious sphere collapsed.

Conclusion

Summarizing, we see that since the birth of the post-colonial modern Tunisian state, there has been a combined policy of strong societal secularization and state-induced clientelism. The Tunisian regime was arguably one of the most successful in the region in changing the (religious) outlook of its society. It created a secular minded economic-political-state elite in an economy that was increasingly marked by income disparities. At the same time an Islamist opposition both emerged and endured, although never accepted and eventually harshly repressed by both Bourguiba and Ben Ali. These conditions provided secular and Islamist opposition forces with a shared enemy, although mutual distrust was never far below the surface. Interestingly the uprising against Ben Ali would not be a “traditional” phase of mobilization initiated and organized by the (national) trade union UGTT. Rather, it was an outburst of popular discontent against Ben Ali. But soon after the revolution, old schisms re-emerged and the question of Islamism versus secularism began to structure public debate. As we will see in the next chapter, issues concerning the interaction between Islamist mobilization, state institutions and regime power are central to understanding this emergence.

³⁸ Interview regional *wāʿiz* of the Tunis region, April 25, 2011, Tunis; also interview with deputy for religious affairs in Kairouan, April 1, 2011, Kairouan.

³⁹ See: Kashu (s. 2011) *What is the Political Police, and What is its Work?*, al-Shurūq, March 8.

Chapter 5

Tunisia

The Islamists Ruling

The following chapter provides an anthology of practical issues relating to Islamist mobilization around the Arab Spring in Tunisia.¹ In general I contend that a differentiation - out of ideological conviction, pragmatic considerations or forced by historical developments - between political and social mobilization emerges in the practical implementation of the Islamist project. It particularly focuses on the importance of state bureaucracies and public institutions in influencing these interactions. The chapter provides, first, an overview of the practical issues of Islamist activism emerging, separately, in social and political arenas. It then goes on to show that a common identity still persists, outlining some resulting dilemmas that Islamists face as a consequence. The chapter also explores relations between Islamist mobilization and state institutions, showing how these relations were present before the revolution and how they have altered since. Finally, the chapter analyzes how Islamist mobilization in social and political spheres has coalesced after the revolution around strategies to address the perceived “secular” nature of these organizations.

The chapter makes a (mostly implicit) comparison with Syria before and during the revolution. Despite the many differences between the two cases, a number of similarities will become apparent. These similarities are mostly due to structural similarities discussed in chapters 4 and 6: endemic clientelism in combination with a perceived secular bias of the previous political regime, has resulted in state bureaucracies and public institutions gaining a position in a specific “Islamist” social cleavage. Also, the (pragmatic) recognition of the boundaries between the social and political spheres is dominant among Islamist

¹ Substantial parts of an earlier version of this chapter were used in an article in *Mediterranean Politics* (July 2013) *Reemerging Islamism in Tunisia: Repositioning Religion in Politics and Society*.

movements and parties in both settings. At the same time and in both contexts, the fundamental thought of Islamism - that Islam should structure society and politics - is still present, active and strong. What we can therefore observe in both settings is how the pragmatic divergence and the continued ideological convergence in Islamism come to the fore in specific dilemmas about how to combine both social and political activism in one project. In both settings state bureaucracies and public institutions are emerging as an ideal practical institutional linchpin for social and political forms of Islamism. Thus in both settings Islamists face similar dilemmas and are drawn to state institutions in an attempt to address these issues.

Differences between the two cases influence how the above dilemmas and position of state institutions play out in practice. The absence of a religious sphere - institutionalized religious authorities that are to some extent independent from the regime - means that the debate on these issues in Tunisia takes place in an environment lacking any pre-institutionalization. It renders these interactions new and volatile, while the lack of pre-institutionalized interests opens up a large set of possible avenues (or at least it does not exclude any). Finally, the prevalence of Sunni Islam in Tunisia means that nationalism can be directly linked to religion in these debates - which is impossible in the more religious sectarian Syrian context.

5.1 Islamism in Society *or* Politics

Author: “so what changed after the revolution?” Mohammad: “Islam is re-emerging now. It is wonderful. [...] Now... the mosques are open. Women started to wear the veil. Muslims started to act their faith in all freedom. [...] After the exit of Ben Ali... there is a new voice of Islam”.²

One of the fields where social Islamic activism was present before the revolution was in religious education and charitable activities. Charitable associations provide anything from scholarships, regular stipends and food, to emergency aid and support during religious festivals. As explained before (see page 90), in late 2007 a limited space was made available for religious education beyond the previous age limit of six years. Formally all of these “Quranic schools” were branches of one organization (“The Association for Quranic Schools”). Each municipality had only one school, and they were only allowed to teach students how to recite and memorize the Quran (*tahfiz*). Despite these strict guidelines, some branches were more active and had a wider range of activities than would be expected. In the Greater Tunis region this was for instance the case with a

² Interview with an Islamist youngster, February 14, 2011, Tunis.

Quran school in Hay Nasr and Denden. The former was attempting to push the limits of who could teach and what activities were part of the school. With a bit of trickery they were able to open the first Islamic kindergarten in the country and go beyond the mere “Quranic recitation” that was formally allowed (we will come back to this example below). They also attracted popular shaykhs that were not entirely to the taste of many within the regime. As the director recalls:

We had an adventure when we wanted [this shaykh] to teach at our school. As you know... they don't like people with long beards, Salafis. [...] We had many many problems with him. Because so many students with long beards came to his classes. The Wali became uncomfortable and told me: no students with beards at your school anymore. So... [laughs] we had to try a bit to make it work.³

In Denden a small group of friends had wanted to institute an Islamic school for years, but were always barred from doing so. To the extent that they had built their school, but were not allowed to use it. Instead, they founded an association and transformed it into a house for homeless Tunisians - all under an informal Islamic banner. In 2007 they were finally able to start the school, and retained their charitable activities. Both these initiatives remained strictly in the social sphere. Due to a repressive authoritarian state they had no possibility of going beyond educational or charitable activities.

Another instance of Islamist mobilization in society was due to the “Islamic awakening”. During the final years of Ben Ali’s rule Tunisia began to feel, at first seemingly unnoticed by the regime, the effects of the so-called *al-Ṣaḥwa al-Islāmiya* (“the Islamic Awakening”). As discussed in section 3.3, throughout the 1990s a general Islamic awakening started to spread throughout the Arab world, first via satellite TV and later through the internet. The Muslim Brotherhoods’ exile to the Gulf (Lacroix, 2011) resulted in a fragmented group of Salafi leaning shaykhs that actively transcended the boundaries of traditional *‘ulamā’* and Islamic movements. Advances in communication technologies, mainly satellite TV and internet, aided dissemination of their ideas throughout the Arab region. Various interviewees noted that from the late 1990s religiosity started to re-emerge in Tunisia and especially in the latter half of the last decade became impossible to ignore.⁴ Among the new influences were also Salafi ones, as a director of an Islamic school explained in 2012:

In [the period between] 2006 and 2009, despite the existence of a severe campaign [against Salafists in the country], we had a few

³ Interview with the director of a Quranic school in Hay an-Nasr (Tunisia), March 3, 2011.

⁴ For instance: Interview with the director of a Quranic school in Hay an-Nasr (Tunisia), March 3, 2011..

Quranic schools under our influence. We had some classes, secret groups, and home meetings. The internet opened the door: we couldn't learn except via the internet. We used so-called "audio rooms": a salon where we installed a computer and a shaykh would speak over the internet. This opened the door, together with satellite television.⁵



Then the revolution happened. A first change in society was that mosques could start social initiatives and that public piety was no longer a threat. More women began to wear the headscarf in public, more men started growing a beard. Some started wearing *jalaba's*, previously impossible in public. Mosques opened outside of prayer time, religious classes started and attendance of mosque prayers went up markedly in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs in March 2012 the number of mosques in the country was 4,861.⁶ The amount of requests for building mosques apparently rose from less than 100 per month before the revolution to around 200-300 just after.⁷ Whereas before the revolution public piety was a personal threat, it now flourished.⁸

After the revolution Islamic educational activities soared. Though specific numbers are not available (as many new organizations are founded without formal state recognition) the rise is clear and substantial. According to a senior official of the Prime Ministry, thousands of new charitable associations have been recognized since January 2011, the largest group being Islamic teaching and charitable associations.⁹ Almost every neighborhood has one or more newly-established Islamic charitable associations. A similar phenomenon was observed in Islamic teaching activities. Islamic kindergartens flourished, as did evening education at primary, secondary and university level.¹⁰ Before the revolution the only type of Islamic teaching that was tolerated was the memorization of the Quran (*tahfiz*). After the revolution teaching on various interpretations of

⁵ Interview with the director of an Islamic school, Sidi Daoud (Tunisia), October 2, 2012.

⁶ See: Tunisian Government (s. 2012a) *Open Information - Religious Affairs*, Tunisian Government, September.

⁷ Although at the time of writing the effect on the number of mosques could not yet be observed. Conversation with a civil servant at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, November 3, 2011, Tunis.

⁸ Interview with the imam of a central mosque in Sidi Bouzzid, April 5, 2011, Sidi Bouzzid.

⁹ Interview with senior representative of the First Ministry, September 28, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia. Exact numbers are not available as the subdivision at the ministry focuses on type of activity, not socio-political world view.

¹⁰ As observed and according to senior officials at the Ministry for Religious Affairs and the Prime Ministry. Interview with a senior official at the Prime Ministry, November 10, 2011, Tunis; Interview with a senior official at the Ministry for Religious Affairs, October 2, 2012, Tunis.

the Quran (*tafsīr*) immediately emerged. Those courses with a link to practical reality, for instance science of religious law (*‘Ulūm Shari‘a*) proved especially popular.¹¹ The increase in religious schooling appeared to continue in the years after the revolution: 6,000 people signed up to the Zeytuna’s Mosque’s religious class when they launched in May 2012.¹²

Most of these activities are institutionally linked. Mosques often created a charitable branch, or at least had informal relations to charitable associations through shared board members. Schools often have an (in)formal relation to a mosque, or have some form of charitable activities. But all would be positioned explicitly within the social sphere. When visiting these mosques, schools and associations, none would say they “belonged” to an Islamist political party. They would say they were only active in their respective (educational or charitable) fields. Sometimes board members were Nahdaoui (member of the Ennahda party) but they would always explicitly state that their organization was independent from the party.¹³

There are also more contentious forms of social Islamist mobilization. For instance mobilization in the context of “secular”-“Islamist” tensions in society. An early example, from April 2011, are protests in reaction to a teacher explaining atheism to his students at an elementary school in the northern town of Binzert. The first response was a demonstration at the Ministry of Justice. A few days later people from across the country demonstrated in the center of town, calling for punishment of the teacher.¹⁴ Another example of more contentious mobilization is the uproar around the showing of the film *Persepolis* by the Nesma television channel in the weeks before the October 2011 elections. *Persepolis* is an animated film about an Iranian girl and her experience with religion and religious movements during the Iranian Revolution. In it, God is depicted as an elderly man that the antagonist converses with. The general consensus is that depicting god is not allowed in Islam. The film was aired on the Tunisian Nesma channel in October 2011 with furious reactions from the more conservative parts of Tunisian society. Thousands marched in the capital to express their anger.¹⁵ Some fringe groups tried to light fire to the house of Nesma’s director. Tables 5.2 and 5.3 provide some examples of these protests. We will return to some of these examples in the next sections.

¹¹ Interview and observation at state-oriented Quran school, November 10, 2011, Tunis; Interview with the director of an independent chain of Quran schools, October 6, 2011, Tunis.

¹² Réalités (s. 2012b) *Report on Zeytuna Education: Nostalgia for the Past or Thirst for Power?*, Réalités, August 23-29.

¹³ Interview with a Nahdaoui director of an (independent) charitable association, October 4, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia.

¹⁴ Observation of an Islamist protest at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, April 25, 2011, Tunis. See: Gharsali (s. 2011) *Protesters Accuse Professor of “an Attack on the Messenger”*, al-Ṣabāḥ, April 26.

¹⁵ See for instance: Marouki (s. 2011) *No to Extremism* Réalités, October 13-19; and Trabelsi and al Chabi (s. 2011) *Friday of Anger against “Nesma”*, al-Ṣarīh, October 15.

Through this mobilized public religion, Tunisians were mobilizing in favor of public Islam and defending it against, as they saw, seculars and *laiïques* that were out to destroy the Islamic identity of the country.¹⁶ It was a form of mobilization build on an “Islamic” identity of Tunisia, but its collective identity remained rather underdeveloped. The protests were non-partisan. Though ideologically religiously conservative, protesters belonged to all types of Islamic tendencies present in Tunisia and were only loosely bound together by a common feeling of national religiosity.



Turning to the political arena, we can see that although Ḥarakat Ennahada “The Ennahda Movement” was effectively repressed in the Tunisia of Ben Ali, some structures of the party – both formal and informal – remained.¹⁷ For instance, the internal *shūra* (“consultation”) council inside Tunisia remained functional, though in the context of constant and effective repression the actual interaction with the constituency was limited.¹⁸ Apart from the *shūra* council there were various Ennahda bureaus that remained, and functioned, after the initial shock of the early 1990s. The research bureau of Ennahda remained in operation, run by someone inside the country. The same applies to the regional development bureau, press bureau, et cetera. Apart from retaining the institutional structure and keeping it functioning to the greatest extent possible, informal relations also remained between (families of) activists. Nahdaoui were active underground and seem to have been successful in rebuilding and rejuvenating their support base - despite fierce repression. It seems that they were starting to build up a presence in youth organizations, were they scouting for supporters. As a young Ennahda activist, and son of long-imprisoned Ennahda member, stated:

Around 2004 many of us [children of imprisoned Ennahda activists] went to university. At the same time, the first batch of Ennahda prisoners were released. They had the explicit task to revive... to recreate the social relations within the movement, between the families of the movement [...], through meetings and [through] social activities [together] for instance: the children of prisoners even had camps together. Secret of course, if anybody would have found out who we were...¹⁹

¹⁶ See: al-Ra’baoui (s. 2011) *Protest against the Cartoon Aired by “Nesma”: Salafists and State Officials with Stones Reported*, al-Usbūa’ī, October 10; al-Shurūq (s. 2011a) *The case of “Nesma”: The protests continue and Civil Society condemns the violence and supports the Freedom of Expression*, al-Shurūq, October 11; and Shārnī (s. 2011) *Calls for Calm, Lost Amid the Sound of the Calls for Revenge*, al-Shurūq, October 11.

¹⁷ Interview with member of Ennahda national executive council and former spokesperson of the party, February 17, 2011, Tunis.

¹⁸ Interview with a member of the executive council of Ennahda, March 4, 2011, Tunis.

¹⁹ Interview with a young Ennahda member, Tunis (Tunisia), March 16, 2011.

It is important to note that these activities were solely aimed at strengthening the structure of the movement. There were no schools or charitable associations related to Ennahda in Tunisia during this period. As such, Rashd Ghanoushi was exiled, many activists imprisoned, but formal and informal networks that constituted the structure of the political movement remained. Together with the shared involvement of the late 1980s and early 1990s – the period of the first rise and subsequent repression of the party – an *esprit de corps* and political experience was sustained within Ennahda ranks. At the same time, due to fierce repression they were unable to be active within re-emerging Islamic activism in society.

As result of the above, Ennahda re-emerged after the revolution. Due to remaining internal structures they were able to reconstitute the party within weeks. Ennahda eventually won 89 out of 217 seats in the October 23 2011 elections for the constitutive assembly. As a result they currently dominate the Tunisian political arena.²⁰ Throughout their electoral campaign they emphasized their moderate Islamist ideology, their support for a civil democratic state and their adherence to human rights. Despite their name, they have emphasized the “normal” nature of their political party: from formal recognition,²¹ to their political program,²² to public statements.²³ In the political program for the October 2011 elections their vision was summarized with the following points:

The power of Tunisia, her progressiveness, the protection and permanence of her independence, her sovereignty and her republican system; based on the separation between powers, the independence of the judiciary, democracy, (good) governance, equality between citizens, economic growth, social development and the adherence to our Arabo-Islamic national identity - this is the message of [the political party of] the Ennahda movement and these are its priorities.²⁴

Also in interviews and personal discussion members reiterated that they abide by the electoral law that stipulates political parties to be solely active within the political arena. In addition they vehemently opposed anything that sounds like an Islamic state or presents an “Iranian option”. They have argued that

²⁰ Ennahda received 41 percent of the seats in the constitutive assembly, while it received 54 percent of the votes. If *all* votes are counted (including votes that were cast on parties that did not receive enough votes for a seat) Ennahda received 37 percent. See also www.isie.tn.

²¹ See: Bousai’ydi (s. 2011) *Official: Ennahda Obtains Official Endorsement*, al-Shurūq, March 2.

²² The Ennahda Movement (p. 2011) *Program of Ennahda: For Tunis, Freedom, Justice and Development*, The Ennahda Movement, September.

²³ See al-Aswad (s. 2011) *Ennahda Obtains Permission for al-Fajr Newspaper*, al-Shurūq, April 3.

²⁴ The Ennahda Movement (p. 2011) *Program of Ennahda: For Tunis, Freedom, Justice and Development*, The Ennahda Movement, September, p.7.

their experience with the previous regime has taught them the dangers of enforcing a specific ideology through politics on society - which can only lead to an autocratic repressive regime.²⁵

There have been other parties that sought formal recognition as a political party before the October 2011 elections but failed. The main one is *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr* (“the Liberation Party”, or HuT). Their goal is the reinstatement of the caliphate and they are willing to do this via political means. Party leaders have stated that if they would get a majority in parliament they would abolish civil democratic politics and (re)instate a “true” Islamic state. They have been successful in staging protests in various cities in Tunisia. On April 1 2011 they organized a prayer in the middle of Tunis, on the Avenue Bourghiba, which showed a surprisingly large turn-out.²⁶ Despite these successes, it seems that their following remains limited. After Ennahda’s rise to power, *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr* was formalized as a political party and it will participate in the next elections. A September 2012 survey said the group had around 2 percent of the popular vote.²⁷

Another party is *Jabhat al-Iṣlāḥ* (“The Reform Front”).²⁸ Their socio-political program states they “work for the application of shariah rule in all parts of life”.²⁹ They state that their religious conviction is at the basis of this project and they do not see an inconsistency in combining political and social activities. But they do make a clear separation between the two. It is for instance stated that they “participate in the political life, by institutionalizing activities and relying on free elections in all parts of political life, like the way to choose citizens’ representatives and to express their opinions”.³⁰ They also tried but failed to get formal recognition before the October 23 2011 elections. They subsequently ran (unsuccessfully) as independents.³¹ The party was formally recognized under the Ennahda government. In the September 2012 survey mentioned above, they were also set to get 2 percent of the popular vote.

Overall we see that in the Tunisian transition period a divergence appears within re-emerging Islamist activism. Islamist activists in society say they are non-political and are solely active in their respective fields. Islamist political

²⁵ Interview with a senior Ennahda member of the party’s Shura council, October 8, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia.

²⁶ The protests subsequently prompted the interim government to issue a law that prohibited any group from interfering with traffic at the avenue. See: Khanashi (s. 2011) *At the First Press Conference of the Liberation Party: The Caliphate is a Principle Basis*, al-Ṣabāḥ, March 11; and al-Nimiri (s. 2011) *In the Middle of the Capital: a march of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr Supporters*, al-Ṣabāḥ, April 2.

²⁷ It should be noted that Tunisia has very little (or no) experience with polls, therefore it is hard to tell to what extent these polls are reliable.

²⁸ There are two other Salafi parties but they have very little support and/or are moribund.

²⁹ The Reform Front (p. 2012) *Program of Jabhat al-Iṣlāḥ*, The Reform Front.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Interview with the president and head of the political bureau of Jabha al-Islah, October 10, 2012, Tunis.

parties were either pure political parties or differentiated between their political and social activities. Even if their ultimate aim might be the caliphate (see HuT) they accept the current reality of a differentiation between political, social and state spheres. Of course there are exceptions to these observations. There is a (vocal) minority among the Islamists that seeks to overthrow current social and political realities and create an Islamic state. They will be discussed, among other issues, in the next section.

5.2 Islamism in Society *and* Politics

Despite the clear influence of today's differentiation between the political arena and society on practical Islamic mobilization, when talking from a religious point of view a large group of Tunisians is strongly non-secular. This in the sense that they see politics and society positioned within an overarching religious sphere and actively support the Islamization of both spheres.

For many Tunisians religion is not only something individual, but something political, economic and societal. Many state explicitly that Islam is more than mere personal religious observance. Religion provides guidelines on how to live and structures one's life, in essence allowing people to adopt an Islamist lifestyle in the social context in which one is active. Numerous times the author has had discussions, with students, politicians, directors of religious schools, or just random taxi drivers (to name a few examples), over the "fact" that Islam was above everything else in life. Politics, society, state; all of human behavior and its institutions are positioned within and informed by Islam. These views are common within Tunisian society, although no reliable data is available to determine to what extent. This point of view is exemplified by what a student from the Zeytuna university stated during a group interview:

The Quran gives us a framework for *all* of life. Even if this is about culture or media. Islam provides a complete and comprehensive view on all of this. [...] In the west you see a difference between faith and life. This is wrong. If you pray and then just go on with life, it's like you didn't pray.³²

These views were also reflected in public contentious mobilization. Though not that frequent in the Tunisian case, protests emerged that demanded the direct implementation of sharia. Two main examples are the March 25 2012 and February 9 2013 protests calling for implementation of sharia. The first protest was organized by the Tunisian Front of Islamic Associations and demanded the inclusion of a reference to sharia in the new constitution.³³ The protests

³² Interview with Zeytuna students, Zeytuna university, March 2, 2011, Tunis.

³³ al-Tūnisiya (s. 2012) *Protest Demands the Creation of a Caliphate in Tunisia*, al-Tūnisiya, March 25.

happened in parallel to the topic being discussed in the National Constituent Assembly, but the protesters were ultimately unsuccessful. The second protests were organized after a secular politician was assassinated by a Salafist. The protests were in support of Ennahda, but also pressuring the party to not forget its sharia roots. Table 5.2 (page 103) provides an overview of these protests.

Within these groups there is a Salafist minority. Salafists in reality constitute a range of smaller groups³⁴ - mostly around specific shaykhs and sometimes more institutionalized in groups such as *Anṣār al-Islām* (“Supporters of Islam”). The common denominator among these groups is that they model their public religious observance on perceived religious interpretations and practices of Muhammad and his early companions. They therefore oppose all contemporary divisions between social and political life and argue for the creation of an Islamic state. These groups translate these views directly into practical mobilization efforts on the ground. They call for the creation of a “pure” Islamic state that conforms to an image of an “Islamic State” as believed to have existed under Muhammad and his first successors. To regain its strength all parts of public life should be governed by Islam. Though by far not a unified group, a sizable part is opposed to party politics. They are also often against the revolution in general, stating that it has created *fitna* (religious chaos) in society and is merely a plan of Zionists, Masons and/or the US to rule the Arab world in general and Tunisia specifically. As one Salafist stated:

Of course I want an Islamic state. But the only way to get there is straight - not making all kinds of turns to get where you want to go. Elections, revolutions only result in bloodshed: look at Libya and Syria. This is not what Islam teaches. The only way to get to an Islamic state is to teach society through *daʿwa*. [...] Not through voting, fighting or mobilizing.³⁵

The practical result is that these Salafists tend to be extremely introvert: not interacting with any public or political mobilization. They therefore correspond closely to what Roy (1996) states are “neo-fundamentalists” (see section 2.1). In the Tunisian context they are sometimes described as “scripturalists”.³⁶ Despite the fact that many Salafists opposed party politics and the electoral law forbade religious parties from running for the constitutive assembly’s election, there were Salafist lists in various regions. None of these Salafists won a seat in the constitutive assembly.

³⁴ Salafism has been, in contrast to many other Arab countries, a relatively new phenomenon in Tunisia. It only emerged in the early 2000s in the context of the American invasion of Iraq. See also: al-Usbūʿī (s. 2011) *The case of the Salafists: Who are they...? Who moves them...? and how do we talk to them?*, al-Usbūʿī, October 17.

³⁵ Interview with a Salafist Student of the Zeytuna University, Tunis, October 20, 2011.

³⁶ See: Marks (s. 2012) *Who Are Tunisia’s Salafis?*, Foreign Policy, September 28.

Table 5.1: Examples of “Political” Islamist Protest Events^a

Date	Location	Demands	#	Actors Organizing	Ennahda Involved?
April 1, 2011 ^b	Avenue Bourguiba, Tunis	Application of Sharia.	50-100	“Salafists”, unknown.	No.
December, 2011 ^c	In front of Seat of Government, Bardo (Tunis)	Support for the newly elected Ennahda government.	Thousands	Ennahda supporters.	Ennahda members involved.
February 10, 2012 ^d	Avenue Bourguiba, Tunis	In support of government policy regarding Syria.	Thousands	Unclear, probably Ennahda and Hizb al-Tahrir.	Probably.
March 25, 2012 ^e	Avenue Bourguiba, Tunis and Mounastir	Application Sharia, creation of Islamic state.	7,000-8,000	Tunisian Front of Islamic Associations (Salafist)	No.
February 9, 2013 ^f	Avenue Bourguiba, Tunis	Demanding Ennahda’s implementation Sharia.	10,000s	Unknown.	No.

^a Protests are selected with a hundred or more participants and with Islamist demands aimed at the formal political arena.

^b See for instance al-Nimiri (s. 2011) *In the Middle of the Capital: a march of Hizb al-Tahrir Supporters*, al-Ṣabāḥ, April 2.

^c See for instance al-Wasaṭ al-Tūnisiya (s. 2011) *Thousands of Protesters support the Islamists and the Majority in the Constituent Assembly in Tunis*, al-Wasaṭ al-Tūnisiya, December 3.

^d See for instance al-Maṣḍar (s. 2011) *Thousands of Ennahda and Tahrir Supporters Crowded the Center of the Capital to Condemn the Practices of the Syrian Regime*, al-Maṣḍar, February 10.

^e See for instance al-Tūnisiya (s. 2012) *Protest demands the Creation of a Caliphate in Tunisia*, al-Tūnisiya, March 25.

^f See for instance ‘Amāra (s. 2013) *Tens of Thousands Protest in Tunis in Support of Sharia in Islamist Rule*, al-Wasaṭ al-Tūnisiya, February 16.

A subgroup among these Salafists are the so-called “Jihadists”. They differ from their more “scriptualists” counterparts in the sense that they support armed struggle against what they define as enemies of Islam. Many Tunisian Salafi Jihadists have traveled abroad to fight - mainly to Iraq, Libya and recently to Syria. They are usually supporters of the revolution. A young Jihadist in Medenine (south-east Tunisia) explained he was not against the revolution as it was a true peoples uprising against an unjust ruler. On the contrary: he was in favor because he was convinced that the struggle would continue and eventually the country would be taken over by “true Muslims” and an Islamic state would be the result.³⁷ Since the elections they have become increasingly visible as a sometimes violent minority within Islamist mobilization. As such, both Jihadist and Scriptualist Salafist wish to see an Islamic state that is the embodiment of a fully - and naturally - Islamized society. All these Salafi movements were, are and probably will always remain a minority within Tunisian Islamism.

Though Ennahda states they are a regular party, they do differ in important ways from other parties in the Tunisian political arena. This is mainly due to the centrality of social Islamic activism that was at the foundation of the party. The collective identity of being a “Nahdaoui”, the basis of a socio-political Islamist movement, remains - caught between diverging interests of social mobilization and party politics. The issue can be exemplified through the president of the October 2011 Ennahda electoral list in the central Tunis-1 district: the philosopher Abu Yarab al-Marzouki.³⁸ He is openly *not* part of the party, but he *does* relate to the Ennahda identity. In an interview in the Ennahda weekly *al-Fajr*:

About whether or not he has a membership of the [political party of the] Ennahda Movement, Abu Yarab said: “I do not negate that I am a Nahdaoui, if we refer to the Arabic and Islamic Renaissance [in Arabic: Ennahda] that has been present at least since two centuries, though not [when we refer to] the name of a movement turned party.”³⁹

This remaining common identity, the foundation of its Islamist identity, together with the fact that Ennahda in practice has transformed into a political party, creates a dilemma.⁴⁰ Within Ennahda, members have come to realize that becoming a party has meant leaving something behind. A movement built

³⁷ Interview with a Salafist Jihadist activist in Medenine, Tunisia, October 15, 2011.

³⁸ Not to be mistaken with Moncef Marzouki, the head of the party Conference for the Republic and Tunisia’s president-to-be.

³⁹ al-Habib (s. 2011) *The Philosopher Abu Yarab Marzouki: I am a Nahdaoui, but I do not belong to the Ennahda Movement*, al-Fajr, September 30.

⁴⁰ Another good example is al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ (s. 2012e) *Tunisian Islamic leader: We Hope that Power does not Swallow us up*, al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, January 10.

on a collective identity, but very diverse in its make up, is something very different to a political party, which involves following a political program with well defined objectives. By prioritizing maximizing influence in the political arena, they lost touch with Islamic movements within society. When asked in October 2011 if Ennahda today is a movement or a party, an Ennahda regional leader stated:

We already started discussing this topic in prisons. [...] One of the most important topics that we face is about the relation between the party and movement. Do we keep a relation between the two? Or else: what do we do with the *da'wa* and more cultural movement?⁴¹

The topic was discussed during the Ninth National Conference of the Ennahda Movement, held in July 2012. An important discussion during the conference was the question of whether the formal institution of the Ennahda movement/party should remain a single entity, or if they should split their political project and their social project into two sub-institutions. Various Nahdaoui stated that two camps had emerged along this question, with many in the basis of the party and a large group within the leadership supporting a split between social and political activism within an overarching Ennahda framework.⁴² But Ghanoushi, apparently, was a direct opponent.⁴³ It was decided to postpone the discussion to the next “exceptional” conference in 2015. Although they were unable to resolve the issue, the discussion shows that all those that participated see Ennahda as more than just a political party.

The above examples show that actors within the society and political arena share a common unified view of the Islamist project. Salafists and Nahdaoui share a view that Islam should structure society and politics. At the same time, in practice they are forced to abide by a divide between the political arena and the social one. This creates tensions. It is not surprising that the March 25 2012 and February 9 2013 protests were directly aimed at Ennahda. But the religious ideologies and practical strategies differ between these Islamists. This become clear as we turn our attention to the position of state institutions in Islamist mobilization.

5.3 Public Institutions and Bureaucracies

At the moment seculars groups in this country, it's correct, do not make up the majority. But look at the press now: until now it is in

⁴¹ Interview with a regional Ennahda leader, October 16, 2011.

⁴² Interview with a member of the Ennahda Shura Council, October 8, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia.

⁴³ Interview with two Ennahda related Islamic activists, September 19, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia.

their hands. And the economy is in their hands, as is the Tunisian administration.⁴⁴

The above discussions show the unified perception of the Islamist project among Tunisian Islamists. This implies that between different types of Islamist currents an interaction (or better, a convergence) should occur. If activities are relegated to either the political or social spheres without constant interaction between the two, it would mean that Islamism has succumbed to the secularized state - and therefore failed.⁴⁵ It meanwhile shows different levels of pragmatism on this issue between, for instance, Salafists and Nahadaoui. Indeed, in practice we can see that both Islamic political parties and Islamic social organizations, unified in their attempt to combat secularism and structure public life along Islamic lines, constantly interact and converge. On an informal level many of the political actors know those that are active within the social sphere. Both newly activated “religious elites” are granted a personal audience with Rashed Ghanoushi.⁴⁶ A bi-weekly informal discussion forum was introduced between Ennahda and other Tunisian Islamist groups after the revolution,⁴⁷ and many Nahadaoui are active - in their own name - in charitable associations. Institutionally the convergence between political and social Islamists’ activism is most distinct where regime power and society meet, for instance around state administration and public institutions that relate somehow to norms and values in public life. Examples are the (state) media, education and administration of the religious sphere. Their perceived secular nature is at the basis of concerted efforts to strengthen the position of Islam in these organizations. Efforts that come to the fore through both contentious Islamist mobilization against these organizations and actions by Islamist parties. I will provide some examples in this section. At the same time we can observe how intra-Islamist tensions emerge, by looking at contentious mobilization aimed at the political arena and state institutions.

But we will start with the observation that even before the revolution these tendencies were present. In the previous section we discussed the Quran school in Hay an-Nasr that had somehow managed to extend its range of (social) activities under the Ben Ali regime. The school was part of the formalized structure of Quran schools in the country, but was actively trying to blur lines of what was permissible, inviting specific conservative religious speakers that would normally not be tolerated. This would have been impossible without the help of state bureaucrats:

⁴⁴ (s. al-Shurūq, 2012a) *The Pillars of the State and Organizations are still in the Hands of the Seculars...*, al-Shurūq, October 11.

⁴⁵ For various views on what secularism can mean, see Casanova (1994).

⁴⁶ Group interview with students of Islamic history. Cartage (Tunisia), March 28, 2011.

⁴⁷ Director of a large Islamic school. Tunis (Tunisia), October 2, 2012.

The thing is... I am friends with the *wālī* [district governor] and he provided me with the initial approval for the school [in 2007]. Later we tricked him into approving our kindergarten project as well. In the mean time, throughout the past four years, he has always provided us with the heads up if some teachers or students became a bit too Islamic at the school.⁴⁸

This is not the only example. Other schools were also forced to informally engage with state bureaucrats to get their initiatives off the ground. In the case of the group of Islamist activists that were active before the revolution in Denden, they stated that one “had to create trust on the side of the regime” if one wanted to get anything done.⁴⁹ So one had to be a member of the RCD party, not because of policy influence but to be able to get access: you had to go for coffees at the regional governor, *wā‘iz* and religious deputy so that they got to know you. When they knew you, and trusted you, things got done. Otherwise state bureaucracies would prove completely impervious and any initiative would be dead on arrival. Thus policies were set, but their implementation depended on bureaucrats at the local (and especially) regional levels; thus rendering the personal inclinations of these civil servants crucial to the implementation of policies. It goes to show that the *existence* of bureaucratic brokerage is not dependent on the nature of political rule, the *type* of brokerage (along what social cleavages it takes place) is.

It should be noted that these interaction were rather limited - and actively trying out boundaries a rarity. Salafists, for instance, had very little prospects of engaging with civil servants in state administrations as their ideology is directly opposed to modern state rule. But the liberalization of the religious educational field was fairly new, many of these schools newly initiated, and the religious sphere still relatively weak. It would have been interesting to see how these liberalization would have developed under the constant observation and tutelage of Ben Ali - and if he would have been able to contain activated religious activism. Additionally, it would have been interesting to observe how informal relations between those implementing relevant policies and the religious sphere would have developed over time. But, as history would have it, something far more interesting was about to happen. An uprising started that, within a month, would topple the regime.

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After the revolution interactions with state bureaucracies and public institutions took on an overtly political and sometimes public contentious tone. Protests vis-à-vis specific civil servants or against particular public institutions and state

⁴⁸ Interview with the director of a Quran School, Ariana (Greater Tunis), March 3, 2011.

⁴⁹ Interview with activists in Denden (Greater Tunis), March 13, 2011.

Table 5.2: Examples of "Institutional" Islamist Protest Events.^a

Date	Location	Demands	#	Actors Organizing	Ennahda Involved?
April 29, 2011 ^c	Habib Bourguiba, Tunis.	Protests due to teacher at Secondary school explaining atheism.	1,000	Non partisan, Grass-root organizations.	Formally no, but Ennahda leaders supported the protests.
October 8, 2011 ^e	Sousse University.	Protest due to the refusal of university management to register a Niqabi girl.	200	Ikhwan students, later Salafists.	Unknown.
October 9 and 14, 2011 ^f	Starting in Tunis, later across the country.	Protests demanding closing Nesma channel due to airing Persepolis on 7 October.	First day 300, a week later thousands	Association of Sharia sciences involved	Initial protests informally supported by Ennahda. Use of violence condemned by Ennahda.
November 28, 2011 - January, 2012 ^g	Manouba University, Greater Tunis.	Protest due to the refusal of university management to register Niqabi girls.	Hundreds	Nahadoui students, Salafists take over later on.	Formally no, but pressure on director and management.
March-April, 2012 ^h	Public Media, Tunis.	To open up public press to social forces; in favor of privatization.	Thousands	Nahdaoui and Salafists.	Formally no, but Ennahda statements supported protesters.

Continued

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- ^a Protests have been selected that had a hundred or more participants, and had demands aimed at public institutions and/or state bureaucracies.
- ^c See al-Ḥayāt (s. 2011d) *Tunisia condemns the Incident in Front of a Synagogue last Friday*, al-Ḥayāt, February 17.
- ^e See al-Shurūq (s. 2011b) *Sousse: Attack on the academic director of the Literature Faculty after refusing to register a Niqab student*, al-Shurūq, October 9; France 24 (s. 2011a) *200 Radicals Storm a College in Tunisia in Defense of a Veiled Student who was Barred from Registration*, France 24, October 8.
- ^f See France 24 (s. 2011e) *Hundreds of Islamists Attack the Headquarters of the "Nesma" Channel Because of Airing the Film "Persepolis"*, France 24, October 10; Trabelsi and al Chabi (s. 2011) *Friday of Anger against "Nesma"*, al-Ṣarīh, October 15; al-Ḥayāt (s. 2011b) *Protests in Tunisia Demand the Closure of the Nesma Channel*, al-Ḥayāt, October 15. For the subsequent condemnation from Ennahda, see al-Ḥayāt (s. 2011a) *Ennahda Condemns Violence of the Salafists in Tunisia*, al-Ḥayāt, October 16.
- ^g These are actually multiple protests that grew in size over time. The first mentioned is in October (s. al-Ḥayāt, 2011c) *Tunis: Radical Islamists Attack University Building and a Television Station*, al-Ḥayāt, October 10. For the larger protests and sit-ins in January and December, see France 24 (s. 2011d) *What happened at the University of Manouba?*, France 24, December 2; France 24 (s. 2012) *Salafist Students Have a sit in at the Literature Department in Manouba to Force the Allowing of the Niqab*, France 24, January 25.
- ^h See Brik (s. 2012) *Debate on Privatization of Media in Tunisia*, al-Jazeera, April 21; and al-Shurūq (s. 2012b) *Sit-in Protesters at the Television Escalade: Confrontations... and Television Union Threatens with Strike*, al-Shurūq, April 24.

bureaucracies emerged. An overview of the largest instances is given in table 5.3. For instance, after the revolution among Islamist actors the Tunisian press was seen as a bastion of secular forces. These forces were enshrined within Tunisian institutions and resisted adaptation to a new Islamized reality. An Islamist interaction is visible firstly in social mobilization challenging this perceived secular bias in national media and by political Islamists parties supporting these claims. This happened, for instance, during the aforementioned anti-Nesma protests (though aimed at a private, not public, television channel) and demonstrations against the director of the public “Islamic” Zeytuna channel. According to the director of the Zeytuna channel, Iqbal Gharbi, she was attacked in November 2011 outside the office of the radio station by members of an Islamists organization named “The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice”.⁵⁰ The president of this organization later publicly declared that he only had a “discussion” with the director about her suitability for the position.⁵¹ She resigned a week later and (state-regulated) changes to the editorial board followed. There have been complaints that Zeytuna radio became more (religiously) politicized afterwards.⁵²

The interaction between social and political Islamists activism in combating “secular” press became more obvious in April 2012 around a conflict concerning state television. The dispute started when the Ennahda-led government attempted to appoint a new editor-in-chief of the national TV. He was a former al-Jazeera correspondent and son-in-law of Ghanoushi, founder and president of the Ennahda movement.⁵³ This resulted in immediate opposition from those within the public TV station. Many decried these “RCD” practices and Ennahdas attempts at controlling state media. In reaction a counter-movement emerged that started protests in front of the headquarters of the national TV in Belvedere, a suburb of Tunis. Protests were aimed at “secular” journalists and in favor of “opening” up public TV to newly empowered public Islam. The secular nature of television was, according to the protesters, left over from the Ben Ali era. At the political level Ennahda denied any direct relation with the protesters apart from supporting their cause. At the same time Amr al-Laridh, an Ennahda leader and Constitutional Assembly member, demanded in April 2012 that public media would have to “open up” to “social forces” or else they would privatize the organization.⁵⁴ Interestingly enough they could not live up

⁵⁰ The name relates directly to a central concept within social Islamists mobilization and the Islamic awakening alluded to above. The organizations was later renamed “the Moderate Association for Awareness and Reform”.

⁵¹ Tunisia live (s. 2012b) *Tunisia Recognizes Controversial Islamist Organization*, Tunisia Live, February 21.

⁵² Tunisia live (s. 2012a) *Radio Zeytouna Accused of Airing Politicized Content*, Tunisia Live, October 19.

⁵³ See also Reuters (s. 2012) *Tunisian Press Protests Against Islamists Attempts to Control the Press*, Reuters, October 17.

⁵⁴ Brik (s. 2012) *Debate on Privatization of Media in Tunisia*, al-Jazeera, April 21.

to their words. Journalists held their ground, Ennahda had to reconsider its appointments, protests dwindled and the discussion of “supervision” of media lost its Islamic flavor.

Similar issues emerge when looking at Tunisian educational institutes. The main examples are student protests for a more public position of Islam in university life. They draw in Islamic political forces through their demands to Islamize a particular public institution. These protests share two key demands: the possibility of Niqabi women to attend classes and exams (a pre-revolution decree states that it is forbidden to wear Niqabs during university classes) and the building of on-campus mosques. At various universities conflicts have emerged over these topics. An example is Islamist mobilization at the University of Tunis, in March 2011, when Islamist students turned a classroom into a mosque.⁵⁵ The action was met by a furious reaction of the council of professors, the mosque was closed, but following student mobilization the university promised to build one on campus.⁵⁶ A similar episode took place in October 2011 in Sousse after Niqabi girls were barred from registering at a local university.⁵⁷

The relation between political and social forms of Islamists activism became more pronounced as one of these conflicts, at the social sciences department of the Manouba University in the capital Tunis, gained national attention. The Manouba University became the symbol of the conflict between those that defended the secular nature of higher education and those that aimed to bring down the “secularized” university system. Secular professors would stress that the conflict at Manouba was a national one, Islamists would argue that it was much more particular as it was specifically against the dean of the university. The dean was perceived as an example of radical secularists that still held elite positions within various national institutions.⁵⁸ Ennahda first openly supported the protesters in name of freedom of religion. After a nationwide fall-out against their support for “extremists” (an increasing amount of Salafists had joined the protests) they offered to play the role of mediator. A professor at the university complained that this “mediation” had been more about pressing the university to give in to some of the protesters’ demands; something the management of the university was unwilling to do. Also here the protests proved unsuccessful. After Salafists replaced the Tunisian flag on top of the university with a Salafist

⁵⁵ Observation at the University of Tunis, March 5, 2011, Tunis.

⁵⁶ See: Council of Professors (p. 2011) *About the Seizure of a Classroom in the Call to Use her as a Prayer House*, Council of Professors April 9 University, March 5; and observation and conversation with students at the University of Tunis, March 8, 2011. Observation and interview with student at Zeytuna University, October 8, 2011, Tunis.

⁵⁷ See: al-Shurūq (s. 2011b) *Sousse: Attack on the Academic director of the Literature Faculty after refusing to register a Niqab student*, al-Shurūq, October 9. For other examples of “Islamist infiltration” see: France 24 (2011b) *Salafists infiltrate Tunisian Educational Institutes*, France 24, December 8.

⁵⁸ France 24 (s. 2012) *Salafist Students Have a sit-in at the Literature Department in Manouba to Force the Allowing if the Niqab*, France 24, January 25.

one, a national outcry forced both general Islamist opinion and Ennahda to retreat (possible temporarily) from the Manouba topic.

The issues mentioned above also reverberated into state administrations. In practice this translates into demands to have “proper” individual civil servants at ministries, especially at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. For instance, during an Islamist protest in front of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the capital, the author observed how a female civil servant, without headscarf, was harassed by Islamist activists shouting that such a person should not be able to work for a *wizara muqadisa* (a holy ministry). They demanded that people who worked within the ministry would have to behave according to religious norms.⁵⁹ The minister of religious affairs under the interim government of Caid as-Sebsi, Azuri Mizuri, was constantly harshly attacked on his perceived lack of religious credentials. In the new Ennahda-led government he was succeeded by Nour ad-Din al-Khadimi, a central figure in post-revolution Islamists social mobilization. Formally non-partisan, al-Khadimi is the former imam of one of the main mosques (al-Fath) in Tunis. Before becoming minister he was the president of Tunisian Association for Shariah Sciences, one of the most influential Islamic sciences institutes in the country after the revolution. The ministry became more attuned to Islamist demands within society. At the same time the minister was soon surrounded by Ennahda advisors.

These feelings, though less extreme, are actually mirrored by some civil servants themselves. In a context where the portfolio of the *wa'idh* (state representative for Islamic affairs at the ministry for religious affairs) has suddenly been extended drastically (at the expense of representatives of the ministry of interior), one of them decried the remaining influence of the old regime. The situation at the Ministry of Religious Affairs was described by one civil servant as a “civil war” between different views of how the ministry should interact with citizens.⁶⁰ The situation changed with the replacement of the minister of religious affairs.

In April 2012, in the setting of continued protests for the inclusion of sharia in the constitution, Ghanoushi had a phone call with a Salafist activists discussing the strategy to take concerning public Islam in the country. The taped phone call was leaked months later.⁶¹ Ghanoushi attempted to convince a Salafist

⁵⁹ Observation at Ministry of Religious Affairs, February 11, 2011, Tunis; conversation with Islamists youngster at the same place and date.

⁶⁰ Conversation with a civil servant at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, November 3, 2011, Tunis.

⁶¹ al-Shurūq (s. 2012a) *The Pillars of the State and Organizations are still in the Hands of the Seculars...*, al-Shurūq, October 11. The leaked tape was not uncontested, in an Ennahda statement Amr al-Laridh wrote that according to Ghanoushi specific sentences had been taken out of context. See La'ridh (p. 2011) *Press Statement*, www.ennahdha.tn, October 10. The specific contested sentences (relating to police and armed forces) have been deleted from this quote.

activist to take a “gradual” rather than more direct approach. In doing so he outlined in detail what this actually meant - implying the close interrelation between activism in society and the political arena; in addition to showing the importance of controlling the state administration in building a successful Islamist project:

... as I said, the Tunisian people want this [Islamic] religion. At the moment seculars groups in this country, it's correct, do not make up the majority. But look at the press now: until now it is in their hands. And the economy is in their hands, as is the Tunisian administration. [...] I say to our brothers concerning these issues, don't deceive yourselves with numbers because of the fact that you go out [and protest] with a thousand, two thousand, ten thousand or twenty thousand. The pillars of the state and its divisions are still in their hands. Take your time to change. At the moment we don't have a mosque, but we have the Ministry of Religious Affairs. At the moment we don't have a shop, but we have the state [...] ⁶²

Contentious Interactions

Thus we see two general strategies emerge when it comes to combining social and political Islamist mobilization. First, some movements attempt to ignore this differentiation and demand direct application of an Islamic system on contemporary society and politics. These demands are voiced through protests calling for the application of sharia and through Islamist organizations such as HuT. Alongside, there is a strategy to address the “secularity” of the state apparatus: demanding that those that implement policies represent the Islamic character of society. The protests at Tunisian media outlets and universities - and interaction with Ennahda over these topics - are examples. These two types of contentious mobilization have been summarized in tables 5.2 and 5.3 respectively. Precisely how to combine political and social Islamist mobilization is highly contested between Islamist movements themselves. What is specific to the Tunisian context is that Ennahda has left an empty space in social Islamist mobilization as it transformed into a political party. Additionally, no pre-existing traditional religious authorities exist in the country. Islamists movements have had to define their relationship with Islamists in the political arena (most notably Ennahda) in an almost completely non-institutionalized religious landscape. And vice versa.

The process of positioning Ennahda vis-à-vis these movements has been highly problematic, as Islamist mobilization is much more fragmented than was

⁶² al-Shurūq (s. 2012a) *The Pillars of the State and Organizations are still in the Hands of the Seculars...* , al-Shurūq, October 11.

hoped for by Islamists themselves. The question has been to what extent Ennahda is reactive or proactive in defining interaction with other Islamist movements. With the history of a broad-based movement as the foundation of its party, it was very well possible Ennahda would to some extent command social mobilization on religious issues ones again. This could be a way of stopping more conservative, Salafist, movements monopolize Islamist social mobilization in the social sphere. In their first year of governing Tunisia it was precisely on these points that the main conflicts emerged. I provide two examples.

In the first weeks following the revolution many imams were forced to leave through popular pressure of their congregations. It was a direct continuation of mobilization from the uprising but within the religious sphere. It brought independence to religious life inside Tunisian mosques, arguably it also brought a level of chaos.⁶³ With the majority of Islamist movements so ill defined, but highly active, Islamist social mobilization was susceptible to new influences. In this context a number of mosques were taken over by Salafist movements.⁶⁴ In Sidi Bouzzid the daily imam of the central mosque recalled that a local mosque had been taken over by Salafists after the first imam had been forced out. Salafi youngsters involved in this particular mosque told the author that it was the wider congregation that had asked for the change.⁶⁵ The same is true of the Fātiḥ Mosque in central Tunis, after its imam became the minister of religious affairs, and many other mosques in the country. In March 2012 the minister for religious affairs estimated that around 400 mosques in the country were Salafist controlled.⁶⁶

Ennahda, being in power, was unwilling to return to actively “managing” mosques as this is associated with the rule of the previous two authoritarian presidents. In addition they were unable to do so, principally out of fear of antagonizing large parts of their more conservative electorate. They therefore opted for building informal links with Salafi groups in order to strengthen common ground within the Islamist movement and gain a level of trust and control.⁶⁷ But fundamental differences on how to manage the relation between Islam and the political sphere started to take their toll: the March 25 2012 protest in favor

⁶³ Interview with a Tunisian academic, February 23, 2011, Tunis. The percentage of imams that had to leave is hard to ascertain and differs between regions. In cities the percentage will be higher than in the country side. But within the cities it is probably between 30 and 40 percent of the mosques; Interview deputy of Religious Affairs in Ariana, March 16, 2011, Greater Tunis; also interview with daily imam of the al-Oqba mosque in Kairouan, April 3, 2011, Kairouan.

⁶⁴ See for instance Krichen (s. 2011) *The War over the Mosques*, Réalités, April 13; and Zbiss (s. 2011) *Politization of the Mosque: Sounding the Alarm*, Réalités, April 13.

⁶⁵ Interview with Salafi activists, April 4, 2011, Sidi Bouzzid.

⁶⁶ al-Arabiya (s. 2012) *Extremists Control Hundreds of Tunisia’s Mosques: Religious Affairs Minister*, al-Arabiya English, March 31.

⁶⁷ Interview with a (Salafi) director of a religious school, October 2, 2012, Sidi Daoud, Greater Tunis.

of sharia in the constitution was informally endorsed and then formally blocked by Ennahda. Many Salafists felt they had been cheated time and again by the party.⁶⁸ The situation worsened after September 14 2012 after someone from the US uploaded a YouTube clip insulting Islam. The video went viral and several American embassies and consulates were attacked across the Arab world - including the one in Tunis.⁶⁹ It proved to be a turning point in the relationship between Ennahda and the Salafists, with Ghanoushi openly declaring that (Jihadi) Salafists were a threat to the nation. At the regional level all the imams of mosques were cross-checked on their religious credentials.⁷⁰ Ennahda stated that any unlawful conduct on the side of the Salafists would not be tolerated and that the non-partisanship of mosques would be monitored more closely. To what extent they were willing or capable of really implementing this more pro-active approach remained an open question.⁷¹

The conflicts within the Islamist project become more complex - going beyond the Salafi-Ennahda dichotomy - when we look at conflicts over Islamic education and most specifically education projects at the (traditionally most important) Zeytuna mosque. Before national independence Zeytuna was not only a mosque but also a teaching institute with elementary, secondary and university education taking place in a religious institutional framework (al-‘Ayāshī, 2003). It was the institution at the center of the Tunisian ‘*ulamā*’. Though the French had tried before, Bourguiba proved to be the most successful in curbing the independence of the educational activities at Zeytuna through comprehensive educational reforms. Much of the traditional religious power of the Tunisian Islamic education system - and of the religious sphere as a whole - was lost.⁷² After the 2011 revolution ambitions (re)surfaced for the Zeytuna Mosque to retain its former grandeur as a leader of Islamic education in the country and revive national traditional religious authorities.⁷³ The central questions would

⁶⁸ Interview with senior ‘*alim* and president of Islamists social organization, October 4, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia. See also Marks (s. 2012) *Who Are Tunisia’s Salafis?*, Foreign Policy, September 28.

⁶⁹ On September 14 2012 the congregation around Abu Iyadh, a Salafi Jihadi preacher who had taken over the al-Fath mosque in downtown Tunis, left the mosque to drive to the US embassy and attack the premises. Although no personnel died, the outer wall was breached and Salafists attempted to set fire to the embassy. The next day hundreds of policemen were awaiting Aby Iyadh after his Friday speech, but in the crowds he escaped.

⁷⁰ Observation at the governorate of Tunis, October 11, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia.

⁷¹ See: Human Rights Watch (s. 2012b) *Tunisia: Investigate Attacks by Religious Extremists*, Human Rights Watch, October 15.

⁷² Interview with a senior representative of the Zeytuna Mosque, October 10, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia. See also Hajji (2011).

⁷³ For example, in the minutes of the 2012 Ennahda conference mentioned earlier, it is explicitly mentioned that Zeytuna has a central role in rebuilding education in the country in order to have it better reflect the Arabo-Islamic identity of the nation. The Ennahda Movement (p. 2012) *The Final Declaration to the Ninth Conference of the Ennahda Movement*, The Ennahda Movement, July 23, p.7.

be: who would define and control the position and level of education at the institute? What would be the position of the mosque and its educational offshoots (particularly the Zeytuna *university*) in higher education?⁷⁴ And, most importantly, what would be the position of the re-emerging Islamic authorities vis-à-vis the political regime?

The conflict eventually focused on the level of independence of the teaching activities of the mosque. Previous agreements between the government and the mosque (from the early 1950s) and a more recent agreement (May 2012) between the Zeytuna Mosque, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs state that independence of the mosque is guaranteed. The principle imam of the mosque, Houshine al-Abadi, argues that these documents give him the right to assign a board of ruling shaykhs that will control the mosque and its teaching activities.⁷⁵ The position of the two ministries is that the mosque is independent but that teaching has to take place within a formalized state structure; closely integrated with state structure for primary and secondary education.

At the time of writing Zeytuna continues its plans to start education for children between the age of 12 and 15. The government has implemented a full financial blockade over the mosque, trying to coerce the mosque into compliance with the state. Stories abound that Zeytuna is getting foreign support, but representatives of the mosque vehemently deny this and state that there is sufficient domestic financial support for the mosque.⁷⁶ There are stories that Nour ad-Din Khadami, the minister of religious affairs, is saturating Zeytuna with students from “his” Association for Shariah Sciences. There are other stories that al-Abadi had all the locks of the mosque changed out of fear of a “state incursion” into his mosque. All these stories are just that - stories. But they show to what level these internal Islamist fights can descend when questions arise over who gets to control the process of repositioning Islam in the country.

Conclusion

The above examples focused on issues where regime power intersects with society through public institutions. Islamists in society push the state to defend the “Islamic nature” of Tunisia, either through formal government policies or

⁷⁴ As early as October 2012 students of the Zeytuna *university* were arguing for separation from the Ministry of Higher Education as it was a “bastion of secular forces, and they will never allow the religious departments to really prosper.” Interview with a Salafi student of the Zeytuna University, October 20, 2011, Tunis, Tunisia.

⁷⁵ Réalités (s. 2012b) *Report on Zeytuna Education: Nostalgia for the Past or Thirst for Power?*, Réalités, August 23-39; and Réalités (s. 2012a) *Interview with Shaykh Houshine al-Abadi, Imam of the Zeytuna Mosque*, Réalités, August 23-39.

⁷⁶ Interview with senior representative of the Zeytuna Mosque, October 10, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia.

more informal sensitization to “Tunisian Islamic values” of (civil servants in) key state administrations and public institutions. It shows that an option exists other than demanding an “Islamic State” or direct application of sharia. As such, to understand Islamism in Tunisia following the Arab Spring, it is not sufficient to only study the actions of those Islamists that are in political power (Ennahda) or those that are fundamentalists calling for the creation of an “Islamic State” (Salafists of various tendencies, HuT). Studying Islamism should be about the larger question of how Islamist demands are translated to political and social arenas. It is a general question of the ways in which Islamists navigate social and political arenas. With the decreasing popularity (though their vocal strength sometimes seems to indicate otherwise) of Salafist revolutionary strategies within the Islamist project, the acceptance of demarcation between social and political arenas has become increasingly internalized. Not just with Ennahda, but also with those activists active within various schools, charitable associations and other types of “Islamic organizations” - and with “fundamentalists” Islamist movements that prove much more pragmatic than their Islamist ideology might suggest. As a consequence, we see that questions emerge about how social and Islamist activism can be combined within movements, and between them.

How these questions are resolved, and to what practical extent they evolve, is then linked to the structural context of the country. Thus we see that in the Tunisian case Ennahda has evolved into a political party and has left few social organizations behind - nor has it tried to institute one. In the context of a very weak (to non-existent) religious sphere, this has meant that the interactions between Islamism in the political and social arena has had to be defined in a near institutional vacuum. The very project of reconstituting a religious authoritative sphere becomes contested between various actors. A key question is the extent to which these religious authorities will be subjugated to a state (educational and religious) structure, or to what extent they will be allowed to function outside of it. The interaction with other Islamist movements can be defined by asking to what extent they form a unified front against “seculars” in Tunisian society, politics and state. It is clear from the above that the few shared projects that emerged among various Islamist movements - and that were relatively successful in maintaining unity - were aimed at Islamizing state structures.

Having discussed the Tunisian case, we can now turn to Syria. The same structure will be used: first the (historical) chapter 6 will outline the chronological development of the Syrian state and the position of religion within it. Second the (more contemporary) chapter 7 will outline relevant practical issues that emerged before, during and will likely emerge after the Syrian revolution. In doing so, we will be able to compare both cases and provide some empirical grounding to the propositions explored in part III of this thesis.

Chapter 6

Syria

Islam & Ba'thist Rule

With the historical and contemporary discussion on social and political Islamist activism in Tunisia completed, we can now turn to our second case: Syria. The following chapter explores the emergence of Syria as a modern nation state and discusses the position of state bureaucracies and organizations in politics and society. In addition it outlines the historic trajectory of relations between political and social activism within Syrian Islamist mobilization in direct relation to the emerging Syrian regime. As was the case in chapter 4, the chapter provides necessary information to understand the structural background influencing Islamist mobilization - in both political and social spheres - before, during and after the revolution of 2011-2012.

The chapter has three main contentions. First, it is argued that the multi-sectarian nature of Syrian society, together with a particular development of the political regime - combining endemic state-led clientelism, a strong religious sphere and minority rule within the armed forces and security services - were crucial in how relations between social, political and state spheres developed. Particularly, it resulted in the emergence of an elite socio-political stratum that was deeply intertwined with the political elites: a so-called “state bourgeoisie” (Haddad and Heydemann, 2004). Second, it is shown that various Islamist movements emerged in Syria throughout the 1930s and 1940s - the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (MB), *Hizb al-Tahrir* (HuT), Salafist movements - but that all of these have been subject to similar developments concerning the relation between social and political activism. From emphasizing *da'wa* in their Islamist mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s, via a politicization at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s in an Islamic uprising, to a subsequent exile and detachments from their social activism base. Those movements that had remained quiescent

throughout the uprising remained in the country, providing the basis for continued but limited social Islamist activism - but necessarily in constant interaction with regime forces. With the Arab Spring of 2011, then, more overtly political Islamist movements have re-emerged and are in the process of repositioning themselves vis-à-vis politics and society. Third, it is argued that state-led secularization of society (as seen with Bourguiba in Tunisia) was never possible in Syria. Instead, a politics of sectarian divide and rule, in combination with attempts to placate Sunni (religious) elites, rendered Sunni religious groups both marginalized and selectively engaged with the political regime. As a result, it is argued, religious elite authorities always remained, despite fierce repression, in the country - rendering them a crucial institutional actor during the Arab Spring.

6.1 Foundations (1860-1973)

The socialist nationalist Ba'ath party has linked nationalism with the socialist struggle. It has led the masses from this dual struggle to achieve her goals in unity, freedom and socialism. These goals were adopted by the millions of sons of our nation and that struggle in order to achieve them for the millions throughout the Arab nation.¹

Syria is a religiously and ethnically divided country. Ninety percent is Arab, the rest are mostly Kurds and Armenians. The country recognizes 17 religions among which are Shi'ites, Alawis (about 2 percent, and officially an offshoot of Shia Islam), various Christian denominations (about 10 percent), Druze (about 2 percent) and Sunni (about 74 percent).² Of the latter 9 percent is Kurd. Syria gained its independence from French colonial rule in 1946. In the 1940s and 1950s various political movements emerged. Reflecting the broader Arab world, the main ones were the pan-Arabists, socialists and communists. Two of the movements of interest here are the socialist Ba'ath party and the Muslim Brotherhood (Hinnebusch, 2001). The Muslim Brotherhood was an emerging force and had sizable support in the cities, but was plagued in its early days by internal schisms. The Ba'ath party mostly had support in the rural areas - but during the periods mentioned above neither group gained more than 6 percent seats in the parliament (as in Batatu, 1982, p.17).

Though active as political parties, due to the weakness of institutionalized politics, all these previously mentioned movements aimed to also create a power base within society, state bureaucracy and the army. The Syrian armed forces, for instance, were soon engulfed and fragmented by different social and political movements, in addition to being fragmented along tribal and sectarian lines.

¹ (p. al-Assad, 1984) *This Said al-Assad*, Tlass Publishers, p.38.

² See: Central Intelligence Agency (s. 2012) *The World Factbook: Syria*, CIA, November.

During this period they often proved more “representative” to social forces than the political sphere itself. Additionally, and crucially, there was an over-representation of Syrians from poorer rural areas in the army, many of them from religious minorities. Therefore the political movements that mostly drew from, and spoke to, minorities proved particularly successful in building a power base: one example was the Syrian Ba’ath party (Seale, 1988).

The strength of pan-Arab nationalism among these movements would lead to calls - and eventual founding of - a greater “Unified Arab Republic” with Nassirist Egypt (Hinnebusch, 2001). The union would only last a few years, from 1958 to 1961, and end in disillusionment. But it would be of paramount importance to the political development of Syria: in the context of political and social chaos in the aftermath of the union - in which coup followed coup that pitted the army against parliamentary political power - the Ba’ath party was able to execute an effective coup d’etat leading to the first Syrian Ba’athist state in 1963. Through a number of subsequent coups that pitted Ba’ath factions in army and political party organizations against each other, a radical Ba’athist group from the army would take power in 1967 (van Dam, 2011). Soon infighting within these groups started as well. It would eventually be Hafez al-Assad, an air force lieutenant and Alawi from the Matawira clan in Qardaha (a city close to Latakia), that eventually took power in 1970 (Batatu, 1982, p.20).

Society and Regime Power

The nascent post-independence democratic Syria had been marked by a democracy that was dominated by a large land owning and urban trader Sunni elites. When it took power in 1963 the Ba’ath party was a direct challenge to the privileged position of these elites. In addition to continued infighting among the new rulers, it meant that the new regime had a very small popular base. In an attempt to stabilize its rule, power was made more selective and concentrated inside the regime, while at the same time attempting to broaden its legitimacy in society. The former meant placing Ba’athist party members in important military and political positions. The latter meant broadening its popular base by integrating rural peasants into its party structure and opening state bureaucracies to Ba’athist peasants. This was possible through new statist policies aimed at nationalizing the economy, enlarging the state bureaucracy and actively “modernizing” society through state-led programs. As table 6.1 (page 122) shows, the annual growth rate in the period 1973-1976 (the earliest available figures) was more than 11 percent. The power of the traditional Sunni elites was therefore broken through state induced social change.

The dynamics mentioned previously became more pronounced after Hafez al-Asad took power. Having fought of various sections within the army, his power

Table 6.1: Growth of Syrian Bureaucracy

Year ^a	Average Size (in thousands)	Average Yearly Growth
1973-1976	236.121	11.59%
1977-1981	342.877	7.98%
1993-1996	753.724	2.50%
1997-2000	842.393	2.56%
2003-2006	1.012.006	2.10%
2007-2010	1.077.071	1.05%

^a Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Syria (2011c).

initially held little legitimacy even within the Ba'ath party (Perthes, 1992).³ To stabilize his personal rule within the army and in key security positions he overtly depended on informal relations (or *‘Aṣabiya*) with his own tribe and family (Hinnebusch, 2001). In an attempt to overcome the sectarian backlash this might involve, Hafez al-Assad took pains to also placate other social groups to the regime. A number of Christians, Ismaelis and Sunnis were given high - but inconsequential - positions within the army and political bodies (Kelidar, 1974, p.17). For instance, Mustafa Tlas, a Sunni from the village of Rastan and a close friend of al-Assad since they both enrolled at the military academy in the Autumn of 1952, became minister of defense in 1972 (Seale, 1988, pp.39, 182). Though seeming to be important positions, such appointments held little real power and people could be easily replaced by al-Assad (van Dam, 2011, p.70). The above meant that political power had been secured by a small group of people linked to each other through informal links based on family and tribal affiliation. In the 1980s important names in Syria were the brother of the president and chief of the *Sarāyā al-Difā‘* (Defense Companies), Rifa‘at al-Assad; chairman of the presidential intelligence committee and chief of the air intelligence, Muhammad al-Khawli; and the head of military intelligence, ‘Ali Dubah. All these individuals are Alawis and from al-Assad’s tribe (Batatu, 1982). These political changes had profound social effects: a new elite emerged that was closely linked to, and dependent on, state institutions. These new elites were overtly drawn from the same social groups as the new regime leaders (van Dam, 2011).

Religion and Institutional Reforms

Before we continue, we need to consider institutional reforms concerning the religious sphere. As was the case in Tunisia, state building in Syria involved

³During the latter years of the power struggle between Salah Jadid and himself, fighting had even taken place within the Alawi religious group and between tribes from Latakia, further weakening his position (van Dam, 2011).

a process in which religious authorities were gradually made subservient to a dominant state bureaucracy. In 1840, during the Ottoman *tanzīmāt* period, the ministry of *awqāf* (Religious Endowments) was founded. In 1938, during French colonial rule, a grand mufti of the republic was for the first time nominated from the congress of the *‘ulamā’*. Three years later, in 1949, all regional muftis were placed under its leadership. In the same year religious laws concerning personal affairs were codified in the “personal status code”, rendering them part of an overall (secular) legal structure (Hinnebusch, 2001).⁴ The sharia faculty at the University of Damascus was created in 1954. In this period, between 1946 and 1964, numerous Islamic charitable associations and various Islamic journals were founded, in addition to a dozen private Islamic secondary schools in Damascus and Aleppo (Pierret, 2011, p.61,188). During the union with Egypt, the ministry of religious endowments was further specialized by adding a directorate for religious education and religious guidance (Pierret, 2011). After the split with Egypt the ministry was tasked with managing the religious sphere, creating a religious curriculum to be used in secondary education and creating a department of religious studies at the University of Damascus (Pierret, 2011).⁵ These actions effectively rendered all formal religious roles (imam, mufti, etc) nationalized and institutionalized in state structures. Thereby placing religious activities directly in a modern bureaucratic structure.⁶

Despite these various institutional reforms, the actual religious authority that constitutes the foundations of the *‘ulamā’* was never replaced by these modern state institutions. The cohesion of the *‘ulamā’* builds on an informal teacher-disciple network that additionally legitimized religious knowledge.⁷ This religious knowledge was gained through informal religious classes (*ḥalqāt*) at homes, at the mosque or in religious schools (*madrāsāt*) that define the authority of specific religious scholars themselves rather than diplomas they have from formal educational institutes (Pierret, 2011, p.52). In large part because the newly created Ba’ath regime was too weak to directly confront them, the institutionalization process of the traditional religious authorities described above was unable to dislodge the system of informal religious authority in Syria: you became an *‘ālim* because you had been taught by *‘ulamā’*; the large religious institutes were all led by specific shaykhs; careers within these institutes were generally defined by the relation to the leading shaykh within the institute - not

⁴ Civil marriage or legal equality between men and women, for instance, is not formally codified in laws or decrees.

⁵ For a more elaborate discussion, see (Böttcher, 1998).

⁶ From its outset the Muslim Brotherhood had a strong presence within its management (for instance Mustapha Sibai). Formally they were sidelined in the 1960s, but their presence remained within the department until the 1980s (Pierret, 2011, pp.58-60).

⁷ Within Sufism the informal networks were institutionalized to the extent of creating “orders” around specific shaykhs. But also in the more literalistic Salafi tendency the personal source of religious knowledge was key to assessing someones religious credence.

degrees obtained at the sharia' faculty of the University of Damascus (Pierret, 2011). This did not mean that the *'ulamā'* were disconnected from the Ba'ath regime. There was much to gain by allying oneself to the new regime. The fortunes of institutes were often related to the personal relation of the shaykh to the regime. And with main *'ulamā'* often having produced hundreds of students over the years - many of which would come to work in state institutions - there was ample opportunity to build large networks of followers within the state bureaucracy (Pierret, 2011, p.63).

Additionally, when al-Assad came to power he could not allow himself to take a pro-active position regarding the religious sphere.⁸ In 1964 the first Islamist uprising in the city of Hama took the country by surprise.⁹ Though small in scale it would be the first sign that Islamist activism was emerging in the country (Weismann, 2005). Al-Assad's preoccupation with securing his political position and his lack of legitimacy meant that during the early years of his presidency he was forced pay lip service to the religious (Sunni) sphere in the country. He showed himself to be a pious Muslim, had Alawi faith declared an official a branch of Islam¹⁰ and gave relative freedom to the *'ulamā'* to be active in the educational field (Kedar, 2005).¹¹

We therefore note two important points in Syria: the ruling party has historically been extremely politically exclusive - building around a small informal clique - while at the same time attempting to co-opt social groups through bureaucratic enlargement. This co-optation was biased towards religious minorities generally and Alawis specifically. Second we can see that traditional religious authorities have always retained their internal cohesion but, at the same time, developed links within state bureaucracies and are formally subservient to the

⁸ This was a continuation of the initial stance of the Ba'ath party vis-à-vis the religious sphere, which was one of "live and let live" aimed at not antagonizing conservative Sunni Muslims in the country. As time passed, though, the secular identity did start to effect - at least so some perceived - the nature of society. A gradual social liberalism was taking root, which was seen to be linked to the new Ba'ath rulers, resulting in a growing frustration among conservative Syrians.

⁹ For a personal account of this uprising see Hawwa (p. 1987) *The Muslim Brotherhood*, Sa'ad Hawwa, chapter 5.

¹⁰ In 1973 Musa al-Sadr, an influential Lebanese imam with close links to the regime, stated that the Alawi faith is part of Shia Islam (Lobmayer, 1995, p.244). In addition, al-Assad made the *'umra* (a pilgrimage to Mecca during a normal month) underscoring his faithfulness as a Muslim. Shia clerics were taken from Iran, and later from Lebanon, to preach in Alawi villages - thereby strengthening the image of Alawis belonging to Shia Islam (Zisser, 2006, p.58).

¹¹ Additionally, in 1972 the curriculum of secondary religious education was reformed and subsequently recognized as regular secondary education. Graduates from these schools could enter the faculty of social sciences at the national universities (Pierret, 2011). Adnan Sa'ad ad-Din forcefully states that the period between 1970 and 1977 was, despite being formally forbidden, the "golden age" of the Muslim Brotherhood. See: Sa'ad al-Din (p. 2010b) *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Memoirs and Memories - 3*, Maktabat al-Madbūlī, p.365.

state. The combination of these two observations sets the stage for the emergence of Syrian Islamists and their increasingly antagonistic relations with the regime of al-Assad. We now turn our attention to this development.

6.2 Islamists versus Hafez (1973-2000)

We [the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood] call and demand the rule of God's law, to live in the shadow of Islam - as was revealed by the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) and as called for by the rightly guided caliphs. [And we call to] live by [Islam], have it fill the hearts, and its true understanding fill the minds, and the law regulate social interaction, behavior and policies.¹²

Islamists Organize

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s various religious associations emerged that mobilized in opposition to the perceived secularization of public life in Syria. A few main examples were Dar al-Arqan in Aleppo, the Muslim Youth in Damascus and the Sons of Religion Association in Homs.¹³ These organizations were almost without exception set up by local *'ulamā'*. They were by and large instituted within a modern associational framework as charitable associations, schools and youth organizations that aimed to retain and nurture the public influence of Islam.

The largest Islamist organization in Syria, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (MB), would emerge as a union of a number of these organizations. The main person behind its founding was Mustapha Siba', the founder and later general secretary of the Syrian MB. In the 1930s Siba' had left Syria - as had many others like him - to study sharia at the al-Azhar institute in Cairo. While there, he came in contact with the Muslim Brotherhood and its founder Hasan al-Banna. Soon he was attending the weekly Tuesday meetings with the leader of the organization and became a follower.¹⁴ After his return, Siba' set out to unify various Islamic associations under the banner of the Muslim Brotherhood. Many of the above mentioned Islamic associations would eventually join Siba's effort and continue as a national Muslim Brotherhood organization from the early 1940s onward.¹⁵ These organizations would remain regional MB organizations, and their financial and organizational structure remained organized (until

¹² (p. Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, 2009) *Who Are We*, Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, June 7.

¹³ Sa'ad al-Dīn (p. 2010a) *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Memoirs and Memories - 1*, Maktabat al-Madbūlī, pp.49-50.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.33.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.53.

the 1970s) at a regional level.¹⁶ As a result regional differences, and specific historical developments of their preceding regional associations, would always have a large influence on the Syrian MB organization. Though first closely aligned to their Egyptian counterparts, with increasing institutionalization at the national level, they articulated a Syria-specific strategy in 1977.¹⁷

But the Syrian MB was not the only Islamist movement present. Many others appeared during these decades. Among foreign Islamist movement organizations that had appeared in Syria were the *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr* and *Daʿwa wa Tablīgh*.¹⁸ All these organizations and movements would remain relatively small compared to the Brotherhood. Consequently the Brothers would be the most important organizational framework for Islamist mobilization in the decades to come. At the same time though, the above mentioned movements had their influence on (and often coincided with) the Syrian MB, facilitated through the decentralized nature of the latter's organization. For instance the leader of the Syrian HuT was Sheikh Abdal Fatah Abu Ghuddah, an *ʿalim* from Aleppo, who would later become the *Murshid al-Ayn Am* ("the general supervisor") of the Syrian MB (Lobmayer, 1995, pp.101-103). Various Salafist tendencies also had a presence within the organization.

These organizations had varying opinions on the position of Islam in politics, but in these early decades of Islamism none saw their political activism as somehow separated from their social activities. The two types were a direct extension of each other. We see that HuT became active in various *daʿwa* related activities in their political aim to create a caliphate, the same with *Daʿwa wa Tablīgh* (Saʿad al-Dīn, 2010b, p.439). This was also the case with the Muslim Brotherhood. After fierce internal discussions on the desirability of *ḥizbiya* (institutionalization as political party) the MB became active in the political field after Syria's independence from France in 1949. It participated multiple times in democratic elections (Lobmayer, 1995, pp.112-115). But it always did so under the banner of the MB. An institutional differentiation between a political and social entity was never considered. Since 1963, when after the Ba'ath coup d'état all opposition parties were either outlawed or formally co-opted in a "National Progressive Front", the Muslim Brotherhood became illegal. Although illegal, it was able to retain its basis in Syrian society throughout the next two decades and remain active. Being excluded from the political sphere, they focused on social *daʿwa* as their principle means to achieve their political aims. In this context, in 1977, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood for the first time laid out their political and social vision for Syria. In its manifesto *the*

¹⁶ See: (Saʿad al-Dīn, 2010b) *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Memoirs and Memories - 3*, Maktabat al-Madbūlī, p.370.

¹⁷ As in (p. Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, 1977) *The General Strategy*, Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

¹⁸ (Saʿad al-Dīn, 2010b) *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Memoirs and Memories - 3*, Maktabat al-Madbūlī.

General Strategy it is stated that the central goal of the MB is to “Islamize life, starting with the personal life, and ending with Islamizing governance”.¹⁹ This is to be achieved through three stages, following Hassan al-Banna closely: 1) “Dawa and configuration”, 2) “training and testing” and 3) “execution”.²⁰ The phase of execution is, according to the Syrian Brothers “the phase in which the group is a complete movement, to steer the Islamic will, and found the Muslim state”.²¹ As such, the social and political aims of the Islamist project are seen to constitute a singular and complete entity rather than complementary sub-parts within an overall Islamist project.²²

These new Islamist movements, though often critical of traditional religious elites, were close to the Syrian ‘*ulamā*’. The founders of the Syrian MB, not surprisingly as the Syrian MB emerged from an Islamic associational sphere that had been initiated by reform minded ‘*ulamā*’, came from the same background. For instance Sibai’, Sa’ad ad-Din and Hawwa - all three major figures within Syrian Islamism - were either ‘*ālim*’ themselves or came from a family of ‘*ulamā*’. Inadvertently, this also meant they were embedded within a particular socio-economic stratum. The ‘*ulamā*’ were often merchants, traders, or shop keepers as they were never able to sustain themselves with purely religious roles (Batatu, 1982). Thus ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Khatīb (the khatīb, or speaker, of the Ommayad Mosque) was also head of Chamber of Commerce in 1914 (Pierret, 2011, p.186). Islamist movements were also often closely related to these trading classes; many within the Zayd movement for instance also had links with the Damascus *sūq* (trading market) (Pierret, 2011, p.187). Therefore, although these movements were a new phenomenon, they emerged among the ranks of the old Sunni bourgeoisie and traditional religious authorities.

An Islamist Opposition Takes Shape

Despite being integrated into various social and economic spheres, nothing could hide the fact that the Sunni bourgeoisie had lost out on both political and economic power after the rise of the new regime. The Sunni bourgeoisie, ‘*ulamā*’ and political Islamist movements were overpowered first by a new state-linked bourgeoisie; second by Alawi control over the army and third by Ba’ath political dominance. There was discontent among Sunni Syrians, but newly found political stability, a growing economy and a cautious regime approach regarding the religious sphere meant that this discontent was not translated into large scale mobilization.

¹⁹ Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (p. 1977) *The General Strategy*, Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, p.417.

²⁰ Ibid, p.417.

²¹ Ibid, p.444.

²² See also the discussion on al-Banna by Said Hawwa, a Salafist Islamist leader both close to the Syrian MB and the Fighting Vanguard of Marwan Hadid. Hawwa (p. 1983) *The Muslim Brotherhood*, Sa’id Hawwa.

But this did not mean that Islamist opposition was absent. It had been taking shape since the very beginning of Ba'ath rule in 1963. During this period some among the Islamist movements, often in the framework of the MB, had started to radicalize. Opinions on the use of violence differed within the movement and were hard to reconcile due to the general fragmentation of the organization. Al-Attar, general secretary of the Syrian MB in the early 1960s, was of the opinion that an armed struggle against the regime would only prove negative to the MB in the end. On the opposing side was Marwan Hadid, an agricultural engineer from the city of Hama and the *ʿālim* Said Hawwa (abd-Allah, 1982, pp.101-103). Many MB members explicitly state that Hadid was never part of the MB, but in the words of a former MB general supervisor: “Marwan never said he was outside the group and he saw himself as part of the organization”.²³ Over the years the situations worsened and resulted in a three-way split in the MB: an Aleppo branch, Damascus branch and a third “neutral” branch that was split between the two cities (Barout, 2000, p.273). This division lasted from 1970 until 1975.²⁴ Exonerating himself, the then general supervisor of the unified MB, Adnan Saʿad ad-Din, writes later in his memoirs that only after becoming the general supervisor in 1975 he found out there were three groups within the MB that (intended to) arm themselves: in Damascus, Hama and Aleppo provinces. They had all done this on their own, through different institutional approaches and to differing levels of success. To what extent he was truly ignorant is an open question, but it is clear that the tendency for radicalization existed within parts of the MB throughout the 1970s.²⁵

Islamist mobilization had openly surfaced for the first time after February 1 1973 when Hafez al-Asad published a constitutional change for open public “discussion” and “consultation” through a national referendum. Apart from being clear that he was trying to implement a constitutional dictatorship, *inter*

²³ (p. Saʿad al-Dīn, 2010b) *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Memoirs and Memories - 3*, Maktabat al-Madbūlī, p.386.

²⁴ As the Damascus bourgeoisie had close links to the regime and the economic resources it controlled, they therefore had little incentive to jeopardize their relationship with the regime (Perthes, 1997, pp.103, 122). This was not true of the bourgeoisie in Aleppo and Hama. Data compiled by (Lobmayer, 1995, p.393) shows that most Islamists in the period 1979-1983 came from Aleppo and Hama. After the uprising the pacifist stance of the Damascus bourgeoisie was rewarded with - albeit limited - gains in political opportunities. Because of his role in keeping the Damascus bourgeoisie quiet during the uprising of 1982, Badr ad-Din Shallah, a key figure in the Damascus Sunni middle class, was appointed head of the Damascus Chamber of Commerce.

²⁵ In more detail he states that the group in Damascus shaped itself in the image of Marwan Hadid's group, but was very secretive and had weak organizational capability. The MB in Hama had acquired weapons, but without informing the previous general secretary of the organization, and they had close links to Marwan Hadid. Finally the group in Aleppo created a position within the organization dealing with military operations, but did not carry out any operations at that early stage. See: Saʿad al-Dīn (p. 2010b) *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Memoirs and Memories - 3*, Maktabat al-Madbūlī, p.381-2.

alia, Islam was not declared a state religion and the constitutional change opened would make it possible to prohibit religious rites. Although from the outset regime opposition unified various parties, soon the most prominent movement was the Islamic one. They were successful in that the constitutional referendum was boycotted widely. But it was to little avail. Later it was stated that the referendum returned a 97.6 percent yes vote - with 88.9 percent of the electorate voting (Lobmayer, 1995, p.194). Subsequently (Islamist) opposition was harshly repressed and as result fragmented and radicalized further. In 1973 *al-Ṭalī'a al-Mugātila li-Ḥizb Allah* ("the Fighting Vanguard of the Party of God") was created by Marwan Hadid. After his death in prison, the movements would *de facto* be headed by Said Hawwa (Weismann, 1993, p.616). But we also have *jabhat al-thuwār al-muslimīn* ("the Front for Islamic Revolutionaries"), *katā'ib muhamad* ("Muhammad's Battalion"), *al-jihād al-muqaddas* ("the Holy Jihad"), et cetera. Often these groups were led by more radical *‘ulamā'* and were very loosely defined (Lobmayer, 1995, pp.114). They followed a more *takfiri* approach towards the regime, describing it as irreligious and calling for an armed insurrection. Taking their cue from the Islamist contemporaries such as Said Qutb their ideological background was rather underdeveloped.

When in the late 1970s and 1980s Syria was hit by a severe economic recession (Perthes, 1997, pp.23-36), the Syrian state reacted with liberalization (*infitāh*) policies. It led to a situation where individuals close to the regime used their advantaged political position to capitalize on these new economic policies (Perthes, 1992; Lobmayer, 1995). In this context general discontent with the regime of Hafez mounted and the conflict with the Islamists escalated. In June 1979, with the help of a Sunni officer, 83 Alawi cadets were killed by Hadid's Fighting Vanguard when they were attacked with grenades and machine gun-fire at the Artillery Academy in Aleppo (Batatu, 1982, p.20). Ba'ath party members, regime supporters and eventually any Alawi Syrian found themselves sniper targets. Soon it became clear that Sa'ad ad-Din, the leader of the MB, had no influence over the Fighting Vanguard and – by now – Hawwa and his followers (Barout, 2000, p.277). Cell structures emerged, in which small groups operated almost independently from the larger organization, to such an extent that members sometimes did not realize in which organizations they were participating.

As the conflict drew to a close, the Islamist opposition, marred by internal fragmentation, found it increasingly challenging to mobilize society. To address these problems, in a 1982 statement the various MB factions, including the Fighting Vanguard, declared the founding of an "Islamic front" against the regime. It was an effort to both create a unified front against the rule of al-Assad and define their political ideology. Their project, described in *the Islamic Revolution in Syria and its Programs*, is both social and political at the same

time:²⁶

The [...] movement holds that the ideal society, which is sought by humanity and which would fulfill its dreams of stability and happiness, is the Islamic society. *Our revolution defines the bases of social reforms on which the structure of society is to be founded.* [...] These establish] a balanced society where the individual does not transgress against the society and where the society does not neglect the rights of the individual, and where no classes or groups wrestle against each other, *as the nation will be united in one group.*²⁷

These attempts to unify and strengthen their resolve proved ineffective. The uprising climaxed in February 1982 in the city of Hama. *Mujāhidīn* provoked the army – although accounts differ – into a violent response. Soon they had forced all government troops out of the city and proclaimed the city “liberated” (Lobmayer, 1995, pp.323-324). Regime troops closed all roads to the city, cut off electricity and phone lines and – in a strategy that would be repeated 30 years later – started shelling it. In the height of the battle over Hama, Sa’id Hawwa, the spiritual leader from Hama and successor of Hadid, called on all Syrians to strike. The next day, everyone outside Hama went to work as usual. The regime’s hands freed, it could now focus solely on this city.²⁸ Not much later the Islamic uprising in Syria was crushed (Lobmayer, 1995, p.327).

Beyond the 1982 Uprising

The uprising had a number of crucial influences on Syrian Islamist mobilization. First, it forced Islamist movements to become fully politicized through defining their political program in the 1982 treaties. Whereas many movements (first and foremost the MB) had argued for societal *da‘wa* in attaining their political goals, the uprising had forced them to develop a much more direct political strategy. From a societal movement with political aims, Islamist movements had turned into political movements with a social program.

Islamist mobilization in the country was harshly and effectively repressed after the Islamist uprising of 1979-1982. Anyone belonging to the Muslim Brothers

²⁶ See: The Leadership of the Islamic Revolution in Syria (1980, Month unknown). See also the English translation from Abd-Allah (1982, p.247 p.249).

²⁷ Ibid. Italics by the author.

²⁸ In more detail, after the Islamists had declared the city “liberated”, some 12,000 soldiers laid siege to the city (Lobmayer, 1995, p.325). Civilian quarters were shelled and whole families were shot, even after the town of Hama was pacified (Seale, 1988, p.333). Estimates of the death toll range from 5,000 to 40,000 civilians, thousands of regime soldiers and about 500 *mujāhidīn* (Islamist fighters) – about all who had been present in the city (Lobmayer, 1995, pp.325, 326, fn. 152).

(a phrase used for any Syrian Islamist) faced the death penalty.²⁹ Movements within the country itself were effectively repressed and seemingly ceased to exist.³⁰ The Hama massacre meant the end of an institutional presence for the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist organizations in Syria. In addition to the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafist and Hizb al-Tahrir were also repressed and exiled. Domestic political Islamist mobilization seemed completely absent. Therefore these movements, especially the MB, would be cut off from their domestic society, rendering their social program obsolete.

Furthermore, any religious institutes that had supported the uprising - or whose students had supported the uprising - were subject to dismantling: examples are the Abu Dharr and the Zayd movement (Pierret, 2009, p.3). Hundreds of shaykhs and ‘*ulamā*’ (religious scholars) were exiled.³¹ As a result Syrian Islamists found themselves rooted out of their home country and scattered across the Arab world and Europe.³² Many went to Britain (London), Germany (Aachen) and the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Qatar). This led to the emergence of a large Syrian religious diaspora (Barout, 2000, p.294). Though dispersed over Europe and the Arab world for decades, a link between these ‘*ulamā*’ remained and some new organizations were set up. Most importantly, a subdivision was created under Yusuf al-Qardawi’s International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS). This was named, rather unsurprisingly, the Syrian League of ‘*ulamā*’ (*Rabīta al-‘Ulāma al-Suriyān*). About a 150 ‘*ulamā*’, estimated by its vice-president to be half of the exiled Syrian ‘*ulamā*’, were member of this organizations.³³ Domestically, it resulted in a traditional religious sphere that was skewed towards quiescent Sufi brotherhoods that had proved their non-critical stance vis-à-vis the political regime.

Ultimately, the conflict heralded a much more pro-active regime stance vis-à-vis the religious sphere. From 1979 onwards *Nahj al-Islām* (“the way of Islam”), a publication from the Ministry of Awqaf (Religious Endowments), was published in which policies of the regime were often religiously legitimized. This holds especially true for the actions of Rifat al-Assad: brother of Hafez al-Assad, and at the time close to the Ministry of Awqaf and secret services (Lobmayer, 1995, p.281). In 1981 an “al-Assad Institute for the Memorization of the Quran” was established in 51 cities (Böttcher, 1998). From now on there would be an active policy of creating a formal state position on Islam. Though the effectiveness of these measures can be debated, state structures for religious authorities

²⁹ The law stipulating the death penalty for Muslim Brothers (law no. 42 from 1980) is still in effect. For a practical example see Syrian Human Rights Committee (s. 2010) *The Ruling on Youngster Amr Hiyaan ar-Razuq, Under the Provision of Law No. 49-1980*, Syrian Human Rights Committee, January 9.

³⁰ For this see Ziadeh (2008).

³¹ Interview exiled ‘*ālim*, Amman (Jordan), August 10, 2011.

³² For their own view of this process see the five volumes of Sa‘ad al-Dīn (p. 2010c) *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Memoirs and Memories - 5*, Maktabat al-Madbūlī.

³³ Interview exiled ‘*ālim*, Amman (Jordan), August 10, 2011.

were drawn much closer to the political regime in an attempt to shore up its religious legitimacy.³⁴

6.3 The Son Ruling (2000-2013)

[I]f there is a need to worry, there is no need to fear. As worry is a positive state that makes us accomplish more, to achieve what we want and [achieve] victory. [...] Fear is negative as it leads to paralysis and defeat. [...] If trust in unity is strong between the people and its leadership, it will become an invincible ring around the nation in the face of difficulties and challenges. This unity will remain strong with Gods help, as it has always been the basis of its rule, protecting its people and state. But above all this - and I will say it in Syrian dialect as it is dear to us all - *Sūriya, Allah Ḥamiha* [Syria, God protects her].³⁵

Inheriting a Regime

In July 2000 Bashar al-Assad became Syrian president following the death of his father and president Hafez al-Assad. The younger al-Assad brought the promise of a new era. But after an inauguration speech that seemed to indicate an era of relative political liberalization,³⁶ many hopes were quickly dashed. The so-called “Damascus Spring” (2000-2001) was aborted after calls for far reaching democratic reforms were published by activists at the beginning of 2001 and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood attempted to link up with emerging movements within Syria (Perthes, 2004a; Zisser, 2005). Key actors found themselves being arrested – often repeatedly.³⁷ It meant that crucial features of the Syrian regime endured. Most individuals at the upper political echelons were replaced but the ways in which key individuals gained and exercised their positions remained (Perthes, 2004b, p.4). When looking at the regime in general – focusing not on the individuals but the social and political institutions

³⁴ In addition, reportedly, HuT was infiltrated and dismantled in 1999, just before the death of Hafez al-Assad. With it the last Islamist organization disappeared (see al-Hajj, 2012, September 5).

³⁵ (p. al-Assad and al Ghāwī, 2005) *The Complete text of Bashar al-Assad Speech at the Theatre of the University of Damascus*, quoted in al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, November 11.

³⁶ See: al-Assad (p. 2001) *This Said al-Assad*, Tlass Publishers, 17 July 2000.

³⁷ Riad Saif was arrested in 2001 and spend five years in prison. In January 2008 he would be arrested again. Michel Kilo was arrested in May 2005 and sentenced to three years imprisonment. Riad al-Turk was jailed for 30 months in 2001 but released early due to health reasons International Crisis Group (2004b, fn.57). Many others have had similar experiences. For an extended discussion on the Damascus spring and its aftermath, see George (2003). Interview with Alawi secular activist, observer and participant in the Damascus Spring, Damascus (Syria), April 22, 2009.

they use to maintain their power positions – the economic-political-institutional synthesis which emerged after the Ba’ath take over and Hafez’s coup was still present. Despite calls to battle corruption it thrived under the tenure of the new president. Some children of the earlier powerful players, the *Awlād al-Masu’līn* (literally “Children of the Officials”) became the new beneficiaries of this system. An example is the cousin of the president, Rami Makhluf, the son of the commander of the Syrian Presidential Guard general, Adnan Makhluf. The younger Makhluf has been able to use his close connections to the regime to form and own, among others things, one (of the two) Syrian mobile telephone companies, duty free shops and a hotel chain – creating a vast business empire.

But this apparent continuity could not hide the fact that the first decade of Bashar’s rule was marked by crises. In 2003 the US invaded Iraq, Syria was implicated in aiding Iraqi opposition and international political isolation was the result.³⁸ The Syrian regime was sent into turmoil again with the murder of former Lebanese president Rafiq Hariri (2005). An initial UN inquiry suspected Syrian involvement (strongly denied by the regime itself). The head of Syria’s security apparatus in Lebanon (and Minister of Interior), Ghazi Kanaan, committed suicide a few months later; two hours after denying allegations of speaking to UN investigators.³⁹ As a direct result Syria retreated from Lebanon, became even more isolated in the international political sphere and lost - for a period at least - its influence the country. Syrian international isolation decreased only after then French President Nicolas Sarkozy invited al-Assad for his newly initiated Union for the Mediterranean in July 2008.⁴⁰

Islamism and Bashar

Alongside these crises, a more general phenomenon began to influence Syria: the Islamic awakening of the late 1990s and early 2000s. As described in chapter 3, satellite television, and later the internet, had given birth to a surge of renewed Islamic activism that spread throughout the Arab world and beyond. In Syria, satellite television and the internet became widely available around 2000. With

³⁸ The Associated Press (s. 2009) *Iraq Sends Thousands of Police to Syria Border to Stop Insurgents*, The New York Times, September 5. See for a policy oriented discussion, International Crisis Group (s. 2004a) *Syria Under Bashar (I): Foreign Policy Challenges*, International Crisis Group, February 11.

³⁹ See for instance: al-Mustaqbal (s. 2005) *Ghazi Kanaan commits suicide in his office by shooting himself in the mouth*, al-Mustaqbal, October 13; and al-Sharq al-Awsat (s. 2005) *Ghazi Kanaan gives his "last" declaration to the radio station "Voice of Lebanon"*, al-Sharq al-Awsat, October 13.

⁴⁰ See: Syrian Arab News Agency (s. 2008) *Union for the Mediterranean Summit Kicks Off with the Participation of President al-Assad*, SANA, July 13; and Union of the Mediterranean (s. 2008) *Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean*, Union of the Mediterranean, July 13.

Table 6.2: Average Yearly Student Growth of Vocational Schools

Year ^a	Sharia	Agriculture	Commercial	Female	Industrial
1991-1995	3.58%	9.00%	7.83%	9.74%	2.55%
1996-2000	7.58%	16.97%	13.34%	13.99%	5.92%
2001-2005	3.36%	-7.04%	-0.16%	-3.02%	7.38%
2006-2010	11.64%	-8.39%	-1.48%	-7.55%	-1.44%

^a Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Syria (s. 2011b).

it came the influence of various Egyptian and Saudi shaykhs - including Syrian *‘ulamā’* that had been exiled decades before. More women began wearing head scarves,⁴¹ more people started fasting during Ramadan and there was an increase in Islamic charity work. Institutionally the regime reacted by founding a number of public “religious” institutions, selectively opening up space to specific religious movements, while at the same time binding them as close as possible to the regime. Three religious state funds were created that aimed to provide (financial) support for those wanting to marry, those in needing medical care, and those in general need. All Islamic associations were forced to contribute (around five percent of their annual income) to these funds. The Zayd movement, after being allowed to return to Syria in the early 2000s, had an institutional link with these funds, rendering the movement both successful but dependent on regime relations (Pierret, 2013).⁴²

In 2005, during the period of international isolation, Bashar al-Assad went further and called out to this religious constituency, in an apparent attempt to both strengthen the regime and shore up its religious legitimacy. In a speech at the University of Damascus in November 2005 (See page 132), revolving around the anxieties of being internationally isolated, he said *“Sūriya Allah Ḥamiha”* (Syria, God Protects her).⁴³ It signaled a willingness on the side of the regime to allow a religious basis to Syrian nationalism, as long as it was within the confines of al-Assad’s rule. Inside the country a surge in Islamic mobilization followed. Movements such as the Zayd and Qubaysiyat became more active. As did various Salafist (and Jihadist) ones. An indicator of the renewed strength of Islam in Syrian public life is the increasing number of students studying at “religious” vocational schools. As noted in table 6.2, the growth of students at sharia schools exploded (especially in comparison to other types of vocational schools) in the period 2006-2010.

Although evidence is anecdotal and imprecise, more violent, jihadi style,

⁴¹ (s. International Crisis Group, 2004b) *Syria Under Bashar (II): Domestic Policy Challenges*, International Crisis Group, February, p.15.

⁴² See also the discussion on the Zayd movement in section 7.3, specifically page 154.

⁴³ A reaction to this speech in a government owned newspaper: al-Wadi (s. 2005) *Syria, God protects her (Op-ed, Arabic)*, al-Thawra, November 11.

groups also emerged in Syria during this period. A striking case is that of shaykh “Abu Qaqa”: a supposedly Jihadi shaykh who was central in transporting Jihadi youngsters to Iraq to fight US troops. In 2003 his star was quickly rising as a popular shaykh in the Aleppo region. Many, mainly youngsters, in the city were drawn to his basic lifestyle and militant Salafist rhetoric. He became central in sending youngsters into Iraq to fight the Jihad there and, reportedly, was organizing Salafi inspired parades in the city. In 2007 he was gunned down in front of his mosque in Aleppo.⁴⁴ Who killed him has always remained unclear. Other examples are, in 2004, a shoot out in the up scale Mezze quarter in Damascus. The government claimed that Islamic terrorists had taken refuge there. A year later a shoot out took place on Jabal Qassioun, a mountain ridge overlooking the capital, in which two Islamists were killed. In July 2008, Islamist prisoners at the Saydnaya prison, a village some 30 kilometers from Damascus, rose up against prison management and kidnapped prison personnel (National Salvation Front, 2008, July 5). Many Syrians see the hand of the government, or foreign groups, or a collusion of the two, behind these incidents – or do not really believe they actually took place. The conspiracy theories are strengthened by the lack of information on these issues. Concerning Abu Qaqa, many raised doubts over his apparent position concerning US and/or Syrian intelligence services. A defected Syrian ambassador declared in 2012 that the regime had supported Abu Qaqa in an aim to destabilize US controlled Iraq. Reportedly, as years went by and the position of Syria vis-à-vis Iraq changed due to the major international backlash, Abu Qaqa was found to be a liability. It is interesting that it is also stated that the Sadnaya uprising was directly linked to Jihadis that had been freed to fight in Iraq, and on their return had been immediately arrested again. Discontent at this treatment had apparently been the basis of the prison uprising.

During all this time, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was still influential in the shadows. In 2006 the Muslim Brotherhood started the National Salvation Front (NSF), together with former and defected vice-president Abdel Halim Khaddam, with the aim of creating a government in exile and destabilizing the regime. For a short while it seemed to be one of the most serious challenges to the Bashar regime, but the initiative never really took off. Throughout this period the Syrian MB, under the leadership of Ali Bayanuni, was becoming a pragmatic political actor that used increasingly a pro-democracy, and pro-human rights, discourse in their opposition to the regime. To what extent they practiced what they preached remains uncertain, but the political development of the party was undeniable. We will come back to this in the next chapter.

⁴⁴ See: Ghaith (2005) *From Here to Eternity*, The Guardian, June 8; and Moubayed (2006) *Syria's Abu al-Qaqa: Authentic Jihadist or Imposter?*, Terrorism Focus, June 27.

Dynamics of the Uprising

With the supposedly successful uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, talk among opposition groups was rife with stories that Syria would be next. Small groups were formed and in February 2011 the first attempts were made to go to the streets, although these were initially unsuccessful.⁴⁵ This changed in mid-March 2011, when popular protests in the southern city of Dara' were violently repressed.⁴⁶ It provided the outrage across the country that made thousands go out and protest against the regime. The following Friday protests took place in cities as far apart as Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus and Deir-ez-Zor and were specifically meant to show support for Dara'.⁴⁷ In the following months a number of phases can be discerned in the development of the uprising. From March until around July 2011 protests were mostly peaceful but immediately met by deadly violence from regime forces. A striking geographic spread to the protests emerged within this time: with the area around Idlib, Homs and Hama rising up, so too did the southern region around Dara' and the eastern region around Deir-ez-Zor. The capital remaining relatively quiet, as did Aleppo in the north. This geographic spread continued in the second phase when increasingly violent repertoires were used by protesters. In response to increasing repression (Homs was first shelled in May 2011) and in light of the success of the Libyan uprising in August of the same year, the belief that armed insurrection was the only means to challenge the al-Assad regime gained traction among Syrian opposition. Eventually internal discussions on the use of violent means became irrelevant as more and more local militias emerged autonomously. Over time these militias became more organized and unified, but attempts to create a unified "Free Syrian Army" (FSA) lacked legitimacy (and influence) on the ground. Finally, on July 18, 2012, the top leadership of the regime was targeted by a bomb attack that killed a number of key aides to al-Assad.⁴⁸ Directly afterwards an opposition attack on Damascus started, followed in the week after with an attack on Aleppo. It would effectively mean that the whole country descended into civil war.

⁴⁵ See for instance: France 24 (s. 2011c) *The Call for a 'Friday of Rage' Against the Regime Did Not Receive Any Echo from the Streets*, France 24, February 4; and The New York Times (s. 2011) *'Day of Rage' Protest Fails to Materialize in Syria*, The New York Times, February 4.

⁴⁶ The spark was provided by a group of youngsters that were arrested after writing "the people want the fall of the regime" on a wall in the town. When their fathers visited the local governor to ask for their release, he stated that if they wanted children back the fathers could give him their wives - he would make some new ones. See for an in-depth exploration of the Dara' uprising Leenders (2012).

⁴⁷ Interview with activist from Homs, Istanbul (Turkey), September 28, 2011. Also see: France 24 (s. 2011f) *Protests in Numerous Cities and Increasing Death toll Despite al-Assad's Declaration on Reforms*, France 24, March 25.

⁴⁸ See: The New York Times (s. 2012) *Bombing Kills Key al-Assad Aides as Syria Fighting Rages*, The New York Times, July 18.

Conclusion

As the writing of this thesis is coming to a close, Syria is falling apart. The general dynamics described in the previous two sections have developed into a situation that is marked by a gradual deadlock within the civil war, continued shelling of urban areas and the emergence of semi-liberated areas in some parts of the country. As long as the conflict endures, there will be no stability between the political regime and society to form the context needed for clear negotiations on the position of Islamic mobilization within politics, society and state. That said, the dynamics described in the previous two sections of this chapter, provide the historical backdrop for issues now emerging within the uprising and “liberated” areas inside Syria. These issues emerge - in clear contrast to the Tunisian case - in a context of state rebuilding. State institutions need to be rebuilt to provide some form of service provision in areas where previous state institutions have collapsed. These attempts of institution building are highly contentious and questions on the “civil” or “religious” nature of this proto-state apparatus are directly related to questions of how to relate social and political forms of Islamism.

Additionally, there are a few other crucial differences and similarities in comparison to Tunisia. The endemic clientelism and the emergence of a regime-related social elite is comparable to Tunisia. In both settings the three decades before the uprisings were marked by economic liberalization that resulted in a close intertwining between certain parts of the political and economic elites. At the same time, there are ample differences between the two cases. Syria is a sectarian country and the political elite are overtly drawn from an Alawi group and from one specific clan close to the city of Qardaha. This sectarian influence, as we saw in chapter 4 is complete absent in the overtly Sunni Muslim Tunisia. Next to this the Syrian political regime has always been closely intertwined with the army, which has not been the case in Tunisia; arguably rendering the Syrian uprising a more problematic (and bloody) affair. Finally, Syria has always had a strong religious sphere, with ‘*ulamā*’ that are (in)famous far beyond the country’s borders. A religious sphere that the Ba’ath political regime has been unable to repress completely, in stark contrast to the Tunisian regime under Bourguiba. As we will see in the next chapter these structural differences between the two cases are crucial to understanding the similarities and differences in contemporary issues relating to the position of Islamist mobilization in society and politics - and the position that state institutions have within them.

Chapter 7

Syria

Islam & State Collapse

The following chapter provides an anthology of issues emerging around Islamist mobilization in Syria, both before and after the Arab Spring. It thereby provides an overview of different Islamist movements that are facing similar dilemmas concerning their reaction to contemporary day-to-day differentiations between social and political activism, in addition to showing what the role of state bureaucracies and public institutions is in these dilemmas. I content that in Syria both the religious sectarian nature of society and the relative strength of the religious sphere meant that religious activism could never be fully dominated by the al-Assad regime. Before the revolution, as also narrated in chapter 6, this resulted in intensive regime involvement in the religious sphere and close interaction between elite religious actors and regime power. Within this context most Islamist movements were repressed, but some remained - without exception caught in a web of bureaucratic regime involvement. After the revolution started, we see a resurgence of a large variety of Islamist movements that are struggling to find answers to the dilemmas of daily governance in “liberated” areas. Though newly reemerging, they are invariably influenced by pre-existing relations between religious elites, Islamist movements and state institutions. This chapter, then, will explore some of the issues that have emerged from trying to combine the practical contemporary realities of social and political mobilization in movements that are build on an Islamist ideology.

These dilemmas, and the actors involved, have changed with the onset of the Arab Spring in the country and a resurgence of public Islamism in Syria. Needless to say, Islamist actors are subject to constant changes and their actions take place in a highly unstable context of the uprising that is marked by polarized divides between various ethnic and religious sects and an increasingly weak - up to the point of collapsing - Syrian state apparatus. As such, the current chapter

only provides a snapshot of the situation as of May 2013, when the final version of this chapter was written.

I will make a (mostly implicit) comparison with Tunisia. A number of similarities will become apparent, as will a number of striking differences. The similarities between the two cases are mostly due to structural similarities discussed in chapter 4 and 6: endemic clientelism in combination with a perceived secular bias of the political regime, in addition to a general disillusionment with revolutionary strategies of recreating social and political arenas according to Islamic principles. Thus we see that among Islamists there is a pragmatic acceptance of social and political realities, and that questions how to reconcile these two types of activism in both are explicitly discussed in each setting. In both cases daily governance and service provision becomes polarized along an “Islamist” cleavage. Also in both cases, the fundamental idea of Islamism - the direct political and social relevance of Islam - is still present, active and strong. The combination of the above three points - the practical divergence, polarization of service provision, and continued strength of Islamist ideologies - renders state bureaucracies and public institutions an ideal institutional linchpin for Islamists that increasingly internalize diverging social and political strategies in their Islamist project.

But differences between the two cases influence how the above can be put into practice. The pre-uprising strength of the religious sphere and its ‘*ulamā*’ in Syria mean that Islamic (and Islamist) mobilization was present before the uprising and was finding ways to interact with state institutions. It creates a context in which elite religious authorities and regime power are closely related. Second, state bureaucracies more generally have always been closely embedded within Syrian society. These institutions are therefore easily perceived as aligned along, and part of, specific mobilized social groups. Furthermore, the sectarian nature of the country means that the Islamist project can never (and has never) been able to propose a truly cross-national project, in striking difference with Tunisia. Last but not least, the dynamics of the uprising itself are markedly different between the two countries. Due to the duration and ferocity of the uprising in Syria, in many parts of the country state institutions are being rebuilt. This leads to questions among Islamist movements about the future of the Syrian state. Specifically concerning its religious or secular nature, to become more polarized than is the case in Tunisia. As noted before, these comparative observations will be further developed in part III.

7.1 Islamism in Politics *or* Society

The political party is something other than the organizations within a *da‘wa* movement. For instance, Christians and other non-Muslims

can become members of the political party that the Muslim Brotherhood will create. As is true of any political party. The same cannot, in principle, be true of the Muslim Brotherhood as an organization of the movement. One cannot participate as a Christian or atheist in an Islamic *da'wa* movement.¹

In Syria a well developed religious sphere has always remained and consisted of well-known '*ulamā'*', large Islamic institutes and associations. In 2005 the Minister of Religious Endowments, Abdal-Razzaq Mounis, stated that there are between seven and eight thousand mosques in Syria. In the same year the mufti of the Syrian Republic, Ahmad Hassoun, boasted that the number was around 10,000 and that around four million people attended Friday prayers every week.² According to him this would mean that around 12 million individuals are reached every week through Friday sermons. To what extent these numbers are accurate can be debated, but it is clear that Syrian society is generally conservative and that these religious institutes hold large sway in its society.

At the same time, the Syrian religious sphere has been distorted by the aftermath of the 1982 uprising: Salafist leaning institutes that were often more regime critical have by and large been repressed. Institutes and movements that survived, and sometimes thrived, often have a Sufi inclination. In Damascus three main Islamic institutes are the Abu Nour Institute in Rukn ad-Din, Faḥ al-Islām close to Bab-Sharqi and al-Furqan in Kafr Susse. The Abu Nour Institute is one of the largest Islamic institute in the Syrian capital, containing a charitable association (al-Anṣār), and "Islamic" education at the primary, secondary, and university level.³ It follows a Nasqbandi Sufi religious approach and has institutional affiliations with a number of foreign religious institutes to provide the university credentials to its students, as it does not have a formal recognition as university inside Syria.⁴ As in the case of the Abu Nour Institute, the al-Faḥ Institute incorporates a charitable association and an educational institute.⁵ It follows a more conservative Islamic approach. The institute never

¹ Interview with former Muslim Brotherhood leader, Amman (Jordan), July 31, 2011.

² This would imply that the religious sphere has far better outreach in society than either the Ba'ath party apparatus or national media. See: Hamidi (s. 2005) *Ministry of Awqaf Trains 150 Preachers to Renew the Discourse, Turning it Away from Foreign Influences*, al-Ḥayāt, August 8.

³ It grew under the leadership of its late shaykh, and mufti of of the Syrian Republic, Ahmad Kaftaru (1912-2004) from a modest mosque to its present size. After Kiftaru's death in 2004, daily management of the Institute transferred to his son Salah al-Din. Spiritual leadership was taken over by multiple '*Ulamā'*'.

⁴ Media department of the Ahmad Kiftaru Institute (p. 2006) *At the Second Commemoration of the Death of our Shaykh*, media department of the Ahmad Kiftaru Institute.

⁵ The founder of the Institute is the late Saleh Farfur (1901-1986). Currently one of his sons, Hisam al-Din Farfur, is one of the leading members of the institute. He is number two in its General Assembly as of 2009-2010. Number one is Abdar Razzaq al-Halabi. See: Faḥ al-Islami Institute (p. 2010) *Members of the Current General Assembly of the Faḥ al-Islami Institute 2009/2010*, alfatihonline.com, November 6.

gained formal state recognition and it provides university level diplomas through its relation with the Egyptian al-Azhar Institute.⁶ More closely related to *ijtihād* and less inclined to a clear *Madhhab* is the al-Furqān Institute, which provides religious education at the primary and secondary levels and is related to the Ri-fai' brothers Usama and Saraya'. In Aleppo a main examples is the Kiltawiyya School, headed by Mahmud al-Hut (for an in-depth discussion of contemporary mosque politics, see Pierret, 2009, 2011). In addition to these large religious institutes, the Syrian religious sphere is institutionalized in numerous smaller Islamic associations.⁷

Within this religious sphere a limited number of Islamist movements existed and were active. Here I will discuss three of the most well known examples. The "Qubaysiyat"⁸ is a women's movement around Shaykha Munira al-Qubaysi, a student of Ahmad Kiftaru. The movement is aimed at empowering women in a conservative sufi inclined Islamic framework, teaching a *Shafa'i fiqh* while emphasizing the conservative role of women in society and at home. They became infamous for their preferred methods of spreading the movement (through small informal teaching groups at women's houses and through access to Syrian elementary education) and their specific dress code (a blue veil - in different shades - in combination with a *manteau*, or long female coat). Though active underground throughout much of the 1980s, due to the heavy repression in the wake of the Islamist uprising, they became more assertive in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2006 it was estimated that the group had tens of thousands of followers.⁹ The second movement discussed here is the Zayd movement. It mainly focuses on charitable work in and around Damascus. During the 1980s many of their followers became politicized and supporters of the Islamic uprising, eventually forcing the whole movement to effectively side against the regime. With the victory of al-Assad the main shaykhs of the movement were exiled and the movement mostly dismantled - though at the local level related associations were allowed to remain. Through these local associations the movement was able to maintain a rudimentary institutional structure while the top leadership was exiled and their institutions dismantled (Pierret, 2009). In the 1990s many

⁶ As stated in (s. Hamidi, 2006b) *They wear the dark blue veil and have a wide network for teaching and influence...*, al-Ḥayāt, March 5.

⁷ Zisser (2005, p.49) quotes Syrian sources in al-Ḥayāt newspaper stating that the number of religious schools in Syria in 2004 was 120, excluding 20 religious institutions or study centers. About 25,000 students studied in these schools. But these figures exclude *informal* religious schools, which were - according to various sources - blossoming throughout the early 2000s (s. Hamidi, 2006b) *They wear the dark blue veil and have a wide network for teaching and influence...*, al-Ḥayāt, March 5. Whereas formal religious schools are under the supervision of the regime, the smaller informal ones are not.

⁸ This is a name given by outsiders to the movement. Participants call themselves *al-Nisā'* ("The Women").

⁹ (s. Hamidi, 2006b) *They wear the dark blue veil and have a wide network for teaching and influence...*, al-Ḥayāt, March 5.

of the shaykhs were allowed to return, including Usama and Sariya Rifai' and given a chance to rebuilt their movements.

Also, despite its weakness due to repression, Salafist movements always remained in the country, but their activism was either aimed at foreign regimes or exclusively at social change. Though reports on their activities are murky at best, it is clear they were active in Syria before the revolution. As narrated in the previous chapter, the Syrian regime had been implicated in sending both Syrian and foreign Jihadists into Iraq. It is likely that Salafist shaykhs such as Abu Qaqa had some relation to the Syrian regime. More strikingly still, Salafist prisoners were apparently set free by the regime to fight against US forces in Iraq and were re-imprisoned after their return. In addition to the above, numerous schools were closed in 2010 due to the apparent influence of "Salafist" movements.¹⁰ It is unclear to what extent these movements were really involved, although available information seems to indicate that these movements were active but rather limited in their breath. They did not have the possibility to stage any kind of politically relevant opposition to the current al-Assad regime, and their influence seems to have been limited to social outreach.

All the above mentioned institutes were active in contemporary Syrian society and linked to specific '*ulamā*'. Abu Nour was linked to the late Ahmad Kiftaru. The Zayd movement was related to the Rifai' Brothers, al-Kiltawiya to al-Hut. Thus these '*ulamā*' were not, so to speak, purely "Islamic scholars", but combined their scholarly and educational activities with social activism. All of these actors would emphasize the apolitical nature of their activities: in all cases they explicitly and continuously stressed that they were social actors and had no political aims what so ever.¹¹ What ever the reason for this,¹² it was clear that in their acceptance of the political regime Islamic actors that remained in Syria had internalized a differentiation between political and social spheres. In their view, politics was for the regime and society for religious authorities.¹³

Of the Syrian political Islamist movements that were active before 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood was by far the largest and best organized. They have been completely absent in the country since 1982 but their shadow has always

¹⁰ Fahim (s. 2010) *Syria Moves to Curb Influence of Muslim Conservatives*, The New York Times, September 3.

¹¹ See: Media department of the Ahmad Kiftaru Institute (2006) *At the Second Commemoration of the Death of our Shaykh*, Media department of the Ahmad Kiftaru Institute; and Fath al-Islami Institute (p. 2007) *About the al-Fath Institute*, alfatihonline.com. Also: Senior shaykh and director of Islamic Institute. Damascus (Syria), April 4, 2009.

¹² A first reason is that state repression made it impossible for any kind of political Islamist mobilization to emerge and for these institutes of paramount importance to stress the non-political nature of their activism. A second is that most politicized Islamist movements were exiled during the uprising of the 1980s.

¹³ For a discussion on the political aspirations of religious movements in Syria, see Alhaj (s. 2011) *The Political Aspirations of Religious Groups in Syria*, Strategic Research and Communication Centre, January 12.

loomed large over the country. While in exile they developed their political and social ideology further, effectively transforming into a political party. During the MB leadership of former general secretary Ali Bayanuni an increasingly pro-democracy, and pro-human rights, discourse was used in their opposition to the regime. A good example of this is the MB treatise *The Political Project for a Future Syria* (2004).¹⁴ Many non-Brotherhood (and non-Islamist) activists praised the pragmatic political tone of the document; a senior non-Brotherhood activist saying that he “agreed with 80 percent of what they said”.¹⁵ The section for the “political issues” states:

[...] Our group confirms the following constitutional politics: [...] Islam is the basic source and highest reference of legislation, and the people are the source of its authorities, [and] the system of governance is the Shura, [in practice meaning] a republican democracy.¹⁶

The fact the Brothers mention Islam as “basic source” (instead of *the* source) and as “reference” to legislation, in addition to stating that citizens (not God) are the source of state’s authority, goes to show to what extent they have grown into accepting the confines of a political arena. Their pragmatism was also observable in their practical activities. In 2005 Vice-President Abdal-Halim Khaddam left Syria and after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri started to criticize the regime. Soon afterwards the Muslim Brotherhood started al-Jabhat al-Islāḥ al-Waṭanī (“the National Salvation Front”, or NSF) with him - allying themselves with one of the former elite figures of the authoritarian regime they so despised.¹⁷ The situation became almost bizarre as the project failed and the Syrian MB stepped out of the group in early 2009. In the same month the group stated that “we will suspend our opposition activities towards the Syrian regime, to save all efforts for the central battle [in support of Gaza against Israel]”.¹⁸ One of the reasons behind this suspension was the (re)start

¹⁴ In the manifesto social and political issues are discussed, but Islam is used solely as an abstract reference and the proposed program is a political one. Propositions in the booklet are based on a (conservative) religious background, but no practical plans for social religious reforms are brought to the fore. Also: interview with non-secular Alawi activist, Damascus (Syria), April 22, 2009.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (p. 2004, pp. 40-41) *The Political Project for the Future Syria*, ikhwansyria.com.

¹⁷ al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm (s. 2007) “*National Salvation*” *Accuses the Syrian Regime of Destabilizing Arab Solidarity*, almasry-alyoum.com, December 19. For the initial program, see National Salvation Front (2006) *The Plan for Advancing the National Salvation Front*, National Salvation Front, June 5.

¹⁸ Levant News (s. 2009b) *The Muslim Brotherhood declares the suspension of its oppositional activities to focus on supporting the people of Gaza...*, thisissyria.net, January 7. See their later retraction of this position: Levant News (s. 2009c) *Muslim Brotherhood in Syria to re-evaluate its position of the National Salvation Front and denies ‘impending reconciliation’ with the Syrian regime*, thisissyria.net, February 14.

of negotiations between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood - or so it was rumored - but nothing came out of these talks until the uprising started in March 2011. It shows that, even though many within the movement would still wish for the “pure” days of Islamic *daʿwa*, in practice the Muslim Brotherhood was transformed through years of exile into a pragmatic actor aiming at maximizing political influence.



With the uprising we see three changes that are crucial to the central questions of this research. First, opposition bodies representing the uprising (politically) are created outside the country; second, there is a gradually increasing role of Salafist groups in the uprising; and third, there is a slow retreat of regime control and functioning state institutions from various parts of the country. These retreats do not mean that these areas are under full control of rebel forces (either under the banner of the Free Syrian Army [FSA] or others) as the Syrian air force is still powerful enough to inhibit a continuous and stable presence on the ground. But this situation does provide a glimpse of a Syria after al-Assad rule.

Concerning the former, new political opposition bodies emerged that created a Syrian political arena outside regime control. Islamist movements suddenly found themselves empowered within these opposition bodies and took more public stances against the al-Assad regime. This was the case for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, but also for various newly emerging political Islamist movements. Starting with the former, during the uprising they published an updated “covenant”. In it support for a civil state by the Muslim Brotherhood is made explicit. It is stated that, for instance, Syria should be “a country that respects organizations, that builds on the separation of legal, legislative and executive powers.”¹⁹ In addition, the rulers should “be held accountable [by] mechanisms defined in the constitution”, thus not through any type of “religiously” defined mechanisms.²⁰ This is not to say that individual members cannot make statements to the contrary: sometimes they do.²¹ But the formal line on the future of Syria that was set out in the 2004 political “plan for a future Syria”,²² and has been reaffirmed since in numerous interviews,²³

¹⁹ Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (p. 2012a) *Covenant and Charter of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood*, ikhwansyria.com, March 21.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ For an example of a Muslim Brother mentioning the establishment of an Islamic state, see Landis (2012, March 26).

²² Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (p. 2004, p.10) *The Political Project for the Future Syria*, al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn fī Sūriya.

²³ al-Sharq al-Awsat (s. 2011b) *Secretary of the Syrian Brotherhood: We demand Reform and Change...*, al-Sharq al-Awsat, July 8; al-Sharq al-Awsat (s. 2011c) *[General] Secretary of the Brotherhood to as-Sharq al-Awsat: the brotherhood is committed to a Civil State and*

is reiterated in this latest document.²⁴ As such, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in effect stated that they would abide by the political-social divide and institutionalize a separation within the organization between social and political activism. More explicitly, in a mid-2012 interview a leading member stated that a political “Muslim Brotherhood party” was in the works, making an explicit differentiation in their aims between the two organizations (see the quote on page 140). The same can be said for the Syrian National Movement led by Shaykh Imad ad-Din Rashid. Founded in January 2011, it is an explicit reaction to the revolution in Tunisia and the Arab Spring.²⁵ The movement, in its own words, “derives its objectives from Islamic authenticity, which is defined by the morality and spirituality of the divine messages that influenced human culture in the Levant (Middle East) throughout history”.²⁶ In its founding document the founders stress the inclusive nature of their political movement, while at the same time stressing their link to the Islamic Arab identity of Syria:

[We] support an independent Syria which retains its republican values; a deliberative, pluralistic, democratic system; and the establishment of a legal, national and institutionalized state. [...] [We aim] to strengthen civil, political, economic and religious freedoms for all Syrians; and to build them an inclusive nation for all, and facilitate a dignified free life for all its people.²⁷

As the uprising continued, Islamism would become increasingly pervasive as rebel groups coalesced in alliances explicitly build on an Islamist ideology. A few main examples are *Liwa al-Tawhīd* and *Aḥrār al-Shām* from Aleppo, and the Farūq Brigade from Homs. Last but not least, there was the al-Qaeda initiated *Jabhat an-Nuṣra* (“The Front of Victory”, or JN). Many of these alliances eventually created further alliances - with varying strength - between them and other groups.²⁸ The two most important ones are the *Jabhat al-Islāmiya al-Sūriya* (“Syrian Islamic Front”, or SIF) and the *Jabhat al-Tahrīr al-Sūriya* (“Syrian Liberation Front”, or SLF). Together with the better organized JN they formed,

renounce violence..., al-Sharq al-Awsat, October 9; al-Sharq al-Awsat (s. 2011a) *Representative of "the Brotherhood" to "al-Sharq al-Awsat": If al-Assad was sincere we would negotiate with him around a round table*, al-Sharq al-Awsat, June 3.

²⁴ (p. Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, 2012b) *The Syria that We Want*, ikhwansyria.com, September 27. This is also reflected in more recent statements. See: Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (p. 2013) *Closing statement to the Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria*, ikhwansyria.com, January 9.

²⁵ (s. Rosen, 2012) *Islamism and the Syrian Uprising*, Foreign Policy, March 8.

²⁶ Syrian National Movement (p. 2011, p.1) *Syrian National Movement: Declaration of Establishment*, Syrian National Movement, January 10; See also: Muṣṭafa (s. 2011) *Syrian Islamists: The 'National Movement' Includes All Currents*, ikhwanonline.com, December 10.

²⁷ Syrian National Movement (p. 2011, p.2) *Syrian National Movement: Declaration of Establishment*, Syrian National Movement, January 10.

²⁸ Due to its strong foreign links, Jabhat al-Nuṣra is an exception to the rule.

at time of writing in May 2013, the backbone of the Syrian uprising. Concerning the position taken on the social-political divide, we can discern a difference between those - like *Liwa al-Tawḥīd* (member of the SLF) - that have their roots as local rebel battalions that took Salafism as their ideology, and those that were mostly initiated from abroad - like *Jabhat an-Nuṣra*. All draw on a Salafist ideology, with JN being Jihadi Salafist, the SIF pure Salafist revivalist and the SLF generally closer to a Muslim Brotherhood approach; though the latter is very loosely organized. Concerning *Liwa al-Tawḥīd*, it pays lip service to the national coalition and the “Free Syrian Army” as fighting force. The movement has stated it will respect any institutional division in a “new” Syria. Unwittingly maybe, this will mean that they have thereby placed themselves practically within a proto-state structure. As the regime falls *Liwa al-Tawḥīd* will have to make a choice to become a “regular” actor within the political sphere (as a political party), state institution (as a new Syrian army) or society (as social organization). It is different with the SIF and *Jabhat al-Nuṣra* as they demand a unified Islamic system governing society and politics after the fall of the al-Assad regime. In its founding charter of the SIF, the vision is defined as the “building of an Islamic society in Syria, governed by God’s law which is favored by it”.²⁹ The same applies, but even more strictly, to *Jabhat al-Nuṣra*. In a mosque sermon in Deir ez-Zor in April 2013, posted on the group’s website, the preacher states that “Islam is religion, state and politics, governance and law” - and that anybody who thinks otherwise and argues for democracy is not a Muslim.³⁰

In summary, we can see that movements that are active in institutionally well developed contexts tend to diverge their activism out of pragmatic considerations. Those active outside of these contexts can - and often do - remain more unified in their activities. Differences in Islamist ideology also influence how these movements relate to emerging proto-state structures in a context of retreating regime power - the third crucial change the uprising has brought as mentioned above. Though pragmatism has pushed many movements to explicitly or implicitly define a dividing line between political and social sphere, in reality choices are never clear and unanimous. The extent to which the differentiation between social and political spheres has been internalized differs greatly between these groups and is contingent on both structural factors and the ideology of these actors. The influence of these issues will be discussed in the next two sections.

²⁹ The Syrian Islamic Front (p. 2012) *the Charter of the Syrian Islamic Front*, al-Jabha al-Islāmiya al-Suriya, December 21.

³⁰ *Jabhat al-Nuṣra* (p. 2013b) *Sermon of Jabhat al-Nuṣra at the Uthmān bin ‘Afān Mosque on April 19th 2013*, al-Manāra al-Bayḍā’, April 19. See also the closely aligned YouTube channel of al-Manar al-Bayda: www.youtube.com/feed/UCeVVBwkdGc74s5Aoq0tmVRg.

7.2 Islamism in Politics *and* Society

So in Judaism and Christianity you have “Men of Religion” (*Rijāl ad-Dīn*) and you have the state. Each has its own specialty. With us in Islam, this situation is completely different. There are no men of religion. You just have people “who have learned” (*mu‘alamūn*). These individuals can say anything about any topic, may it be about social problems, economic or political.³¹

Even in cases where a differentiation between political and social mobilization within the Islamist project has emerged - out of ideological conviction, pragmatic considerations or forced by historical developments - the idea that Islam should be a complete system structuring social and political spheres is still strong. Though repressed and thus underplayed in Syria under al-Assad, this position is expressed in various interviews and informal conversations. This view is institutionalized in the position that ‘*ulamā*’ are perceived to have: above any type of social or political division and above state structures (see quote above). A Syrian ‘*ālim*’ estimated that about 10 percent of Syrians were believers in the privatization of religion, the rest sees religion as an integral part of public life. Mohammad Habbash, an MP and ‘*ālim*’ from Damascus, estimated in 2009 that 80 percent of Sunni Arabs in the country are conservative, opposing *ijtihād* and following one of the *fiqh madhāhib*. Twenty percent, he estimated, are in favor of *ijtihād* and therefore argue for going beyond the traditional religious schools. Of that number one percent were “radicals”.³² Though these figures do not necessarily relate to the amount of individuals that are Islamists as conceptualized in this thesis, it does show that Syrian Sunni Arabs tend to be conservative Muslim. These numbers are provided to paint a general picture: the idea that Islam should structure all of public life - and in consequence politics - is still widely accepted among Sunni Syrians. Every movement discussed in the previous section can be said to fall into this general group. In conversations with ‘*ulamā*’, and with political and social Islamist activists these views were articulated, as well as in documents from various Islamist organizations, including pragmatic political ones. Though they accept contemporary social and political realities, they have not accepted a secularized state.

Though Syrian ‘*ulamā*’ before the revolution would always underplay their political role and emphasize their purely religious aims,³³ their role is most often interpreted as encompassing all types of political, economic and/or social issues. For instance the vice-president of the Syrian association for ‘*ulamā*’ stated that:

Some people say that the personal relation between an individual and God is all there is to religion. This is not true: it is how people

³¹ Interview with recently exiled Hama shaykh, Antakya (Turkey), September 1, 2012.

³² Interview with Mohammad Habash, Damascus (Syria), March 11, 2009.

³³ For instance in an interview with Nabulsi, Damascus (Syria), July 31, 2010.

act within society, act within each other, economics, etc. It is in everything [The ‘*ulamā*’] are here to create *Nahḍa Islāmiyya al-Jadīda* (“the new Islamic renaissance”).³⁴

These views had an impact on the social and political influence of these ‘*ulamā*’. This was apparent under the regime of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad. For instance Mohammad Habbash is an ‘*ālim*, had an Islamic center *and* was a member of parliament. In recent years he was joined by three other shaykhs that took had positions in parliament. Pierret (2013) describes the Syrian parliamentary elections of 2006 in which various party blocs explicitly took a shaykh into their ranks to bolster their “Islamic” credentials.³⁵ By being the institutional representation of the non-secular view of Islam, these religious authorities automatically gained a level of political significance.³⁶ The ‘*ulamā*’ were never purely social actors, despite them vehemently claiming to be.

In a context where religion and religious authorities have always had political significance, Islamist social movements were never purely a-political. For example, Ibrahim Hamidi (s. 2006b) implies that the Qubaysiyat movement is not only about teaching - despite many ‘*ulamā*’ stressing otherwise - but also about (political) influence. Through a strategy of Qubaysiyat members marrying to influential business men in- and outside of Syria, the movement built a powerful network in Syrian companies and state institutions.³⁷ It is unsurprising that in order to succeed the movement needed tacit political support, as changing society from below is inherently a political project (see for this section 2.1). These informal links were therefore indispensable for its survival.³⁸ The same holds true for the Zayd movement. Throughout the two decades after its reemergence, it build close links with politicians and business-men alike (Pierret, 2009). Remaining a social charitable movement throughout this period, but gaining a level of political leverage necessary for its survival in the hostile environment that Syria is. In both these instances ‘*ulamā*’ had a key role to play in how these relations developed. The Syrian movements were all founded and headed by senior ‘*ulamā*’: Abdel Karim Rifai’ and his two sons led the Zayd movement, while Munira al-Qubaysi headed the Qubaysiyat. In both instances

³⁴ Interview with Musa al-Ibrahim, Amman (Jordan), August 10, 2011.

³⁵ Selvik (2008).

³⁶ This does not mean that all these actors were actively mobilizing to structure society and politics according to Islamic principles. The ‘*ulamā*’ are a very diverse group of individuals in which many different religious interpretations are represented, but the above does show that ‘*ulamā*’ are perceived to be very much part of public life and thereby have both social and political significance.

³⁷ Hamidi (s. 2006b) *They wear the dark blue veil and have a wide network for teaching and influence*, al-Ḥayāt, March 5.

³⁸ This point is supported by a former Qubaysi that states in a post after her leaving the organizations that the movement is “being played” with by outside actors. Anonymus (p. 2010) *I was with the Qubaysiyat group: these are important truths about them as a warning*, ahlalhdeth.com, May 7.

it was these religious authorities that created the basis for subsequent relations between the regime and the movement.

Concerning political Islamist movements before the 2011 revolution, I will limit myself here to the Muslim Brotherhood as it was the most active and well documented during this period. Though the Muslim Brotherhood had a well developed pragmatic political strategy, built on the acceptance of a differentiation between political and social spheres, this did not entail a negation of their Islamist ideology. Thus in a recent statement the Muslim Brotherhood stated:

We want a country of the Arab-Islamic identity, [in which] Islam is a religion and civilization of Muslim citizens, and cultural identity of the non-Muslim citizen. [And w]e want a country where everyone enjoys the shadow of sharia of God almighty through the consent and choice of his people.³⁹

What an “Arab-Islamic identity”, Islam as “civilization” and a “cultural identity” would mean in practice remains unclear. Maybe deliberately so, but this is not the main point here. What it signals is that for the Muslim Brotherhood, although the ideals of a constitutional republican democracy are very real, Islam is effectively given a place *above* all these practical considerations. This does not necessarily imply that these Islamist ideals will be imposed on other (non Islamist) citizens, but it does mean that Islam is still perceived as an overarching structuring entity that combines social and political activism - and above and beyond any type of worldly consideration.⁴⁰ This standpoint is reflected in institutional choices. As previously mentioned the Muslim Brotherhood would follow their Egyptian counterparts in creating a separate political party. But they would retain their social movement organization. Thereby implying there will be two projects for the MB in Syria after the revolution: creating and building up a political party, and rebuilding a foothold in Islamist social mobilization. The MB explicitly accepts social and political boundaries but sees itself as being part of both arenas.⁴¹ Although the party might be formally independent, there will be not one Syrian who will not realize that this party belongs to the MB; as is the case with Egyptian MB and the Freedom and Justice Party.

³⁹ Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (p. 2012b) *The Syria that We Want*, al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn fi Sūriya, September 27.

⁴⁰ Though staying close to the 2004 *Political Program for a Future Syria* these recent statements are more openly “Islamist”. Probably because of the increased strength of Salafist and Jihadist groups in the country.

⁴¹ A nice example of how this works in practice is a short matter of controversy over an alleged statement by the then just newly instated general Mohammad Riad al-Shaqfi. In 2010 he was quoted as saying that he wanted to strike a deal with Bashar al-Assad: that the MB could return as a *daʿwa* organization and it would give up its political ambitions. This was quickly denied by the organization, but it does show that the identity of a social *daʿwa* organization is still strong in the Syrian MB. See (s. Abdallah, 2011) *al-Bayanuni: I don't know of the speech of al-Shaqfi in the name of the Brotherhood*, all4syria.info, January 17.



All of the above actors were forced to become more explicit about their position vis-à-vis politics during the 2011-2013 uprising. We see, both on the level of discourse and practical activities, that differences between social and political activism are blurred - even with those that make a distinction between social and political activities. From the very beginning of the uprising many Syrians were looking to the *‘ulamā’* for what their political position would be regarding the uprising and the regime’s reaction. It became clear that it was impossible for them *not* to take a position, as many saw their role as not just social, but also very much political: their silence would be interpreted as legitimation of the al-Assad regime.⁴² Thus even if they wanted to, their political significance left no space to remain “independent” vis-à-vis an anti-regime uprising. As a result there were those shayks and *‘ulamā’* that either spoke out against the regime (for instance Mouaz al-khatib)⁴³ or condoned it (for instance Ahmad Hassoun and al-Buti).⁴⁴ As time went by, and the conflict became increasingly polarized, the former group of *‘ulamā’* became increasingly critical publicly and were subsequently harassed by the regime and forced to leave the country. A few main examples are the Rifai’ brothers, Ratib al-Nabulsi, Mohammad Habbash and Mouaz al-Khatib.⁴⁵ Some of them became central in organizing the uprising. Though retaining their “social” stance on public appearances, the Rifai’ brothers are said to be actively collecting and channeling money and arms to rebels inside Syria. Often these channels created by the *‘ulamā’* and religious shaykhs take place outside any formal institutional framework.⁴⁶

Additionally, some of the *‘ulamā’* that had been exiled in the 1980s began to speak out. One of the most infamous examples is Shaykh Adnan al-’Arour.⁴⁷ Having been exiled from Hama in the 1980s, he would become one of the central Salafist voices in the 2011 uprising. Through the satellite televised program *M‘a Sūriya Ḥata al-Naṣr* (“With Syria until Victory”) he encourages Syrians, often through explicit Islamic language, to go to the streets despite harsh regime repression. For instance, in a February 2012 “Letter to the Syrian People” he calls on Syrians to go to the streets “and not return to our homes [until

⁴² Another point in this respect: the vice president of the Association for Religious Scholars stated that he could imagine some *‘ulamā’* starting a political party. Vice President of the Syrian Council of *‘Ulamā’*. Amman (Jordan), August 10, 2011.

⁴³ al-Khaṭīb (p. 2012) *Interview at Sharia wa al-Hayat: Towards a new Intruiging Alliance*, al-Jazeera, August 18.

⁴⁴ Hassoun (2011) *Interview on al-Jazeera Channel*, al-Jazeera, March 26. See for a general overview of movements and splits, including the *‘ulamā’* in Syria: al-Hajj (s. 2012) *Islamic Movements and the Revolution in Syria*, Syrian Media Center, September 5.

⁴⁵ Another example is Mohammad Karim Rajih, one of the most senior shaykhs in Damascus, who publicly resigned on May 20 2011, see: Rajih (p. 2011) *The Resignation of Abdel Karim Rajih on al-Jazeera*, al-Jazeera, May 20.

⁴⁶ Interview Shaykh from Jisr as-Shourhour region, Rahanli (Turkey), August 26, 2012.

⁴⁷ For his personal YouTube channel, see www.youtube.com/user/AdnanAlarour.

the regime falls], however many of us they kill.”⁴⁸ During the first months of the uprising he was one of the central instigators of mobilization in the Idlib, Hama and Homs regions.⁴⁹ Gaining notoriety, around May-June 2011 large scale protests across these regions would often erupt after his program ended on Friday afternoons.⁵⁰ Though speeches are embedded in religious references and language, his logic to mobilize is mostly political: arguing that the repressive nature of the Syrian regime is the reason it should fall. He has also become increasingly active in funding and organizing the rebels inside Syria.⁵¹

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood is still largely following the position set out in their 2004 and 2012 documents. They increasingly emphasize the Islamist credentials within their program, probably as a reaction to the increasing power of Salafist movements. At the same time they remain attached to their acceptance of a civil democratic state. Thus in a recent statement the Muslim Brotherhood state: “[W]e want a country where everyone enjoys the shadow of sharia of God almighty”, but adding that this should happen “through the consent and choice of its people.”⁵² By being forced to be more explicit, the balancing act between pragmatic divergence and ideological convergence is brought to the fore.

Summarized, all of these actors see Islam as standing above the “secular” division between social and political spheres. Therefore the difference between Jabhat al-Nuṣra, the SIF and MB is in their practical implementation of an Islamist project, not in their Islamist credentials or their envisioned socio-political project. They mention Islam as a “source” for politics, or a “basis” of culture or civilization, or the “law of god on earth” - all are expressions of Islam in the public sphere in both its social and political expression. None would therefore argue to relegate Islam to the private sphere, or to “purify” the political sphere of religion. It is obvious that the translation of Islam in society and politics differs between these groups (and their particular wording used), but practical influences of these differences are impossible to pin down. What is exactly meant by a “source” or “basis” or the “law of God on earth” and how (the use of) these concepts relates to actions on the ground remains unclear. I contend here that state bureaucracies and public institutions have an important institutional role to play in how these two dynamics are brought together *in practice*,

⁴⁸ His programs are also posted on YouTube, in one case drawing more than 175,000 viewers in less than three months. See: al-ʿArṣūr (p. 2012) *Letter from Shaykh Adnan al-Arouy to the Syrian People*, youtube.com, February 4

⁴⁹ Interview with a young Syrian activist, Istanbul (Turkey), August 24, 2011.

⁵⁰ Ibid. His stardom would lessen somewhat at the end of this year, due to the political naivety of the shaykh. Because he had declared Hama and Homs “liberated” he invited harsh (air) bombardments by the regime. Taking many of the celebrating Syrians in these cities by surprise - with hundreds of casualties as a result. Young Islamist activist, Istanbul (Turkey), August 23, 2012.

⁵¹ Lund (s. 2012) *Syrian Jihadism*, Swedish Institute for International Affairs, September 14.

⁵² Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (2012b, September 27).

as these organizations provide the embodiment of a secularized state that is - to differing degrees - unavoidable for these movements. This, and other issues relating to state institutions, will be discussed in the next section.

7.3 Public Institutions and Bureaucracies

Although being a member of parliament (MP) does not give me any direct power to change policies, and as an independent I am always a minority against the Ba'ath MPs that vote as one block, being an MP has helped my project [aimed at renewal of religious speech]. There are a lot of conservative shaykhs that oppose me, and the position of MP has protected me against repression, I have been able to care for my center and constituency and I have been given a platform to voice my thoughts in the [state controlled] Thawra newspaper.⁵³

The above sections have shown how separated political and social activities exist within a perceived unified Islamist framework. Even those active under the al-Assad regime are not mere social actors. What ever their position is on the scale of pragmatism - either explicitly accepting contemporary social and political realities or following a more principled "fundamentalist" approach - they are faced with questions of how to reconcile an ideology that stands above and goes beyond daily realities with practical activism embedded within them. The combination of a perceived comprehensive system with practical distinctions, implies - despite the very different political contexts before and after the onset of the Syrian uprising - that Islamist movements face constant practical dilemmas on how to implement their ideology on the ground.

As argued for the Tunisian case in chapter 5, I contend that in Syria we can observe these dilemmas in Islamist mobilization around those institutions where regime power and society meet: in state institutions that have a direct influence on public life. This was the case before the Arab Spring and has continued - albeit in often new but historically contingent ways - since the start of the uprising. The practical interactions that emerged during the rule of the al-Assad's laid the foundations for how these dilemmas emerged during the uprising. In the next section we will first discuss emerging interaction around public institutions and state bureaucracies under Syrian authoritarian rule, before discussing how these issues (re)emerged in "liberated" areas during the uprising.

As previously discussed, in the era before the revolution, a variety of Islamist movements, religious elites and Islamic associations had become more politically

⁵³ Interview with a senior Shaykh, Damascus (Syria), March 11, 2009.

active.⁵⁴ With formal political power out of reach, they attempted to gain access to state resources through creating inroads into public institutions and bureaucracies. This could be clearly observed with the Qubaysiyat, Zayd movement and Salafists. Concerning the former, the effects were for instance observable in (primary) education in the Damascus area. Aimed at societal change, a specific strategy of the movement was to mobilize and spread within the education sector. They would generally not establish Islamic schools themselves, but would rather acquire existing ones. After buying a school, “additional” teaching material would be provided as well as religious social activities next to the - state prescribed - curriculum. In addition the teaching staff would follow strict Islamic dress and social codes.⁵⁵ An ex-Qubaysi estimated in 2012 that between 60 and 70 percent of the kindergartens in the capital had been taken over by the movement.⁵⁶ Hamidi ascribes the success of this approach to the fact that the Qubaysiyat can provide the level of elementary schooling that is usually found at (Christian) private schools but for far less money. Where the necessary financial means were derived from was unclear.⁵⁷

Salafists had a similar strategy but mainly with primary education. In 2010 a number of primary schools in the capital were closed due to apparent “Salafi” influences and a thousand teachers removed from their teaching positions.⁵⁸ This action was taken by the minister of education in an explicit attempt to safeguard the “secular” nature of state institutions against Islamist infiltration.⁵⁹ With the Zayd movement a similar dynamic is present, but directed more at state charitable associations. Rebuilding their movement after their return in the 1990s, Zayd-related businessmen proved able to take control of the Union of Charitable Associations in Damascus (see Pierret, 2009). Initially created to bolster the regimes Islamic credentials, and funded by an obligatory five percent deposit of all Islamic associations in the city, a close synergy between the Union and the Zayd movement emerged. It effectively meant that charitable activities of the Zayd movement were directly financed by a state enforced financial scheme.⁶⁰ They thereby not only infiltrated a state institutions, they

⁵⁴ Alhaj (s. 2011) *The Political Aspirations of Religious Groups in Syria*, Strategic Research and Communication Centre, January 12.

⁵⁵ Hamidi (s. 2006b) *They wear the dark blue veil and have a wide network for teaching and influence*, al-Ḥayāt, March 5.

⁵⁶ Interview ex-Qubaysi, Istanbul (Turkey), 2012, August 16.

⁵⁷ Hamidi (s. 2006b) *They wear the dark blue veil and have a wide network for teaching and influence*, al-Ḥayāt, March 5. Also see: Hamidi (s. 2006a) *Damascus Allows Public Activities for the Qubaysiyat*, al-Ḥayāt, May 3.

⁵⁸ France 24 (s. 2010, July 1) *Minister of Education decrees to Transfer Niqabs from field of education in defence of secularism*, France 24, July 1.

⁵⁹ The New York Times (s. 2010) *Syria’s Solidarity With Islamists Ends at Home*, The New York Times, September 4; and Zoepf (s. 2006) *In Syria, a quiet Islamic revival*, New York Times, August 26.

⁶⁰ Interview with a senior shaykh, Damascus (Syria), April 5, 2009. Interview with an employee at Hafiz an-Naima. Damascus (Syria), March 25, 2009.

were close to appropriating them.⁶¹ In all these three instances the regime eventually - around 2008-2009 - reasserted control over these movements. Fearing the increased power of the Zayd movement, in 2008 a wide-ranging campaign was reported where dozens of Islamic charitable associations were pacified.⁶² Islamic teaching institutes would soon follow.⁶³ Though the strategy of state encroachment existed it did not challenge the political dominance of the regime.

A similar dynamic could be observed concerning state administrations. Some shaykhs have said that some people within state bureaucracies (including the intelligence services) are more friendly vis-à-vis Islamic social mobilization than others. Specifically stating that with the amount of student that they have many end up working for state institutions, leaving them with inroads into the state apparatus. The above strategies had an effect on how state institutions are perceived by citizens. More secular activists describe whole municipalities as being “Islamist” or not; noting the spatial differentiation in implementation of laws along sectarian lines is due to the “Islamist nature” of key civil servants working in a given municipality. For instance it was said that it had become increasingly hard to get approval to start a bar outside the Christian quarters in Damascus. This was put down to the “Islamization” of the Damascus city council. “Thirty years ago there were a hundred bars outside the Damascus’ Christian areas; 10 years ago there were 10; now there is one: the journalists’ club.”⁶⁴ These (secular) activists also complained about the supposedly growing influence of (conservative) Sunni individuals on various levels of state institutions and legislative processes.⁶⁵

As discussed above, the *‘ulamā’* held crucial positions between movements and the regime. It is therefore not surprising that they also often held positions within state institutions. Many religious elites have (had) some formal position

⁶¹ It should be noted that all these three movements were quite localized and that these effects were most notable in the larger cities - and especially the capital. For instance, in an interview with a shaykh from the Jisr al-Shoughour region - arguably one of the most repressive areas of Syria - he had never heard of the Qubaysiyat. Additionally he found the strategies they used to be impossible in his region due to more extreme repression. Interview with a shaykh from the Jisr al-Shoughour region, Rahanli (Turkey), September, 2012.

⁶² Levant News (s. 2009a) *Salah Kiftaru Arrested on Charges Related to Work of the Islamic Kiftaru Congregation*, Levant News, July 1; Levant News (s. 2008) *Activists Confirm That the Syrian Authorities Continue ‘the Massacre of Charities and Social Organizations*, Levant News, December 4.

⁶³ France 24 (s. 2010) *Minister of Education decrees to Transfer Niqabs from field of education in defense of secularism*, France 24, July 1; Shikāy (s. 2010) *1,200 teachers removed from their teaching positions*, al-Rai, June 10.

⁶⁴ Interview with two senior secular activists, Damascus (Syria), April 12, 2009.

⁶⁵ Another example is the redrafting of the personal status law in 2009. When asked who produced the first draft of the personal status law, the regime or conservative Islamic movements, a secular activist said: “it is impossible for me to tell, maybe both. Seen from my side, they’re so close together... you can say it is as if they are married”. Interview with a secular activist, July 15, 2010.

in either a ministry, public organizations, or a political body that is, strictly speaking, not directly related to their religious project. Mohamed Habash, for instance, was a member of parliament. Shaykh Farfur is a special advisor to the Ministry of Awqaf. Shaykh Nabulsi has been member of various councils at the Ministry of Awqaf.⁶⁶ This is not to mention Hassoun and al-Buti, the mufti of the Syrian Republic and advisor to the president respectively. These types of positions are readily available because of the extensive institutional framework that exists for managing religious affairs. The above goes to show that under the Syrian authoritarian regime, where Islamist mobilization was supposedly “purely a-political” Islamic actors interact with, and to certain extent infiltrate, state bureaucracies and public institutions. ‘*Ulamā*’ are asked to provide religious legitimacy for the regime, in return for freedom to build religious projects within society. It draws the ‘*ulamā*’ and related movements close to state institutions and creates the impression that certain state bureaucracies and public institutions are “Islamized” in the process.

Public Institutions During the Uprising

A key difference between Tunisia and Syria is that in the latter case the uprising has evolved into a protracted civil war. This has a number of important consequences for observing the position of state bureaucracies and public institutions in Islamists interactions. Most obviously, those institutions that are still under the management of the regime are part and parcel of a polarized conflict between an increasingly Islamist opposition and the regime of al-Assad. Compounding these problems is the fact that the conflict is still in flux, rendering the relative stability needed for interaction to emerge absent and making an analysis challenging. Fortunately for this thesis, some areas have been “liberated” from government control, for instance the region around Idlib, Jisr al-Shourough and Aleppo in the north; the region around Dara’ and Quneitra in the south, parts of Deir ez-Zor in the east and Ar-Raqqa in the center. In these areas the regime lost practical influence on the ground for extended periods of time. Consequently, though, a collapse of service provision was taking place and an immediate need for some kind of governance emerged. Around these issues, of building governance structures, we can observe 1) how a cleavage between “Islamic” and “civil” management emerges and 2) how both more social and political expressions of Islamist mobilization intersected at the first practical experimentation of institution building in liberated areas.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ See their information on the web: Habash (p. 2010) *About Dr. Muhammad Habash*, altajdeed.org; Farfur (p. 2010) *The honorable Shaykh and Dr. Hīsam al-Dīn Farfur*, Al-fatihaonline.com; al-Nābulṣī (p. 2007) *Curriculum Vitae of Dr. Mohamad Rātīb al-Nābulṣī*, nabulsi.com, June 16.

⁶⁷ As the following section has been written as recently as possible, it was impossible to interview Syrians on these topics. Therefore the following overtly depends on public sources,

With the collapse of state institutions in liberated areas, slowly but steadily local councils emerged for the provision of basic services. Civil in nature, they were related to and grew out of local protest coordination committees and received - in theory at least - financial support from the Syrian National Coalition (NC) and Muslim Brotherhood. They therefore built on the civil institutional structure that emerged among activists at the onset of the uprising. Alongside, pre-existing religious institutions provide a foundation for service provision. Mosques, charitable associations, schools and courts, in addition to the *‘ulamā’* manning them, provided a well developed and accepted institutional structure for providing food aid, shelter, a justice system and schooling. Thus in the context of state collapse in areas outside government control, we see early on that mosques are used as hotels and for neighborhood gatherings and general community outreach.⁶⁸ Also, from early on local shaykhs and religious authorities were regularly used as advisory council in low profile legal cases and as community leaders to initiate social activism.⁶⁹ Though coexisting at the start, with time these “emergency” institutions developed further and the difference between these two approaches grew starker. In an April 2013 *al-Sharq al-Awsat* article it is noted that an open conflict is currently emerging between civil organizations (including the judiciary, which will be explored in more detail later) and Islamic ones governing liberated areas. An activist from Idlib is quoted as saying that local civil groups exist, but that they have a severe lack of (financial) resources as they are not receiving enough support from the NC. As result, in Idlib at least, a conglomerate of Islamic shaykhs, advocates and judges rule over the area.⁷⁰ In many other regions *Hay’at al-Shar‘iyya* (“sharia boards”) were formed that created a unified Islamic institutional structure to manage these liberated areas: for instance in Aleppo,⁷¹ but also in Raqqa and the eastern regions.⁷²

Interestingly Islamist movements and militias initially attempted to provide basic services in these regions themselves, but found this eventually impossible. In varying situations they were forced to turn to some type of proto-governance bodies. Being revivalist movements they turned to the sharia boards. Thus

including propaganda clips from various Islamist groups and English- and Arabic-language secondary newspaper articles.

⁶⁸ Concerning the latter two functions, see Aḥrār al-Shām al-Islāmī (p. 2013a) *Aleppo: Mosques regain their Positions in Building Society*, al-Jabha al-Islāmiyya al-Sūriyya, March 24.

⁶⁹ Interview Turkey 2012.

⁷⁰ al-Sharq al-Awsat (s. 2013a) *Struggle between “Civil Judiciary” and “Sharia Organizations” about Management of Affairs in Liberated Areas*, al-Sharq al-Awsat, April 11. The problem is also noted in other Arabic newspapers: Balūt (s. 2013) *al-Nusra and Hittu Compete for the Management of Syria*, al-Safir, April 12.

⁷¹ Aleppo Media Center (p. 2012) *The Statement of the Creation to the Sharia Board in Aleppo and Surroundings*, Aleppo Media Center, November 11.

⁷² Sharia Committee in the Eastern Regions (p. 2013) *a Military Parade of the Police of the Sharia Committee in the Eastern Regions*, youtube.com, March 9.

at the beginning of the emergence of these bodies it was mostly ‘ulamā’ that founded these organizations, increasingly Islamist movements and their militias attempted to gain influence over and a role in these types of Sharia Boards. In the following subsection I will start by describing a few practical initiatives of Islamist movements in liberated areas, before returning to the more general sharia boards. By doing so I can show how practical considerations lead to some form of proto-state institutions, which is quickly caught up in Islamist mobilization - providing us with an institutional mirror into Islamist dynamics in the liberated areas. Many examples of practical initiatives can be found, three of which I will mention here: basic service provision, schooling and the application in sharia through local courts.

When various areas were freed from government control service provision collapsed. With it, for instance, the production and distribution of food became problematic. This was particularly true of the distribution of flour, the functioning of bakeries and therefore general availability of bread. As a reaction various militias set up systems to both distribute flour and safeguard bakeries from armed looters. In a propaganda clip from the Syrian Islamic Front (SIF) these attempts are explicitly discussed, including interviewing a baker stating that the SIF have laid down the rule that bakeries are forbidden terrain for any armed group - including the SIF itself.⁷³ Jabhat an-Nuṣra (JN) has attempted similar strategies in stabilizing food supplies in liberated areas, especially urban areas such as Aleppo. For example, JN provides emergency food aid in Aleppo and al-Raqqā.⁷⁴ Additionally, there were attempts at providing basic schooling in liberated areas, after the education system collapsed. One of the clearest examples of this comes from the SIF. In another propaganda clip they show educational activities at various primary and secondary schools in Aleppo. As explained in the clip they worked together with existing teachers and schools to provide continued schooling in these areas.⁷⁵ As the above observations are based on material from these groups themselves, it is unclear to what extent these initiatives were either successful and/or could be attributed to the SIF. Despite these two caveats it is clear that these Islamist groups understand that legitimacy is derived from actual service provisions they can provide. In both examples Islamist groups do not aim to just implement sharia rules, but they aim to show their movements are more competent than other (non-Islamist) ones in providing services and governing these areas.⁷⁶

⁷³ Aḥrār al-Shām al-Islāmī (p. 2013c) *The Islamic Movement for the Liberation of the Levant: the Production of Bread and delivery to Families in Aleppo*, al-Jabha al-Islāmiya al-Sūriya, March 5.

⁷⁴ Jabhat al-Nuṣra (p. 2013a) *Jabhat al-Nuṣra in Raqqā, the Popular and Daʿwa Car Between People*, al-Manāra al-Bayḍāʾ, March 29.

⁷⁵ Aḥrār al-Shām al-Islāmī (p. 2013b) *The Islamic Movement for the Liberation of the Levant: Cultural and Daʿwa Activities in Aleppo*, al-Jabha al-Islāmiya al-Sūriya, March 11.

⁷⁶ An interesting side note in this respect is the interest that Jabhat al-Nuṣra has shown

In time, it became increasingly clear that some form of government structure was necessary. Having no existing state structure in place, and being revivalist movements, the Islamist groups present in these areas turned to religious based governance structures. These attempts began to be institutionalized in the earlier mentioned “sharia boards”.⁷⁷ Thus in Raqqa we see that Jabhat al-Nuṣra is forced to give up financial resources gained by taking over the regional bank to a sharia board.⁷⁸ In Aleppo a “sharia board” has emerged that manages everything from food distribution to police tasks,⁷⁹ while in the East Islamist groups founded a Sharia board for daily governance and intra-opposition conflict resolution.⁸⁰ These boards are specifically aimed at providing a complete system of governance - including police, service provision, food distribution - in an Islamic framework and are related to the Islamist militias present in the country. They also, of course, include a da‘wa department and a religious court system.⁸¹ They thereby provide the institutional arena where social and political Islamist activism meet, in a structure provided by religious authorities.

Unsurprisingly these Islamic governance bodies - for this is what the sharia boards really are - are highly contentious. Though a very recent phenomenon, a May 2013 article in the Lebanese newspaper al-Ḥayāt goes into detail of how these organizations developed a unified structure to provide some services and intra-Islamist conflict resolution in liberated areas. In Raqqa for instance, an activist stated that the body has been unable to manage its finances correctly and has grown increasingly authoritarian. This polarized society and nurtured a general animosity against these Islamic governance bodies.⁸² The above goes to show that even the more “fundamentalist” Islamist movements face questions

in public television in the country. In August 2012 Jabhat al-Nuṣra abducted and murdered Mohamad Said, a well known Syrian anchorman, for his role in supporting the regime. They stated in their declaration that “in the war that the regime is waging against Syria and her families, [...] it has used everything, including state television that is paid for by people to function.” See Jabhat al-Nuṣra (p. 2012) *Declaration Number 41: Killing of Muhammad Sa‘īd*, Jabhat al-Nuṣra, August. Also see al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ (s. 2012c) *First Military Airplane Shot Down in Aleppo*, al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, August 5.

⁷⁷ With the MB active from outside, they are disconnected from these bodies, and have not commented on their existence.

⁷⁸ al-Ḥayāt (p. 2013) *The Islamic Boards.. Imperfect Justice and the Establishment of a New Dictatorship for Syria*, al-Ḥayāt, May 19.

⁷⁹ Aleppo Media Center (p. 2012) *The Statement of the Creation to the Sharia Board in Aleppo and Surroundings*, Aleppo Media Center, November 11.

⁸⁰ Sharia Committee in the Eastern Regions (p. 2013) *a Military Parade of the Police of the Sharia Committee in the Eastern Regions*, youtube.com, March 9.

⁸¹ For a clear example see the founding document of the “Eastern Sharia Board” under the YouTube clip parading their police and armed forces. Sharia Committee in the Eastern Regions (p. 2013) *A Military Parade of the Police of the Sharia Board in the Eastern Regions*, youtube.com, March 9.

⁸² al-Ḥayāt (p. 2013) *The Islamic Boards.. Imperfect Justice and the Establishment of a New Dictatorship for Syria*, al-Ḥayāt, May 19.

over how to implement an Islamic system in practice.⁸³ Though not showing the type of mobilization vis-à-vis state institutional reforms, as in the case of Tunisia, tensions evolve around the *creation* of an “Islamic” state apparatus. Needless to say, this creation has been far from unproblematic.

Through all these examples we see the difference between various Islamist groups such as the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, Syrian Islamic Front and Jabhat al-Nuṣra - including the role that previously discussed religious shaykhs and ‘ulamā’ played in these interactions. These were related to two issues: having to govern a certain area - instead of only fighting a regime - and having to work with pre-existing religious, state and public institutions. These were issues of “rebuilding” public institutions, and showed struggles between key stakeholders in the Islamist project on how to practically construct a functioning Islamic system. Though answers to related dilemmas differed between movements, we can see that all of the above examples were faced by Islamist movements in some fashion or another.

Conclusion

All the above issues discussed are examples of political power intersecting with society through public institutions. Though these interactions are currently changing rapidly due to the unstable political context, in essence the logic remains the same: social mobilization is aided by the Islamization of the state, Islamization of the state can (and should) be aided by a political regime. Where the regime is not dominated by an Islamist party, a game of legitimacy emerges. Where the regime is weakened, attempts at Islamizing state structures immediately emerge. Islamists in society push the state to reflect the “Islamic nature” of Syria. In a situation of state collapse, this can mean the creation of Islamic governance structures. As such, it shows that in order to understand Islamism - or Islam and politics - in Syria during the Arab Spring, one must go beyond the actions of those “political” Islamists proper (may it be the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, liberal political Islamist movements, Salafists or Jihadists). Understanding Islamism should rather be about actors trying to shape public life, through both political and social means - through implementing “Islamic policies”, societal projects, or Islamizing those institutions governing public life.



By exploring these issues, the previous four chapters have provided both an historical and contemporary overview of issues concerning the interaction within

⁸³ al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ (s. 2013a) *Struggle between “Civil Judiciary” and “Sharia Organizations” about Management of Affairs in Liberated Areas*, al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, April 11. See also: Human Rights Watch (s. 2012a) *Syria: End Opposition Use of Torture, Executions*, Human Rights Watch, September 17.

the Islamist project between social and political spheres - and the role of state institutions within them. In doing so, it provided a narrative of how the central questions of this research works out in practice becomes clear. We will now turn our attention to a more precise paired comparison, using a Social Movement Studies inspired analytical framework to theorize how social and political Islamist activism interact and what positions state institutions can have in these interactions.

Part III

Changing the Rules?

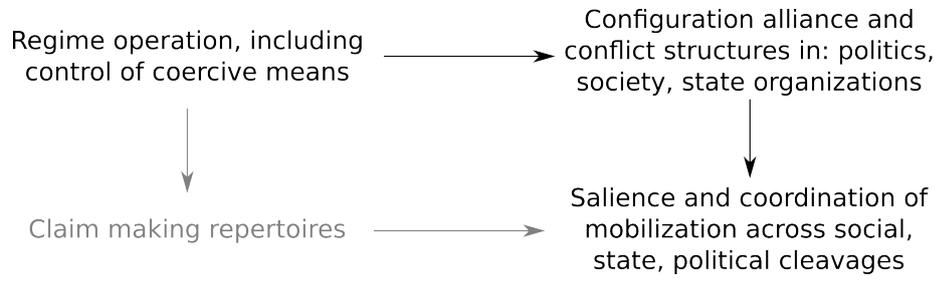
Chapter 8

An Arab Spring: Configuration of Actors

Now that we have completed our case-by-case discussion, we turn to the interaction between social mobilization, the political arena and state institutions through a paired comparison between Syria and Tunisia. In this chapter I use insights from Tilly (1978) and his concept of “CATNETs”, which I develop further using Bartolini and Mair (1990), on the political salience of social divisions, to discuss the salience of an Islamist identity within society. I will thereby attempt to provide some initial clues to the two central questions of this thesis: why do most Islamist movements, including those traditionally opposed to party politics, accept and organize along a formal division between political and social arenas, and why is this secularized politicization of the Islamist project not matched by a general weakened salience of the Islamist ideology? In doing so I will provide an overview of the relevant actors and arenas in our paired comparison.

Bartolini and Mair (1990) have been mostly concerned with the extent to which social cleavages are translated into social mobilization and/or political (voting) behavior. Especially concerning the latter academic discussions, research has been heavily based on quantitative analysis correlating specific social variables with electoral behavior. My aim here is not to provide a quantitative analysis establishing a correlation between types of Islamist mobilization in society, political strategies of Islamic parties and their positions within state institutions. Though interesting as it would be, practical conditions on the ground make it currently impossible to collect sufficient reliable quantifiable data. Rather, my aim here is to provide an initial outline of the strength of the Islamist social identity, its representation in the political arena, and how state institutions are related to both.

Figure 8.1: Interrelation Political, Societal and Bureaucratic configurations



Source: adapted from Tilly (2006, p.149).

The chapter is structured as follows: after the outline of the argumentation, an introductory overview is given of the relevant actors in society, politics and state institutions. Following this I explore alliance and conflict structures that have emerged and their relative politicization after the Arab Spring. Finally, I discuss how the traditional position of state bureaucracies and public institutions in these countries - between the political and social sphere - has influenced how Islamist mobilization re-emerged. In doing so I put forward an argumentation that is at the basis of the next two chapters.

State Institutions' Social Cleavages

This chapter argues that state institutions and their bureaucrats can be perceived to have a position in specific, politically salient, social cleavages around which mobilization occurs. In addition to implying a level of autonomy on the side of civil servants, it also means that with political liberalizations state institutions can be implicitly perceived as not only implementor of policies but also actors in social struggles. I argue that this dynamic is particularly obvious in the “Islamist”-“secular” cleavage in many Arab societies. Beyond these Arab similarities, differences in the strength of the Islamic sphere, the participation of Islamist parties in the political sphere, and the availability of Islamist mobilization in society, have meant that interactions between Islamists and state institutions develop their own particularities in the two cases discussed here.

The argument is drawn in figure 8.1.¹ The first observation is that a regime operates in specific ways. This does not only include formal rules on what type of mobilization is supported, permitted or forbidden and (the application of) coercive means to force citizens to abide by these rules (Tilly, 2006). It also includes formal and informal regime operations to (de)politicize its citizens, co-opt specific groups and/or suppress dissent. The creation of a corporatist regime

¹ The chapter focuses mainly on the relation in black.

is one example (for a discussion on Egypt and corporatism, see Bianchi, 1989), another strategy can be to bind social groups to the political regime through state-led clientelism. Second it is argued that these modes of operation have an influence on what claim-making repertoires emerge and how the alliance and conflict structures permeate and relate to the political sphere, society and state institutions. Third, this combines with the fact that politicized cleavages, as a direct result of clientelism, permeate state institutions.

After the Arab Spring, we need to take the above into consideration in order to understand the salience and coordination of post-revolution Islamist mobilization. I argue that the previous social position of these organizations in relation to the political regime has led to a perception of state institutions being positioned along a secular-Islamist divide. Institutionalized power is not just enshrined in (formal political) elite structures, but it is present throughout political and state institutions, and popular organizations. Therefore incumbents will always be present within multiple spheres of institutionalized power - rendering the image of social forces mobilizing against a political regime misguided (see also Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012b).

The above has played out differently in Syria and Tunisia. In Syria the uprising has not only entrenched existing structures, it has also caused new actors to emerge or old ones to reenter center stage. It has shown the ever present differences between “Islamist” and “non-Islamists” opposition to the ruling regime headed by Bashar al-Assad. In the context of state collapse these issues have emerged in discussing the characteristics of a future Syrian state apparatus. In Tunisia, though the revolution has resulted in enormous political change, old structures reappear. Both the Islamist tensions have come to the surface, in addition to the reappearance of traditional religious actors. The task at hand is therefore to explore the differences and similarities between Tunisia and Syria in how actors in society and politics are changing their relation to each other - and what position state institutions have regarding both groups.

8.1 Politics, Society, State

A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power [...] Each field prescribes its particular values and possesses its own regulative principles (Wacquant in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pp.16-17).

The Social Arena

To gain an insight into how the configuration of actors has played out in both Syria and Tunisia, we need to explore the perceived social cleavages and their level of organization in society. The first thing to mention in this respect is the

difference in religious cleavages and their relative level of organization: in Syria and Tunisia the plurality and organizational density of social cleavages sects differs greatly. In Syria there are multiple religious (and ethnic) sects: in total there are about 17, including Sunni Muslims (around 74 percent), Christians of various denominations, and Shia, Alawi and Ismaeli. In addition, about 9 percent of the Sunni Muslims are Kurds.² All these religious and ethnic groups have their own internal religious associational structures, although differing in their organizational development. Religious institutions can own property but this property is administered by the state.³ In addition, family and clan ties still structure Syrian society, especially outside the larger urban areas. Though religious groups lack formal institutionalization in many (rural) parts of the country they are (still) an important part of daily social reality. They interlink with religious or ethnic affiliation to position individuals within society.⁴

In Tunisia the situation is somewhat different. First of all, 99 percent of Tunisians are Sunni Muslim. There are a few small communities of Jews, for instance in the city of Jerba.⁵ For a comparative overview, see table 8.1 (page 169). The institutional structure of public religion in Tunisia had been effectively destroyed. In addition elite family structures exist (Green, 1978), but they are currently far less of a defining part of social life than is the case in Syria. Tunisians could therefore truthfully say that “they were all similar” and that religion did not create any meaningful cleavages within society as it did not have an organizational structure. But what the emergence of Ennahda in the 1990s has shown was that it did have a strong cultural distinctiveness and, to some extent, a social cohesiveness (see also the discussion in chapter 4). It had been mostly the economically disadvantaged that had been drawn to the Islamist party (Perkins, 2004).

In both countries space for social mobilization was restricted, closely monitored and structured by the regime. In Syria this space had been somewhat increased since the 2000s - especially after initial political liberalizations that were cut short by early 2001 - but all of these charitable and cultural NGOs were closely monitored. Additionally all larger social organizations have necessarily close links to the regime. The president of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, for instance (Abdul Rahman Attar) is a notable Syrian businessman and president of the Syrian International Chamber of Commerce.⁶ The wife of the al-Assad

² Central Intelligence Agency (s. 2012) *The World Factbook: Syria*, CIA, March 4.

³ To what extent this power is centralized depends on the structure of the religious sect. The Christian denomination all have a center in church structures. This is not the case in Sunni Islam - although Sufi groups are more hierarchical than more Salafist minded groups.

⁴ Both (sur)name and Syrian accent are key markers to position someone within society. The question, in Syrian dialect, *shu ismak* (“what’s your name”) is never about just your name. It is about placing a person within a social field.

⁵ Central Intelligence Agency (s. 2010) *The World Factbook: Tunisia*, CIA, January 12.

⁶ See Attar Group (p. 2007) *Dr. Abdul Rahman Attar*, attargroup.com.

Table 8.1: General Comparison of Religion in Syria and Tunisia

Country	Syria	Tunisia
Inhabitants (in million) ^a	20.8	10.7
Sunni Muslims ^b	75%	99%
Shia Muslims	15%	0.2%
Jews	0%	0%
Christians	7%	0%
Other denominations	3%	0%

^a Data on population size retrieved from The World Bank (s. 2013a,b).

^b Data on religious affiliation retrieved from www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook.

- Asma al-Akhras - started her own social initiatives, for instance the Syrian Trust for Development, that soon became one of the largest in the country.⁷ One of the only spheres of social mobilization that retained some of its independent agency was the religious one. Large Islamic schools and institutes were present in Aleppo and Damascus, in addition to a number of smaller Islamic associations, that were the prime framework for charitable and education activities. Many informal Islamic schools were scattered across the country. In Tunisia under President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, NGOs were far more numerous than in Syria (around 12,000) providing a positive image of the country at the outside. But as became clear after the revolution, these organizations were either in decline, pacified, or controlled by the regime.⁸ Charitable activities were dominated by the state run national “26/26” fund. The Tunisian first lady, as did her Syrian counterpart, became one of the main actors within social activism. Thus in both countries social activities were highly structured by the political regime. The Arab Spring would change this fundamentally.

In this general context, before the Arab spring, Islamist movements were present in both countries, though their public mobilization was severely limited by government repression and by successful policies to “de-salienize” Islam related social cleavages. In Syria, despite repression, Salafists were present as were various *da'wa* movements (such as the Qubaysiyat women’s movement) but none of these movements had formal approval to be present publicly. Every time one of these movements gained a considerable level of independent internal organizational they would face effective repression.⁹ In Tunisia there were reli-

⁷ See their website <http://www.syriatrust.sy>. At the time of writing Asma al-Akhras’ name is absent, but the organization is stated to be sponsored by the Syrian Computer Society - of which al-Assad used to be the head before becoming president in 2000.

⁸ Interview with a senior civil servant at the First Ministry, Tunis (Tunisia) October 26, 2011.

⁹ A practical example is the peace and non-violence movement from the Damascus suburb of Daria’: a group of youngsters decided to provide public works, specifically cleaning the

gious movements (with Salafists present but repressed) but overall their room for activism was even more curtailed than in Syria. Despite this curtailment increasing public religiosity was clearly visible and was testament to the success of *daʿwa* movements active inside Tunisia. Around 2007 a (very) limited possibility for Islamic educational activities was opened in response. After the Arab Spring Islamists movements became more openly present in both countries.¹⁰ In Syria various “Salafist” revivalist movements have come to the fore,¹¹ as have more pragmatic movements such as the Syrian National Movement, and - last but not least - the Muslim Brotherhood. The same holds true for Tunisia. For instance Hizb al-Tahrīr, and Salafists of various guises have become increasingly vocal and publicly active. Compared to Syria such public shows of Salafist movements are a relatively new phenomenon, but despite their relative weakness they have been highly visible in public life and in protests.¹²

The Political Arena

Formally in Syria and (in pre-revolutionary) Tunisia political power was concentrated in the executive branches of the government and, specifically, the president. For instance in Syria (before constitutional changes in February 2012) the president had the formal power to lay down and supervise general policy (article 94), veto laws approved by the people assembly (article 98) and order the dissolution of the people’s assembly (article 107). More strikingly still, the assembly convenes three times a year - in between which the president assumed legislative authority (article 111). Lastly, the president appoints ministers and they are accountable to the president (article 117).¹³ Despite constitutional changes in 2012, little has changed in practice. There was a similar situation in Tunisia before the revolution. For instance the president directed the general policy of the state, defined its basic implementation (article 49); and the president appointed the prime minister and - through proposals made by same prime minister - the other members of the government (Article 50).¹⁴ In both instances institutionalized power is fully centered around the president. Both

streets in their neighborhoods, out of a religious conviction. They hoped to show the beneficial character of active public religion. Though their activism was limited in scale, all were arrested in 2009 and sent to jail for a number of years. Interview with an exiled member of the local coordination committee, Istanbul (Turkey), August 24, 2011.

¹⁰ Interview with Syrian secular opposition leader from Dara’, Ramtha (Jordan), July 26, 2011. See Shadid (s. 2011) *City of Hama Offers Glimpse of a Syria After al-Assad*, the New York Times, July 20.

¹¹ A main proponent is ʿAdnān al-Arʿūr, calling via television and YouTube for the continued protest against and fall of al-Assad, provides Salafism with a voice in the Syrian uprising.

¹² For instance in anti-Nesma protests, and at the University of Manouba protests. See generally chapter 5.

¹³ Syrian Arab Republic (p. 1973, article 1 and 3) *Article 1 and 3 of the Syrian Constitution*, March 13.

¹⁴ Tunisian Republic (p. 1959) *Article 1 and 2 of the Tunisian Constitution*, June 1.

countries had elections, but before 2011 these elections were “managed” successfully through voting laws and a range of other measures to assure dominance of the ruling party (Sadiki, 2002a; Schedler, 2006).

The ruling party in Syria is the Ba’ath party. The Syrian political regime is headed by a president (al-Assad) from the Alawi sect, but is secular in its ideology. A national “patriotic and progressive front” was created in the 1970s as an umbrella organization in which the “opposition” participated in politics under the guidance of the Ba’ath party (see Sottimano and Selvik, 2008). This national progressive front has remained the only formal arena for opposition in Syria; practically neutralizing any “formalized” opposition parties. Additionally, in the people’s assembly, a third of the seats were reserved for independent candidates (Selvik, 2008, p.60). This percentage ensured there was always a two-third majority for the Ba’ath party and national progressive front, so presidential decrees are not opposed. Most of these seats for independent candidates are taken by entrepreneurs, and no unofficial parties are represented within this quota of seats (Selvik, 2008, p. 59). Although a new constitution was introduced during the Syrian uprising, little practical change could be observed. In Tunisia the ruling party before the revolution was the RCD (*Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique*; in English: Constitutional Democratic Rally). Through voting lists in the elections the overall majority of the RCD party was also always ensured. Ben Ali effectively sidelined opposition parties by providing a set amount of seats within parliament (around 10 percent) which these parties accepted: it ensured that they had a voice in politics, when true political liberalization was out of question (see Perkins, 2004; Erdle, 2010).

In both instances the ruling parties were more than normal political parties. As explained in part II (see sections 4.1 and 6.1) they emerged from broad based social movements aimed at independence (Tunisia) or socialist reforms (Syria). As a result of this background, the parties were explicitly seen as an institutional vehicle to reach out to society in all parts of the country, and to bind the people to their state. For instance the Ba’ath party, following article 8 of the pre-2012 Syrian constitution, leads the “patriotic and progressive front” with the aim to “unify the resources of the people’s masses and place them at the service of the Arab nation’s goals.”¹⁵ In Tunisia a similar situation was present. As noted in a 1971 PSD (later RCD) resolution the aims of the party were stated as: “educating the population and forming the sound patriotism of the youth; [... and] inciting the goodwill for action, for sacrifice, for perfecting the intellect and spirituality and for the development of human potential.”¹⁶ The situation directly before the Arab Spring was that these parties were tools for ensuring

¹⁵ Syrian Arab Republic (p. 1973, article 1 and 3) *Article 1 and 3 of the previous Syrian Constitution*, March 13.

¹⁶ Parti Socialiste Destourien (p. 1971) *Excerpts from the Resolution of General Policy, Adopted by the 8th Congress of PSD*, PSD, October 15, p.46.

the allegiance of the population to the political regime by institutionalizing clientalism through party structures: one had to be member of the RCD or Ba'ath party if one wanted a job in a public institution. As such they were not so much corporatist structures (as they were not regime institutionalized conduits for interest representation) but rather an essential institution for distributing state resources. As the state in both countries is also the largest economic actor this seemed to ensure popular support for the ruling regime.

But access to political (and economic) power was in both cases restrictive. In Syria access was influenced by existing sectarian and clan ties. Power was concentrated around individuals and groups that had close informal (and often familial) ties to the president. Important individuals are, for instance, Rami Makhluf – one of the most powerful Syrian businessman¹⁷ – and Asef Shawkat – deputy chief of staff of the Syrian army. These individuals are the top of a political elite that exists within opaque informal networks of individual relations closely related to various state institutions (Perthes, 1997, p.132-202). Both Makhluf and Shawkat have family ties to the president; most essential and sensitive (security) positions are taken by individuals from the clan of al-Assad and often from his home village of Qardaha.¹⁸ The Tunisian authoritarian regime developed a similar approach as political (and economic) power became increasingly restrictive and structured around family relations. In the years preceding the revolution political and economic power was increasingly concentrated around family members of Ben Ali. For instance Belhassem Trabelsi, the brother of the president's wife Leila Ben Ali, owned the Bank of Tunisia, hotel chains, radio and TV channels in addition to a sugar refinery and car dealership. Saher al-Matri, the president's son-in-law, owned the "Islamic" Zeytuna Bank in addition to the Attijari Bank; he was also big in newspapers (as-Sabah) and radio (Zeytuna FM).¹⁹ Therefore, although clan and family structures are less pervasive as in Syria, Tunisia also gained a particular informal twist to institutionalized power, in which state control over economic, legal and security resources were used to bind particular societal groups and families to the political regime.

With decision-making power centered around the president, the Ministry of Interior was the nexus around which key decisions were taken and implemented. In Tunisia the political police, Ben Ali's feared security service, was part of the interior ministry. In Syria the interior ministry and various army branches

¹⁷ Due to popular discontent specifically aimed at him, his assets were frozen during the 2011-2012 uprising. He declared he would focus on charitable activities.

¹⁸ As different groups (and families) within Syrian political elites have dynamic and diverging interests and opinions, this results in fragmentation of the political regime. Within these elites, groups are in constant struggle over access to decision-making power (Perthes, 2004b).

¹⁹ See The Economist (s. 2011) *Tunisia: Ali Baba gone, but what about the 40 thieves?*, The Economist, January 20. See also section 4.3 and 6.3.

all have their own security services.²⁰ The security services and army have substantial independence and power, making al-Assad more of a linchpin than king maker, around which various groups of influence (present in the various security services and army divisions) evolve. In Tunisia the presidency was, before the revolution, also the focus of power, but the army and intelligence services had less privileged positions in the structure of institutionalized power. The political police and the ministry which supervised it were more directly linked to Ben Ali, rendering elite power structures less decentralized as in Syria - but arguably more fragile in the face of social upheaval.

State Bureaucracies and Public Institutions

To assess the position of state bureaucracies in these social cleavages, we have to take a step back and assess state structures in both Syria and Tunisia regarding both society and the religious sphere specifically. The two countries have a state structure that is divided at national, regional (in Syria *muhāfaẓa* and in Tunisia *wilāya*) and local level. In both countries institutionalized power was centralized at the executive and national level. Though regional levels retained some power, decision-making power was focused at the presidency, Ministry of Interior and security services at the national level. Thus in Tunisia the Department of Religious Affairs on the *regional* level reported directly to the Ministry of Interior on the *national* one - without consulting with either governor or ministry of religious affairs. In Syria local and regional branches of the security services all report back to their national headquarters, outside of any other state structure. The end result for those in society was the same: a machinery existed for repression of society that stood outside and above any legal framework and was disconnected from any political decision-making body. This machinery permeated every level of state and society.

What is important for the general argument here is that informal political relations described above extended through state institutions into society. The logic of informal power in political elites is mirrored by and related to a logic of building personal prosperity based on informal relationships with people with economic and political power. Consequently, in a situation where ruling authoritarian parties are the institutional framework for disseminating state resources through clientalistic networks to key constituencies, the state apparatus will become affected in return. These institutions will start to reflect the social characteristics of the groups they serve. In part this is true in reality (employing only those that fit the correct social characteristics) and in part it is perceived (as a social estrangement to a state apparatus that seems to serve the few and

²⁰ Interview with secular activists, Damascus (Syria), April 20, 2009. Formally there are four main security branches (civilian, interior, military and air force) but Syrians would sometimes mention 16 or more security services.

Table 8.2: Number of Islamic Institutions (per million inhabitants)

Country ^a	Syria	Tunisia
Mosques	8.000 (400) ^e	4641 (464) ^h
<i>Tahfīz</i> institutes ^b	720 (36) ^f	200 (20) ⁱ
<i>Tafsīr</i> institutes ^c	22 (1.1) ^f	0 (0.0) ^j
Number of Civil Servants ^d	8636 (430) ^g	80 (8) ^k

^a Population data from The World Bank (s. 2013a) *Syrian Arab Republic*, worldbank.org; and The World Bank (s. 2013b) *Tunisia*, worldbank.org.

^b Defined as institutes aimed at memorizing the Quran. In Syria this includes the various al-Assad centers (120) and private ones (600), in Tunisia various branches of the Association for Quranic schools.

^c Defined as institutes aimed at interpreting the Quran and Sunna. In Syria these are Sharia' vocational schools, in addition to other private religious institutes.

^d The number of civil servants working at the Ministry of *Awqāf* (Syria) and Ministry of Religious Affairs (Tunisia).

^e As of late 2005, see Hamidi (s. 2005) *Ministry of Awqaf Trains 150 Preachers to Renew the Discourse...*, al-Ḥayāt, August 8.

^f As of December 2006, see Hamidi (s. 2012) *The number of Mosques in Syria is around 8.000*, al-sham.net, March 1.

^g As of December 2010, see Central Bureau of Statistics Syria (s. 2011a) *Distribution of government employees by institution and sex in 31/12/2010*, Central Bureau of Statistics Syria.

^h As of December 2009, see Tunisian Government (s. 2012b) *Religious information - Mosques and Prayer Houses*, Tunisian Government, September.

ⁱ Interview with an official from the Association of Quranic Schools, Tunis (Tunisia), 2012.

^j In Tunisia these institutes were not present before the revolution.

^k Estimates by the former minister of religious affairs, interview in Cartage (Tunis), February 27, 2011.

not the collective). If one wanted a position in a state institution, one needed to be part of the RCD party. The same holds true for the Ba'ath in Syria: without membership there is no job, no income, and no relations to individuals within ministries needed to start any kind of social or economic initiative. But, as the political regime and the state become increasingly fused with society, this point also held more generally: for proper jobs, also at private companies, one needed to show allegiance to the regime - party membership was a way to do this. In Syria this logic is summarized in the word *wāṣṭa* ("intermediary") and the concept of *Awlād al-Mas'ulīn* ("children of the officials"). In Tunisia *kutf* ("shoulder") is used; in other Arab countries the words are different but the logic is the same: one needs informal relations to gain access to institutionalized power and related resources; and the ruling party is the institutional framework in which these informal relations are created and nurtured.

Finally, we examine the state institutions managing the religious sphere. In Syria the state structure managing the religious sphere is more elaborate than it is in Tunisia. As a result in Syria, al-Assad's regime has an extensive for-

mal institutional structure for managing religious (and Islamic) activism. State authorities control the appointments of formal mufti positions, appointments of imams, and financial flows through (Islamic) charitable associations. The Ministry of Awqaf directs all religious activities (for instance assigning imams to mosques and managing local and national mufti positions); the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor controls all financial flows to charitable associations; and the ministries of Education and Higher Education are mostly concerned with the accreditation of Islamic teaching institutes (Ziadeh, 2008, p. 68-70). Apart from attempts to suppress contentious, and more explicitly political, forms of Islamic mobilization, this institutional framework is aimed at supporting “state-sanctioned” Islamic interpretations that focus on individual piety as the accepted mode of religious expression.²¹ Ironically, this extensive nature of state institutions reflects the relative failure of the regime to completely curtail Islamic activism. This is in contrast to Tunisia.

The Tunisian state structure governing Islamic activism is much less elaborate. Before the revolution, two ministries were key in governing religious activism: the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Interior.²² All religious functionaries in the religious sphere are direct state employees - there are no (independent) religious organizations present. As Islamic activism was mostly thought of as a security issue, the Ministry of Interior had the most sway over issues concerning the religious sphere and religious activism. The role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs was mostly coordinating religious events such as the yearly *Hajj* to Mekka, practical matters at mosques (such as the availability of water and electricity) and providing small allowances for people working at mosques.²³ On a regional level, there were deputies for religious affairs that functioned below the regional governor but had direct contact with the Ministry of Interior and its political police. There was also a *wāʿiẓ*, religious representatives, at the regional and local levels, which have a more religious function and report to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. There was an independent but state-sponsored (and until the revolution, monopolist) organization concerned with memorizing the Quran.²⁴

8.2 Islamist Cleavages

The strength of a social cleavage [can be measured] in terms of the three dimensions of social homogeneity, organizational density, and

²¹ At the same time though, formal state Islam has never gained the dominant position that it has, for instance, in Egypt.

²² For Tunisia see interview al-Habib bin Taher, Tunis (Tunisia), November 16, 2011.

²³ Interview with daily Imam from Binzert (Tunisia), February 24, 2011. See for instance al-Ṣarīh (s. 2011) *Tomorrow first Hajj tour*, al-Ṣarīh, October 15.

²⁴ Interview with the vice president of the Association for Quranic Schools, Tunis (Tunisia), November 3, 2011.

cultural distinctiveness. As should be evident, a cleavage which is characterized by a homogeneous social base, a dense organizational network, and a clearly defined level of cultural distinctiveness will prove extremely strong and will produce an immensely effective closure of social relationships (Bartolini and Mair, 1990, p.207).

“Islamists” versus “Non-Islamist”

With a general overview of relevant actors in society, politics, and state institutions completed, we can now explore the social cleavage at the center of the thesis’ analysis: between “Islamists” and “non-Islamists”. As the thesis focuses on the social and political mobilization in the Islamist project, the main focus here is on exploring how cognitive boundaries between “Islamists” and others are constructed and how they relate to organizational networks and social bases.²⁵ Subsequently, I will examine how these groups have translated these boundaries into mobilization in political and social arenas. The same approach is taken for boundaries between Islamist movements within the Islamist project. I contend that the Islamist divide in Syria and Tunisia is highly salient both before and after the Arab Spring. Despite internal Islamist fragmentation the religious basis of the Islamist ideology means that there is a clear organizational division between Islamists and non-Islamists: Islamists have access to, though they are independent from, religious institutions. Additionally, because internal Islamist fragmentation is to a far lesser extent mirrored in organizational networks, internal schisms tend not to reverberate beyond the general Islamist cleavage. Finally, I argue that the organizational network behind the Islamist project is to a large extent excluded from state institutions, due to a history of repression and selective social co-optation by the previous authoritarian regime. This means that state institutions are both in reality and perception “non-Islamist”.

The cleavage between “Islamists” and “non-Islamists” is present in both countries and easily observable through social polarization. In both case polarization around this cleavage is commonplace - both before and after the Arab Spring. For instance in Syria around discussions about (the drafting of) the personal status laws. These type of laws outline parental recognition of children, inheritance matters, and inter-sectarian marriages, among other social related matters; and they draw on religious jurisprudence (Fox, 2006). In Syria, in early 2009, a reform of this law was initiated, and the first draft proposed proved surprisingly religiously conservative. It resulted in an outcry from liberal parts of society, pitting secular movements against conservative Islamic ones.²⁶ A more liberal draft of the new law was then created, but was subsequently never implemented due to pressure by conservative movements.²⁷ This

²⁵ In Tillyian parlance: their “level of CATNETness”.

²⁶ Haysu (s. 2010) *In Defense of Secularism*, thara-sy.com, August 21.

²⁷ Interview with a senior Damascus-based shaykh, Damascus (Syria), July 15, 2010.

Islamist-non-Islamist polarization became increasingly obvious during the 2011-2013 uprising. As the uprising turned more and more Islamist, liberal actors decried the end of the “secular” uprising and Islamists began to speak increasingly in terms of *Jihād* (“holy war”). In Tunisia, the cleavage between secular and Islamist had already been present in the late 1980s with the rise of the “Movement of Islamic Tendency” (MTI) but had been subsequently effectively repressed by the regime. Many secular Tunisians remained silent to the repression of Islamists due to their fears of Islamists creating a “Tunisian Iran”. These cleavages resurfaced and quickly polarized after the 2011 revolution. An example of contentious mobilization along this cleavage is the uproar around the showing of the “anti-Islam” movie *Persepolis* by the Nesma television channel in the weeks before the October 2011 elections. Airing the film sparked furious reactions from more conservative parts of Tunisian society and thousands marched in the capital to express their anger. Following the electoral victory of the Islamist Ennahda, the division between seculars and Islamists only gained in salience; with hesitance on the side of Ennahda to reign in mobilization of the more fundamentalist Salafist leading to generally more polarization between Islamists and seculars.

The question is to what extent this cognitive cleavage is reflected in (organizational) networks. When we take a look at the general organizational structure of Islamist movements versus secular ones, access to religious institutions starts to matter. Though religious activities as such are not part of Islamist mobilization, institutionalized religion provides the organizational backdrop for these movements. This is true for both their historic emergence and contemporary activism. Many of these movements started out as *daʿwa* (“Islamic Call”) movements around mosques and religious institutes that subsequently became more organized and mobilized. Though this organization was independent from the religious sphere, their emergence and subsequent activism was closely linked to it. Thus, for instance, in Syria the MB was the result of a union in the 1940s of various local Islamist social organizations that had been set up by *ʿulamāʾ* in the decades before. The organizations were often linked to specific mosques and/or religious institutes. The MB remained active in social *daʿwa* through these institutes in the following decades. In Tunisia Ennahda emerged as a social *daʿwa* movement from an organization called *Association Pour la Sauvegarde du Coran* that had been founded by former *Zeytuna* students. They would subsequently be mostly active within and around mosques in the country. Thus, despite their independent institutionalization, these movements have always had a close interrelation with the religious sphere and its institutions. Because of their religious ideology the religious sphere can, and is, used as an arena for mobilization. As this religious institutional context is unavailable to secular movements, the secular-Islamist divide tends to be reflected in organizational structures.

In both cases, historically, mosques and religious teaching organizations are “taken over” by these movements. Institutes are infiltrated and their students become part of particular Islamist movements. Boundaries between religious authorities, the *‘ulamā’* and Islamists are blurred as some *‘ulamā’* become mobilized. For a movement family that was born out of a religious critique it is not surprising that it will, in its mobilized practice, have the tendency to make incursions into the religious sphere. Thus you see that social Islamist mobilizations - schools, charitable associations and the like - are often (informally) linked to a specific religious institution that they emanated from. Many of the resulting movements, despite having their own collective identity, then retain some of their allegiance to these religious institutions. It was therefore unsurprising that the Syrian and Tunisian authoritarian political regimes, as a reaction to *Islamist* mobilization, began to closely administer the *religious* sphere in both countries.

“Islamists” versus “Islamists”

From the brief discussion above it is clear that there is a specific organizational structure that supports the cognitive division between Islamists and non-Islamists. But this is not to say Islamists are unified: they are not. To a large extent the cognitive differences within the Islamist project can be said to build upon religious ideological bases, stemming from different strategic choices made concerning the relation between religion, politics and the public sphere in combination with collective identities of specific movements. These choices and identities are built on religious ideologies. As discussed in section 3.3 various movements have different approaches to what “true Islam” is, what the value is of tradition Islamic schools in defining *sharia* and how to practically apply these insights to social realities. Groups define themselves by being the “true” representative of Islamist mobilization and questioning the authority of other groups over their Islamic credentials. For instance, in Syria, Hizb al-Tahrir has complained that other Islamist movements are not “true” Islamists as they do not demand an Islamic state,²⁸ as Islamists militias related to *Jabhat al-Nuṣra* did. Similarly in Tunisia, Salafists say that Nahdaoui (members from the Ennahda movement) do not understand what Islam is. The opposite side accuses

²⁸ For instance in a communique it was stated that: “Hizb ut-Tahrir warns them about the evil they have done, both those who label themselves as secularists and those who label themselves as Islamists. Indeed al-Sham is the heart of the abode of Islam. Its pact and covenant is to rule by Islam. Everything else is scum that passes away in vain, returning to those who adopted it with disgrace in this world and punishment in the hereafter. We warn, more so, those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, from the consequence of adopting the rule of Jahiliyya instead of the rule of Islam”. (p. Hizb al-Taḥrīr, 2012) *The Heart of the Abode of Islam Is al-Sham... its Covenant Is but Rule by Islam*, hizb-ut-tahrir.org, March 28.

Salafists of being too radical and fundamentalists, ignoring hundreds of years of insights from religious scholars.

These cognitive differences are reflected in organizational networks. Thus we see that in Syria opposition alliances are created around various Salafist ideologies: Jabhat al-Nuṣra being Jihadist, the Syrian Islamic Front Salafist revivalist, and the Syrian (Islamic) Liberation Front more pragmatically Salafist.²⁹ In Tunisia we see that the Salafists are internally debating to organize or not, as ideologically it is most contrary to their ideals (Merone and Cavatorta, 2012). This in addition to the regular organizations and parties that all have their particular backgrounds, such as HuT, Ennahda and the MB. Of course, as discussed earlier, these organizational boundaries do not match ideological ones perfectly, there are “Salafist” wings in both Ennahda and the Syrian MB for instance.

Though cognitive boundaries exist between these movements that are to some extent matched by organizational networks, there is no structural organizational basis for their differentiation (as there is between Islamists and non-Islamists mobilization). Thus they generally mobilize around the same (religious) institutions and boundaries between these movements are often not clearly set. When the US embassy in Tunisia was attacked, there were immediately stories that Ennahda leaders from its “Salafist wing” had been in contact with the group behind the attack: Anṣār al-Islām.³⁰ In Syria these tendencies are even stronger due to the internal fragmentation of the MB, whereby some within the movement are closer to the Salafist movement than others.³¹

To make things more complicated, traditional religious elites are closely interlinked with these schisms. At first instance many Islamists will state they have nothing to do with their traditional religious counterparts. But in both Syria and Tunisia the schism between traditional religious authorities and Islamist movements should be problematized.³² Religious authorities have become intertwined with Islamist movements on both a personal and ideological level. With it, its schisms are also reflected among the religious authorities. Concerning domestic ‘*ulamā*’ in Syria for instance, the al-Fatah al-Islam Institute is close to conservative Islamic movements and its Kiftaru counterpart to the more liberal ones, while al-Buti is more conservative than “liberal outliers” such as Shaykh Habash. As the uprising in Syria unfolded, the ‘*ulamā*’ became split and were forced to take a position in favor or against the regime. Additionally, the ‘*ulamā*’ previously exiled from Syria became more mobilized; the Syrian

²⁹ See Lund (s. 2012) *Syrian Jihadism*, Swedish Institute for International Affairs, September 14; and Lund (s. 2013) *Syria's Salafi Insurgents: The Rise of the Syrian Islamic Front*, Swedish Institute for International Affairs, March.

³⁰ al-Maghreb al-Siāsī (s. 2012) *Contacts between Ennahda and Anṣār al-Islām*, al-Maghreb as-Siāsī, September 23.

³¹ See Sa‘ad al-Dīn (p. 2010a) *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Memoirs and Memories - 1*, Maktabat al-Madbūlī.

³² Interview with a Syrian secular activist, Ramtha (Jordan), July 26, 2011.

league of *‘ulamā’* has for instance taken a clear political stance on the uprising.³³ One of the most popular figures of the uprising, as another example, was the Salafist shaykh and *‘ālim* Adnan al-Arouf.

National particularities of traditional Islamic authorities influence the extent to which Islamist movements are reflected among them. In Tunisia we see that traditional religious authorities are relatively weak and underdeveloped.³⁴ The last and most well known shaykh is Bin Ashour, who died in 1962.³⁵ In Syria, in contrast, the religious sphere is relatively strong.³⁶ Islamic scholars and shaykhs such as al-Buti, Nabulsi and Adnan al-Arouf command great respect and are often famous internationally. In Tunisia this has never been the case. Due to the lack of traditional religious elites the religious sphere in Tunisia was rather “empty” before the revolution. It was only in 2006 that other movements (such as the salafists and HuT) emerged. In Tunisia it can be expected that new religious elites will emerge from the evolving sphere of Islamic activism. This (re)emergence of a religious elites will happen in the broader context of various Islamist movements currently present in Tunisia. In Syria in contrast, the religious sphere has always experienced many more currents - due to the strength and relative independence of institutionalized religion. The fact that many Islamic shaykhs have been exiled from Syria, means that these shaykhs come under influence of the country they live in. The result is very different views between shaykhs who reside in Europe (mainly Germany and the UK), those that reside in the Gulf (mainly Qatar and Saudi Arabia) and those that reside in various neighboring countries (currently Turkey, Iraq and Jordan). This geographic spread and strength of religious authorities has resulted in ideological divergences and conflict structures of the “family” of Islamist movements being reflected among the *‘Ulamā’*.³⁷

The above goes to show that Islamists are far from united. Religious ideological differences exist regarding how to translate religion to contemporary reality, which are then translated into specific movement identities and organizational structures. But, despite all these internal differences, it is undeniable that a common Islamist identity exists and that it is organizationally distinct.

³³ It might also be, for instance, that *‘ulamā’* will start political parties after a possible revolution. Interview with two Syrian activists, Amman (Jordan), August 9, 2011.

³⁴ There are currently no well-known religious scholars whose authority is acknowledged by most actors in society, state and politics. Interview with two Ennahda activists, Tunis (Tunisia), October 3, 2011.

³⁵ Tellingly his children would also become well known figures in the country, but in rather different ways: heading the Tunisian communist party.

³⁶ Interview with the vice-president of the Association of Syrian *‘Ulamā’*, Amman (Jordan), August 10, 2011.

³⁷ To some extent the same applies to Tunisia, where the exile of Ennahda’s Rashid Ghanounshi to the UK influenced his views; to some extent “democratizing” Islamist ideology. This in turn created a rift later on with the more fundamentalist Salafists in the country.

Many religious leaders know each other and are in contact with each other, even though internal tensions might persist.

Politicization

Before the revolution these cleavages were excluded from the political arena, at the will of the formal ruling party. In Tunisia any form of religion was absent from the political arena. In Syria the situation was somewhat different with some ‘*ulamā*’ and shaykhs running for independent seats in the parliament (and some winning) but none were running on a “religious inspired” political platform.³⁸ After the Arab Spring it is striking to observe that there is one main Islamist party in Tunisia. This is partly due to formal recognition (Ennahda was the only Islamist political party to be formalized before the 23 October 2011 elections) but it also reflects that internal Islamist divisions have not (yet) been translated into political cleavages. The next two chapters will show that this is probably a temporary situation. In Syria a political sphere has opened outside existing political institutions through the formation of various opposition bodies. The relation between the political and social representations of the main Islamists groups differs between Syria and Tunisia. In Tunisia Ennahda *became* a political party, while in Syria the Muslim Brotherhood will *form* a party. This - again, as we will see in the next two chapters - can have a decisive effect on how their Islamist project evolves.

What is similar in both cases is that the social cleavage between religious-secular has historically been polarized and politicized. In Syria the Muslim Brotherhood has been active as a political party since the late 1940s and was the main party in an Islamist uprising against the regime in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In Tunisia an Islamist movement, the *Mouvement du Tendance Islamique* (MTI) emerged in the late 1960s and would evolve into the movement/party of Ennahda. In the late 1970s through the 1980s Islamist movements would find themselves in direct opposition to the regime and eventually be effectively repressed. In both cases the political regime won against an Islamist “uprising” and subsequently repressed any forms of public politicization along these lines. In both cases the main political Islamist party (in Tunisia Ennahda, in Syria the Muslim Brotherhood) was exiled. But the extent to which the political regime had a clear secular ideology was very different in the two cases. In Tunisia, throughout the rule of Habib Bourguiba, religious properties were nationalized, and religious institutes curtailed; all imams were direct state employees and had no possibility for other income (and with it independence). A policy of societal secularization was implemented. As a result Tunisia appeared to be one of the most secular-minded countries in the Arab world (Charrad, 1997). In Syria this was also the case but to a far lesser extent. A group of ‘*ulamā*’ always

³⁸ Actually none of the independent candidates really had a program, see Selvik (2008).

remained in the country (for an extended discussion, see sections 4.2 and 6.2). Large religious institutes remained and were active formally - and many more informally.

8.3 Islamism and State Institutions

Formal Organizations [and bureaucracies] are very specific kinds of field[s]. This is because of their particular rigid, formalized structures - structures that define the relationships between subunits within the field and the rules regulating field conduct more precisely and legalistically than is true for other kinds of fields (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012b, 1.1494-1508).

State within Society

Tunisia experienced authoritarian clientelistic rule for the entirety of its post-independence existence. Syria has been an authoritarian state since 1967. In all this time state institutions have been used as tool to bind society to a political regime. We have to assess what this has meant for the position of state institutions in society in general and Islamist movements specifically. Subsequently we have to assess what influence this can have on Islamist mobilization.

As detailed above, state institutions have been closely embedded in society through years of state-led clientelism. This does not only mean that state institutions, through their informal linkages to social actors, become embedded within society as such. It also means that this embeddedness is not equal throughout society - as some groups are more eligible for state clientelism than others. I argue that uneven eligibility can be, and in the case of Tunisia and Syria was, influenced by the main social cleavages of “religious” versus “secular”. This was the result of one or more of four mechanisms. It can be a result of “chain hiring”:³⁹ a specific state institutions can tend to hire people from a social-political or geographic background due to a hiring process that is primarily build on informal relations. As a result, specific Tunisian state institutions, though all present in the capital, could have civil servants that were overrepresented from specific regions.⁴⁰ Second, there is the influence of the security services on state incorporation. Individuals from social groups that have been at odds with the political regime have a relative high chance of being barred from government jobs by these organizations. As any decision or hiring process has to go through the security services, they act as the institutionalized gatekeepers to state based clientelism. In Syria for instance, any person whose family member had been linked to the Muslim Brotherhood - a substantial group within the

³⁹ See also Peters (2001).

⁴⁰ Interview with independent Islamist activist, Medenine (Tunisia), November 12, 2011.

Syrian Sunni community - would never be able to apply for government jobs. As such, those that were somehow related to activists on the Islamist side of the social cleavage were by and large barred from entering jobs as civil servants. Third, in both instances you had to be a member of the ruling party to apply for government positions. This meant that those that out of conviction would not become part of the ruling party had no chance of obtaining a government post. It can be assumed that many Islamist leaning people were part of this group and would never be able to apply. In Tunisia religious dress (including Hijab) was also forbidden in state institutions. Fourth, and maybe most influential, the political networks that were at the basis of the state-led clientelism tended to draw people from secular groups in society as these were linked to the political and social ideology of the ruling regime.

To what extent specific mechanisms were at work is not the issue here, but I do argue that their combined influence meant that state bureaucracies and public institutions were disconnected from the networks behind social Islamist mobilization. Therefore, I am arguing that it was not just Islamists activists as such that were barred, but also many others among the social bases and networks that constituted the pool of potential recruits for Islamist movements. In other words: secular citizens were overrepresented to the detriment of more conservative ones.

Cleavages within State Organizations

The above had a crucial influence on how mobilization emerged vis-à-vis state institutions. Due to the centrality of the Islamist struggle in many Arab countries, including Syria and Tunisia, the Islamist divide became one of the most salient in both society and politics. The political regime, crucially, had a specific position vis-à-vis this cleavage - on the secular side of this divide.⁴¹ A political elite - especially an authoritarian one - can to a high degree be autonomous from the society it rules. If it then uses state institutions to pacify society through party led clientelism, it ends up positioning these institutions alongside particular social cleavages.⁴² Therefore, it has to be recognized that the make-up of state institutions can reflect the position of (previous) regime elites in social struggles. Especially if these social cleavages are highly salient, the political regime was independent from society, it had a clear position in these divides and, finally, if the political regime had the time and capacity to transform state institutions. All of this applies - though to a different extent - to Tunisia, Syria and many other Arab states, especially concerning the Islamist/non-Islamist divide.

⁴¹ Interview with head Ennahda in Kairouan, Kairouan (Tunisia), October 12, 2011.

⁴² Interview with a Jihadi Islamist, Medenine (Tunisia), October 15, 2011; interview with a civil servant at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Tunis (Tunisia), November 3, 2011; Interview with an independent Islamist activist, Medenine (Tunisia), November 12, 2011.

The extent to which the above is true in practice - if there is a difference in the general view of civil servants (at specific organizations and bureaucracies) in comparison to overall society - is hard to ascertain at this stage. But to a large extent it does not matter, because the very fact that state institutions were so closely embedded within society, meant that people *perceived* them as belonging to certain groups. This perception often differed between various ministries, public institutions or municipalities. But the very fact that state institutions were placed along an “Islamist” divide showed that the cleavage mattered. Thus in Syria we can observe that secular activists would bemoan the “Islamist” nature of the Damascus municipality, and would describe one minister as being “Islamist” and another not. And in Tunisia, though the effect was more limited, we can still see that some civil servants would be perceived as closer to Islamic social mobilization than others. To what extent these difference are “true” is besides the point here, the fact is that even before the Arab Spring state institutions and civil servants were placed along a “secular” “Islamist” divide. Those who were “proper” Muslims were then singled out to aid Islamic initiatives. This would be especially crucial with the regional *wāli* (“governor”) who was both accessible and yielded powers in approving local social initiatives. Additionally, to people within the intelligence services could warn others if some form of repression was imminent. In effect, brokers would be sought in both contexts to bridge the divide between religious activism and state institutions. Necessitated by their activism in such an uncertain and constrained context, it was repression from the same regime that drew these activists to the find inroads into state institutions. It was a brokerage that was directly influenced by the perception that activists had of specific civil servants as being “good Muslims” or not.

Conclusion

In general I have argued that although Tunisia and Syria are currently on diverging paths concerning their polities, similarities exist in the configuration of polities, political Islamist parties, Islamist movements and state institutions. In both instances state institutions have been finely integrated into society, thereby becoming as much implementer of policies as well as an independent actor controlling crucial resources for initiating collective mobilization. They have been influenced by the explicit position the previous political regime had in social cleavages. As a result, I contend that state institutions executing regime policies can be perceived to have a position within social and political boundaries (for this proposition page, see 20). Though the political context differed (and differs) drastically between the two countries these point applies to both contexts. With institutionalized power not only vested in political elites but also

in state institutions, mobilization will be influenced not only by (the perceived configuration of) actors in the political sphere but also in state institutions.

After the uprisings we see that many of the internal differentiations in these perceptions are overwritten by a polarized social-political divide. Thus state institutions, in Tunisia in this case, are perceived as the “last bastion” of the previous regime and overtly secular in nature. We see that there are people saying the press is “secular” and not open to “social forces”.⁴³ The same with universities and specific ministries. In Syria we can see that in building a proto-state apparatus tensions between civil and religious approaches emerge. The dynamics of these conflicts, structured by the issues discussed in this chapter, will be the topic of the next two chapters.

⁴³ See: Brik (s. 2012) *Debate on Privatization of Media in Tunisia*, al-Jazeera, April 21.

Chapter 9

Dilemmas of Engagement: Mobilization Strategies

The following chapter uses the concept of strategies to explore the role of state institutions in Islamist mobilization. Thereby I will provide some hypotheses to the two central questions of this thesis. In doing so, I will mostly revert back to the interpretation of a “strategic approach” as proposed by Jasper (2006) without neglecting other (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012a) and earlier contributions (such as Ganz, 2000; Goodwin and Jasper, 2003; Polletta, 2006).

As discussed before (see chapter 2, page 25) the strategic approach was born out of the discussion on the structural bias in Social Movement Studies and, on the other side, the complete absence of structure in game theory.¹ The strategic approach in studies on social movements tries to find a middle ground between these two extremes of structural and agency models of mobilization, by appreciating that actors have agency through available choices, but that these choices are circumscribed and their results influenced by structures. Therefore, we can understand strategies as “the conceptual link we make between the targeting, timing and tactics with which we mobilize and deploy [structured] resources and the outcomes we hope to achieve [from interactions with other actors]” (Ganz, 2003, p.181). Unsurprising for such a broad approach, over time a large and very diverse body of scholarly work has emerged concerning strategic interaction, although mostly outside SMS.² Within SMS, scholars have focused on what characteristics of actors and organizations influence the capacity and effectiveness of strategic choices in similar contexts (Ganz, 2000); how culture defines strategic boundaries of actors in specific settings (operationalized as

¹ Game theory tends to neglects all context, or structures, that circumscribe choices available to actors. Therefore the “strategic corridors” available to players, in pure game theory, only emerge as lessons taken from previous games - not from a structural context as such.

² Strategies as research approach have been much more prolific in business and organization studies (see for instance Porter, 1991; Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998).

narratives in Polletta, 2006); how strategies and social fields are interrelated (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012b,a); or on what structural conditions specific dilemmas are created concerning strategic interactions (Jasper, 2006). The aim here is not to critique or add to the strategic approach as such; it is to look at the influence (of the perceived social embeddedness) of state institutions on strategic dilemmas in Islamist mobilization. As I wish to highlight certain dilemmas Islamist face, I rather uncritically follow Jasper (2006) in his approach as he takes micro-level dilemmas as the central focus. I subsequently show how our understanding of Islamist movements' strategies is enriched when we take state institutions into consideration.

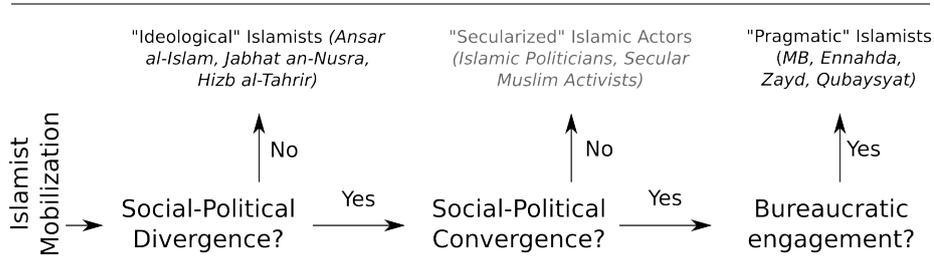
The availability of choices in strategic dilemmas is circumscribed by the structural characteristics of the context in which actors are active, and by other actors involved in the strategic interaction. Following Jasper (2004) an exploration of strategies therefore involves, first, *players*. Players can both be simple (individuals) or complex (groups) and are the units that face dilemmas and are involved in strategic interactions with other players. Second, every player has *goals*. These goals can be explicit or implicit, and change over time - but each player has an idea what he/she/it wants to achieve. Third, actors strategize in specific *arenas*: these are social contexts that have specific rules and resources (that may be formalized or not) that circumscribe what actions are encouraged, permissible, and/or (im)possible. Examples are the media, courts, town hall meetings. Fourth, each player has specific *resources and skills* that it can use. The value of specific skills and resources is dependent on what arena one is active in. Finally, there are *audiences* that players try to reach through their action. Many actions are not just aimed at opponents, they are also aimed at activating audiences to support players embroiled in strategic interactions (for a more elaborate discussion, see Jasper, 2004, 2006).

Unity in Divergence

This chapter argues that dynamics within contemporary Islamist movements are, in large part, derived from strategic dilemmas concerning the application of a religious ideology to a contemporary reality. More precisely, I argue that these strategic dilemmas evolve around how to position Islamist movements in both politics and society, while concurrently retaining a shared Islamist goal.

Specifically, the argumentation can be subdivided in three parts. First, I reiterate the observation that the division between political and social mobilization is increasingly internalized in the overall Islamist project. This means that Islamist movements increasingly organize either as political parties or, on the other side, as various "front" organizations representing social Islamist mobilization. Though the adherence differs between movements and actors -

Figure 9.1: An Analytical Overview of Central Strategic Dilemmas



the extent to which movements and parties diverge is not a given - every Islamist actor is acutely aware of the pressure to conform to these divides. This divergence therefore implies a pressure to adhere to existing institutionalized *arenas* in modern states, with clear delineations between society, state institutions and formal politics. The existence of a dilemma concerning divergence in mobilization is reflected in the fact that actors make explicit choices concerning the transformation of Islamist Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) to political parties and their position vis-à-vis Islamist social movements present in society.

Second, I reiterate the observation that both social and political forms of Islamism speak to similar *audiences*. Again, the extent to which this convergence in audience applies is not a given. But all Islamist movements and parties are constantly confronted with choices of how to interact with other Islamists both in the political and social arenas, as they are active, in the eyes of supporters, within a single unified project. This is exemplified by dilemmas over how to (not) engage with Islamist political/social counterparts. What is puzzling in this respect is the seemingly enduring contradictory dynamic: on one side Islamists are diverging practically as they are forced to become active in different arenas; on the other they converge around a shared (both political and social) Islamist message. One would expect Islamist mobilization to either increasingly grow apart *or* fuse together again. Neither is happening. I argue that to explain this endurance in times of pragmatism, we can take a look at how these two types of Islamist activism interact in reaction to the perceived societal position of state institutions.

Third, I explore how the interaction between social and political realms of Islamism evolves through their position vis-à-vis state bureaucracies and public institutions. State institutions are perceived to have a position in social cleavages. Political Islamist parties can address, as a political aim, the “secular bias” of (emerging or existing) state institutions. Policies put forward by Islamist political parties can be surprisingly “non-Islamist” as it is not only about setting policies, but also about controlling the state’s apparatus. Islamists movements

from their side, then, can encroach on state bureaucracies, in search of like-minded civil servants with access to state resources. Therefore “non-Islamist” state bureaucracies can be outflanked - so to speak - approaching it from both the top (the political arena) and the bottom (society). Naturally this strategy plays out somewhat differently in a context of state formation or state reform, but the essence remains the same: social and political Islamist mobilization coalesces around influencing the social identity of state institutions. The strategic considerations underlying the convergence over state institutions can provide a shared program for an Islamist project under strain to abide by a social-political divide.

When we take a look at Syria and Tunisia, I will show that state institutions have become crucial actors in strategic choices concerning Islamist mobilization in both countries. But important differences exist between the two cases, notably in the existence of traditional religious elites, the position of the regime within the salient Islamist-secular (in Tunisia) and sectarian divides (in Syria) and the strength of state institutions following the start of the Arab Spring. It will become clear that many of these differences directly relate to pre-revolutionary positions of religious authorities, political Islamist parties and Islamist social mobilization and influence the dilemmas which emerge after the Arab Spring. I will show that general dilemmas are similar, but specificities differ according to structural differences between the two cases.

The current chapter is structured around specific dilemmas. I first observe dilemmas concerning the divergence between social and political Islamist mobilization, and explore the strategic considerations behind them. Following this, I take the same approach for the continued close interrelation between the two. Finally the discussion on the convergence within the Islamist project is taken as the starting point to discuss the possible position of state bureaucracies on Islamist mobilization, showing how state institutions have been central in cases where dilemmas related to the interaction between social and political mobilization emerged in the Islamist project.³

9.1 Who Are We?

The Basket Dilemma. One strategic dilemma centers around the choice to focus on one arena, or when to coordinate on multiple fronts. Putting “all your eggs in one basket” or dividing them

³ A word of caution. By discussing strategic considerations of actors, there is a danger of putting yourself into someone else’s shoes. Interviewees are often not completely open about their motives and strategies. I have tried, through methodological triangulation (building the analysis on interviews, documents from relevant SMOs, newspaper articles as well as other secondary sources) to overcome this issue.

over multiple. If you can coordinate your activities well on multiple fronts, this may be appealing. Your choice may depend on the extent to which activities in different arenas threaten the common identity or organization. If you think you can win it, entering a “decisive engagement” makes sense. If you are not sure, it may be wiser to spread the conflict out over a number of arenas, no single one of which will then be decisive. But activism in different arena might imply fragmenting activities, and thereby risking reputational damage (Adapted from Jasper, 2006, p.146).

Diverging Mobilization

This dilemma can be summarized as the choice of the extent to which one becomes active in the either formal political arena, social arena or attempts to remain active in both. The dilemma emerges most clearly after the Arab Spring, as Islamists find that their public re-emergence is increasingly structured by a political-social divide. Partly because formalized political rules and public opinion force Islamists to be either party or movement, in part it is due to the exile of political Islamist movements during the previous authoritarian regime. Due to effective repression, the better organized movements (specifically the MB in Syria and Ennahda in Tunisia) were exiled and cut of from their social base. In exile they effectively transformed into political parties, whether they wanted to or not, as this was the only approach to having practical influence from abroad. This transformation is also due to the mainstream disillusion with revolutionary Islamist approaches. Though the change has been gradual and often non-intentional, the Arab Spring and its subsequent political changes have brought this dilemma to the fore. Though all Islamist movements are faced with this dilemma, some choose to retain - against the overall tendency - their revolutionary outlook. When we translate this observation to a strategic approach, we can state that there is an increasing acceptance of existing *arenas* among Islamists. Traditionally - in the 1950s until the 1980s - a revolutionary approach was much more pervasive: aimed at recreating all social, political and state structures from the ground up. This approach in essence negated and neglected any structural arenas previously present in the country and necessitated creating a new “Islamic” reality. This revolutionary strategy has lost much of its appeal among Islamist movements and broader society as being unrealistic and destructive.⁴ There is a broad practical acceptance that one needs to abide by the social and political arenas that exist within a country.

⁴ Note that we can see here a close correspondence with the general decline of revolutionary ideologies after the fall of communism. Therefore the process described here has as much to do with a changing world context as it has with changing socio-political dynamics within the Arab world.

The practical result of the above is that Islamists have had to adjust their strategies to deal with this division and to the specific arenas in which they are active. An Islamist SMO has to abide by a different set of (implicit and explicit) rules than an Islamist political party does. Consequently there are different mobilization strategies for political and social arenas. The political sphere is about political and economic programs, and above all it is about pragmatism. Social mobilization is about building a collectivity and mobilizing it around (idealist) goals. Movements are forced to make a choice: either become a political party, or remain an (a-political) Islamist movement. Concerning political Islamic parties, both the Tunisian Ennahda and Syrian MB have been forced to “play by the rules” of the arena in which they are active; meaning they have had to strategize their relation to the social sphere. For instance, when we consider two principle treaties of the Syrian MB, *The Islamic Revolution in Syria and its Programs* (The Leadership of the Islamic Revolution in Syria, 1980) and *The Political Project for the Future Syria* (Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, 2004), we see a clear difference in how the relation between society and politics is dealt with. The earlier document speaks about an “Islamic revolution” that not only touches upon the political - but also the social sphere. A similar point holds true for the Tunisian Ennahda. In its development from movement to party it has become increasingly political and pragmatic; turning away from societal mobilization to focus on becoming a political party.

These changes, and pragmatic acceptance of social and political arenas, is not new. It is rather a gradual process in which many Islamists have adapted their strategies during the last decades. The Syrian MB has been increasingly arguing for adherence to human rights and (civil) democratic rule since the 1990s. The Tunisian Ennahda has done so since its early days and increasingly since the 1980s (when it started participating as a political party). With the Arab Spring it has become clear that the same is true of many other Islamic movements. The large majority of Islamist movements organized themselves as either associations, social movement “front” organizations or political parties, thereby following existing social and political divisions.⁵ We have for instance the Front of Islamic Associations in Tunisia and the Hafiz al-Na‘ima charitable association (related to the Zayd movement) in Syria. They are just two examples of a plethora of social movement organizations emerging. On the political side we have the Syrian National Movement and even, to some extent, various Salafist movements and Hizb al-Tahrir, in addition to Ennahda and the MB. The above dynamic is, I argue, relatively similar in Tunisia and Syria (and other Arab countries). This is due to a general failure of revolutionary approaches within

⁵ But it is important to recognize that the acceptance of the current social and political reality does not necessarily entail a denial of the underlying goal to (re)structure this reality. Recognizing that existing arenas have to be a starting point for mobilization does not, I argue, mean the end of Islamism as such.

the Islamist project, in addition to a shared historical trajectory concerning the relation between political power and Islamist mobilization.

An Emerging Divergence

Before the Arab Spring in both Tunisia and Syria, in the context of close government observation (and often outright repression and exile of political Islamist) there were indications that social Islamist movements were active.⁶ Though reliable survey data is scarce, numerous observers have made similar observations - also before the Arab Spring.⁷ For instance the increasingly visible public religiosity has been noted through the increased number of women wearing the veil. Though present long before, movements such as the Qubaysiyat and Zayd in Syria grew enormously in power and membership throughout the decade before the Arab Spring. Up to the point that the regime felt it had to clamp down on these movements in 2010.⁸ In Tunisia the regime saw it necessary to open up somewhat to Islamic mobilization - by creating Quranic schools - to at least be able to regulate, or observe, Islamic activism somewhat. In both countries the regime felt the need to react to the increased power of public religiosity.

In both countries movements that were present in the period before the revolution that aimed at social change remained explicitly a-political.⁹ Part of the reason was repression, as a Syrian participant in home teachings states: “we don’t discuss politics or other sensitive issues. The teachers are too scared that something will happen.”¹⁰ Similar opinions were voiced by various social Islamist activists in Tunisia about Islamic social mobilization before the revolution: any tendency to talk politics would immediately get you in trouble. In Tunisia even having a long beard would be enough of a political statement in this respect.¹¹ Another reason is that there seems to be a real conviction of the importance of separating religion from politics. This is for instance true with the Qubaysiyat that preach social change but leave public activism (and thus politics) to their husbands. As it is true of many Islamists - including many

⁶ In both countries Salafist movements exist, as do Hizb al-Tahrir and Da‘wa wa Tablīgh; although to (very) different degree of strength. But apart from these fundamentalist movements, there are movements that build on a more liberal religious framework (an example is the Syrian Islamic Democracy Movement) and more general, less well defined, Islamic activism.

⁷ Concerning interviews in Syria: interview with western diplomat, Damascus (Syria), March 4, 2009. Also in (scholarly) articles and reports there was attention to the increased religiosity in Arab societies. See: (s. Human Rights Watch, 2009a) *Far From Justice: Syrias Supreme State Security Court*, Human Rights Watch, February 1.

⁸ Fahim (s. 2010) *Syria Moves to Curb Influence of Muslim Conservatives*, The New York Times, September 3.

⁹ Interview with shaykha, Damascus (Syria), July 15, 2010; Interview with management of Quran school, Greater Tunis (Tunisia), March 13, 2011

¹⁰ Interview with youngster at Abu Nour Institute, Damascus (Syria), July 29, 2010.

¹¹ For instance, interview with the director of a religious school. Hay an-Nasr, Tunis (Tunisia), March 3, 2011.

Salafists - emerging after the Tunisian revolution: many became active in associations and schools aimed at social change. Of the overall Islamist group there was only a small minority that negated current realities by opposing institutionalization in either political party or social institution. These changes were by and large not perceived as dilemmas before the Arab Spring as the context was so constraining that there was no other choice - by exiling political expressions of Islamism the authoritarian regime created a *de facto* separation.

After the Arab Spring started, this situation fundamentally changed. In both countries the political sphere changed drastically: in Tunisia there was a revolution, in Syria large parts of the country slipped out of government control. As a result the political sphere opened up to Islamists, resulting in a drastic change in the divergence and tensions described above. In Tunisia Ennahda became the ruling party, many other Islamist parties were recognized (including *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr* and the Salafist *Jabhat al-Iṣlāḥ*) and Islamist mobilization in society soars. With it tensions between Islamists and non-Islamists and among Islamist movement themselves became polarized. In Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood has become more active and dominates political opposition bodies, while domestically Salafism is empowered among militias fighting the regime. Additionally, foreign influences in Syria have increased as the uprising has turned into an increasingly violent civil war. All of these Syrian Islamist movements have to decide where they will stand in a post-al-Assad Syria and how they will interact with religious and ethnic minorities. Therefore, in both settings, the opening of the political arena as a result of the Arab Spring has meant that the divergence dilemma has become explicit.

Dilemmas of Divergence

The structural backdrop to the issues described above should not be taken for a lack of agency (or set outcome) on the side of these actors. Since the Arab Spring began there have been acute dilemmas over the extent of adherence to either political or social arenas. Though structural factors push Islamist social movement organizations in similar directions - forming political parties from their SMOs or remaining SMOs - the extent to which and the way they do so differs quite markedly. For instance, looking at political Islamic parties, in Syria the MB will create a new political party when a revolution will emerge; in Tunisia the Ennahda SMO was actually transformed into a political party. This means that after the revolution Ennahda as an SMO ceased to exist, while after a revolution in Syria the MB will not become a political party: it will create a “proxy” within the political sphere. When asked why they would not rebuild the Muslim Brotherhood as political party (as existed in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s), a former MB leader answered that “the world has changed”, and

other types of organization were needed.¹² Members of the Tunisian Ennahda were often more explicit about the discussions that took place, stating that the choice not to create a separate party from the SMO had been made in prison. But following the revolution many within the party doubted this decision and at the first national conference one of the main topics was how to deal with *da'wa* activities of the party - something many saw had been lost in the process of becoming a political party. The issue could not be resolved and has been postponed to the next extraordinary Ennahda conference in 2014.¹³

On the other side, it is striking to see that the vast majority of Islamist movements have decided to become active within institutionalized social organizations. In Tunisia a plethora of new charitable and educational associations emerged after the revolution. It can be safely said that every neighborhood in the larger cities has a charitable association. I would argue that the majority of these are of an Islamist nature and are run by all types of Islamists, from “Salafists” to “modernists”. The emergence of a mobilized “Front of Islamic Associations”, organizing large protests demanding the application of sharia, shows that this type of activism is perceived to be not just social in nature. The same is true when looking at Syrian Islamist groups that by and large organize as either (social) charitable associations or militias that explicitly state their allegiance to a future civil rule. In general we can say that only a small proportion of Islamists have retreated from public life, and that the overall majority - including many Salafists - have become active in social associations. But this process has not been without its tensions. The extent to which these social activities are embedded within the overall state structure is often contested. In Tunisia for instance, Salafists are engaged in fierce debates over the extent to which they should institutionalize as organizations (Merone and Cavatorta, 2012). The same can be said of the discussions taking place within Ennahda, which revolve around a question of institutionalizing its social activism. In Syria this issue comes to the fore with some rebel groups explicitly stating they are both a fighting force *and* an Islamist *da'wa* movement (e.g. the Syrian Islamic Front) while others explicitly state they will abide by future state structures (e.g. the Farouk brigade and SLF). In essence it is the question of the extent to

¹² Interview with former Muslim Brotherhood leader, Amman (Jordan), July 31, 2011.

¹³ These dilemmas can be influenced by existing structures. One can imagine that splitting an organization creates possible conflicting interests between the two, and possible future conflicts (and maybe even a split); but transforming completely into a political party means giving up influence within the social sphere. It could very well be that in case of poorly-developed institutional structures in the socio-religious arena, a weak religious sphere, there is far less chance of other actors emerging - making a full transition to political party more likely. In this sense it can be argued that the absence of a religious sphere in Tunisia has meant that it was more likely for Ennahda to transform instead of split, and in Syria the opposite. Where an elaborate religious structure exists, transforming Islamist SMOs can consider it important to retain a SMO to keep influence in and over this plethora of organized religious activism.

which they will comply with externally imposed boundaries and tasks defined for the arena in which they are active.

Finally there are those that (attempt to) negate the division all together. They include some of the Salafist groups, including those with a takfiri tendency, in both countries. In Syria they include the increasingly powerful *Jabhat al-Nuṣra* and other Jihadist groups. These groups were founded by, and include many, foreign fighters. In Tunisia Jihadists are also present: there is the infamous Anṣār al-Islām group of Abu Iyadh that was behind the attack on the US Embassy on September 14 2012. More numerous, but still a small minority, are “scriptualist Salafist” groups that have withdrawn from both society and politics, but do not use a violent mobilization repertoire. Many of these groups lack a well-developed institutionalization and are a small minority within the Islamist project.

In general, summarized, we can state that before the Arab Spring the dynamics of divergence between movements and parties was not really a dilemma - as it was not the result of explicit strategic considerations. But after the Arab Spring issues emerge as to the extent to which - and how - Islamist organizations were reacting to this divide and accepting the practical consequences of being active in different arenas. Though most obvious among political Islamist parties - because they have the best developed institutional structure - these issues also emerge among Islamist movements active in society. How they react to this dilemma is further elaborated in the next section.

9.2 What Game Do We Play?

The Sincerity Dilemma. Appearances are crucial. You may wish to have a certain kind of reputation—for being nice, competent, trustworthy (or sometimes for being ruthless, violent, or inept). But you do not necessarily have to be or act that way (See Jasper, 2006, p.101).

Sharing Audiences

This dilemma can be summarized as the problem of being active in a particular social or political arena, while staying true to the general Islamist project. Pragmatist Islamists wish to seem sincere in their revolutionary project, while hoping to get away with their pragmatism. Activism in Tunisia and Syria, both on the social and political side, has soared since 2011. In Tunisia due to the revolution, in Syria due to the ongoing uprising. This increased mobilization has given prominence to dilemmas concerning the continued interrelation between social and political forms of Islamist mobilization. Social Islamist movements

and Islamist political parties, despite having different immediate goals and being fragmented among themselves, share an (arguably vague) overall aim of restructuring society, state and politics according to Islamic standards. Thus despite being active in separate arenas and having varying religious ideologies, they share a common message build on a reference to an Islamic authenticity.¹⁴ I argue that this shared Islamist goal of Islamizing public life ensures that both these groups continue to talk to *similar audiences*, and despite being active in different arenas, that the general public sees the two projects as at least interdependent and more often as unified. The question is just how to combine the two.

In the general practice of Islamic social movements we see that their overall frame of reference is broader than only a-political social mobilization. Islam is often stated to be a complete system; having an influence over not just individual conduct, but also public life. Therefore Islamist movements transcend, in ideology but not in practice, the boundaries of what could be called pure “identity movements” to become something that is more political in its outcome. This is exemplified, for instance, by people who state that “Religion [in the end] is the multiplicity of actions; of religious actions. Islam is not just in the mosques, or about going to the mosque. Islam is within social and economic conduct; Islam is in all this”. And who go on to state that “if you pray and then just go on with life, it’s like you didn’t pray”.¹⁵ This point of view that is quite popular within both Syrian and Tunisian society. On a more practical level, a director of an Islamic school explicitly stated that social change was there to provide the proper cadre for future political mobilization. He therefore explicitly stated that social activism served a political goal.¹⁶ Less direct, but similar in its consequence, is the fact that many Syrian ‘*ulamā*’ have been active in politics and sometimes made it into parliament. The very fact that many ‘*ulamā*’ have also been active in the political arena before the Arab Spring - and built their political careers on their religious authority without any reaction from society shows that the position of ‘*ulamā*’ between society and politics is generally uncontested.¹⁷ It is a vision of a Syria in which religion, embodied here in the religious authorities, has a greater role and commands not just social but also political influence. This does not mean that these movements are out to create an Islamic state - the majority explicitly argue for democracy. But

¹⁴ This common message and ideological interrelation between movement and party is not something specific to Islamist movements. It is comparable to (early) Christian Democratic parties and to the green movements-turned-parties. In both these instances a social (or socio-religious) movement gave birth to political parties, that thereby - initially at least - had a close connection with the general societal base that they derived from.

¹⁵ Interview with students from the Zeytuna University, Tunis (Tunisia), March 2, 2011.

¹⁶ Director of a large Islamic school. Tunis (Tunisia), October 2, 2012.

¹⁷ Interview with a student at al-Fatah al-Islami Institute, Damascus (Syria), March 15, 2009.

it does imply that these movements see their activism in a broader frame than their actual practice would imply.

Depending on their religious ideology, there are different strategies of how to react to this dilemma. One can be said to be a “conceptual” strategy, another a “temporal” one. Concerning the conceptual solution, political Islamist parties often refer to *Marjaʿiyya Islāmiyya* (“Islamic reference”) or *Maṣḍar Islāmī* (“Islamic source”) in legitimizing their practice. This is most often the case with parties that are not strongly revivalist or Salafist in their ideology. These Islamist SMOs-turned-parties state that their parties are in accordance with local party laws (stipulating that religious parties are banned thereby rendering any political party in essence secular) but that their parties are built on a “reference” to an Islamic source. For instance the Ennahda program clarifies in its introduction that one of the main beliefs of the party is that “Islam as reference [...] and in combination with human experience, is useful” for finding solutions to social, economic and political problems.¹⁸ A similar concept of “Islamic source” was used by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, when discussing the position of Islam in their political program: “The Islamic jurisprudence in its eternal sources (the book and the Sunni) is the source of our vision to formulate a political program.”¹⁹ When asked what an Islamic “reference” or “source” means in practice, the answer is often both vague and broad: that the principles of the Quran and Sunna inform their political program.²⁰ But it also tends to be explained as a *socio*-religious reference. In the sense that they have a connection with society that other parties do not have; as they build on, and emerged from, “an Islamic society” of which only an Islamic party can be the true representation.²¹ What is thus similar between both parties is that they build on the premise that Islam is the only authentic source defining society and culture. It thereby explicitly positions itself within a larger Islamist project, but one that omits what this will actually mean in political practice.

The “temporal” solution is taken by SMOs-turned-parties that build on a stricter interpretation of a revivalist point of view, a few examples being *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr*, Jabhat al-Islāḥ and the Syrian Islamic Front. Their stricter interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence renders a conceptual solution to the convergence dilemma impossible. To solve this issues, they state that time is needed. When they will achieve a majority they will abolish party politics and institute an Islamic state. At a press conference the Tunisian branch of the HuT stated

¹⁸ The Ennahda Movement (p. 2011) *Program of Ennahda: For Tunis, Freedom, Justice and Development*, Ḥarakat Ennahada, September, p.3.

¹⁹ Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (p. 2004) *The Political Project for the Future Syria*, al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn fī Sūriya, p.11.

²⁰ For instance in a group interview with Ennahda members at the Ennahda office in Medenine, November 11, 2011.

²¹ For instance talking to Nahdaoui in Medenine, a city in the south of Tunisia, a discussion arose on the meaning of the Islamic reference of the party.

that “we offer an alternative: we enter political and ideological struggles in this *ummah* (“Islamic World”) to achieve our objective of an Islamic state that [represents] all people.”²² As long as it is seen as a temporal solution, the acceptance of contemporary realities is not seen as a problem. At least, that is the aim. Both options show that from the perspective of the Islamist project, the existing boundaries between social and political arenas are not as clear cut as they are in practice.²³ Social and political forms of Islamist mobilization are seen to belong to one and the same project as they share a common goal - Islamization of the public life - and therefore talk to similar audiences. The extent to which these solutions are effective in convincing an Islamist audience is the main question, but (for now) the conceptual approach seems prevalent.

Convergence of Islamist Mobilization in Practice

Similarly in Syria and Tunisia, political Islamist parties and Islamist movements talk to the same audience. But the specific dilemmas that emerge related to this unified message, and the considerations made, are different. In Tunisia the sudden disappearance of repression of religious activism, political liberalization and the October 23 2011 elections for the Constitutive Assembly, have meant that certain dynamics - decades in the making - have been accelerated drastically. Ennahda has become the ruling party, in a government coalition with a centrist and leftist party. Salfists have become openly active, as has *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr*. Public religion has become a mass mobilizing force. Islamism in Tunisia has been pushed back into public view after being forcefully removed for the last two decades. In Syria the emerging dilemmas and strategic considerations are different. With the uprising, the MB has become increasingly vocal and various Islamist actors have participated in opposition meetings abroad. Various Islamist movements have appeared in- and outside the country and people have started to contemplate how a future (Islamized) Syria would look.²⁴

It can be argued that in Tunisia the dilemma concerning the interaction between political and social forms of Islamism is relatively “simple”. This is the result of a weak religious sphere, no previous (non-Ennahda) Islamist mobilization in society, and a political regime that is now Islamist friendly. The number of players is limited, and the previous and current political regime relatively unified. The main post-revolutionary dilemma is about the position of Ennahda in relation to social Islamist movements in society; movements which themselves are still rather underdeveloped. To what extent do social Islamist movements support Ennahda? Or to what extent do they seek to extract support from it?

²² See: *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr* (p. 2011) *Press Conference of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr Despite Attempts to Have it Canceled*, youtube.com, October 10.

²³ As also noted by a senior Syrian observer, Interview in Damascus (Syria), April 27, 2009.

²⁴ See for instance: Shadid (s. 2011) *City of Hama Offers Glimpse of a Syria After al-Assad*, The New York Times, July 19.

How does the political role of Ennahda reflect on the development of Islamism in society?

Dilemmas that emerge in Syria can be considered more “complex” than in the case of Tunisia. There is a broader array of influential players, in combination with a political regime and (Islamist) opposition that are fragmented and sectarian cleavages that permeate society and politics. As explained in the previous chapter, the Alawi dominated regimes of the al-Assad family have never been capable of repressing the Sunni religious sphere completely, nor create a new state-sanctioned one. They have therefore opted to control it. Through a bureaucratic structure that consists of a mufti for the Syrian Republic as well as state-sanctioned mufti’s at the regional and local level, and state-sanctioned schools for memorizing the Quran (Pierret, 2009). In doing so the regime has penetrated the traditional Sunni sphere - and to certain extent visa versa (Donker, 2010). Consequently dilemmas concerning the interaction between social and political forms of Islamism involve, first, powerful religious authorities (principally the *‘ulamā’*); second, various groups within the political regime; and third, the plethora of reemerging Islamist movements - including the Syrian MB and in addition to any other Islamic parties that may be founded. The dilemmas then involve how these groups - political dominant groups, Islamist political parties, social Islamist movements, and religious authorities - relate to each other. Are certain groups split, or unified? Who is courting who? Is the Islamist project fragmenting along social-political divides?

This dilemma is apparent on the ground. Within Ennahda, for instance, members have come to realize that becoming a party has meant leaving something behind. By prioritizing maximizing influence in the political arena, they lost touch with Islamic movements within society. The topic was discussed during the Ninth National Conference of the Ennahda Movement, held in July 2012. An important discussion during the conference was on the question of whether the formal institution of the Ennahda movement/party should remain a single entity, or if they should split their political project and their social project into two sub-institutions. Various Nahdaoui (party members) stated that two camps had emerged along this question, with many members and a large group within the leadership supporting a split between social and political activism within an overarching Ennahda framework.²⁵ But the president of Ennahda, Rashid Ghanoushi, apparently, was a direct opponent.²⁶ It was decided to postpone the discussion to the next “exceptional” conference in 2015. In the mean-time their incapability to resolve this issue has led to problems of how to relate to their social movement counterparts in different guises. We will return to this later.

²⁵ Interview with a member of the Ennahda Shura Council, October 8, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia.

²⁶ Interview with two Ennahda related Islamic activists, September 19, 2012, Tunis, Tunisia.

Concerning Syria, it is clear that any (re)emerging Islamist political party (including the Syrian MB) cannot command as much political power as the Tunisian Ennahda. As a consequence the dilemma becomes more complex. In Syria most movements have a direct connection with shaykhs and religious authorities - as such the field of Islamist social mobilization is not as clear (in an institutional meaning) as it was in Tunisia after the revolution. Any Islamist political party, if it hopes to speak to similar audiences as Islamist movements, will have to engage with the traditional religious authorities. Religious authorities that are themselves fragmented, embroiled in conflict and in a general state of turmoil - rendering these interactions daunting at best. This is true for the current non-Sunni dominated authoritarian regime, but will also be true for a possible post-revolutionary Islamist dominated one. How the future Muslim Brotherhood (as social movement organization) will interact with these powerful religious authorities remains to be seen, but it is clear they need to interact with them. Though most explicit with those movements entering the political sphere - currently confined to the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood through its participation in the opposition's National Coalition and Ennahda in Tunisia - other movements and parties in these two countries face similar dilemmas.

As such, dilemmas emerging within the Islamist project include institutional (concerning divergence) and identity (concerning convergence) affiliation. We can see that in Tunisia and Syria both political and social Islamist groups are speaking to similar audiences with a message of using Islam as the foundations structuring social and political life. As a result they are drawn to each other, while being forced to focus on different arenas in practice. But existing structures make divergence/convergence dilemmas between the two cases very different. In Tunisia the question is how the Ennahda party will retain influence over social Islamist mobilization - and for movements how to pressure Ennahda; in Syria it is about influencing a society in which traditional religious authorities still yield considerable power. Therefore relations between Islamist parties and movements in Tunisia mostly remain in the informal sphere. Even in the case of Syria, in a post-revolutionary period in which a "political MB party" will be founded, it can be expected that relations between the two will be formally disconnected.

Whatever the chosen approach, in practice it is likely there will be close informal connections between the two parts of the Islamist project. What is surprising is that this entente between convergence and divergence seems to be more than a temporal phenomenon. As noted earlier, one would expect this duality to collapse: either social movements would start to clearly differentiate; or they would become "revolutionaries" ignoring political and social divides and start building an Islamic utopia. From what does this entente between divergence and convergence gain its popularity?

9.3 Who Do We Deal With?

Money's Curse. The most noble ends may only be attainable by those who have compromised with (and been compromised by) evil: those within a destructive system can do more to subvert it — should they choose to — than morally pure but powerless outsiders.

The Goose Dilemma (after the goose that laid the golden eggs). You can overexploit a resource for short-term gains, perhaps destroying it in the process, or you can cultivate it to sustain the flow indefinitely (See Jasper, 2006, p.71 and p.96 respectively).

The State and Islamism

This dilemma can be summarized as the extent to which one should engage with state institutions that do not belong, or are even hostile, to the Islamist project. In Syria and Tunisia actors in state institutions are seen, often implicitly, as having a position in the salient Islamist-secular cleavage. In part this is due to the fact that the political sphere was closed before the revolution and a strategy of clientelism aimed at embedding the state in society was dominant.²⁷ As a result practical policy implementation was often influenced by personal relations between citizens and specific civil servants: they were the gatekeepers of state resources.²⁸ This system was built upon the discretionary powers of certain bureaucrats deciding who would receive, and who would not. Activists subsequently learned to deal with individual civil servants to gain access to state resources. As a consequence we will see that social mobilization strategies, also after a revolution, do not have to focus on political demands but can also be aimed at engaging state institutions in support for social Islamist projects. This general tendency, of engaging with state institutions rather than political sphere, has a crucial influence on the relation between political and social Islamism as it provides a “linchpin” around which political and social Islamism can converge.

This was true both before and after the Arab Spring. Before (and during) the Arab Spring the question focused on engagement with state institutions that were perceived to be at the opposite end of a social divide. After the Arab Spring the question changed to be about how (and to what extent) to engage with state institutions whose affiliation is unclear. Furthermore, from the viewpoint of the political sphere, about how to bring state institutions closer to their position within the Islamist-secular cleavage - in an attempt to make state resources more accessible to Islamists in society. Despite these similarities,

²⁷ As was discussed in the previous chapter; due to the patrimonial character of the Tunisian and Syrian regimes, state institutions came to be viewed as having a position in social cleavages. See also Bratton and Van de Walle (1994).

²⁸ In this chapter I discuss specifically financial resources, security (from regime-induced repression) and preferred access to the bureaucratic apparatus.

particularities of engagement dilemmas differ between Tunisia and Syria, due to differing social, political and religious structures. We will turn to this now.

Engaging the State Before...

The structural situation before the revolution in Syria and Tunisia was similar concerning the neo-patrimonial character of the political regime. In practical terms this meant that the implementation of state policies was dependent on the receiver's relation to state bureaucracies. Not surprisingly, this resulted in a tendency for "pragmatism" on the side of social Islamist actors concerning informal relations to civil bureaucrats. At the same time the regimes created a context in which state resources were crucial for any type of social activism: repression was applied non-uniformly creating a constant need for information from state bureaucrats. A Kafkaesque bureaucracy created the need for "persuasion" by them; the possibilities for "exemptions" from restrictive laws made "lenience" in the hands of the bureaucrats a necessity. It meant that whenever activists contemplated initiating any type of activities, dilemmas concerning state actors emerged. It was not the actors with influence over policies that were important - the so-called politically relevant elites²⁹ - but rather the civil servants tasked with their implementation.

There are ample examples from both cases that illustrate this point. In Tunisia the volume of activism (and therefore the engagement with state actors) was limited but the tendency could be observed.³⁰ In the case of a group of Islamist activists that was active before the revolution in Denden (Greater Tunis, Tunisia), they stated that one "had to create trust on the side of the regime" if one wanted to get anything done.³¹ So one had to be a member of the RCD party, not because of policy influence, but to be able to get access: you had to go for coffees at the regional wali, with the religious representative *wā'iz* and the religious deputy so that they got to know you. When they did, and they trusted you, things got done.³² Otherwise state institutions would not do anything - and nothing would happen. In Syria this "game" between state actors and Islamist movements has been ever present and developed to great refinement. The dilemmas emerging in Syria are similar to Tunisia but involve traditional religious authorities, rendering the situation more complex. Considering these religious elites it is clear that they had the possibility to engage with the political regime and state institutions. Again, often not so much for influence but rather for access to state controlled resources. Tellingly the current mufti of the Syrian Republic, Ahmad Hassoun, does not have a very extensive religious background,

²⁹ See Werenfels (2007) on Algeria.

³⁰ Though in the framework of reforms there was a limited liberalization in the religious sphere in the period 2007-2008. It mostly involved Quran classes.

³¹ Interview with activists in Denden (Greater Tunis, Tunisia), March 13, 2011.

³² Ibid.

but he does have a history (he is the son of an important Aleppo-based shaykh that was murdered in the 1982 uprising) and was an MP.³³ This pragmatism was noted by many. Syrians outside the country often decried the hypocrisy of many within the Syrian religious establishment. It is clear that engaging with state bureaucrats taints one's image as shaykh. It is a dilemma of *Money's Curse*: to what extent does one want to be pragmatic? The different choices taken show that there is agency within this dilemma. The Damascus-based *‘ālim* stated that the *‘ulamā’* are all just being pragmatic in their choice to engage with state institutions; a case in point.

Concerning the grass-root level of individual activists in Syria, the real dilemma is to become active or not within informal (teaching) circles around specific shaykhs. The various home teaching circles were the principle area of social Islamist mobilization before the revolution. These groups are presumably only tolerated because of the trust local authorities have in the shaykh. The choice of what (classes of) shaykh to follow is important: grass-root level Islamists actually imply support by attending classes. Consequently it is uncommon for grass-root activists to have direct contact with state bureaucrats (as was the case in Tunisia) as it is often the shaykhs that act as intermediaries between the two groups. As such, the dilemma (simplified) has two stages in Syria: at the level of religious elites on whether to engage with authorities; at the grassroots level the dilemma is whether to engage with specific shaykhs (and what kind of shaykh).

... and Engaging the State After

Then the Arab Spring came along. In Tunisia a process of political liberalization was initiated and political Islamists took power; in Syria an uprising started that turned into a protracted civil war. In Tunisia Ennahda used vague language about what a “proper” society should look like, but did not link this to any specific type of policies. They talked about freedom, human rights and democracy. In this situation you would expect social Islamist movements not to mobilize contentiously at all - being uninterested in politics - or to mobilize against Ennahda who is forsaking their Islamist ideals. Although “traditional” mobilization emerged (two large protests were organized demanding the implementation of sharia), it was also often aimed at universities, state-owned television and radio stations, and state bureaucracies.³⁴ Thus contentious mobilization is also aimed at those organizations that influence day-to-day reality within the public sphere. Years of neo-patrimonial policies by an authoritarian regime has meant that people perceive state institutions as having a position in

³³ Interview with a Syrian observer, Damascus (Syria), March 12, 2009.

³⁴ For an anthology of these issues see chapter 5.

salient social cleavages and that actors within state institutions can be active actors - as gatekeepers of crucial resources - within these struggles. Following the revolution it might be that neo-patrimonial tendencies have declined (though this is arguably questionable), but it does not negate the practical enduring influences of years of neo-patrimonial policies on the social perception of state institutions. And here there is a role for an Islamist party. As independent Tunisian activists would state, it was Ennahda's task to "open the gates" of state institutions and to let society do the work.³⁵ The only thing that Ennahda has tried to do is appoint Islamist-friendly civil servants to key media and educational positions as well as test new police recruits on their religious knowledge.³⁶ And when Islamization of crucial state institutions was perceived as insufficient, additional pressure was exerted to "open up" these organizations to "social forces".³⁷

As such, whenever we consider capacities (and with it resources) in Islamist movements, state bureaucracies and public institutions are never far away - especially when discussed in the context of converging social and political forms of Islamism. From the political side it is not just about policies, but also about people; not just about Islamic policies but also about Islamizing the state. As such, I argue, the role of Ennahda ministers is not so much in making Islamist policies, but in placing Islamist-minded people inside state institutions or enforcing an Islamist identity on civil servants. All this in name of battling the "secular" nature of the state and making it more "balanced". The question is, however, to what extent is it successful? A conflict emerged between Islamist students and university management in various cities (for instance at Manouba, Greater Tunis, and at the University of Sousse). In both cases Islamist mobilization did not make a difference - despite being aided by Ennahda. Mobilization against state press, despite continuing for months, was also not immediately successful.

Here a problem emerges specifically in the Tunisian context. By practically transforming into a political party, Ennahda has given up an institutional presence within society. It is therefore entirely dependent on binding social Islamist movements to its party through its role as political patron and influencing state institutions. This strategy has been problematic vis-à-vis certain Salafist movements. Though from the start an informal working group between Ennahda and certain Salafist groups aimed at pacifying these movements and binding them to some extent to the overall Islamist project as envisioned by Ennahda, these movements have been attacking "non-Islamic" targets increasingly after 2011. In a 2011 phone call (quoted in chapter 5) Ghanoushi attempts to clarify that

³⁵ Interview with an independent Islamist, Medenine (Tunisia), November 12, 2011.

³⁶ Concerning the latter examples, see: Tunisia live (s. 2013) *Security Force Applicants Quizzed on Islam*, Tunisia live, April 22.

³⁷ See: Brik (s. 2012) *Debate on Privatization of Media in Tunisia*, al-Jazeera, April 21.

Table 9.1: Overview of Strategic Choices in Chapter 9

Actor	Diverge Institutionally?	Convergence Ideologically?	Engagement State Institutions?
Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (Syria)	Yes, we will create a separate party (pp.192, 194).	Yes, conceptually. Islam as complete "source" (p.198).	Yes, Supports civil state structures in "liberated" Syrian areas (p.208).
Ennahda (Tunisia)	Yes, independent from social activism. But internal frictions (pp.192, 200).	Yes, conceptually. Islamic "authenticity" at basis of Tunisian nation-state (p.198).	Yes, Pressuring public media, universities, testing police recruits on religious knowledge (p.205).
Front of Islamic Associations (Tunisia)	Yes, we are a-political, societal actors (pp.192, 195).	Yes, conceptually. Islam is a complete system, governs everything.	Partly, mobilization at public media, universities; but also mobilization demanding sharia (p.204).
Zayd Movement and Qubaysiyat (Syria)	Yes, we are a-political, societal actors (p.193).	Yes, conceptually. Islam is a complete system, but practical governance is for the ruler.	Encroachment public charity sector and education respectively (p.193).
Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr (Tunisia)	Yes, created an Islamic party. (p.198).	Yes, temporal approach: "We will end party politics when we rule" (p.198).	No, calling for literal implementation of sharia laws (p.198).
Jabhat al-Islāḥ (Tunisia)	Yes, an official Islamic Salafist party. (p.195).	Yes, temporal approach. "Islam will eventually rule all" (p.198).	No, calling for literal implementation of sharia laws (p.198).

Continued

Anṣār al-Shariya (Tunisia)	No, Islamic system governs all (p.196).	Yes, in practice. Does not support party politics at all (p.195).	No, calling for sharia and targeting foreign targets (p.114).
Syrian Liberation Front (Syria)	No, Islamic system governs all. We are both fighting group and societal actor (p.195).	Yes, in practice. Islam is a complete system and sufficient to govern Syria (p.198).	No, creation of Islamic state apparatus in “liberated” areas (p.208).
Jabhat al-Nuṣra (Syria)	No, Islamic system governs all, goes beyond nation-state (p.196).	Yes, in practice. Islam is a complete system and imposed as such (p.196).	Ibid.

they should not be direct in their activism but attempt to enlarge power within state institutions, to little avail. Thus, although a majority within the Islamist project abides by the social-political divide and remains supporters of Ennahda as its political patron, this support is not universal.

Concerning Syria, we can see that different approaches to state institutions are reflected in practical choices made during the uprising. With each approach practical issues of combining social and political forms of Islamism come to the fore. The Syrian MB, as an example of the pragmatic approach, is within (and with) civil state institutions. It is a powerful actor within the Syrian National Coalition (NC) and use this to support civil proto-state institutions in the liberated areas. Groups such as the Syrian Islamic Front and Jabhat al-Nuṣra are more “ideological” and aim to create a governance structure based on Islam.³⁸ Both aim to structure public life according to Islamic norms, but with the former this is achieved through civil state institutions, while the latter aims to create religious state institutions.

Due to specific circumstances - the collapse of state institutions, lack of financial aid and rampant corruption among civil proto-state institutions and the opposite for revivalist Islamist movements - religious governance structures have had the chance to develop and become prevalent. With it, we can see that charitable activities, education, and other “social” Islamist activities are institutionalized in a unified governance structure with police, armed and political forces. Furthermore, Islamist revivalist movements have had the opportunity to dominate these Islamic proto-governance structures. Though their emergence reflects the trust many Sunni Syrians place in religion as the structuring principle of public life, the eventual dominance of strong revivalist movements within them has proved (socially and politically) polarizing. It has created immense tensions between society and these institutions, as well as tensions with more civil proto-state institutions. The “natural” emergence of sharia bodies, and their importance in providing basic services, shows the legitimacy of an Islamized “state” apparatus. But at the same time, the polarizing effect of “true” Islamic rule, as instituted by Jabhat al-Nuṣra in al-Raqq, shows the difficulty many Syrians have with an outright “Islamic State”. What ever the outcome of the struggles now played out in liberated Syrian areas, it is clear that questions of practical governance - how to built and manage state bureaucracies and public institutions - will be central in deciding how the unified image of an Islamist project will be implemented in practice.

All in all we can see in Tunisia that through focusing engagement on state institutions Ennahda attempts to avoid a contradiction between political and social Islamist mobilization, by rendering them both part of a unified Islamist

³⁸ See section 7.3 from page 156 onward and al-Sharq al-Awsat (s. 2013a) *Struggle between "Civil Judiciary" and "Sharia Organizations" about Management of Affairs in Liberated Areas*, al-Sharq al-Awsat, April 11.

project. Both political Islamist parties and social Islamist movements have mutually reinforcing roles within existing social and political arenas concerning the overall Islamist project - as long as state institutions are perceived to have a level of autonomy and are used as linchpins around which these social and political roles revolve. Generally speaking, in Syria emerging dilemmas are similar to Tunisia in the sense that choices will emerge about how to determine what the position will be of state institutions vis-à-vis Islamist mobilization. It is about who, how and where to position individuals in state institutions. The dilemmas are different in the sense that there is a religious elite in the country, religious minorities, and that these questions emerge in the context of state rebuilding instead of reform. As such, dilemmas will differ from their Tunisian counterpart in that players, their resources and skills differ: religious authorities exist and players are positioned along multiple (instead of one single) social cleavages.³⁹ Table 9.3 (page 206) provides a schematic overview of examples discussed in this chapter that support the above analysis.

The Strategic Approach to Islamism

The three dilemmas - concerning Islamist divergence, convergence, and state institutions - are related. The general dynamic in which this interrelation emerges is similar: Islamists are forced to diverge in social and political activism, but speak to similar audiences and thereby retain a type of convergence. In a context where state institutions are perceived to have a position in social cleavages, political and social Islamist mobilization can join forces to gain access to state bureaucracies and public institutions. By focusing on engagement with state institutions a contradiction between political and social forms of Islamism is avoided, by creating a common goal in unlocking/accessing state resources for societal Islamization. Concurrently this ensures that no direct demands will be made from Islamist movements to their political counterparts (or visa versa). Thereby competing interests are avoided and the unity of the Islamist project is ensured.

At the same time, we see that the specific considerations within these dilemmas differ between Syria and Tunisia. Whereas in Syria an institutionalized layer of religious authority exists, in Tunisia it does not. Whereas in Tunisia it is about state reform, in Syria it is (in some areas) about state (re)building. It means that dilemmas involve an extra group of actors that will endure the revolution, with it transferring pre-revolutionary (political) tensions into the

³⁹ The Islamist will state that only the first cleavage matters, as Islam has a perfect framework to deal with minorities. In practical terms this will mean that people who are appointed to state institutions will be "Islamist friendly", whether they are Muslim or not. Minorities will beg to differ, as they will be relegated to being tolerated inside a political system of managing the state that is defined by Islam.

post-revolutionary context. As such, dilemmas mimicking the basket, band-wagon, dirty hands, sincerity and money's curse are present in both countries. But the actors involved differ, as do their skills and resources, rendering eventual strategies chosen unpredictable to a certain extent.

Chapter 10

An Islamist Summer: Mechanisms and Processes

In this chapter I draw on the mechanistic approach in Social Movement Studies (SMS) to analyze Islamist mobilization in Syria and Tunisia and suggest some explanations to the two central questions of this thesis. The mechanistic approach does not aim to find general covering laws for social phenomena (as the more structuralist approach used in chapter 8), nor does it take strategic considerations faced by activists (as used in chapter 9) as a point of departure. Rather, it takes causal patterns - social processes that can be subdivided into mechanisms - as the conceptual framework to explore and analyze social phenomena (Elster, 1998). Within this approach it is argued that particular social processes can be observed in a wide range of contexts, but that in each of these multiple mechanisms combine in particular ways which results in different outcomes of the social processes they constitute (Tilly, 2007). The various strands of criticism to this approach (specifically concerning its adoption in SMS) have been discussed in chapter 2. In this chapter I will try to incorporate these insights.

The mechanistic approach, then, entails a description of relevant processes and an analysis of how they combine to produce a certain result in processes of contentious politics. In this chapter I focus on the process of “upward scale shift”. It is the process through which contentious mobilization diffuses across social sectors and creates instances for coordination at a higher institutional level than its initiation (adapted from Tarrow, 2010a, p.214).¹ I use the concept of upward scale shift to draw attention to the interaction between political

¹ Note the difference with the traditional understanding of scale shift (as in McAdam et al., 2001) which denotes the horizontal spread of mobilization to multiple sites. Tarrow (2010a) mentions “upward scale shift” in his contribution in *Diffusion of Social Movements: Actors, Mechanisms, and Political Effects* (Givan et al., 2010). Although not an exact copy, the general aim of showing the influence of institutions on mobilization processes is similar.

and social Islamist mobilization. Additionally, to showing the role of public institutions (state-funded and managed elementary education, universities and press) and state bureaucracies (ministries, regional and local administrations implementing state policies) can have in these interactions.² Simplified, I contend that, next to implementing Islamist policies, Islamist parties can gain legitimacy by supporting the “Islamization” of bureaucracies and public institutions. Both options provide a level of legitimacy, but the latter can nurture a seemingly “secularization” of political Islamist demands. Thus the chapter is not aimed at discovering new mechanisms, but rather at showing the importance of taking a specific set of actors into consideration when analyzing social mechanisms of (Islamist) mobilization in the Arab world. In this sense, a mechanistic approach is used to make an argument concerning structures.

Before setting out the central argumentation in this chapter, let me elaborate on the specific mechanisms that constitute the overall process of upward scale shift discussed in this chapter: category formation, brokerage and diffusion. Brokerage denotes “the linking of two or more previously unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with one another and/or with yet other sites” (McAdam et al., 2001; Han, 2009, p.26). It is a *relational* mechanism that changes (informal) linkages between actors.³ Brokerage as concept has a long history in the field of Social Network Analysis (SNA). Understood in the literal sense of SNA, brokers are those actors that connect various networks by bridging structural holes between them. Ideal brokers have weak links to many different groups (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 2005).⁴ The concept of brokerage was adopted enthusiastically by scholars using the mechanistic approach in SMS.⁵ The following analysis will stay close to the general usage of brokerage in the analysis of contentious mobilization as proposed by Tarrow, Tilly and McAdam, but incorporates insights of Elster (1998) concerning the logic-like nature of causal mechanisms.⁶

Closely related to brokerage is another relational mechanism: diffusion. Diffusion denotes the process in which ideas, resources and/or repertoires spread from one site to others. This spread can take place via existing informal networks (direct diffusion), spread without direct links between sites (indirect diffusion), or via a broker mediating the exchange between sites (mediated diffusion).⁷ In

² The chapter builds on the more empirical discussions on contemporary Islamist mobilization in Tunisia and Syria in chapter 5 and 7 but can be read on its own.

³ For a discussion on relational, cognitive and environmental mechanisms, see Tarrow (2011).

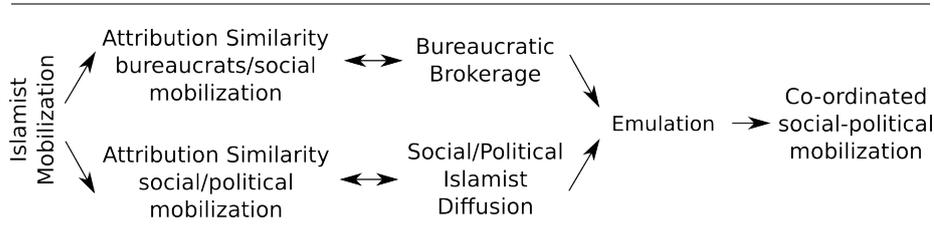
⁴ Therefore these brokers can gain from (and have an incentive to sustain) these differences between networks, these (economic) incentives have become especially central in (social) network analyses (Burt, 2005).

⁵ It is one of the most popular mechanisms (as in the amount of times referred to) in the *Dynamics of Contention* (see Koopmans, 2003).

⁶ See also the discussion in chapter 2.

⁷ For an elaborate discussion, see Soule (2010).

Figure 10.1: The Process of Political Scale Shift in Islamist Mobilization



Source: adapted from McAdam et al. (2001, p.333) and Tarrow (2010a).

this chapter I will focus on the spread of Islamist claims from the social to political sphere through direct diffusion. This does not imply that indirect diffusion is not present, but concerning the argument made here direct diffusion is of central importance.⁸

The final mechanism discussed in this chapter is category formation. Category formation “creates a set of sites that share a boundary distinguishing all of them from, and relating all of them to, at least one set of sites visibly excluded by the boundary” (McAdam et al., 2001, p.157). It consists of drawing new boundaries (invention), installing boundaries locally that already exist elsewhere (borrowing) and previously separated groups which start competing for resources and negotiating boundaries (encountering) (McAdam et al., 2001, p.157-8). Category formation is a *cognitive* mechanisms that alters individual and collective perceptions of the world around them (Tarrow, 2011).⁹ In the following analysis I apply these three processes, which constitute an overall process of upward scale shift, to the contemporary realities of Islamist mobilization in Syria and Tunisia.

Category Setting, Brokerage, Diffusion

Concerning the role of state institutions in Islamist mobilization, the key mechanisms can be described as in figure 10.1 (page 213). We can discern two trajectories for upward scale shift in Islamist mobilization: the bottom trajectory of “political scale shift” and the upper one of “bureaucratic scale shift”. Political scale shift consists of direct diffusion and the attribution of similarity between political and social mobilization within an Islamist movement. Bureaucratic scale shift consists of brokerage to civil servants in bureaucracies and

⁸ This is especially true as many of the actors in social and political spheres have a shared history. Therefore direct informal networks exist between these actors. With transnational Islamist activism the situation might be different.

⁹ These conceptualizations of cognitive mechanisms in SMS can be said to be influenced by the works of Melucci (1989, 1996) and the debate around framing in SMS. Also see the discussion in chapter 2.

public institutions. This occurs in combination with an attribution of social similarity and difference to civil servants. Though both trajectories result in bridging Islamist demands to the formal political arena, through the first trajectory this is more literal than through the second. As discussed in chapter 8, a necessary condition for the emergence of the second trajectory is the existence of bureaucracies and public institutions that are perceived as positioned along and embedded in social cleavages.

If we apply this analytical framework to contemporary Islamist mobilization, there seems to be an inverse relation between these two trajectories: more bureaucratic brokerage seems to mean less political diffusion, and more attribution of similarity between civil servants and movements seems to mean less between social and political Islamist mobilization. What trajectory dominates then influences how emulation occurs between social and political Islamist demands. With a trajectory of political scale shift we see that Islamist demands are directly translated into political Islamic ones: demands for sharia as the basis of the constitution, education laws on what can (and cannot) be taught in schools, changes in the personal status code. With bureaucratic scale shift it is not so much about policies, but about those civil servants that implement policies: Islamizing state institutions becoming an aim, to the detriment of Islamizing state policies. A seemingly “secularization” of claims made by Islamic political parties is the result. I argue that the particular combination of relational and cognitive mechanisms as described in the analytical framework above can go a long way to explaining why Islamist movements and parties make certain Islamist claims in both Tunisia and Syria.

In the following chapter I will first observe the presence of these mechanisms in both countries and then explore how they interrelate. In the first part of the chapter I focus on brokerage to bureaucracies versus direct diffusion of demands between Islamist movements and parties. In the second part I focus on related cognitive mechanisms of attribution of (dis)similarity between social and political mobilization, and between movements and civil servants. Finally, I provide an analysis of how these mechanisms relate to the emulation of Islamist demands from society to the political arena. This all is done in the overall context of political destabilization in the context of the Arab Spring.

10.1 Brokerage versus Diffusion

[... W]hatever is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people, and traverse greater social distance (i.e. path length), when passed through weak ties rather than strong. If one tells a rumor to all his close friends, and they do likewise, many will hear the rumor a second and third time, since those linked by strong ties tend to share

friends. If the motivation to spread the rumor is dampened a bit on each wave of retelling, then the rumor moving through strong ties is much more likely to be limited to a few cliques than that going via weak ones; bridges will not be crossed (Granovetter, 1973, p.1378).

Brokers between Movements and State

This section focuses on two mechanisms. First, it focuses on brokerage between Islamist movements and civil servants; second on diffusion of Islamist demands between Islamist movements and parties. With the former mechanism I denote the mediation of Islamist claims through (a group of) civil servants that function as brokers between Islamist movements and the political arena. I call it here *bureaucratic brokerage*. With the latter I denote the diffusion of Islamist claims along pre-existing relations between Islamist movements and parties. I call this *political diffusion*.¹⁰ I argue that these brokerage and diffusion mechanisms influence each other: if brokerage via civil servants is pervasive; there will be less diffusion between social and political Islamist actors.

In the next section I will observe and analyze how brokerage and diffusion interact in two very different contexts: Tunisia and Syria. Despite the fact that they constitute two very different contexts, we will see that the interaction between the two types of brokerage is rather similar; but that the specificities of this interaction between political diffusion and bureaucratic brokerage is dependent on the position state bureaucracies have regarding Islamist mobilization.

Bureaucratic Brokerage

Brokerage between Islamist movements and bureaucrats in state institutions can be observed in both Syria and Tunisia. Before the revolution, brokerage to civil servants was perceived to be an essential part of Islamic activism in both countries. In Tunisia informal contacts between heads of Quranic schools and regional governors and their deputies existed; especially at the schools that attempted to provide a wider range of activities than strictly allowed by formal policies. The same holds true for Syria, where in the context of severe repression, brokerage to state bureaucracies was pervasive: Islamic shaykhs and activists by and large maintained informal contacts with relevant ministries and intelligence services. Outside observers often draw differences between elite shaykhs and *‘ulamā’* on the basis of their “pragmatism”; the word signaling the extent to which shaykhs use contacts in state institutions to make their religious initiatives work.¹¹ Though this did not involve *Islamist* mobilization as such, it did create

¹⁰ Note here that these mechanisms do not have to take place in the country itself. For instance in the Syrian case we will see that a considerable part of brokerage and diffusion takes place outside the country.

¹¹ For details section, see 7.2 (page 148).

the context in which Islamist movements were active and (re)emerged after the onset of the Arab Spring.

There is a clear logic to bureaucratic brokerage in authoritarian settings: contacts are needed in state institutions to protect initiatives against ambiguously applied repression. From the perspective of the civil servant, it provides links along which information is exchanged and that help cement his authority: by providing a crucial service to these Islamic activist they were also dependent on him - providing him with a level of influence. As such, the logic behind this particular mechanism of *bureaucratic brokerage* is that brokers are sought in bureaucracies to function as links between social Islamic activism and state power, which in the end is beneficial for both sides. In Tunisia, in the context of (very) limited liberalization of the religious sphere, some groups took the opportunity to establish their own Islamic initiatives. Part of an Islamic *da'wa* movement, these groups recognized that the success of religious initiatives was not so much dependent on particular policies, but on the relations you had with crucial bureaucrats. The practical implementation of policies was often not dependent on the content of the policies, but rather on a case-by-case decisions within the intelligence services, the interior ministry and related bureaucrats. In the Tunisian case this involved regional governors and their deputies of religious affairs - as observed in the case of the Quran schools in Denden and Hay an-Nasr in Greater Tunis. This meant that often informal relations were sought with the regional governor and/or his deputy for religious affairs religious.¹²

In Syria, before the start of the uprising, informal bureaucratic brokerage was also readily observable, as it was generally perceived as crucial to keep any socio-religious initiative going. But Syria has a strong Islamic sphere, with elite Islamic shaykhs and an extensive bureaucracy governing religious activism. As a result brokerage tends to be more institutionalized and elite centered. It was widely accepted that elite Islamic actors had close relations with elites in regime circles. For instance Ramadan al-Buti and the late Ahmad Kiftaru - both world-renowned Islamic scholars - have been known to maintain close relations with the top regime figures, including the president. The latter additionally boasted that there were so many former students of his institute in the Syrian bureaucracy, he could always get things done.¹³ Shaykh Mohammad Habash was a member of parliament; Shaykh Farfur is a special advisor to the Ministry of Awqaf; and, most senior of all, al-Buti as the (informal) advisor to the president.¹⁴ Some

¹² For these examples of of the two local schools in Denden and Hay an-Nasr, that actively sought relations with their respective civil servants to be able to be active in the way that they wanted, see section 5.1 (page 94).

¹³ That this approach had its limits in this case was made clear when Salah Kiftaru was arrested on account of financial embezzlement in late 2009. Levant News (s. 2009a) *Salah Kiftaru Arrested on Charges Related to Work of the Islamic Kiftaru Congregation*, Levant News, July 1.

¹⁴ As a result, social Islamic mobilization has a profound impact on the political sphere. For

actors stated that these informal relations are a necessity and that any Islamic activist needs to acquire some form of regime relations to be able to acquire the resources needed to set up non-contentious social activities.¹⁵ The few Islamist social movements that were present during these days, most importantly the Qubaysiyat and Zayd movements, were both deeply involved in these relations. Related religious elite shaykhs, Munira al-Qubaysi and the Rifai' brothers respectively, were closely interacting with regime elites. As discussed earlier, the Zayd movement ended up nearly appropriating the state-initiated Union for Charitable Associations.¹⁶

But observing that relations exist between civil servants and Islamic actors does not, as such, show that brokerage is at work. The existence of a brokerage mechanism implies that a change in relations between sites should be observable. This change was most readily observable after the Arab Spring in the Tunisian context. In the Tunisian case, for instance, we see that bureaucratic brokerage initially declined and subsequently reemerged as reaction to a changing political context. With the 2011 revolution the traditional logic behind bureaucratic brokerage failed: as regime repression stopped, there was no need to nurture relations with civil servants for preferential treatment. Additionally, state bureaucracies and public organizations were in turmoil and therefore no possible brokers were available. The director of the Denden Quran School - that weeks before had entertained close relations with the governor - lost all interest in brokerage directly after the revolution. But brokerage soon resurfaced as formal political and state institutions stabilized. In the context of an explosion of Islamist movements in the country and an Islamist political party dominating politics after the breakdown of the Ben Ali regime, a new context for brokerage emerged.¹⁷ The former umbrella organizations for Quranic teaching has expanded their activities enormously after the revolution, and they told the author that they had "very good" and well developed relations to (people within) the ministry of religion. It does not hurt that one of their top figures became the minister of religious affairs directly after the revolution. Even Tunisian Salafists actively attempted to gain representation among civil servants in the ministry. Ennahda seemed to actively support this process by attempting to change key civil servants in ministries and public institutions. The minister of religious

instance, secular activists noted that within the capital it has become increasingly difficult to open bars serving alcohol outside the Christian quarter (Bab Tuma) and that bars have been closed following Islamic-based mobilization. The interviewees attributed this shift to informal pressure on the regime by conservative Islamic groups.

¹⁵ Tellingly one Damascus-based shaykh stated that: "all you need is contacts [with regime actors], money, and information". Interview with a Damascus-based shaykh, March 23, 2009. It is what Syrians call "wasṭa" (see also Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; Selvik and Pierret, 2009) and Tunisians call "kutf".

¹⁶ For details, see section 7.3 (page 153).

¹⁷ For a more detailed discussion, see chapter 8.

affairs under the Ennahda government is non-partisan but a well-known representation of newly-emerging Islamist social movements in the country. The replacement of the director general of the ministry of religious affairs and the editor-in-chief of the national television station are two main examples. When civil servants in the organizations of national television and radio refused to accept the new approach, Ennahda attempted to privatize these organizations and open them to foreign (Gulf) investors.¹⁸

As such, we see that brokerage to state institutions does not seem to be something of the past but reemerges in different political contexts. With different political contexts incentives and type of brokers changed, but as long as bureaucrats are perceived to have a position in social cleavages and are crucial for access to state's legal and financial resources, the basic logic of bureaucratic brokerage remains: rules are not applied uniformly thus access to those implementing the rules is necessary. Where first brokerage was about safeguarding projects against repression (triggered by a feeling of threat) it is now about facilitating initiatives (triggered by a feeling of opportunity). I would argue that this difference does not change the mechanisms as such, but it does influence the relation to category setting and diffusion between political and social Islamist mobilization. To the latter, the mechanism of diffusion, we now turn.

Diffusion from Movements to Politics

Diffusion of Islamist claims between Islamist movements and the political sphere can be observed in both settings. Though before the revolution little Islamist mobilization was present, after the Arab Spring both countries provide striking examples of this type of diffusion. Consider Ennahda: though formally a political party and therefore without links to social Islamist movements as such, they state themselves they are “informed” by social Islamist mobilization in society. These are not just political slogans: many Nahdaoui are individually active in society (a fact that is stressed by Ennahda members themselves), creating a well-developed informal network between movements and the party through which diffusion can take place. Within the regions Nahdaoui are well embedded within social mobilization and take note of what Islamist activists' demands are. That some diffusion takes place is therefore likely. That said, it is also clear in Tunisia that diffusion is much more direct within *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr* (and probably with future Salafist parties) than is the case with Ennahda. By deciding to transform into a political party (and not retaining an organization in society) Ennahda is losing clout among societal Islamist mobilization. The transformation into a political party without retaining an affiliated institutional structure within society weakens links for diffusion. Compared to Salafists and *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr*, Ennahda is increasingly detached from its social base.

¹⁸ Brik (s. 2012) *Debate on Privatization of Media in Tunisia*, al-Jazeera, April 21.

Considering Syria, in the context of the uprising, direct diffusion of Islamist demands gradually became more powerful. Some Islamist organizations, for instance Aḥrār al-Shām, combine both in a cohesive institutional structure. Others, such as the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, are more institutionally specialized with political activism dominating their activities. Though direct diffusion is present in both, it is more pervasive in the former than in the latter. When providing (food) aid or fighting the Syrian regime, Aḥrār al-Shām infuses its activism with similar calls for Islamic social and political governance. The founding document of the Syrian Islamic Front (dominated by Aḥrār al-Shām) reflects this literal diffusion.¹⁹ Though the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood also emulates Islamist demands, it does so much more indirectly. But the choice of the Syrian MB to start a new separate political party instead of transforming into one becomes crucial: it ensures they will retain some link with social mobilization that will be conducive to diffusion of Islamist claims to the political party.

What should be noted in this respect are the different actors involved in the two settings. Syria has well-developed, institutionalized, traditional religious authorities, Tunisia had (and still has) none. The diffusion between the religious sphere and Syrian politics is facilitated by formal positions within (political or bureaucratic) bodies. It is clear that shaykhs were the main link between existing Islamist movements and the political regime: they create and sustain informal relations between the two sites that sustain some form of diffusion (see also Donker, 2013). The result is that diffusion (as was the case with brokerage) in Syria is more “elitist” than it is in Tunisia. During the uprising these Islamic shaykhs and scholars retained their importance: both in regime territory (observable with the “political” assassination of elite shaykh Ramadan al-Buti) and in liberated areas where shaykhs such as al-Arouf and the Rifai’ brothers gained infamy. In Tunisia these traditional religious elites lost their former institutionalization during the rule of former presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Therefore diffusion takes place more directly between social Islamist movements and political Islamist parties.

Scale Shift?

When we take a look at Islamist claims made in the political sphere, a striking observation can be made: many - even to some extent the fundamentalist Salafists - seem to make non-Islamist political demands. The Tunisian Ennahda for instance, stated that Sharia will *not* be part of the constitution; while thousand were protesting in favor of such inclusion.²⁰ Despite increasing strength of

¹⁹ For details, see section 7.3 (page 153).

²⁰ al-Ṣabāḥ (s. 2012) *Shaykh Rashd Ghanoushi: Maintaining the First Article of the Constitution from '59 Is a Commitment Stipulated in the Electoral Programme of Ennahda*, al-Ṣabāḥ, March 27.

Salafists movements, many Syrian shaykhs argue for a civil Syrian state. In the case of Syria, one would have expected this to be a result of repression on the side of authoritarian regimes; rendering public Islamists somehow domesticated. But apart from shaykhs inside the country, it also includes more fundamentalist Salafist shaykhs abroad, those that have nothing to fear from regime repression. The Muslim Brotherhood, during the uprising, published a covenant explicitly *against* an Islamic state. On the other hand, though, many Syrians and Tunisian support a comprehensive Islamist project. They are in favor of an Islam that defines how public social, economic and political conduct is structured: many still support these “secularized” Islamist parties. With diffusion and close linkage between Islamist parties and their movement counterparts present, what can explain the endurance of this divergence between political and social in Islamist mobilization?

Part of the explanation, I argue, lies in the position of the political sphere and state institutions vis-à-vis society. In a situation where state institutions are embedded through informal relation to social mobilization - as is the case in many Arab countries - representation of interest does not only have to take place via the political sphere. If a movement is able to influence state bureaucracies and public institutions (and their civil servants), many Islamist claims can also be represented effectively. Therefore, there might be an indirect relation between bureaucratic brokerage and political diffusion. With increased brokerage the direct emulation of social Islamic claims to the political sphere can decrease. Though arguably attractive for its parsimony, this relational argumentation does not explain *why* diffusion or rather brokerage is triggered - or why between certain actors and not others. To explain these differences (also those between Syria and Tunisia) we have to consider how categories are set; and similarities attributed. To this we now turn.

10.2 Attribution of Similarities and Differences

Neither invention, borrowing, encounter, nor their combination creates a complete perimeter or a homogeneous population on one side of the boundary or the other; mixed cases, further distinctions, and variable degrees of conformity always survive. Category formation takes time and occurs in discrete increments. But category formation powerfully affects the identities in the name of which participants in contention interact (McAdam et al., 2001, p.144).

Creating Categories

A key mechanism in scale shift is the attribution of similarity: “the mutual identification of actors in different sites as being sufficiently similar to justify

common action” (McAdam et al., 2001, p.334). Simply stated, people have to feel they belong to a similar group otherwise they will not undertake action together - rendering upward scale shift impossible. But these similarities are never absolute: social categories are created, maintained, and broken down continuously. As we will see in the following analysis, the attribution of similarities between social sites is contingent on existing (and changing) social boundaries in society. It is as much about creating categories (the attribution of difference) as it is about the attribution of similarity. These two cognitive mechanisms, discussed in the following analysis, are central to understand how scale shift evolves in Islamist mobilization in the Arab world today. For upward scale shift there are two crucial boundaries across which attribution of similarities occurs: between social and political Islamist activists and between civil servants and Islamist movements. The mechanisms at the two levels do not interact directly, but their interplay defines how upward scale shift evolves.

One caveat should be made, and will return, concerning these mechanisms: they do not exist in a social vacuum. Other social boundaries present in society influence the attribution of similarity (or difference) along these two boundaries. In Syria we have strong sectarian boundaries dividing society, in Tunisia there have always been strong differences between the towns in the rural periphery and the cities in the coastal regions. In both countries we see boundaries between cities, families, the ones who have and the have-nots. Some of these also influence, but are not crucial to, upward scale shift in both countries. We will see that some boundaries that exist in one country but not the other can account for differences observed in the process of scale shift. But the two boundaries central to the analysis here are the most important, I argue, to account for the way that upward scale shift occurs. To get a better sense how these cognitive mechanisms interplay, we now take a closer look at both of them in the Syrian and Tunisian contexts.

Boundaries between Bureaucracies and Movements

In both “democratizing” and authoritarian settings we can see the attribution of similarity between civil servants and Islamic activists. Thus, when discussing the pre-revolutionary situation with a director of a Quranic school in Tunis, he stated that the wali (“governor”) was a “good Muslim” and that some people were more on the side of the Islamic mobilization than others. The deputy of religious affairs in his particular region, in combination with the wali, would serve as protection against more hostile natured state institutions. Deserved or not, the similarity was socially appropriated: despite belonging to Ben Ali’s state, these bureaucrats were perceived to be more sensitive to the interests of Islamic activists.²¹ The same holds true for Syria: some shaykhs state that some

²¹ For these examples, again, see section 5.1 (page 94).

people within state bureaucracies (including those in the intelligence services) are more accepting of Islamic social mobilization than others. More secular activists describe whole municipalities as being “Islamist” or not; noting that the spatial differentiation in implementation of laws along sectarian lines (for instance concerning opening bars in Christian and Muslim parts of the city) is due to the “Islamist nature” of key civil servants working in this municipality.²² If this is actually true or not is besides the point: what is crucial is that both Islamic activists and their secular counterparts *perceive* that these social boundaries are reflected in state institutions; even in the situation where there is no formal Islamic political representation.

That these categories exist is one thing, that they change - that a cognitive mechanism of category setting is at work - is another. The salience of the Islamist/secular divide in Syrian state institutions has undergone marked change throughout Ba’ath rule. It influenced the attribution of similarity between those in bureaucracies and movements. Most strikingly after 2003 (when Syria found itself increasingly isolated by the international community due to its perceived involvement in the Iraq war and assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri), Ba’ath rule opened up to social Islamist mobilization and the perception that some state institutions were under the influence of Islamist movements gained salience. The same applies to Tunisia. The regime always kept it staunchly secular identity, but after the 2006 reforms there was some room for individual bureaucrats to look more “Islamic”. It was in this context that some activists “discovered” some deputies and governors to be on “their” side. Again the extent to which these bureaucrats really believed in an interpretation of Islamic norms and values is unknown; they might have acted out of more utilitarian considerations, aiming for increased legitimacy among the population. What is important is that there was a perceived representation of social categories among bureaucrats in state institutions - and these perceptions altered over time.

With the Arab Spring these cognitive mechanisms have become increasingly obvious as Islamist movements reemerged. In Tunisia, following the revolution and the end of perceived necessity for bureaucratic brokerage, all Islamic activists stated they cut off all relations with people in state institutions as they “belonged to the regime of Ben Ali”. All previous perceived differences between civil servants in state institutions disappeared, to be overtaken by a differentiation between those that were “with” or “against” Ben Ali during the previous regime.²³ This difference was then linked to a secular-Islamist divide, perceiving

²² See section 7.3 (page 153).

²³ In interviews Ennahda member reluctantly acknowledged that certain aspects of Ben Ali’s rule were embedded in state institutions. But they, by and large, stated that civil servants have to be changed although they were wary of too much change in too short a time - which might create unrest.

more many civil servants as explicitly “secular”. Thus the previous (arguably limited) attribution of similarity between bureaucrats and Islamist movements disappeared. This translated in a wariness to engage with bureaucrats from the “old” regime. At the same time, though, it also translated into attempts to improve sensitivity to Islamic values inside state institutions. With Ennahda in power numerous conflicts emerged around replacing civil servant at public media and ministries, in addition to conflicts around supporting contentious Islamist mobilization which aimed at replacing management at universities around the country. As such, an “Islamization” of state institutions seemed to have been attempted through introducing Islamist-minded senior civil servants.²⁴

In Syria we see that the Arab Spring also radically changes the way divides between Islamist and non-Islamist are perceived inside state institutions. The main difference is that in Syria two interrelated categories are at play: one between various religious sects, the other between proponents and opponents of the ruling regime. As the uprising continued and turned into a struggle that took weeks, months and then years, the boundary between those that were in favor of al-Assad and those in favor of the uprising gained salience and became polarized. This category was then directly linked to sectarianism: the regime upholding the image that it was battling a radical Sunni Islamist uprising that aimed to create an Islamic state in which all religious minorities would be subservient to the Sunni rulers. Opponents tried to portray the struggle as one of a united Syrian people against an oppressive regime - but could not help that the large majority of the protesters were Sunni Muslims. Despite the fact that the Islamist-secular divide was not at the basis of the conflict, religious actors were therefore forced to take a position within the continuing conflict. Sunni shaykhs that retained their pragmatism were seen as being pro-regime and often lost legitimacy among their congregations. Only those elite shaykhs that enjoyed years of close relations to the political elites (for instance al-Buti) were not as dependent on their congregations and therefore appeared able to ignore the increasingly polarized boundary between pro- and anti-regime.²⁵ The above effectively meant that the attribution of similarity between Sunni movements and civil servants became increasingly linked to an emerging boundary between pro- and anti-regime.

The setting and salience of these categories has an impact on how and to what extent bureaucratic brokerage can occur. Thus in the first weeks and months after the Tunisian revolution brokerage to bureaucracies seemed to have ceased almost entirely. After Ennahda came to power attempts were made to re-initiate this brokerage. The same happened in Syria, where relations between state institutions and Islamist movements became severely strained as the uprising continued. But the extent to which this type of brokerage occurs

²⁴ See section 5.3 (page 105).

²⁵ Al-Buti’s assassination on March 22 2013 shows this only goes so far.

also depends on the extent to which political and social Islamic mobilization is perceived to be one project. This is discussed in the following section.

Boundaries between Social and Political Mobilization

A main category that is emerging within Islamism is between “political” and “social” forms of mobilization. It is the difference between parties that aim for political influence and movements that aim for societal transformation. The formation of these two categories can be observed in both Tunisia and Syria and is not something recent. As we have seen (in chapter 3) it is part of the overall development of Islamism in recent decades. Thus we see that the Tunisian Ennahda transformed over the years from *daʿwa* movement to political party; currently leaving no organizations behind in society. This dynamic is exemplified by party members that state they have nothing to say about social activism as they are a political party, to the head of the Ennahda electoral list in Tunis-1 stating he belongs to the movement and not the party, and Islamist movements stating they are purely *daʿwa* related. In essence they are all acts of category formation between social and political mobilization.²⁶ In Syria we see that the same type of categories are present. Islamist social movements, such as the Zayd and Qubaysiyat movements, in the country itself stress in no uncertain terms that they only have social aims, not political ones. Political Islamists (specifically the Muslim Brotherhood) state they want to establish a political party next to their *daʿwa* movement. Even the Salafists, before the uprising, were forced to remain a social Islamist movement inside the country. The above is not to say that these social Islamist movements did not have political influence; their aim to restructure public life is inherently political. But irrespective of whether these movements had actual influence in the political arena, there is a perceived specialization between Islamist mobilization aimed at societal change and influence in the political arena.

In the context of the Arab Spring the actual mechanism of category setting comes more clearly to the fore. The covenant mentioned above was a direct reaction to broad-based distrust of the Muslim Brothers’ intention of becoming a regular political party. Many fear that they will aim to introduce an Islamic state in which socio-religious mobilization is subject to political policies. Within liberated areas in Syria, according to several news sources, discussion was over differentiation and separation between social and political forms of Islamic mobilization.²⁷ In Tunisia these discussions are brought even more starkly to the

²⁶ It must be said that Rashd Ghanoushi, one of the founders and leader of Ennahda, has been at the forefront of bringing Islamism and democracy closer together. As such, compared to other countries Tunisian Islamism has been at the forefront of accepting democratic political sphere.

²⁷ See also Shadid (s. 2011) *City of Hama Offers Glimpse of a Syria After al-Assad*, The New York Times, July 19.

fore. Publicly Nahdaoui show that they constitute a normal political party that has a secularized political program. At the same time, when faced with the reality of being in power, Ennahda took care not to distance itself too much from social Islamist movements. Therefore their political program states solely that it is “informed by” and “builds on” Islam,²⁸ but individual Nahdaoui state that their movement differs from others in Tunisia because they emerged from, and are still an extension of, Islamist movements in society. The balance between the two causes continued discussion within the organization about the relation between political and social Islamist mobilization. It is clear that the distinct categories of “social” and “political” mobilization are not absolute (political parties have characteristics of movements and movements have political influence), but the reaction to them shows that these categories are emerging and have practical importance. It goes to show that they are subject to a mechanisms of setting and changing boundaries between political and social forms of Islamic mobilization; and have to find a balance between the two.

Islamist versus Islamist

Above I have mainly discussed the largest Islamic political parties and movements in Tunisia and Syria and shown how these mechanisms apply to them. They are not alone, and Islamist movements are far from unified. We will now turn to other movements present and discover that these mechanism also apply to them, but interact in different ways.

In Tunisia we see that there are Salafists, Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr, and Ennahda active in both politics and society. In Syria we have the Syrian Muslim Brothers, and strong representation of Salafists such as Jabhat al-Nuṣra, in addition to the organizations active under the banner of the Syrian Islamic Front and Syrian Liberation Front. These movements are in addition influenced by the structure of institutionalized religious authorities in the country. We can observe the attribution of similarities and differences with all these movements and actors. A main difference between these movements is how they perceive the position of politics within their Islamist project. The differences evolve around what the “proper” interpretation of Islam is as the basis of social and political identity. Salafists, although starting political parties, retain a close interrelation between social and political projects; while with the Tunisian Ennahda the divergence is clearer. Ennahda describes itself as a political party with a “movement background”, Salafists want to build a political regime based on Islamic jurisprudence (sharia).²⁹ Needless to say, Tunisian Salafists, Tahriri (activists from Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr) and Nahdaoui have very different visions of what this identity should

²⁸ The Ennahda Movement (p. 2011) *Program of Ennahda: For Tunis, Freedom, Justice and Development*, Ḥarakat Ennahada, September.

²⁹ Note that from the point of Salafists this is often not a contradiction; it is rather in support of a democratic pluralistic political regime.

be and how it should relate to society and politics. With the liberalization of the social sphere and remobilization of these various Islamist movements, the tensions between these various visions have become increasingly public. The same difference can be observed between the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Syrian Salafists in areas that have (temporarily) been liberated from government control. Members of Jabhat al-Nuṣra explicitly critique those that argue for this separation and there are conflicts on this point between ʿAdnān al-ʿArṣūr and both the Syrian MB and Jabhat al-Nuṣra.³⁰ As such, despite similar mechanism being at play, these movements have formatted the social and political categories around Islamist mobilization in different ways.

The position that Islamist parties have concerning the social/political divide is clarified when exploring how these movements relate to their non-Islamist counterparts in society. In Tunisia Islamists of all appearances state that their country is build on an Arabo-Islamic heritage; that everybody is Muslim; thereby defining a religion as a central characteristics of Tunisian nationalism.³¹ Islamist movements and parties differ on how to address actors that do not fit within their interpretation of what it means to be Muslim (e.g. more secularized Tunisians). Simplified, it can be stated that Salafists are the most pronounced opponents to secular counterparts in society and are also the ones to conflate the social and political divide the most. They feel that the Islamic characteristic of the nation needs to be defended through policies set by the political regime. Whereas Ennahda feels they are the guardian of both Tunisian nationhood and public Islam by providing the context for Islamist movements to Islamize society. In Ennahda's view societal Islamization does not have to (and should not) be imposed through policies: public Islam will naturally reappear when given the opportunity.³²

The same difference can be seen in Syria but related to a much more sectarian context. Thus we can read that Syrian MB wishes for a Syria build on an Islamic-Arab identity in which "Islam is a religion and civilization for its Muslim citizens" and a "civilizational identity for non-Muslim citizens". The Syrian Islamic Front is more outright in its aim to build an Islamic society. It thereby keeps to the point that *everyone* should live under sharia-based laws, but that in this framework minorities will have their rights, properties and place in the community. Jabhat al-Nuṣra acknowledges fears among Syrian minorities even

³⁰ See section 7.3 (page 153) for more details.

³¹ We see that strong nationalistic overtones are produced when contentious mobilization erupts between religious and secular movements in society; for instance with the anti-Nesma and #occupyBardo protests (see for more detail section 5.2).

³² The difference in mobilization potential between these two approaches can be assessed by comparing two protests. The first aimed at defending the Islamic characteristic of Tunisian identity (after the Nesma showing of Perspolis) that drew tens of thousands of protesters. The second demanding that Islamic jurisprudence (sharia) be the basis of the Tunisian constitution: "only" around 8,000 showed upS.

less. As such, the position and rights that non-Muslims are given relates directly to the position of Islam in an envisioned future “Syrian” state.

Therefore, concluding, we see that not only do different movements exist within Syria and Tunisia, but that their collective identities vis-à-vis each other are to a large degree substantiated by how they relate social and political mobilization within their Islamist activism. What I argue is that the position that movements take concerning the above discussed categories also defines the position they have on state institutions and bureaucrats - finally influencing how Islamist demands are shifted in scale from the societal to the political sphere.

10.3 Emulation

Institutions and institutional differences frame how claims are produced and disseminated. Many students appear to see framing as a self-generating process of social construction. Although there is a warrant for such a view in early accounts of framing [more recent ones] demonstrate [...] that interaction between movements and institutions plays an important role in framing (Tarrow, 2010a, pp. 218-219).

Upward Scale Shift

To understand how the above mechanisms interrelate and influence upward scale shift we need to, I argue, take into account differences between two trajectories through which upward scale shift can occur. This differentiation is dependent on bureaucracies that are embedded in society and are perceived to have a position within social categories, and on the perceived differentiation between social and political Islamic mobilization. We called the first trajectory “political scale shift”. In this instance, through a mechanisms of direct diffusion and continued shared identity between a diverging political and social mobilization, demands from Islamist movements are emulated quite literally in the political arena. With political scale shift we see that Islamist demands are directly translated into political Islamic ones: demands for sharia as the basis of the constitution, education laws on what can (and cannot) be taught in schools, changes in the personal status code. The second trajectory we can call “bureaucratic scale shift”. In this instance the role of political Islamic parties is not to set policies, but to change the position of the state apparatus (through appointment of key civil servants) along the Islamist/non-Islamist social divide. As a result demands are emulated much more liberally. With bureaucratic scale shift it is not so much about policies, but about people. On the policy front a secularized political program is followed, while focus is laid on changing civil servants in

crucial bureaucracies and public organizations. Civil servants thereby become unintentional brokers between Islamist demands in social and political arenas.

If we take a look at the Tunisian and Syrian practices we can observe how political emulation of Islamist movements' claims is taking place differently through these two trajectories. In Tunisia after the revolution Islamist movements' protests were not only aimed at demanding sharia-based legislation but also at strengthening public Islamic observance at universities, elementary education, public press and relevant ministries.³³ Ennahda changed the director general and civil servants at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and attempted to change key civil servants at public media.³⁴ This seemingly all in an attempt to facilitate Islamist mobilization and nurture Islamization of public life. Islamist social movements encroach on public institutions and bureaucracies to gain access to state resources. With increased "openness" of bureaucracies and public institutions to Islamist mobilization, movements will be more successful - at least, this is the thought. Lenient application of state-set rules, access to financial sources, access to public institutions as platforms for Islamist movements to be active - all can aid the overall Islamist project. These attempts can be readily observed (see chapter 5). Although these attempts at "opening up" state bureaucracies and public institutions are not always directly successful, they seem to provide Ennahda with a stable support base that seems to endure economic and social difficulties.

In Syria, specifically in the context of an emerging proto-state apparatus in "liberated" areas, we can observe differences in political emulation between the MB and more Salafist-leaning groups. Whereas the former is active in political bodies abroad, and supports the creation of a civil state bureaucracy and public institutions, the latter are creating a state apparatus based on religion and assume a "natural" representativeness through pure religious credentials. Though both approaches are fraught with difficulties, related differences in political demands made is striking. The MB continues as pragmatic political actor trying to build alliances with, or create, Islamist movement organizations. The Salafists often explicitly negate any such differentiations and continue to demand the enforcement of a religious system on both society and politics. Before the revolution, despite a completely different context, a similar process of "bureaucratic brokerage" could be observed. This previous existence, and experience of actors involved, provides the backdrop for its current reemergence. During the last decade, Islamist movements gained both infamy and popularity (depending on who you ask) because of their success in Islamizing Damascene public life. A success that was impossible without encroaching on elementary education

³³ See tables 5.2 (page 103) listing "political protests" and table 5.3 (page 108) listing "bureaucratic protests".

³⁴ For more details see section 5.3 (page 105 onwards).

(concerning the Qubaysiyat) or state charitable associations (the Zayd movement). These attempts were only made possible because there was an initial regime willingness, nurtured by informal contacts to the religious sphere, to let it happen and provide the regime with a level of Islamic legitimacy.³⁵

What trajectory is taken influences how emulation between political and social Islamic mobilization occurs. With an increased focus on changing state bureaucracies and public institutions, the importance of Islamist policy setting in creating legitimacy for political Islamist parties can decrease. Thus failure to explicitly implement sharia-based laws might affect political legitimacy of these parties in a limited sense, as long as they are perceived to support the Islamization of state bureaucracies and public institutions, thereby nurturing the Islamization of public life. Therefore scale shift occurs in both instances, as there is an (implicit) coordination between social and political mobilization, but the extent to which demands and grievances are literally *emulated* differs between the two trajectories. Summarized, we can state that pervasive bureaucratic brokerage supports a secularization of political Islamist programs (for this proposition page, see 22).

As must be clear from the above there are some necessary structural conditions for both trajectories to occur. In a situation where political partisanship and state bureaucracies are fused, and the latter are closely integrated into society through endemic regime induced clientelism, we see that state institutions are perceived to be part of social cleavages. In other words, state institutions and their civil servants are positioned along an Islamist/non-Islamist social cleavage. Only in this context does an “Islamization” of state institutions make sense. In addition, the existence of informal contacts between civil servants and Islamist activists is a necessary condition for bureaucratic brokerage to emerge (for an elaborate discussion see chapter 8). This condition is present in both Tunisia and Syria and we can therefore conclude that - despite enormous differences in political, social and religious contexts - both mechanistic trajectories are available to Islamist actors in Tunisia and Syria.

Conclusion

The previous chapter has provided a mechanistic vantage point respond to to the two central questions of this thesis: why do Islamist movements, including those traditionally opposed to party politics, increasingly accept and organize along a formal division between political and social arenas? And why is this increasing Islamist acceptance not matched by a general weakened salience of Islamist ideologies? The mechanistic approach is particularly apt to describe the interrelation between various mechanisms and processes that constitute collective mobilization and thereby provide hypotheses concerning these questions.

³⁵ See section 7.3 (page 153 onwards).

Table 10.1: Overview Processes “Upward Scale Shift” in Chapter 10

Trajectory	Attribution Similarity/Difference	Brokerage/Diffusion	Result
Bureaucratic Scale Shift	<p><i>Tunisia</i>: similarity / differences attributed to civil servants by activists along secular-Islamic cleavage, see pp.221, 222. Concerning Ennahda see pp.223, 224; for Quranic schools, see p.222.</p> <p><i>Syria</i>: similarity / differences attributed along “secular-Islamic” cleavage to particular state institutions both before and after start of uprising, see pp.221, 223. Concerning the Zayd and Qubaysiyat before, see p.224; for MB vs. JN and SLF during the uprising, see p.159.</p>	<p><i>Tunisia</i>: attempts to “open up” state institutions as brokers to Islamist mobilization from below, see pp.216, 217. Concerning Ennahda see pp.217, 228; for related contentious mobilization, see table 5.3.</p> <p><i>Syria</i>: attempts to encroach on education and charitable sector before revolution, demands for civil governance structures in liberated areas after start uprising, see p.216. Concerning MB vs. JN and SLF during revolution, see p.159; concerning the Zayd and Qubaysiyat, see p.217.</p>	<p>“Loose” Emulation Islamist Demands to Politics</p>
Political Scale Shift	<p><i>Tunisia</i>: complete similarity attributed within Islamist project, no differentiation social and political activism, see p.225. Concerning Ennahda versus Salafists, see p.225; concerning Salafists both before and after the revolution, p.102.</p> <p><i>Syria</i>: complete similarity attributed within Islamist project, difference attributed between Islamist project and secular state institutions, pp.226. Concerning the MB, see p.224; for MB vs. JN and SIF, see p.226.</p>	<p><i>Tunisia</i>: direct contact between those Islamists active for societal and political goals; often within the same organizations, see p.219. Concerning Ennahda vs. Hut and Salafists, see p.218; concerning contentious mobilization, see table 5.2.</p> <p><i>Syria</i>: before uprising fighting for Islamic state abroad, practical implementation of Islamic governance structures during the uprising, see p.219. Concerning MB vs. Ahrār, see p.218; concerning JN, SIF and governance structures in liberated areas, p.226.</p>	<p>“Literal” Emulation Islamist Demands to Politics</p>

Through the analytical tools it provides, differences between modes of mobilization can be understood as the outcome of varying constellations of social processes and their mechanisms. Table 10.1 provides an empirical overview of the argumentation put forward in this chapter. What has also become clear is that mobilization is not just about these mechanisms. I have argued that the embedding of public institutions and state bureaucracies in informal social networks and cleavages influences how certain mechanisms emerge and are triggered. Therefore I argue that certain institutional structures influence how social processes emerge (see for a similar argument McAdam, 2003a; Tarrow, 2010a).

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More generally, chapter 8 focused on a structural explanation of the position of state institutions in social cleavages. I argued that over the years of authoritarian rule, state institutions have been used as a tool for regime-induced clientelism aimed at creating a dependence on the ruling political regime. In a context of close interrelation between political and economic elites, this means that state institutions were not only implementors of policies but also holders of critical resources used in clientelism. It both implied a level of autonomy on the side of state institutions from set policies, and selective rather than generic distribution of state resources. As a result of this, state bureaucracies are seen both as actors within and holders of critical resources for social mobilization. Chapter 9 focused on the strategic mobilization dilemmas that emerged within the Islamist project due to the particular position of state institutions. I argued that a divergence is emerging, within the Islamist project, between social and political mobilization. The extent to which this divergence is internalized differs between movements, but all are confronted by it. It means that Islamists face a new strategic dilemma: to aim at influencing policies, or aim at influencing state institutions instead. Chapter 10 focused on two different mechanistic trajectories to the way Islamist demands are shifted up in scale from the social to the political sphere. I argued that there are two possible trajectories: through “political scale shift” or “bureaucratic scale shift”. With political scale shift we see that Islamist demands are directly translated into political Islamic ones; with bureaucratic scale shift we see a focus on changing civil servant in key ministries rendering emulation of Islamist demands from society to the political arena much more free. I argue that in order to understand Islamist mobilization during and after the Arab Spring we need to focus on the interrelation between the mechanisms that constitute these two trajectories and analyze how they influence mobilization within movements across different structural contexts.

Through these various approaches to answering the questions stated above, I have shown that debates on collective contentious mobilization and social

movements studies provides a useful conceptual and analytical framework to understand Islamist mobilization today. The combination of these structural, agency and mechanistic approaches provides an in-depth understanding of why certain social and political demands are made - or not. As such, I argue that the analysis made in the previous chapters can (and should) be applied to other countries in the region as well. Therefore, as we turn to the concluding chapter, a large section is devoted to an initial broader comparative survey of the Arab world. We will assess to what extent we can observe similar dynamics in other Arab countries that have witnessed political change during the Arab Spring and, briefly, if we can observe these dynamics in other Muslim-majority countries across the Arab world and beyond.

Part IV

Taking Stock

Chapter 11

Conclusion

Islamism Today

The Arab Spring - as the mobilization wave of 2011-2013 came to be known - revived interest in two topics: collective contentious mobilization and Islamist movements. This thesis is positioned at the intersection of these two topics. Though the Arab Spring has not finished yet, one result is clear. In all countries where popular mobilization effectively challenged authoritarian rule, Islamism - mobilization aimed at restructuring public life according to Islamic norms - gained influence. The two central cases in this thesis, Tunisia and Syria, are but two examples. In other Arab Muslim-majority countries similar scenarios played out. Tensions between Islamist and non-Islamist tendencies polarized in all of these societies as Islamist movements became more openly active. The new “democratic” era in the Arab world seems to be colored by an Islamist resurgence.

When taking a closer look at this resurgence, we can observe an interesting development. Islamist movements increasingly tend to diverge institutionally in their activism: many Islamist movements create separated institutional bodies (parties and social movement organizations) for activism in politics and society. This is for instance true of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Syria and Ennahda in Tunisia. Surprisingly this is also true of some Salafists groups, despite calling for an Islamic system that governs all and everything. Though decades in the making, the sudden social and political changes as a result of regime collapse during the Arab Spring, have brought this divergence to the fore. Interestingly, Islamism is built on the idea that Islam provides a structure for all public (both social and political) life in one comprehensive structure. Thereby it places religion above any worldly considerations, rendering the aforementioned pragmatic approach to institutionalization seemingly at odds with an Islamist ideology.

This in itself is interesting; what is puzzling is that the increased divergence seems to have not weakened the overall salience of the Islamist project. One would expect popularity to decrease as Islamists increasingly seem to forsake their ideological basis out of pragmatic considerations. Instead, in Syria Islamists form the most powerful group in foreign opposition bodies and among rebels fighting the regime of Bashar al-Assad. In Tunisia Ennahda won by a landslide and Salafists are gaining traction in society. Islamist social movements are currently one of the most active and powerful in these countries. Again, the same applies to many other Arab countries that have seen regime breakdown during the Arab Spring. The above puzzle brings up a range of interesting issues pertaining to the mechanisms and strategies within the overall Islamist project. They were caught in two central questions, articulated in the introduction of this thesis: (a) why do most Islamist movements, including those traditionally opposed to party politics, accept and organize along a formal division between political and social arenas. And (b) why is this secularized politicization of the Islamist project not matched by a general weakened salience of the Islamist ideology? This thesis explored these two questions by comparing Syria and Tunisia while drawing on debates from social movement studies for its analysis.

11.1 Results and Implications

The thesis' main contentions are, first, that in practice Islamist movements face a dilemma of how to react to a context that is ever more strictly divided between a social and political arena: either mobilization is aimed at societal change through organizing as social associations, or it is aimed at maximizing political influence through organizing as political parties. Irrespective of what their ideology is, all movements face the dilemma of how to reconcile a vision of a complete Islamic system with day-to-day realities. Second, I argued that common strategies addressing the perceived "secularity" of state bureaucracies and public institutions (such as the ministries for social and religious affairs, public education and media, police forces, etc) can be the basis of a shared goal for mobilization and thereby ensure the unity of an Islamist project. Debates on collective mobilization and social movements - specifically relating to alliance and conflict structures, dilemmas of strategic action, and the social process of "upward scale shift" - were then used to provide insights into how the political-social divide influenced Islamist claim making, and how state institutions can be positioned along this divide. I substantiated these claims through a paired comparison between Syria and Tunisia. The comparison built on, first, extensive fieldwork over the course of four years in the Arab world. Second, it drew on a content analysis of primary sources from Islamist associations, state institutions, and individual autobiographies of (Islamist) actors; third, it used secondary

sources from local, Arab and international newspapers as the empirical basis for the analysis.

The thesis used three different, but complementary, analytical approaches to draw insights from the paired comparison. First, drawing on a more traditional structural approach within social movement studies, it was argued that a shared history of 1) regime-led clientelism with 2) a well-developed state bureaucracy, in 3) the context of a politically salient social divide, can result in state bureaucracies and public institutions being positioned along social cleavages. In other words: state institutions and their civil servants can be perceived to have a position in specific, politically salient, social cleavages around which mobilization occurs. Next to implying a level of autonomy on the side of civil servants, it also means that in the context of political liberalizations state institutions can be perceived as not only implementor of policies but also actors in social struggles. I argue that this dynamic is particularly obvious concerning the “Islamist”-“secular” cleavage in many Arab societies. Thus particular ministries, universities’ managements, public media and even police forces, can be perceived as being “secular” and in need of “Islamization”. Beyond these Arab similarities, differences in the strength of the Islamic sphere, the participation of Islamist parties in the political sphere and the availability of Islamist mobilization in society before the Arab Spring have meant that interactions between Islamists and state institutions develop their own particularities in the two cases discussed here.

Taking the above as a starting point, the thesis then analyzed how this structural context influences contemporary Islamist mobilization. Using a second analytical approach, drawing on a more recent strategic approach in social movement studies, it was argued that dynamics in contemporary Islamist movements are, in large part, derived from strategic dilemmas concerning the application of a religious ideology to a contemporary reality. It is a dilemma created by concurrent pressure to adhere to existing institutionalized *arenas* in modern nation-states, while aiming to speak to similar *audiences*. All Islamists face this dilemma but react differently. I observed that although Islamist movements increasingly organize either as political parties or, on the other side, as various societal organizations representing social Islamist mobilization, the adherence to this differentiation differs between various Islamist actors. Thus the extent to which movements and parties diverge is not a given, but every Islamist actor is acutely aware of the pressure to conform to these divides.

What is puzzling in this respect is the seemingly enduring contradictory dynamic: on one side Islamists are diverging practically as they are forced to become active in different arenas; on the other side they converge around a shared (both political and social) Islamist message. One would expect Islamist mobilization to either increasingly grow apart *or* fuse together again. Neither is happening. I argued that to explain this endurance, in times of pragmatism, we

can take a look at how these two types of Islamist activism interact in reaction to the perceived societal position of state institutions. Comparing Syria and Tunisia, we saw that state institutions have become crucial actors in strategic choices concerning Islamist mobilization in both countries. They provide an opportunity for Islamists to both diverge institutionally and continue to talk to similar audiences, as these institutions provide a shared goal: Islamists in politics can pressure state institutions to “open up” to new social forces, while social Islamist movements encroach on these institutions from below. Though dilemmas and possible strategic choices are similar in both cases, important differences between the cases remain. Notably in the existence of traditional religious elites, and the position of the regime within the salient Islamist-secular (in Tunisia) and religious sectarian divides (in Syria). It became clear that these differences directly relate to pre-revolutionary positions of religious authorities, political Islamist parties and Islamist social mobilization and influence what dilemmas emerge after the Arab Spring. I showed that general dilemmas are similar, but specificities differ according to structural differences between the two cases.

Finally, drawing on a mechanistic approach in social movement studies, it was argued that the relation between Islamist claim making and state institutions can be described through the analytical concept of “upward scale shift”. This social process can be seen to consist of a conjecture of two mechanistic trajectories. A first trajectory of “political scale shift” that consists of direct diffusion and the attribution of similarity between political and social mobilization within an Islamist movement. A second trajectory of “bureaucratic scale shift” consists of civil servants in bureaucracies and public institutions as (to some extent unintentional) brokers in combination with an attribution of social similarity and difference to civil servants. If we apply this analytical framework to contemporary Islamist mobilization, there seems to be an inverse relation between these two trajectories: more bureaucratic brokerage seems to mean less political diffusion, and more attribution of similarity between civil servants and movements. What trajectory dominates then influences how emulation occurs between social and political Islamist demands. With a trajectory of political scale shift we see that Islamist demands are directly translated into political Islamic ones: demands for sharia as the basis of the constitution, education laws on what can (and cannot) be taught in schools, changes in the personal status code. With bureaucratic scale shift it is not so much about policies, but about those civil servants that implement policies: Islamizing state institutions becoming an aim, to the detriment of Islamizing state policies. A seemingly “secularization” of claims made by Islamist political parties is the result. As a result, a social-political divergence within Islamist mobilization is developed, without threatening the overall unity of the Islamist project.

If we take a look at the Tunisian and Syrian practice we can observe how

political emulation of Islamist movements' claims is taking place differently through these two trajectories. In Tunisia after the revolution Islamist movements protests were not only aimed at demanding sharia-based legislation but also at strengthening public Islamic observance at universities, elementary education, public press and relevant ministries.¹ Ennahda changed the director general and civil servants at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and attempted to change key civil servants at public media. Islamist social movements, meanwhile, encroach on public institutions and bureaucracies to gain access to state resources. With increased "openness" of bureaucracies and public institutions to Islamist mobilization, movements will be more successful - at least, this is the thought. In Syria, in the context of an emerging proto-state apparatus in "liberated" areas, we can observe differences in political emulation between the MB and Salafist groups. Whereas the former is active in political bodies abroad, and supports the creation of a civil state bureaucracy and public institutions, the latter are creating a state apparatus based on religion and assuming a "natural" representativeness through pure religious credentials. Though both approaches are fraught with difficulties, related differences in the political demands made is striking. The MB continues as pragmatic political actor trying to build alliances with, or create, Islamist movement organizations. The Salafists often explicitly negate any such differentiations and continue to demand the enforcement of a religious system on both society and politics.

All of the above means, simplified, that the state does not have to be seen as an aim, but it can also be seen as a tool in a comprehensive Islamist project aimed at restructuring public life. A civil democratic state does not have to be perceived as antagonistic to Islamist goals, nor do seemingly "secularized" policies, even though the state is still perceived as subservient to religious considerations. It means, as discussed above, that Islamist parties do not have to directly translate Islamist demands into the political arena to sustain a legitimacy among Islamist social movements active in society. This holds true of parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and Ennahda in Tunisia, but it is also true for many more fundamentalist movements, such as Salafist ones.

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The above analysis has important implications for the study of social movements and collective mobilization. First of all, it shows how various debates within studies on social movements and contentious mobilization can be used in conjecture to analyze one specific phenomenon. It thereby shows the strength that can be drawn from the fragmentation that marks the contemporary field of social movement studies. Next to this, it draws attention to the influence that

¹ See tables 5.2 (page 103) listing "political protests" and table 5.3 (page 108) listing "bureaucratic protests".

(a perceived) autonomy of state bureaucracies and public institutions can have in defining the relation between social movements and political parties. If state institutions are caught in social cleavages they can become an aim for collective mobilization and thereby influence how demands are translated to the political arena and/or collective identities are sustained.

Concerning debates on Islamism, I argued that stressing the “post” in post-Islamism among some academics has led to an over-emphasis on the increased acceptance of social and political divisions among Islamist actors. This tendency has been strengthened by popular concepts such as “political Islam” (leading to a focus on the formal political expressions of Islamism) that largely ignore the link between social activism and political power in Islamist practice. The approaches mirror academic divisions between sociology and political science but often poorly reflect actual dynamics on the ground. Practically, it results in an underestimation of the power of Islamism because the enduring connection between social and political mobilization, and the popularity derived from it, is neglected. The fact is that Islamism does not mold itself into distinct independent social and political entities. For an academia that is ever more specialized this creates a challenge in analyzing such a phenomenon. This thesis attempted to show that a meaningful academic analysis of Islamism, broadly defined, is both possible and necessary.

The general picture drawn in the thesis’ analysis is of an Islamist project, despite an increasing institutional divergence, that is neither dead nor dying. It is a picture of an Islamist project faced with immense opportunities and challenges. By making use of emerging opportunities, Islamists become publicly active and now face questions of how to relate those active to political and social arenas. Some of these questions are faced within organizations (see the discussion within the Tunisian Ennahda “movement” on the question of whether they are truly a movement or a party). Some are faced between Islamist organizations (see the discussion between the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists movements active in the armed uprising). But in all cases the Arab Spring has made these questions more pressing than ever before.

11.2 Islamism in the Arab World Today

The question remains as to the extent to which the above propositions are applicable to only Syria and Tunisia, or also to the other Arab (and Muslim-majority) countries. In most, including those affected by the Arab Spring, Islamist activism has been present since the emergence of the modern nation state and in recent decades has been increasingly institutionalized in “modern” associations, foundations and political movements. We can therefore also explore issues of combining institutional divergence and ideological convergence in these other

countries and assess to the extent to which state institutions play a part in them. In the the following section we focus on countries that have experienced sudden regime breakdown as a result of popular mobilization during the Arab Spring: Egypt, Libya and Yemen. More briefly, at the end of this section, we discuss other Muslim-majority countries in the Arab world and beyond. Furthermore, this section will provide the opportunity to highlight one issue that has been relatively neglected throughout the thesis: the extent of cross-border influences between various Islamist movements. Although these actors first and foremost react to a nation arena, Islamism is a strong trans-national phenomenon - as chapter 3 has shown. How this trans-national characteristic has worked in practice will be discussed in the final parts of this chapter.

Religious Authorities, the State and Islamism

Despite all being authoritarian republics, the five Arab states most profoundly affected by the Arab Spring are very diverse in the structure (and strength) of state institutions, the traditional position of mobilized Islam in society and politics, and the extent of previous (contentious) mobilization present. I argue that despite all of these differences we see similar dilemmas and mechanisms around the interaction between social and political forms of Islamism emerge.

In Yemen, for instance, due to the enduring strength of tribal relations, a long porous border with Saudi Arabia, institutional ramifications of a 1990 unification and subsequent civil war, the state does not fully control its territory nor does it have a monopoly on the use of violence (Phillips, 2008). Additionally, in the early 2000s a Shia uprising started and activities of al-Qaeda (linked) groups increased in the south-west of the country. The weakness of the Yemeni state is reflected in its political structures. The former ruling party, the *Mu'atamir al-Sha'bi al-Ām* ("General Peoples Congress" or GPC) is a party without an ideological basis and is generally seen as an institutional structure for regime-based patronage. Various tribal leaders, Socialist politicians, Islamists and religious authorities are represented among its ranks. GPC membership was essential for obtaining any kind of civil servant jobs (Phillips, 2008, chapter 2). As a result, in a context where the state (either in the more traditional North Yemen or Socialist South Yemen) had never been strong enough to fully challenge the power of religious authorities, Islamic (and Islamist) actors became integrated into this political body. Yemen was therefore authoritarian, as were other Arab states, but its state institutional structure nurtured a relatively open social pluralism - including its religious segments - that were subsequently closely engaging with the regime and state institutions.²

² What should be mentioned in this respect is that there is a large Zaydi Shia minority in the country, but this religious sectarian difference has been somewhat underplayed due to the religious closeness of the Zaydi Shia to Sunni Islam. Also see Phillips (2008, chapter 2).

Concerning the post-colonial Libyan state, constructed from three separate regions - Tripolitania, Fezzan and Cyrenaica - in 1951, it never developed a well-defined institutional state structure at all. But in contrast to Yemen, since a 1969 coup d'état brought Muammar Qadhafi to power he has retained full control over the country. But instead of building state institutions, he has actively worked to oppose any construction of state bureaucracies and public institutions. In an aim to create a true "Revolutionary Society" a new type of political community was created: the *Jamahiriyah* (loosely translated as "The State of the People"). It was marked by consultation, not representation, through popular congresses and committees that would directly manage the state's administrative and bureaucratic tasks (Anderson, 1987). In addition, "Revolutionary Councils" were created that were aimed at keeping the revolutionary zeal alive. At the same time the Libyan oil industry (indispensable for funding the revolutionary project) remained untouched by these revolutionary attempts, as did the growing security apparatus. As a result a dual state emerged: a formal one consisting of popular congresses and committees that were the executive and legislative branches of government; and an informal one around the revolutionary councils and security apparatus with Qadhafi at the center. Religious authorities, although being of key importance during the kingdom that preceded Qadhafi's rule, had lost almost all their importance following the post-coup curtailment. Though Qadhafi explicitly drew on Islam in an attempt to popularize and legitimize his revolution, he was never able to combine his attempts at nationalization of private property with mainstream Islamic jurisprudence. Therefore, although often embedding his revolutionary ideology in Islamic discourse, religious legitimacy remained elusive (Vandewalle, 2012).

Egypt (as well as Tunisia and Syria) has fared better in retaining state structures. Those institutions that emerged under Ottoman rule were strengthened during colonialism and subsequently largely remained present following independence and thereafter. Although politics differed between Presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956-1970), Anwar al-Sadat (1970-1981) and Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011), the unity of the country, state institutions and religious sphere has never been in question. In addition, due to its economic and political strength - especially from independence up until the 1980s - Egypt has been one of the leading countries, socially, economically and politically, of the Arab world. Also, al-Azhar, a leading Islamic institute in the Muslim world, is based in the capital Cairo. Considering all of the above, it might not be surprising that the most important Islamist organizations in the world, the Muslim Brotherhood, was founded in Egypt in 1928.³ Therefore there has been a long history of interaction between the Muslim Brothers, its Islamist offshoots, and the political regimes of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak. Additionally, the regime has in the

³ For a classic on the early history of the Muslim Brothers, see Mitchell (1969).

past attempted to use traditional religious authorities, mainly institutionalized in al-Azhar, in its attempts to garner a level of religious legitimacy (al-Awadi, 2004).

As a result of the above, we see that the position of religion in state and politics differed greatly between these countries. In Yemen the intersection between the religious sphere - and Islamist movements - and state institutions and politics was furthest developed. Religious elites had been co-opted in the GPC and since the early 1990s an Islamist opposition party - the Islāh party - existed publicly. In the strong patronage-based Yemeni regime these politicized religious authorities and Islamist parties became powerful in the police, army and bureaucracies; and were closely related to various Islamic associations (Bonney, 2011). In Egypt this was also the case, but these interactions revolved more around a single institute (considering the religious sphere) and were dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood (considering Islamist mobilization). With the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and various other Islamist movements never completely uprooted, a lively Islamist social arena was present which gradually attempted to take over primary and secondary education, health care and mosques. Though the MB was initially successful in gaining a level of political access through the election of MB “independents” in the Egyptian parliament, they were eventually (through the 2010 elections) effectively politically sidelined. In Libya these interactions were the least developed. Religious authorities related to the previous Idrissi kingdom had been sidelined since the early years following the revolution and Islamist opposition that emerged during the early 1980s was effectively repressed. The state itself was in constant turmoil, due to Qadhafi’s ongoing attempts at “popularizing” state management. It meant that, despite Islamic rhetoric on the side of Qadhafi, traditional religious authorities and Islamist actors had next to no inroads into politics nor state.

Islamists Divergence and Convergence

Despite these vast differences between these settings we see similar dilemmas and mechanisms of Islamist mobilization emerge during and after the Arab Spring. The most striking feature of the Islamist resurgence around the Arab Spring is the extent to which Islamist groups have established parties and have accepted differentiations between social and political activism in these varying contexts. Either in repressive settings or relatively more free ones, in contexts of complete breakdown or some form of regime survival, Islamist movements have both founded political parties and societal associations. To some extent these choices are constrained by (electoral) laws, but in many cases these movements seem genuine in their acceptance of the practical realities of social and political divisions. Through a process that started in the preceding decades - as we

also observed in our Tunisian and Syrian cases - and still incomplete, many movements seems to follow this route.⁴

Thus we see that the main Yemeni party Islāḥ is an explicitly political party, while at the same time an Islamist charitable association *Jamaʿiyya Islāḥ al-Ijtimāʿiyya al-Khayriyya* (“Societal Reform Charitable Association” or SRCA) dominates its charitable activities.⁵ The Islāḥ party has become a pragmatic political actor to the extent that it built an opposition bloc with the Yemeni socialist party - historically their main enemy. At the same time, organizations such as SRCA have provided a strong institutional presence of Islamist social movements in society. Both political party and charitable association were founded in 1990 and are informally related, but participants explicitly state that the two organizations are independent (Phillips, 2008; Carapico, 1998).

In Egypt, there was fierce discussion throughout the 1970s about formal recognition of the Muslim Brotherhood by the regime. Any regime invitations to register as political party, charitable association or formal movements were, at the time, refused in fear of destabilizing the overall *tanẓīm* (“organization”) of the movement (al-Awadi, 2004). During Mubarak’s rule though, the benefits of more formal participation outweighed the disadvantages and the Muslim Brotherhood actively began to become active, where possible, as a social organization in society and as individual political activists in parliament. It was therefore no real surprise that the MB launched a separate political party from their social organization following the 2011 revolution (*Ḥizb al-Ḥuriyya wa al-ʿadāla*, “the Freedom and Justice Party” or FJP). But, to the surprise of many, it was not just the MB which founded an Islamist political party. The Salafists also create one (*Ḥizb al-Nūr*, “The Party of Light”). The above meant that the Muslim Brotherhood existed as “pure” daʿwa organization in society.⁶ But the organization is not alone. A plethora of other Islamist associations emerged. Most strikingly is that next to the Salafist Nour political party, social “Salafist” also gradually institutionalize. An example of this is *al-Jabha al-Salafiyya bi-Maṣr* (“The Salafist Front in Egypt”) described as an organization that unifies a number of “independent” Salafist shaykhs active in daʿwa activities in the country.⁷ Even though their Islamist ideology denounces pragmatic differentiation between social and political activism, in practice they have been forced

⁴ For a local example of such an approach see Rashwān (2007).

⁵ For a year report, see The Societal Reform Charitable Association (p. 2013) *The Yearly Report 2012*, The Societal Reform Charitable Association, May 7.

⁶ The freedom and justice party is explicitly described as the representation of Muslim Brotherhood thought in the political and party sphere. See Freedom and Justice Party (p. 2011) *Who Are We*, hurryh.com.

⁷ Two other (Salafist) examples of Islamist social organizations are: *Thuwār Muslimūn* (“Muslim Revolutionaries”) and *Ṭulāb al-Shʿariyya* (“Students of Sharia”). See ʿAkīla and al-Ayn Amārī (s. 2013) *Islamists Organize Protests for the Resignation of the Minister of Interior and Threaten the Brotherhood*, al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm, May 14.

to institutionalize along this division and interact with the Nour party as their political counterpart.⁸

In Libya, we also see that the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood created a separate party: *Ḥizb al-ʿAdāla wa al-Bināʾ* (“the Justice and Construction Party” or JCP). This party is explicitly separated and independent from the Muslim Brotherhood daʿwa organization.⁹ And, again, the Muslim Brothers are not alone in creating separate political parties. We have for instance *Ḥizb al-Jabha al-Wataniya* (“The National Front Party”) emerging from the 1981 Islamist opposition movement against Qadhafi, and *al-Ḥizb al-Watan* (“The Nation Party”) being the political representation of Libyan Salafists.¹⁰ Both the Libyan MB and The National Front Party have explicitly stated they are in favor of democracy, with the MB stating they are also in favor of a civil political regime. The Nation Party was more explicitly Salafist, but did participate in elections - although it did not win any seats.¹¹ In the mean time Islamists movements gained traction within society. Together with re-institutionalization of religious elites in the country, Islamist social activism slowly re-emerged. In each national setting there are, of course, exceptions. A large part of these exceptions are trans-national Salafist Jihadi movements - for instance *Anṣār al-Sharīya* in Libya, al-Qaeda linked groups in Yemen and various Salafi Jihadi groups in Egypt. But in all of these cases, though often vocal, these movements were a minority.¹²

Despite often emphasizing their independence, these movements and parties relate to each other - both ideologically and through shared activism. What ever choice is taken on formal institutionalization, Islamists perceive that Islam should structure public life - in both its political and social aspects - and they are therefore participants in a unified project. Consequently, these different actors will somehow be related too other participants in this Islamist project. Numerous examples of these interrelations emerge from Islamist practice in these countries. In Egypt, for instance, Hizb al-Nour and the Egyptian Salafist Front shared delegations when concerned with (religious and) societal issues.¹³ The

⁸ See for instance mahmūd al-ʿamrī (s. 2013) *Delegation of the Salafist Dawā and “al-Nur” visit the Shaykh of al-Azhar to discuss the “Shia tide”*, al-Maṣrī al-yuwm, May 8.

⁹ al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ (s. 2012d) *Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya: an Autocracy is not Our Desire... if we wanted to would we have established our own party*, al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, March 14.

¹⁰ al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ (s. 2012a) *The Political Groups that Compete in Libya*, al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, July 7.

¹¹ For a list of the results in English, see Project on Middle East Democracy (s. 2012) *Libyan Election Party Results: Seats per Party per District*, pomed.org, July.

¹² In this sense it can be said that Syria is an exception due to the high volume of Salafist movements that do not related to any type of social-political divergence. But, as discussed earlier, this has probably more to do with the context of a civil war than with the actual level of pragmatism that Islamists have.

¹³ mahmūd al-ʿamrī (s. 2013) *Delegation of the Salafist Dawā and “al-Nur” visit the Shaykh of al-Azhar to discuss the “Shia tide”*, al-Maṣrī al-yuwm, May 8.

relation between the MB and the FJP is more formalized in the sense that the FJP's founding document states that it is the political representation of MB ideology.¹⁴ This plays out in practice when FJP ministers have meetings at the "guidance office" of the Muslim Brotherhood to "help" them run their ministries.¹⁵ Many of the MB members became politicians in the FJP party. In Yemen the Islāḥ party is closely related to various Islamist associations, such as the SRCA. But it is also true concerning individual shaykhs and their religious movements. An infamous example is the range of educational institutes founded by Abdul Majeed al-Zindani - a leading Salafist member of the Islāḥ party.¹⁶ In Libya this becomes clear with the resurgent national MB organizations and the Justice and Construction Party. As was the case in Egypt, individuals from the MB organization became active within the party. Other Islamist political parties were also invariably linked to Islamist movements within society - either as dissenters within the MB party, or other Islamist movements within society.¹⁷

The above goes to show that a majority of Islamists, coming from a wide range of Islamist ideologies, have chosen to accept a differentiation between political and social activism - both before and after the Arab Spring. But whereas this acceptance was merely stated before the Arab Spring, they have had to become practical after. In the context of sudden political changes - as was the case in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria - these issues are most pronounced as actors were caught off guard, giving their choice an explicit urgency. My argument is that all Islamist movements - both those with experience in the political arena and those that propagate to mobilize in search of an Islamic state - have faced, and are facing, questions over how to relate to divisions between the social and political arena. This includes movements that publicly denounce party politics, those actors that openly say they are a-political social actors, and many of the "activated" religious elites. One of the key arenas to observe these dilemmas and processes of the Islamist resurgence are state bureaucracies (ministries, local and regional governments) and public institutions (universities, public media, elementary education, police); specifically those that are at the intersection of public life and state power.

Islamists and State Organizations

In each of these cases, even in the Libya of Qadhafi, state institutions emerged that were embedded within social structures. An existence of pervasive state-led

¹⁴ Freedom and Justice Party (p. 2011) *Who Are We*, Freedom and Justice Party.

¹⁵ Alī (s. 2013b) *Director of the Office of the President Attends meeting of the "Guidance Office" for the support of Brotherhood Ministers*, al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm, May 8.

¹⁶ Due to its, typically Yemeni, weak ideological basis, the Islāḥ party is the single political representation of a wide variety of Islamist movements. See Schwedler (2007).

¹⁷ al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ (s. 2012a) *The Political Groups that Compete in Libya*, al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, July 7.

patronage meant that in each of these states personal access to civil servants was a vehicle for accessing state resources. Thereby the allocation of resources was to some degree not just dependent on legislative processes, but also on informal individual relations between patrons inside state institutions and their clients on the outside. The clearest example is the function of parliaments in both Egypt and Yemen, as described by Blaydes (2008) and Phillips (2008) respectively, where being elected to parliament mainly functions as access to patronage networks. But even in Libya the security services, revolutionary councils and Ministry of Oil developed into institutions for state-induced patronage due to the constant influx of oil revenue (Vandewalle, 2012). This endemic state patronage nurtured an image, and reality, of state institutions being embedded within social groups instead of being impartial implementors of policy.

In this context, especially in Egypt and Yemen, we can observe that Islamist encroachment on state bureaucracies and public institutions was already taking place before the Arab Spring. Relations to, and influence over, these institutions and their civil servants were used to empower Islamist mobilization. In Yemen Islamic authorities, together with tribal leaders, have always remained powerful social actors. But throughout the last decades - starting with the social and political liberalization that accompanied the unification of North and South Yemen - Islamist mobilization has become more apparent and institutionalized. This happened, for instance, through the establishment of numerous charitable organizations, religious schools and health care clinics (Phillips, 2008).¹⁸ More interestingly though, in the context of an alliance between the ruling GNC and Islāḥ against the socialist YSP during the early 1990s, political power was directly used to strengthen Islamist movements within society. Thus:

During this period, Islāḥ's education minister, Abdu-Ali al-Qubati, worked to have the number of hours spent teaching the Qur'an in Yemen's schools increased at the expense of the time spent teaching science. A number of teachers thought to have socialist or secular sympathies were dismissed and were replaced with teachers from Egypt and Sudan with more solid Islamist credentials, and coeducational classes, which were still common in the South, were phased out. The party's justice minister, Abd al-Wahab al-Daylami, fired the female judges of the former PDRY, citing their supposed incompetence in sharia law (Phillips, 2008, p.140).

This set the stage for the following decades, in which individuals within Islāḥ (specifically Abdallah and Zindani) used access to state patronage and their

¹⁸ Though these movements - as all social and political mobilization in the country - are infused with tribal cleavages, differences between North and South Yemen, and ideological Islamist differences, they constitute one Islamist movement. In Yemen, due to a history of non-ideological party formation, the Islamist Islāḥ is one party that incorporates and represents a wide range of Salafist and MB activists.

political power to further affiliated social Islamist projects. As both the tribal relations and political cooperations turned increasingly sour in the mid-2000s, these struggles were played out in both polity and society - with President Ali Abdullah Saleh creating his own social charitable organization, al-Saleh, to rival Iṣlāḥs (Phillips, 2008, p.116) and attempting to curtail the power of Zindanis educational network (Schwedler, 2007).

In Egypt the strength of Islamist movements since the early 1980s on university campuses, educational institutes and informal mosques has been well described and researched by others.¹⁹ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s this movement became better institutionalized and arguably powerful through the creation of numerous associations, hospitals and schools. In this context the movement also began to influence the bureaucracy of the state itself.²⁰ It meant that Islamic associations were nurtured through their relations to low level bureaucrats that were supporting their cause. With the Islamist movement becoming an overt threat to regime legitimacy, it started to curtail its activism. There were attempts to improve regime supervision of mosques and the educational sector, but these were initially frustrated by the strength of Islamist encroachment on lower level bureaucrats (Rosefsky Wickham, 1996). Only after the mid-2000s, following a surprising win of MB independents in the parliamentary elections, was their power more effectively curtailed. Ironically, therefore, just before the Arab Spring the position of the Egyptian MB had never seemed so dire.

With the Arab Spring, and its related sudden political changes, the position of bureaucracies and public institutions in Islamist mobilization emerged (Libya), reemerged (Egypt) or changed (Yemen).²¹ In each case the dynamics of Islamist mobilization closely mirrored local particularities of state-society relations and Islamist movements present. In Yemen, politically, we can see that Ali Mohsen and al-Ahmar (both related to Iṣlāḥ and of an opposing tribe to former president Saleh) have created a power center against remaining loyalists of the former president. Therefore the elite political arena has not been completely overturned, but rather fragmented into three subgroups.²² Additionally a clear outcome to the removal of president Saleh is yet to emerge, rendering political change in the Yemeni case more ambiguous than in Egypt or Libya. At the time of writing, Yemen's Congress for National Dialogue was debating constitutional

¹⁹ See for instance Rosefsky Wickham (2002); Clark (2004a).

²⁰ Zubaida (1996) discusses the Islamic banking sector that thrived because of civil servants that were close to Islamic associations. These civil servants were lenient on Islamic organizations.

²¹ Note that the following paragraphs are based on a limited base of primary and secondary sources. Due to time constraints the main period researched was about three month (February - May 2013).

²² See also International Crisis Group (s. 2012) *Yemen: Enduring Conflicts, Threatened Transition*, International Crisis Group, July 3.

reforms touching on issues as diverse as the armed forces, possible federalism and the position of religion in the constitution. With it, influences on the relation between state bureaucracies and public institutions are still somewhat unclear.

In Libya political changes have been more pronounced and influential, and therefore influences on societies relations to state institutions have also been easier to observe. One key issue emerging from Libyan state reform after the revolution, and of relevance here, is the extent to which Qadhafi-linked civil servants should be replaced in state institutions. In May 2013, various - often Islamist related - militias that emerged during the uprising and are impossible to reign in due to the weakness of Libya's state apparatus, took over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and surrounded the Ministry of Justice demanding the immediate implementation of a proposed law to replace Qadhafi-linked civil servants.²³ Interestingly enough, the (MB-linked) Justice and Construction Party not only supported their claims but pushed for a version that was even more far reaching in its attempts to reconstitute the work force within state institutions. The law was passed but is still awaits implementation. It has the potential to open up state bureaucracies and public institutions to a new wave of civil servants.²⁴ It would therefore create the opportunity for state encroachment by various social groups and movements, including Islamist ones.

In Egypt, finally, many of the above issues have emerged with increasing clarity during the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood. Allegations were going back and forth over attempts to control various state organizations and public institutions after the post-revolutionary elections of November 2011-February 2012. One of the more interesting ones was a leader of the Jihadi Salafists complaining that reforms by the Muslim Brotherhood's FJP of the judiciary, police and media were explicitly aimed at gaining control over these institutions.²⁵ These conflicts generally ran along a "secular"- "Islamist" divide. Thus increasing attempts to curtail the media were slammed as the Muslim Brothers' attempts to intimidate "seculars" within these organizations.²⁶ The same applied to conflicts over the judiciary, with seculars going out to protest in support of the judiciary and Islamists against their perceived bias against new Islamist forces.²⁷ It should be noted in this respect that Islam in the Egyptian constitution has hardly been changed. To the extent that some Salafists describe it as an "apostate"

²³ al-Sharq al-Awsat (s. 2013b) *Militias Surround the Ministry of Justice After Raking over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, al-Sharq al-Awsat, May 1.

²⁴ al-Sharq al-Awsat (s. 2013c) *President of the Justice and Construction Party: We are Not Thinking of Withdrawing from the Zidan Government*, al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 4.

²⁵ Ramaḍān (s. 2013) *Jihad: "The Brotherhood" will Continue to Dominate the Nation without Taking the People into Consideration*, al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm, May 18.

²⁶ Maḥdī (s. 2013) *"Reporters Without Borders" Demands form Mursi to Stop Ikhwani attacks on Seculars*, al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm, April 24.

²⁷ Concerning the latter see: 'Alī (s. 2013a) *"The Brotherhood": a Million this Friday Aimed at the Corruption of Mubaraks Men on the Judiciary*, al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm, April 14.

constitution.²⁸ Instead tensions between Islamists and seculars has surfaced over conflicts around state bureaucracies, the judiciary and public media. An additional institution that should be mentioned in this respect is the Islamic institute of al-Azhar. Especially as al-Azhar has, since the revolution, fought to gain independence from both the political regime and state institutions. At the same time it has obtained, and nurtures, important political influence. Al-Azhar therefore attempts to stand above politics, and is constantly courted by and interacts with various Islamist parties and movements. It sometimes leads to furious reactions from the Ministry of Awqaf as it is being bypassed.²⁹ But it fits in with the vision that the state exists in service of religion, not the other way around. Of course here it is impossible to go into the details and particularities of each case. But in each one, in its own way, social and political Islamist forces have continued to interact where they have had the chance. A continued institutional divergence has not meant an end to the more comprehensive Islamist project. And in each case public institutions and state bureaucracies have had a key position in these interactions.

Although the sudden political changes have brought these dilemmas very clearly to the fore, they are not specific to the five countries discussed here. Similar dynamics can be observed in other Muslim-majority countries as well. The relation between the Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and various Islamist movements - especially the Gülen movement - is a clear example. As is the encroachment of the Islamist movements on the police services and education (see for a more elaborate discussion for instance: White, 2002; Turam, 2004). In the Gulf a similar dynamic can be seen in Kuwait and the project of *al-Ḥaraka al-Dustūriyya al-Islāmiyya* ("Islamic Constitutional Movement", Hadas), during the 1990s, to create an independent body *within* the Ministry of Religion that was a direct representation of and controlled by Islamist movements.³⁰ Time and space - and the scope of this thesis - make it impossible to discuss these other examples at length. But initial indications are that the dynamics described in this thesis can also be observed in other Muslim-majority countries - either Arab or not.

Transitional Islamist Ties

It is not so surprising that Islamist movements react in similar ways to dilemmas faced in very different settings. Islamist movements, in part due to their explicit pan-Arab ideology, are a profoundly transnational phenomenon. They

²⁸ Ramaḍān (s. 2013) *Jihad: "The Brotherhood" will Continue to Dominate the Nation without Taking the People into Consideration*, al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm, May 18.

²⁹ See for instance al-Sharfāwī and Muhamed (s. 2013) *Angry Reactions from [the Ministry of] Endowments after visit of the "Preachers" to the "Guidance" of the Brotherhood*, al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm, May 2.

³⁰ See: (Sa'īd, 1995).

emerged from similar organizations, are embedded in global religious networks, and are often in personal contact with each other. The clearest example of this transnational characteristic of Islamism is the Muslim Brotherhood. The MB organization was founded in Egypt in 1928. All other MB affiliated organizations were somehow initiated by either locals that came in contact with MB ideology while traveling in Egypt, or by members of the Egyptian MB themselves. This is true of MB affiliated organizations from Jordan, Syria and Egypt to Morocco and Kuwait. Although they are independent, they explicitly recognize each other as sister organizations. Members meet, organize and talk to each other on a regular basis. This is also true of the Ennahda organization in Tunisia, which is closely aligned to the Islamist ideology of the Muslim Brothers. Salafist Jihadi type movements, in all of these countries, also have strong links but often through shared combat experience. Thus Afghanistan in the 1970s and 1980s, followed by Algeria and Bosnia in the early 1990s, to the war in Iraq in the early 2000s and now in Syria - they all provide an arena where Jihadists from all over the world meet and create long lasting ties. Though often still active within their national contexts, even when abroad, the transnational nature of their network was nurtured during these conflicts.³¹ In practice we can therefore see that many formalized and informal contacts exist between various (Sunni) Islamist movements. Year round there are conferences where Islamists of various guises come together and discuss current affairs within the Arab World and beyond.³² Additionally, their ideology links to (Sunni) Islam provides them with access to a global religious arena. Yusuf al-Qardawi's International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) is but one instance where the global reach of Islamic authorities is institutionalized within one particular organization. In their years of exile Islamists were in constant contact abroad - often in European cities such as Brussels, Paris and London.

The above has an effect on how different Islamist organizations and movements learn from each other. It has been noted, for instance, that the Syrian experience - being a political party in a sectarian social setting - already in the early 1940s and 1950s, helped define the subsequent strategies of the Egyptian MB. It was apparently also the case in Tunisia concerning their explicit demand of a civil state.³³ The same can be said for Rashid Ghannouchi's influence over closing the gap between democracy advocates and Islamists in Tunisia -

³¹ It was for instance mentioned that "Chechen brigades" exist within Jabhat An-Nusra during the uprising against the al-Assad regime. The explanation provided is that, if in combat together, these fighters will be more effective back home to spread Salafist Jihadism. See: Benotman and Blake (s. 2013) *Jabhat al-Nusra: A Strategic Briefing*, Quilliam Foundation, January 8.

³² One such example comes from Qatar where, in October 2012, a large meeting was held which was attended by Islamists from all over the world.

³³ See al-Sharq al-Awsat (s. 2012b) *Islamists of Tunisia, Following the Plan of the Syrian Brotherhood, In Favor of a Civil State*, al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 27.

and subsequently in many other countries as well. Thus there is a strong mutual influence between these various Islamist movements that renders them hard to analyze as completely independent entities. Repeating a caveat to this research therefore seems in order: as I focused on the position of state institutions in Islamist mobilization in my thesis, I overtly focused on the country level for my analysis. This should not be taken to mean that I imply that transnational influences are of no importance. Although all of these movements and organizations are independent and primarily active within their national contexts, they are influenced by a web of Islamist movements that transcends the boundaries of the nation state.

11.3 The Future of Islamism

As ideology, Islamism perceives Islam as a “complete system” that stands above and goes beyond any “worldly” social and political institutional divisions. Although this thesis has shown that in practice Islamist movements have increasingly sought to reconcile their ideology with a daily practice that is inadvertently structured by these divisions, it has also shown that the above description of Islamism is not made up of hollow words. Islamist movements attempt to structure public life, in all of its expressions, along Islamic lines. How this is accomplished is an open question, but I argue that bureaucracies and state institutions provide an institutional arena in which answers to these questions have to be formulated.

In the context of authoritarian regime breakdown during the Arab Spring, Islamist movements have had to reposition themselves in both political and social arenas. With this, tensions between a pragmatism pushing for a divergence in mobilizations and an ideology calling for convergence is clearly coming to the fore. I have argued that we might describe these tensions using both a strategic and mechanistic approach from studies on social movements and contentious mobilization. It means facing a dilemma created by the existing pressures to adhere to existing institutionalized *arena* in modern nation states, while aiming to speak to similar *audiences*. Possibly finding a solution in concurrent social and political state institutional engagement. Or it means facing a dilemma attempting to find a proper position within a social process of “upward scale shift” between a “political” and “bureaucratic” trajectory. Both imply an important position of state bureaucracies and public institutions in influencing how Islamism will evolve. The specificities and the outcomes of the interrelations are hard to predict for each national context, but what we *can* do is outline some likely dilemmas that Islamists will face in the Arab world. I will highlight two main ones here.

Dilemmas

A first dilemma will be about the *extent* to which specific Islamist movements will accept practical divisions between social and political arenas present. This is the central tension explored in this thesis: to what extent is a “religious” project molded into the divisions of day-to-day life? I contend that *any* movement that is practically mobilizing within a society, irrespective of what type of ideology this movement adheres to, faces this question. This is in itself not a new observation. The tendency of some Islamists to retreat from public life is born from the attempt to evade state involvement and thus this dilemma. But strikingly, around the Arab Spring, it has become clear that many movements - including strongly revivalist “Salafist” ones - attempted to gain inroads into the political sphere. The pro-active acceptance of these divisions begs the question of how their practical activism will be reconciled with a religious ideology that transcends all worldly social and political divisions. Different movements will have different answers. But, again, all will face this dilemma.

A second dilemma will be about *how* a convergence between Islamists active in different fields will be accomplished. Even if in some movements the divergence between social and political mobilization might not be complete, they still face questions how to reconcile the two. It is likely that state bureaucracies and particularly public institutions will play an important role in influencing this dilemma. The existence of state institutions that can be “Islamized” can provide a linchpin to ensuring continued unity between social and political Islamist forces by providing a shared project that is not directly build on the implementation of sharia. By strengthening social Islamist movements the enforcement of these rules are left to society - but the political sphere is there to enable and empower their activism. Thus by Islamizing the state, Islamist movements will be strengthened and social pressure to abide by Islamic norms increased.

These two dilemmas will be influenced by a group often underexposed in research on Islamism: the traditional religious authorities or ‘*ulamā*’. These traditional authorities are perceived to be the institutionalization of non-secular Islam: they stand above and beyond any kind of day-to-day divisions between public and private life, and between society and politics. They therefore demand full independence from, but have influence over, politics and society. This position has rendered them increasingly closely intertwined with the Islamist project - a project that at its inception was diametrically opposed to these traditional religious authorities. Who will control this sphere will be the real question. It can be expected that fights over religious authority in the country will quickly transcend the “religious sphere” and become deeply intertwined with struggles fought out in Arab politics, society and state institutions.

Whatever the outcome of the above dilemmas, one of the main lessons of the present study is that Islamism is not just its purely political ideology; it is a

larger project that encompasses a full structure to govern (public) life, including its social and political aspects. We can expect that political Islamist parties will face a tough time governing after the revolution: social, economic and political problems are immense and hard to overcome. It is probable that after their first electoral successes - build on the continued resonance of their Islamist message - they might loose in the next, due to their incapability to provide answers to practical economic and social problems. It is probable that many (Western) academics and “experts” will declare the true “end of Islamism” at this time. But if this thesis has shown anything, it is that these political parties are not the embodiment of the Islamist project as such. The failure of political Islamist parties should not be equated with the failure of the larger Islamist project. Following the analysis in this thesis it is likely that the project will continue - embodied by a plethora of associations, groups, and non-institutionalized activism - and as a result the Islamist message will continue to resonate within Arab societies. Either old Islamist parties will return to prominence or new parties will appear “out of nowhere”. But whatever their future developments, it is likely that Islamist influence on society - and with it politics - is set to remain important for years to come.

Thd, September 6, 2013.

Appendix

Interviews Cited

The thesis builds on a total of 189 interviews, held between February 2009 and October 2012 during five field work periods: February-May 2009 in Damascus (Syria); June-August 2010 in Syria, Algeria and Morocco; January-April 2011 in Tunis (Tunisia); July-November 2011 in Amman (Jordan), Istanbul (Turkey) and Tunis (Tunisia); September and October 2012 in Istanbul and Antakya (Turkey) and Tunis (Tunisia). The following is a list of formal semi-structured interviews that are cited in the thesis. I promised all interviewees they would remain anonymous, therefore I only provide a general description of the person interviewed.

Early interviews in Syria were not taped, later interviews (in Tunisia, Turkey and Jordan) were - except when refused by the interviewee. At first around 30 percent of the early interviews were conducted in Arabic, later (August 2010 and beyond) this was around 80 percent. Only a third of the interviews made it into the thesis, but all interviews have had an influence on the final analysis. In addition to these interviews there were countless conversations, observations and encounters that have in some way shaped the views expressed in this thesis.

1. Senior European diplomat. Damascus (Syria), March 4, 2009.
2. Two young secular activists. Damascus (Syria), March 9, 2009.
3. Senior shaykh and MP. Damascus (Syria), March 11, 2009.
4. Syrian and European journalist. Damascus (Syria), March 12, 2009.
5. Student sharia sciences at Fath al-Islam Institute. Damascus (Syria), March 15, 2009.
6. Senior shaykh, opposition. Damascus (Syria), March 23, 2009.
7. Employee, Hafiz an-Naima. Damascus (Syria), March 25, 2009.
8. Senior shaykh and director of Islamic Institute. Damascus (Syria), April 4, 2009.

9. Senior shaykh, opposition. Damascus (Syria), April 5, 2009.
10. Two senior secular activists. Damascus (Syria), April 12, 2009.
11. Group interview with secular activists. Damascus (Syria), April 20, 2009.
12. Senior secular activist, Alawi. Damascus (Syria), April 22, 2009.
13. Senior leftist human rights activist. Damascus (Syria), April 27, 2009.
14. Senior shaykha. Damascus (Syria), July 15, 2010.
15. Senior European diplomat. Damascus (Syria), July 27, 2010.
16. Junior Islamic actor. Damascus (Syria), July 29, 2010.
17. Senior popular shaykh. Damascus (Syria), July 31, 2010.
18. Senior Tunisian scholar. Tunis (Tunisia), February 2, 2011.
19. Young Islamist activist. Tunis (Tunisia), February 14, 2011.
20. Ennahda leader. Tunis (Tunisia), February 17, 2011.
21. Young Islamist activist. Tunis (Tunisia), February 19, 2011.
22. Senior Tunisian scholar. Tunis (Tunisia), February 23, 2011.
23. Local Imam. Binzerte (Tunisia), February 24, 2011.
24. Senior Tunisian scholar, former minister and *ʿālim*. Cartage (Tunisia), February 27, 2011.
25. Group interview with students at the Department of Islamic Sciences. Tunis (Tunisia), March 2, 2011.
26. Director, religious school. Hay an-Nasr, Tunis (Tunisia), March 3, 2011.
27. Member, executive council Ennahda. Tunis (Tunisia), March 4, 2011.
28. Employees, Quranic school. Denden, Tunis (Tunisia), March 13, 2011.
29. Salafist employee, Quranic school. Denden, Tunis (Tunisia), March 13, 2011.
30. Regional deputy, religious affairs. Ariana, Tunis (Tunisia), March 16, 2011.
31. Young Ennahda activist and son of formerly imprisoned Ennahda leader. Tunis (Tunisia), March 16, 2011.

32. Group interview with students of Islamic history. Cartage (Tunisia), March 28, 2011.
33. Regional deputy, religious affairs. Kairouan, Tunis (Tunisia), April 1, 2011.
34. Friday Imam of the Oqba Mosque. Kairouan (Tunisia), April 3, 2011.
35. Group interview, Salafists. Sidi Bouzzid (Tunisia), April 4, 2011.
36. Imam, Central Mosque. Sidi Bouzzid (Tunisia), April 5, 2011.
37. Idrissi Khatib. Senior (and formally imprisoned) Salafist shaykh. Bin Aoun (Tunisia), April 6, 2011.
38. Director of the Ennahda research and regional development bureau. Tunis (Tunisia), April 25, 2011.
39. Syrian secular activist from Dara', a recent refugee. Ramtha (Jordan), July 26, 2011.
40. Two-person interview with senior former leader and senior employee of Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. Amman (Jordan), July 31, 2011.
41. Two young Syrian secular activists. Amman (Jordan), August 9, 2011.
42. Vice president, Syrian council of *'ulamā'*. Amman (Jordan), August 10, 2011.
43. Alawi journalist and former member of a coordination committee in Damascus; a recent refugee. Istanbul (Turkey), August 24, 2011.
44. Syrian activist from Homs, recently returned to Istanbul. Istanbul (Turkey), September 28, 2011.
45. Two-person interview with two young secular activists. Tunis (Tunisia), October 3, 2011.
46. Master student, the Zeytuna Department of the University of Tunis. Tunis (Tunisia), October 8, 2011.
47. Regional head, Ennahda. Kairouan (Tunisia), October 12, 2011.
48. Young Jihadi Salafist. Medenine (Tunisia), October 15, 2011.
49. Regional head, Ennahda. Medenine (Tunisia), October 16, 2011.
50. Group interview with Salafist students. Tunis (Tunisia), October 20, 2011.
51. Senior scholar and head of NGO. Tunis (Tunisia), November 4, 2011.

52. Two-person interview with two senior bureaucrats at prime ministry. Tunis (Tunisia), November 10, 2011.
53. Employee, Association for Quranic Schools. Tunis (Tunisia), November 10, 2011.
54. Group interview with Ennahda employees. Medenine (Tunisia), November 11, 2011.
55. Independent Islamist. Medenine (Tunisia), November 12, 2011.
56. Vice-president, Association for Sharia Sciences . Tunis (Tunisia), November 16, 2011.
57. Young female activist and former Qubaysi. Istanbul (Turkey), August 16, 2012.
58. Young Islamist activist. Istanbul (Turkey), August 23, 2012.
59. Opposition activist from Saraqib. Antakya (Turkey), August 24, 2012.
60. Imam/Shaykh from Jisr as-Shourghour region. Rahanli (Turkey), August 26, 2012.
61. Imam/Shaykh from Hama region. Antakya (Turkey), September 1, 2012.
62. Head of a chain of Islamic schools. Tunis (Tunisia), September 19, 2012.
63. Two-person interview with two Ennahda youngsters. Tunis (Tunisia), September 19, 2012.
64. Senior civil servant at Prime Ministry. Tunis (Tunisia), September 28, 2012.
65. Director, large Islamic school. Tunis (Tunisia), October 2, 2012.
66. Director, Islamic charitable association. Tunis (Tunisia), October 4, 2012.
67. Senior shaykh and head of Islamist umbrella organization. Tunis (Tunisia), October 4, 2012.
68. Senior member of Ennahda Shura council. Tunis (Tunisia), October 8, 2012.
69. Senior shaykh, Zeytuna Mosque. Tunis (Tunisia), October 10, 2012.

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