NEO-ISLAMISM AFTER THE ARAB SPRING:
CASE STUDY OF THE TUNISIAN ENNAHDA PARTY

TAREK CHAMKHI
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Supervisors: Prof. Vedi Hadiz & Prof. Garry Rodan

This thesis is presented to obtain the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Politics, at Murdoch University, Western Australia, 2015
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Tarek Chamkhi
ABSTRACT

This thesis has focused on debate surrounding the commitment of the Arab Spring’s neo-Islamists to democracy and pluralism. It examines neo-Islamism as a tendency that emerged within the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood movement and its pro-democracy affiliates in the Muslim World that uses politically liberal sets of concepts, for tactical or strategic purposes.

Neo-Islamism is distinguished by an ethical and theological emphasis on Islam that combines social conservatism with political moderation. Neo-Islamists are united in the view that Sharia law is not an immediate reform priority. However there are divisions over whether this is a tactical pause in the ultimate pursuit of shariatisation, whether it should be diluted if introduced at some future point, or whether it should never be introduced.

This study has brought to light six preferences of neo-Islamism as a socio-political phenomenon: gradualist Islamisation, modernisation, moderation, nationalistic Islamism, and pragmatism in Western relationships. It has been shown, through the case study of Tunisian Ennahda Party, that neo-Islamism employs tactical measures such as gradualism and pragmatic relations with the secularist elite and the West, and implements ideological reforms related closely to the concepts of democracy, civic participation and peaceful transitioning of power.
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INTRODUCTION

The Arab Spring (Arabic: الربيع العربي) describes the wave of violent and non-violent revolutions in the Middle East, that started in Tunisia on 18 December 2010.¹ To date, rulers have been forced from power in Tunisia, Egypt (four times), Libya and Yemen. Civil uprisings have erupted in Bahrain, and a civil war commenced and is ongoing in Syria. Major protests have broken out in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Sudan; minor protests have occurred in Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti and Western Sahara.

The Arab world stretches geographically from the Atlantic Ocean on the western shores of Mauritania in North Africa to the Iranian borders of Iraq, and from the southern borders of Turkey to the Horn of Africa. Arabic is the dominant language in twenty-one countries, with dialects across the region. Despite the fact that the inhabitants of the Arab world are homogeneous neither religiously nor ethnically, there is a common Arab identity that has been forged by historical experience and reinforced for many generations by the school systems of each country. There are also pop culture products like Egyptian soap operas and movies that Arabs throughout the region, and throughout the world,

¹ The term 'Arab Spring' was derived from the European Revolutions of 1848, known as 'The Spring of Nations' and 'Springtime of the Peoples' (Dabashi 2012, XV).
share. This is why the adage “Egyptians write books, Lebanese publish them, and the Iraqis read them” rings true (Gelvin 2012, 1-3).

Prior to the Arab Spring, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has suffered from severe lack of freedom and democracy almost throughout the entire Arab world. Most Arab countries, specifically those with close ties to the West, such as Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and the sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf (chiefly Saudi Arabia) “have continued to defy persistent calls for democratisation and accountability. Precisely such a historical trajectory has engendered opposition movements, which have been overwhelmingly articulated by religious (Islamist) political groups, and which have espoused equally undemocratic, exclusive, and often violent measures” (Bayat 2010, 27).

The Arab Spring can be compared to the 1989 revolutions that struck Eastern Europe in that both caught regional experts completely off guard, as protest and crisis spread across regimes that almost all observers had seen as exceptionally stable (Way 2011, 17-27). Over two decades before, Mikhail Gorbachev’s Perestroika (literally, ‘restructuring’) in the former Soviet Union and the fall of communism in Poland inspired the masses to take to the streets and demand change in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, Bulgaria, and finally Romania. These events showed how a “mere sight of change in one country can have an explosive impact on seemingly stable autocracies nearby” or on the borders, and vice versa (Way 2011, 17). However, the outcomes of the Arab Spring have surely not been the same thus far. In Eastern Europe, the whole communist bloc collapsed within a short time span (Vasiliev 2011).
After ten years of the war on terror, the Arab revolutions that began in Tunisia\(^2\) have reshaped the region forever and led to the re-examination of traditional concepts about the political stagnation of the Middle East (Brumber and Diamond 2003). These revolutions have been a surprise for scholars and policy makers alike, and challenged a number of widely held assumptions about state-society relations in the Arab world (Cavatorta 2012a). More specifically, the English-speaking academic literature on Arab politics and society of the last three decades tended to neglect the case of Tunisia. Despite some notable exceptions, including Christopher Alexander, Francois Burgat and very few others, Tunisia never featured prominently either as a single case study or in comparative works. The fall of the Ben Ali regime seemed to change that and both the policy-making community and academia focused extensively on Tunisia (Merone & Cavatorta 2013, 2).

The most obvious facet of the Arab revolutions is the rise of Islamic movements, not on the streets, but from organised political parties seeking to rule countries that have been freed from authoritarian regimes. Many of the Islamists involved in these political parties had been imprisoned as terror suspects or forced underground. Some scholars argue that while Islamists did not trigger the Arab Spring, they are coming to power on the back of it (Cavatorta 2012a; Bradley 2012; Hall 2012). Claims about the role and agendas of the Arab Islamists in the origins of these revolutions have reignited the long standing debate about Islamism and its commitment to democracy, pluralism and individual freedoms (Berman 2013; Jones 2013; Garcia 2012; Etzioni 2011; Ergun 2012; Hashemi 2009; Hefner 2011; Noueihed and Warren 2012; Bryant 2011).

\(^2\) Tunisia is a North African Arab country, sandwiched between resource rich neighbours Algeria and Libya. Under Ben Ali’s autocratic rule from 1987 until 2011, Tunisia had been stubbornly isolationist and stayed out of the region’s turbulent politics (Bradley 2012).
Framing thesis topic

This thesis examines neo-Islamism as a tendency that emerged within the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood movement and its pro-democracy affiliates in the Muslim World that uses liberal sets of concepts for tactical or strategic purposes.

It scrutinises why such a trend has emerged in Tunisia and the factors that shape its prospects after the Arab Spring. It starts from the observation that the sudden successes of Islamists in politics in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Libya and elsewhere in 2011 and 2012, have surprised many, both locally and internationally. Analysts have found it difficult to explain how apparently spontaneous revolutions, which arose in response to authoritarian rule, economic crisis and unemployment, could bring Islamic movements into powerful positions (Council on Foreign Relations 2012; Bülent and Akarçesme 2012; Schraeder 2012; Turner 2012; Khalil 2012; Hilal 2012).

Furthermore, this thesis questions whether neo-Islamism will continue to be a major factor in the region after the Arab Revolutions, as many have projected. The main case study will involve the Tunisian Ennahda Party.

Whether Tunisian-style neo-Islamism can continue to be influential in Tunisia and the broader Arab and Muslim world depends upon the answers to the following questions:

- What is neo-Islamism and how has it emerged in Tunisia and other Arab countries?
- What are the sources of opposition to the rise of neo-Islamism?
- What has been the role of neo-Islamism in the Arab Spring?
What is the link between neo-Islamism and democracy and how is this reflected in the Tunisian case?

What does neo-Islamism political parties do when they rule?

The main focus of the thesis is the nature, preconditions and implications of neo-Islamism’s rise in the Arab world in general and in Tunisia in particular, as a case study.

**Neo-Islamism paradigm**

This study sheds light on the current players within the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) movement in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere, and draws conclusions as to whether the MB is in actuality evolving into an effective political force, willing to govern with a democracy and a moderate version of Islam, and promote a free civil society.

The thesis discusses change and continuity in neo-Islamist political stances, in the context of regional and international geopolitics and socio-economic changes and challenges. (Khalifa 2012; Chamkhi 2014)

By examining the party's political and philosophical motivations through data represented in the Ennahda Party leaders’ interviews, poll figures and survey methods, the phenomena of neo-Islamism can be studied.

Although Islamists did not trigger the popular uprisings associated with the Arab Spring, “their decades-long resistance to autocratic rulers turned them into shadow governments in the peoples’ eyes. A vote for the Islamists implied a clean break with the failed past and a belief (to be tested) that they could deliver the goods-jobs, economic stability, transparency, and inclusiveness” (Gerges 2013, 390).
Post-Arab Spring elections produced mixed results for the Islamists across the Arab World. The 2012 victory of the Egyptian MB presidential candidate represented an instance, but not lasting, of revolutionary change; Islamists with Muslim Brotherhood roots were in power in at least three Arab countries. The MB dominated freely elected parliaments in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco within a year after the start of the Arab Spring. Moreover, there were Islamist dominated governments under prime ministers in Tunisia and Morocco, while Egypt elected a Muslim Brotherhood president. However, MB’s success in Egypt was short lived and by 4 July 2013 the Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi was ousted. The instigators of the military coup justified their actions by citing dangers to ‘national unity', growing liberal and nationalist popular unrest, and dissatisfaction with Morsi’s performance in office. Following this, Egypt's hopes of democratisation and free society have been replaced by a reality that is considered by many observers to be worse than Mubarek’s era (McDowel 2013).

Tunisian liberals and anti-government allies have also rebelled, organising their own ‘tamaroud’ movement to change the freely elected government and to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. A few months later, the Tunisian Islamist-led government would survive both domestic and regional political unrest. (Fadel 2013; Elshinnawi 2013; Chamkhi 2014)

3 In contrast, Libya produced its first elected parliament in more than four decades, dominated by secularists rather than Islamists, due to complex reasons relating to tribal affiliations.

4 Daragh McDowell wrote on 18th August 2013: “A cycle of brutality has been set in motion that all but assures any stable government in Egypt's future will be built on a foundation of corpses. No side is completely without fault, but the overwhelming share of the blame for Egypt's descent into a pre-civil war situation lies with the armed forces and the National Salvation Front (NSF). Yes, Mohammed Morsi's brief tenure as president showed him to be a dull and inflexible leader with an alarming authoritarian streak, a partisan for the Muslim Brotherhood unable and unwilling to provide the kind of unifying leadership Egypt needed after the 2011 revolution.” (McDowell 2013, par. 3-4)

5 “تممرد” Arabic word for rebellion, or civil disobedience.
Islamist victories have caused significant concern to conservative and authoritarian countries in the Arab peninsula (Saudi Arabia, Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Jordan and so on). They were, however, welcomed by Turkey, one of the strongest non-Arab geopolitical players in the region. The Turkish government was established by elements of a new generation of Islamists over a decade ago and is considered a close ally of the traditional MB movement (Torelli 2012; Ergun 2012; Cavdar 2006; Menderes 2006).

Meanwhile, Iran remains ambiguous about supporting the Arab awakening. Iranian conservative religious leaders claimed that the Arab Spring was the fruit of the Iranian Islamic revolution (Eisenstadt 2011). Despite this, Tehran’s Shia leaders chose to support the Syrian regime against its own ‘spring’ and the Syrian people's armed revolution. Geopolitics and historical tension between the Arab rich oil states, mostly Wahhabis from either side of the Persian Gulf, have put the region in a state of turmoil. The Shia regime has added fuel to the existing fire; there is cause to fear that civil wars between Sunni and Shia factions might come to decimate the region (Noueiheh and Warren 2012; Chaland 2013).

This thesis addresses such issues by utilising the concept of “neo-Islamism” to examine Ennahda's declared goals, its commitment to moderation and inclusion, and the extent of its ability to provide an effective economic policy. It argues that the rise of neo-Islamism represents a phase of the MENA region’s political evolution, where moderate self-proclaimed Islamic democrats are leading the democratic transition process in an effort to steer their countries towards economic prosperity and harmony in democratic
consensus. The thesis will examine what has made this ideological move possible, and what might sustain or threaten this process.

**Major research aims**

This study is based on an interpretation of the rise of the political phenomenon of neo-Islamism over the past thirty years and its influence on Tunisian politics following the fall of Ben Ali's regime. The interpretation entails multiple tasks, including observation of the political progress of the neo-Islamists and the outcome of their political actions in Tunisia. The study focuses on the Ennahda Party, as one of the most obvious and successful cases of neo-Islamism after the Arab Spring of 2011, and its organisational and ideological developments to date.

Also utilised are the following approaches to process the data derived from other academics and experts on Ennahda or Islamism in general:

1) An approach that focuses on the historical development of the schools of political thought in Islam, from their beginnings to the present. This approach sheds light on how competing theological views have interconnected with issues related to Islam and democracy over time. This is discussed in Chapter One.

2) A combination of interpretive and qualitative approaches that rely on interviews and examination of data obtained by analysis of historical and contemporary documents as well as the collection of statements made at press conferences and at major political events.

The next five chapters explore the factors behind the rise of neo-Islamic parties after the Arab revolutions, with special focus on Tunisia’s Ennahda Party. To start, a review of the literature that discusses Islamism and post-Islamism is explored, followed
by an examination of the debate regarding the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Following that, a discussion of Bourguibism and the Ben Ali era in Tunisia provides the emergence of Ennahda party within the postcolonial era. Finally, Ennahda's political strategy, methods and performance are examined in the context of a post Arab Spring, which includes a discussion of Ennahda's political future.
While some are surprised by the sudden rise of Islamism, others have argued that its current prominence is not surprising, because Islamists are not alien to their own societies. Rather, they have been the principal victims of decades of dictatorship, and they were the ones who have paid the highest price in the struggle for freedom (Council on Foreign Relations 2012, xii-xvi; Gerges 2013; Colvin 2011; David 2012). It appears, therefore, that Islamists have not only been striving for an Islamic state under Shariaa, but also fighting for freedom of expression, dignity and real liberation, concepts that clearly appeal to Arab citizenries that have had to cope with harsh authoritarianism over several generations (Roy 2011; Bayat 2011; Yilmaz 2012).

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6 In this thesis, the terms 'Sharia', 'Shariaa' and 'shari’aa' and the like all refer to the same Islamic law. Differences in spellings are due to citations from different sources.
Many questions have emerged specifically about Tunisia, where an Islamic party, Ennahda, won a democratic election on 23 October 2011, but was subsequently defeated three years later on 26th of October 2014. How did Tunisia’s Islamist government manage new roles after decades of underground opposition, without any training or experience in managing a democracy? What relationships developed between this government and the West, and the USA in particular? Did Ennahda Party’s time in power lead to greater social conservatism and conflict with secular opposition groups, bringing social instability?

This chapter deals with the preconditions of the Arab Spring and its spread. It also looks at the role of social media in spreading support for revolutions as well as the very language of the Arab Spring across different countries.

By focusing on the traditional Muslim Brotherhood movement’s development and evolution, this Chapter paves the way to understanding neo-Islamism and its links to MB as well as Islamism in its many varieties. As is well known, Islamists range from moderate to radical, violent to non-violent, with factions and individuals sometimes drastically contradicting each other, such as Osama Bin Laden and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as Ennahda's Rashid Ghanouchi (2012) pointed out recently.

**Bouazizi’s self-immolation**

The Arab world has an exceptionally young population. The median age in Arab countries was twenty-two years in 2009, compared to the rest of the world at twenty-eight years. Sixty percent of the Arab population is less than twenty-five years old, which means that up until the Arab Spring of 2011, most Arabs spent their lives under the leadership of the same ruler (Filiu 2011).
Human development in Arab countries has been limited. Despite their rich resources, Arab countries are ranked amongst the lowest in education, human development and human rights, according to the United Nations’ (UN) Arab Human Development Reports (AHDR)\(^7\) (AHDR 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2009). The Arab oligarchic distribution of wealth dragged down per capita Arab income to amongst the lowest in the world,\(^8\) and therefore, productivity declined and scientific research remained at a standstill during the first decade of the new millennium. School enrolment decreased and illiteracy remained considerably high despite high levels of spending on education (Bayat 2010, 27-28; Filiu 2011, 7).\(^9\)

The Arab Spring was ostensibly triggered when Mouhamed Bouazizi doused himself with gasoline and set himself on fire on 17 December 2010. Bouazizi’s actions were prompted by the confiscation of his unlicensed vegetable cart and the subsequent slap to the face he received from the policewoman who had effectively confiscated his means of livelihood. This twenty-six year old man was both deeply humiliated by the

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\(^7\) Arab Human Development Report of: 2002 ‘Opportunities’, 2003 ‘Knowledge’, 2004 ‘Freedom’, 2005 ‘Gender’ and 2009 ‘Human resources’. Apparently, no comparable surveying and academic efforts in the Arab world have been as debated, commended and contested as much as the AHDR series has. This report was prepared by a team of over a hundred Arab intellectuals and professionals, which just until 2005, cost US$ 700,000. The report provoked unprecedented discussion and controversy in the West as well as inside the Arab world about the predicament of the region, the topic airing on television talk shows, in parliaments, and in print media (Bayat 2010).

\(^8\) According to AHDR, the percentage of the population living below the international poverty line of $1.25 (in purchasing power parity terms) a day is high in poor countries such as Mauritania, with 21.2% (2000), or Tunisia 5.87% (1990), which dropped to 2.6% in 2000. Also, figures shown that up to 2007 Morocco recorded 2.5% and in 2005 Egypt recorded 2%. Source: AHDR 2014 and World Bank (2011).

\(^9\) Also, Bayat noted that media and information dissemination was no better off than education. During the early 2000s, Arab countries had a lower information/media-to-population ratio than the world average; less than fifty-three newspapers per 1000 citizens, compared to 285 per 1000 people in the industrialised world. Furthermore, the translation of books remained negligible; only 4.4 translated books per million were published every year, compared to 519 in Hungary and 920 in Spain (Bayat 2010, 27-28). Also, Bayat noted that media and information dissemination was no better off than education. During the early 2000s, Arab countries had a lower information/media-to-population ratio than the world average; less than fifty-three newspapers per 1000 citizens, compared to 285 per 1000 people in the industrialised world. (Bayat 2010, 27-28).
abuse and exasperated by his inability to get redress10 (Council on Foreign Relations 2012, 3).

Furthermore, Bouazizi was not enacting the suicide commands of an Islamist jihadi group. Rather, his self-immolation was a sacrifice that “echoed Jan Palach’s immolation on 19 January 1969, when the Czech offered his life in protest against the Soviet invasion” (Filui 2011, 19).

In a matter of just a few days, Bouazizi’s anger ignited the Tunisian landscape, and in a matter of a few weeks, the uprising spread via internet forums such as Facebook and Twitter. Consequently, this uprising kick started similar but more protracted revolutions in Egypt against the Mubarek regime and in Libya against the Kaddafi regime.

**The Role of Social Networks in the Arab Spring**

Bayat (2011, 2013) and Roy (2011a, 2011b, 2012b, 2012d, 2012c) focus heavily on the Arab youth's use of foreign languages, social networks and media, street sit-ins and protest and consumption of Western merchandise such as signature jeans and American fast-food chains, as an exclusive phenomenon of post-Islamists, (though Roy credits the practices to so-called neo-fundamentalists as well). The plain fact is, almost all

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10 Contrary to popular belief, Bouazizi was not a university graduate. He dropped out of secondary school when his father, a farm labourer, died, leaving him in charge of his six sisters and brothers. Without decent permanent employment, he had only his produce cart and scale for income, earning the equivalent of about ten dollars per day. Because Bouazizi had neither support nor connections with local authorities, and certainly not much money to bribe the appropriate officials, he could not get a licence for his work or an ‘overlook’. On 17 December 2010, a municipal patrol, four men and two women, cornered Bouazizi and seized his possessions: seven kilos of bananas, along with five boxes of apples and pears. When the street peddler protested, a policewoman slapped his face. Devastated by the loss and humiliated, Bouazizi tried in vain to retrieve his meager stock at the police station, then he pleaded unsuccessfully three times for mercy at the governor’s headquarters. After the third attempt, he quietly parked his cart next to the Governor’s headquarters, bought a jug of turpentine at the nearby grocery shop, doused himself with it, pointed at the sky and lit a match. By the fall of Ben Ali, and during the protest, eleven Tunisians set themselves on fire, and five of them subsequently died. “There is nothing Islamic about this sacrifice, but such a denouncing of oppression is devastating” (Filui 2011, 19-20).
modernIslamistsuse modern tools to various degrees. Even the *Jihadi Salafis*\(^\text{11}\) or Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT)\(^\text{12}\) cadres, who still believe that democracy is religiously forbidden and an evil Western tool of domination, are computer and social media savvy and experts in the latest Western brands of various products.

Social networks and social media were crucial to the Arab Spring, facilitating communication and coordination between the young, but these efforts came from a mass of individuals, rather than formal non-government organisations (NGOs) or political parties. (Bayat 2013; Ehrenberg 2012; Marzouki 2011a; Khalil 2012; Pontin 2011)

When the Tunisian uprising started on 17 December 2010, none of the Western think tanks, politicians or policy makers predicted what would happen next across the Middle East. Furthermore, almost all Western policy makers failed to predict the collapse of the Mubarek regime. In fact, during the first weeks of the long Tahrir Square sit-ins with millions of Egyptians protesting against Mubarek, the Obama Administration refused to take a stand with the revolutionaries. At the very least, the American position was that of disorientation. Some American policy makers saw the Mubarek regime as having regional political and security privilege, describing the regime as an example of ‘durable authoritarianism’ (Mason 2012).

\(^{11}\) *Salafis, Salafiyya and Salafism* are derived from Arabic salaf, Salafiyyun literally, the ancestors, are used to describe the first three generations of Muslims, deemed to be the most pious believers. The Salaffiya movement claims to return to the original Islam through the elimination of those elements that, throughout history, have been introduced to Islam from the outside, and inevitably changed the essence of the original. Groups that use violence to further their agendas are modernly described as Jihadi Salafists. Modern usage of the term *Salafism* that references radical Islamic groups is a relatively new practice. The original term which established from around the thirteen century, up until the early twentieth century had assumed reform and religious purity (Torelli, Merone, and Cavatorta 2012, 144).

\(^{12}\) Hizb ut-Tahrir (Arabic: حزب التحرير; Party of Liberation) is an international pan-Islamic political organisation. They are commonly associated with the goal of unifying the Muslim countries into one Islamic state ruled by Sharia and with a caliph head of state elected by Muslims. The organisation was founded in 1953 in Jerusalem by a Sunni scholar and Sharia Judge Taqiuddin al-Nabhani.
A clear but infamous example of Western governments being complicit in the propagation of the modern Arab police state and misleading the outside world comes from the Ben Ali regime in 2005. In November of that year, Ben Ali proudly hosted the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis. It was the second round of the UN-sponsored conference, the first part of which had taken place in Geneva two years earlier. Hundreds of international delegations, both official and non-governmental, gathered in Tunis for three days to discuss the latest issues relating to Internet communication, the new era of digital and grass-roots information and to exchange ideas. They were, paradoxically, “confined to a well polished ghetto in the northern suburb of the capital city, and access to the internet was only unrestricted in the limited perimeter of the conference and the delegations’ hotels” (Filiu 2011, 43).

Local civil society representatives, independent media and human rights activists were banned from attending the conference. Those forces launched their campaigns to draw the world’s attention to human rights abuses in Tunisia, some organising hunger strikes, though the outside world seemed oblivious to their existence. As Filiu (2011, 45) observed, that the Orwellian nature of the Ben Ali regime never had reached such blatant authoritarianism and hypocrisy: while his guests at the WSIS were enjoying free internet service and celebrating the virtues of do-it-yourself new technologies and e-management, the outside conference rooms’ internet was heavily controlled and censored as usual, thanks to the monopoly of the state-monitored providers and their direct connections with (not so) secret police.

By the time of the second Tehran Spring on the eve of the 2009 Iranian presidential election (the first Tehran Spring was in 1997\(^\text{13}\)), the reformist Iranian

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\(^{13}\) In the spring of 1997, Mohammad Khatami was elected president of Iran. He won 70 per cent of the votes on an 80 per cent turnout, and campaigned on a clear reformist ground, thrashing his theocrat opponent three-to-one. The commander of the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps lobbied Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, advising him to reject the result. According to a member of the Expediency Council,
presidential candidate, Mir Hossein Mousavi, lost to President Mahmud Ahmadinejad. Iranian youths immediately protested, using social media to organise, while they accused the government of fabricating election results. For weeks, the Iranian Republican Guard Corps (IRGC) and Basij\(^{14}\) suppressed the protesters, while the world's media was flooded with short videos and news via Twitter and Facebook from the protesters' hotspots. Overcoming state censorship would also become, in less than two years, the most important feature of the Arab Spring.

The boom years of globalisation have created a global culture of an educated and freedom-eager youth. Now “there is a mass transnational culture of disillusionment, and it transmits easily ... From Tahrir and Syntagma to the student ‘kissing protest’ in Santiago’s Central Plaza and Occupy Wall Street, these attempts to create instant ‘liberated spaces’ have become the single most important theme in the global revolt” (Mason 2012, 69, 84).

Few would dare to underestimate the role of social media in the Arab Spring, though as Gelvin points out, there is no evidence to demonstrate that it played any more of a role than the printing press and telegraph did in earlier uprisings (Gelvin 2012, 158). Social media might not have contributed to the content of the Arab uprisings, but due to the widespread governmental censorship and crackdown on protestors' conventional channels of communication (such as newspapers, lift-outs, radio and television), social media became the communication tool and propaganda forum for revolutionaries across

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\(^{14}\) Literally means ‘Mobilisation of the Oppressed’, which is a paramilitary volunteer militia established in 1979 by order of the Islamic Revolution’s leader Ayatollah Khomeini
the Arab world. An analysis of ten months of news, information and social media used in
eighteen Arab spring countries found that the number of Facebook users swelled during
that time, though the pattern of increased use of social media did not correlate directly
with the pattern of protests. Social media sites told people where to find information, not
to revolt (Ehrenberg 2012).

John Pollock (2011, 82) writes, “people used not only all the technology they had,
but all the technology they could borrow”. He added that the Arab Spring “sharpened an
acrimonious debate in the United States and Europe about the uses and importance of
technology in regime change” (Pollock 2011, 82). In North Africa, social media
accomplished two major tasks. First, they made public the tyranny known and common to
many Egyptians and Tunisians but hitherto unacknowledged. Second, they helped
revolutionaries organise continuous protests in countries where the police had efficiently
beaten, imprisoned, tortured, and murdered dissidents by creating networks the regimes
found difficult to suppress (Pontin 2011).

Without the amateur video captured on the mobile phone of al Bouazizi’s cousin,
and its immediate distribution to tens of thousands of Tunisians on Facebook, the
Tunisian revolution might not have commenced. The influence of Facebook prompted
many to refer to the events in Tunisia as the ‘first Facebook revolution’15 (Schraeder

15 Tunisian National Statistics show that 20 percent of Tunisian citizens, that’s more than 2.1 million;
maintain Facebook pages. According to a survey conducted in Tunis in March 2011, 91 percent of
university students use Facebook daily or multiple times a day, and on average spend 1 hour and 45
minutes each day on the website. “Of great interest from a political science perspective is that this same
survey demonstrated that 64 percent of students used Facebook as their primary source of information
about protests and demonstrations during the 4 weeks period between December 17 and January 14.
Indeed, 32 percent of all students indicated they first learned of Bouazizi’s self-immolation via
Facebook,” (Schraeder 2012, 75-76)
Feiler (2011, 143) concluded:

[Maybe] the Middle East uprisings were a Facebook Revolution after all. They were a massive, generation-wide Facebook friend request from a people as enamored of freedom as we are that arrives in our inbox looking for support at exactly the moment we had all but turned up our noses and turned our backs on anyone from their neighborhood. And in that way in which the Internet tries to make things easy, this request comes with two helpful options: CONFIRM OR NOT NOW. The choice is ours: which will it be?

The Arab revolutionaries used a full suite of information sharing and communication tools, that

were employed to spread the revolutions of 2009-11, it goes like this: Facebook is used to form groups, covert and overt in order to establish those strong but flexible connections. Twitter is used for real-time organization and news dissemination, bypassing the cumbersome ‘newsgathering’ operations of the mainstream media. YouTube and the Twitter-linked photographic sites - Yfrog, Flickr and Twitpic - are used to provide instant evidence of the claims being made. Link-shorteners like bit-ly are used to disseminate key articles via Twitter. (Mason 2012, 75)

However, social media was above all a technical channel to report and spread social discontent and link the dissidents with each other, rather than cause of revolution itself. In other words, what was more important was that Tunisia was already ripe for revolutionary change, if we take a number of factors into account. To quote Peter Schraeder (2012, 75),

[The] first factor was an intensifying socio-economic crisis during the five years preceding the revolution, from 2006 to 2010, as measured by a number of economic indicators. Overall unemployment had risen to 14% in 2010, with the figure for youth aged 15-24 years of age exceeding 30 percent. Those with higher education were especially affected; over 45 percent of college graduates could not find work. As of 2008, the average Tunisian spent nearly 36 percent of household spending on basic foodstuffs consumed at home. To put this in comparative context, the average American in 2008 spent just under 7 percent of household spending on the same foodstuffs. It is for this reason that the percentage of the Tunisian population that considered itself to be ‘thriving’ dropped from 24 percent (2.52 million people) in 2008, to only 14 percent (1.47 million people) in 2010, meaning that at least 1 million citizens had witnessed a reversal in their economic fortunes.
Other factors that paved the way for the Jasmine revolution were the growing authoritarianism of the Ben Ali regime and public disenchantment with the growing corruption of Ben Ali’s extended family, which was estimated at 140 members. This trend is captured by the annual ‘Perception of Corruption’ index maintained by Transparency International, in which Tunisia’s ranking declined from 43rd in 2005 to 59th in 2010, out of 178 countries monitored (Schraeder 2012, 76-77).

This evidence of corruption, which is similar to that nearby countries where the Arab Spring spread later, leads one to question the Arab Spring ideology and the success of the neo-Islamist parties afterwards: were the revolutions merely liberating, economically driven and spontaneous, or did they carry out hidden agendas despite their unpartisan appearance?

**Arab Spring ideology**

Although neo-Islamism did not lead the early stages of the revolution, it turned out to be more organised, more prepared ideologically, than other revolutionaries. Non-

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16 Schraeder cited an example of Ali Khalifi, who was a student enrolled in a Master's degree program in Common Law coordinated by the University of Carthage. Ali was jailed because one of his friends, unbeknownst to him, was also friends with two young men who mentioned to the wrong person that the Ben Ali regime should be replaced by an Islamist regime. Ben Ali’s secret police apparently learned of the public statements of the two young men via an informant. All were arrested and jailed, and given prison sentences of one to three years. After several nights of jail, one of the jailers told Ali they knew he was innocent and that he had no contact with the students calling for the government’s overthrow, hence why he only received a one-year sentence. When Ali asked, “Well, why am I in jail then, with one-year sentence?” the response was: “Because you should know who the friends of your friends are” (Schraeder 2012, 73-77).

17 The Tunisian people regularly mocked Ben Ali’s over the top totalitarianism behind closed doors. Special attention was reserved for his second wife Leila Trabelsi, who was twenty-one years younger than he. Leila was derogatorily nicknamed the ‘regent of Carthage’ colloquially meaning ‘she who governs in the absence of the king’, a reference to her growing assertiveness in the governing of the nation. Leila’s notorious brother, Belhassan Trabelsi (fled to Canada during the 14th January 2011 regime change) was often referred to as the ‘godfather’. The Trabelsi family illegally controlled, or assumed control, over 180 major companies including an airline, several hotels, one of the Tunisia’s two private radio stations, numerous car assembly plants, a Ford distribution centre, a real estate development company, and many more (Schraeder 2012, 75-88).
partisan revolutionary language was quickly adopted by the neo-Islamists who enriched it with modern idioms and terminology as necessary. (David 2012; Bayat 2013; Roy 2011b and 2012c) Nevertheless, this ‘declared ideology’ (as opposed to their alleged actual ideology or hidden agendas) simply signifies a change in tactics; rather than a change in the goals of Islamic politics. Nevertheless, Ghanouchi has stated that democratisation and peaceful transitioning to power through fair elections were at the centre of his party’s agenda since June 1981, and that these were almost the same goals of the Arab Spring some thirty years later (interview with author, Tunis: 25 April 2013).

What Filali-Ansary (2012, 10) observed as “[an] unsuspected wave … gathering strength and producing a new political language [which] can be seen in the coinage and dissemination of new concepts that capture the aspirations and hopes of the new generations”, has been diluted as well by the rise of jihadist groups. These are occupying cities, declaring their caliphate (Islamic state) and destabilising the entire region. Nevertheless, at least one neo-Islamist party, Ennahda, has proven itself committed to a new language of Islamic politics, which requires an investigation into the motivation behind the Arab Spring ideology in its early stages.

However, the dream of some party elites of melding Western liberalism into an Islamic framework was to be shattered not more than three years later. The post-Arab Spring failure of establishing democracy is the result of a combination of many factors and an ongoing process of struggle between two major camps: revolutionary Arabs who aspire to freedom and democracy and counter-revolutionary forces who aspire to restore the old systems.
This is seen very clearly in the Tunisian case. On 26 October 2014, the first Tunisian elections held under a new democratic constitution resulted in a comeback for those who had supported Ben Ali’s former ruling party. Under the name Nidaa Tunis, the new party won around 18 more seats than Ennahda, (88 seats for Nidaa Tunis and 69 for Ennahda). Such a result notwithstanding, Tunisia and Ennahda appear to be still on the track of an exciting yet painstaking transition to democracy, unlike other countries in the Middle East (Wolf 2014; Chamkhi 2014; Hilal 2012; Fadel 2013; Chaland 2013; Guazzone 2013; Ottaway 2012).

The language of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring displayed a huge shift in the language of Arab revolution. (Filali-Ansary 2012) The young protesters were no longer shouting nationalistic slogans, calling for the shariatisation of the society, or getting frenzied about the Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, the protesters did not arise spontaneously for the abstract ideal of ‘democracy’, or because of the activities of outside democracy promotion organizations (as some authoritarian governments believed of the ‘colored revolutions’ in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan). They occurred instead for a variety of homegrown reasons [such as: Economic deprivation, political absolutism and corruption] that should give all authoritarian governments pause (Craner 2011, par. 17).

According to the Tunisian League for the Protection of the Revolution (LNPR)18 spokesman Nasrudidine Wezfa (interview with author: Tunis, 15th April 2013), most of

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18 Tunisian National League for the Protection of the Revolution, (LNPR) (French: La Ligue de protection de la révolution (LPR) or Ligue Nationale de Protection de la Révolution (LNPR) is a coalition of Islamists, jobless young people, thugs, and others who gathered and were legalised under the Hammadi Jebali government in May 2012. Their goal was to defend what they perceive to be the objectives of the Tunisian revolution and to block attempts by the old regime to make a comeback. The organisation soon evolved into loosely organised militias of thugs who allegedly attacked the UGTT headquarters, the secular anti-Ennahda opposition groups and former RCD supporters. The UGTT and Nidaa’ Tunis...
the Tunisian revolutionary demands were shaped during the famous sit-ins of Qasbah 1 and Qasbah 2. These sit-ins\textsuperscript{19} were a sort of open continuous congress, which witnessed days and days of discussions between all political cadres, youngsters and independents and intelligentsia.

Wezfa stated that the early intent of the Qasbah sit-ins of early 2011 was simply to oust the old regime of Ben Ali, which was seen as a burden, and keep everything else untouched (Interview with author, Tunis: 15\textsuperscript{th} April 2013). After 14 January 2011 (the day Ben Ali fled the country), the government attempted to impose a curfew in order to restore security and to reorganize. However, spontaneous gatherings of communities originally intending to protect neighborhoods, spoiled government efforts. The goal of the crowds quickly transformed into efforts to preserve the revolution.

The reasons behind the uprising include:

advocate banning this group and accuse Ennahda of using these militias are its own to enforce its hidden agendas (Guazzone 2013, 37).

\textsuperscript{19} Qasba1 took place in Qasbah Square next the Prime Ministers office directly after the flight of Ben Ali on 16 January 2011; this was the first sit-in that led to changes in the government. On 27 January, a compromise was reached: the government would continue to be presided by Ben Ali’s last prime minister. With two uncorrupted technocrats of the former regime taking minor positions. The parliament featured new faces from Tunisian universities, the private sector outside Tunisia, and the judiciary. This compromise was supported by the the Tunisian General Labour Union (French: \textit{Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail}) (UGTT) and notably, was accepted by the street, which for a short time had stopped demonstrating. This respite allowed the government to begin functioning ‘normally’ and it immediately started by taking the first transition measures: releasing political convicts, setting conditions for general amnesty, legalising previously forbidden political parties, liberalising the media, and the setting up commissions on political reform.

Qasbah 2, started on 20 February 2011, demanded the departure of Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi and his peers, as former militants of RCD. This sit-in was more politicised than the first sit-in. Several opposition parties pushed the participants to demand an election of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution and to create a council for safeguarding the revolution. This council would act as a counter-power to the government, which apart from the pressure of the street, was acting without oversight.

A demographically youthful population with little reverence for the regimes that struggled historically for independence from European colonialism;

Widespread resentment over pervasive regime corruption and youths’ inability to find jobs while they sank in poverty like the older population;

While some economic improvement had taken place at the time of the revolutions, this was insufficient to save the old regime. Furthermore, the interior population was resentful of the (relatively) more prosperous coastal residents;

Economic and political repression led to a yearning not necessarily for democracy, but for other more personal needs, such as ‘dignity’, ‘justice’ and ‘respect’. People believed these desires could only be satisfied if the aged authoritarian regimes were removed.

Technology such as the Internet and satellite television showed the people ways to defeat official censorship, and also opened people’s eyes to the wellbeing of the outside world. Technology showed Arabs, including in Tunisia, the abnormality of their country’s situation, and that they were falling behind in a more democratic and globalised world. Social media gave them not new beliefs, but the channels to express their desires in a more rapid and organised way (Craner 2011, par. 22).

Although ultra conservative and jihadi groups later explicitly called for shariatisation, taking advantage of the new era of freedom of speech and liberties, the revolutions themselves appear to have no ideological templates; they were not driven by established ideologies such as nationalism, socialism or Islamism, but “a retrieval of a cosmopolitan worldliness that was always already there but repressed under the duress of
a dialectic sustained between domestic tyranny and globalised imperialism” (Debashi 2012, 11). At the same time, the Arab Spring shifted the traditional political language from blaming the West and Israel for all that is wrong to focusing on dignity, freedom and calls for democratisation (Roy 2011a and 2012c)

In addition, the ousting of ageing pro-imperialist dictators such as Mubarek and Ben Ali caused confusion in American policy on Africa and the Middle East. According to Petras (2012), the Obama Administration was hesitant to oust Mubarek for several reasons, even as the movement against him grew:

The White House has many clients around the world - including Honduras, Mexico, Indonesia, Jordan and Algeria - who believe they have a strategic relationship with Washington and would lose confidence in their future if Mubarak were dumped.

Secondly, the highly influential leading pro-Israel organisations in the US (AIPAC, the President of the Major American Jewish Organisations) and their army of scribes mobilized congressional leaders to pressure the White House to continue backing Mubarak, as Israel was the prime beneficiary of a dictator who was at the throat of the Egyptians (and Palestinians) and at the feet of the Jewish state. As a result, the Obama regime moved slowly, under fear and pressure of the growing Egyptian popular movement (Petras 2012, 17-18).

Some scholars have been more optimistic than many of the Arab revolutionaries themselves. For example, Filui (2011, 135) concluded that the Arab revolutions, transmitted from Tunisia to nearby countries within days or weeks, are not the products of a domino effect, but rather of a renaissance:

The Arab revolution is an Arab renaissance. It is literally striving to revive a social body paralyzed by the various autocrats, their predatory clique and their unbridled security services. The vanguard role played by the youth is just the ultimate reaction of defense by the most exposed generation against the sterilisation of its aspirations, the privatisation of its nation-state and the obliteration of its future. But this dynamic of defiance and empowerment will not stop
with the toppling of an ageing ruler … It is a regional tide that will leave no sector untouched, one way or another.

Stepan and Linz (2013, 29) conclude something similar:

Neither the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, nor Poland’s Solidarity in 1981 succeeded in immediately creating a democracy. Yet each of these historic movements eroded forever the legitimacy of the dictatorial regime that it challenged. We think that the events of the Arab Spring at the very least have made Arab ‘presidents for life’ increasingly unacceptable, and the dignity of citizens increasingly desired.

The Arab Spring was not by any means an Islamic revolution, and it is unlikely that the Middle East will experience an Iranian style revolution any time soon. Islamists as organised groups did not explicitly lead the revolutions, though individuals participated under more cosmopolitan banners, slogans and demands (Roy 2012c and 2012d; Bayat 2013; Cavatorta 2012)

Patrick Seale (2011, par. 9) adds to this discussion:

For many Arabs, indeed for most Muslims, the West is highly suspect, and its current rampant Islamophobia a source of angry bewilderment. America’s blind support for Israel – for its aggression against its neighbours and its long and cruel oppression of the Palestinian – is a source of great rage, latent and largely impotent so far, but for how long? The West’s colonial past in the region has also by no means been forgotten, whether in Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, to name only the most obvious countries.

The so-called Arab Street is without doubt still occupied with chronic distrust of the West, but the Arab Spring revolutionaries were not targeting Western imperialism in the first place. They simply aimed to get rid of autocratic regimes and dictators. The revolutionaries were not necessarily enlightened by any particular philosophical concept or ideology, let alone democracy. They were also without proper leaders (David 2012; Roy 2011b; Etzioni 2011).
Yet the Arab nations have no major guiding ideology to fall back on, despite neo-Islamists trying to invent a new revised ‘Islamic ideology’ as well as secular and Islamic fundamentalist groups attempting to offer their own alternatives.

Arabs irreversibly disposed of their most notorious dictators but have had no state or economic policies to revert to, since they can no longer sustain the old political system based on fear, or the old economic model, which failed to deliver prosperity. Indeed, the 2011 uprisings had no focus but to overthrow the homegrown authoritarian regimes, and a vague eagerness for freedom and democracy.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, no serious economic reforms were proposed in the Middle East over the three-year period that followed the 2011 revolution (Eyal 2012a). It seems the neo-Islamists in parts of the Arab world were one of only two beneficiaries from the Arab Spring. The other beneficiaries were the jihadi Salafi groups, namely al Qaeda and its affiliated groups in Syria and Iraq, which under the banner of ISIL have achieved unprecedented victories.

**The historical origins of Islamism**

Islamism is a relatively modern phenomenon in Muslim societies around the world. Political Islam, which is another term for Islamism, is a contemporary political ideology, rather than a religion, religious cult or theology. Islamism is the social and political expression of Islam that seeks to integrate it into politics, state affairs, economics and civil and constitutional laws. Given the heterogeneity of political Islam across the globe, no academic consensus exists on what constitutes an Islamist party, but in the “broadest possible sense such parties can be defined as parties that strive for the
implementation of Islamic law (sharia) in all aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural life” (Tomsa 2012, 487).

The most precise definition of Islamism is provided by Yılmaz (2012, 42), who describes it as:

a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives. It provides political responses to today’s societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations for which rest on reappropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from the Islamic tradition.

While Asef Bayat (2013, 592) defined Islamism as those ideologies and movements that seek to establish some kind of an Islamic order; a religious state, sharia law and moral codes in Muslim societies and communities.

Bayat observes that the association with the state is a key feature of modern Islamic movements, whose procedures include controlling state power. On the other hand, Aktay (2013, 125) observed that “Islamism is an indistinguishable element of Islam and its survival depends on it. In other words, Islamism represents the political grammar of Islam, and this explains why many Islamists do not need to employ the term”.

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood slogan, ‘Islam is the Solution’, indicates that Islamism is a socio-political movement in the first place. However, Islamism, as Greg Barton points out, covers a “broad spectrum of convictions, at one extreme are those who would merely like to see Islam accorded proper recognition in national life in terms of national symbols. At the other extreme are those who want to see the radical transformation of society and politics, by whatever means, into an absolute theocracy”. (Ayoob 2008, 2).
The modern concept of reviving Islam in public life and considering politics an authentic part of religion, was developed by nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers as a response to direct contact with the West through colonialism, including figures such as Jamal Eddin al-Afghani, Mohammed Abdah and Mohammed Rashid Rida, the founder of a famous intellectual magazine, *el-Manar*. Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, reportedly worked with Rida and was strongly influenced by his reformist opinions. According to Khatab and Bouma (2007, 58), al-Banna “was one of Rashid Rida’s regular disciples, he regularly attended Rida’s circle, read his journal and carried it on after Rida’s death in 1934”.

**Emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood**

The genesis of modern Islamism can be traced to March 1928, when “a twenty-two-year-old schoolteacher mobilised six disgruntled workers from Egypt’s Suez Canal Company. It was originally a social and religious movement but Hassan al-Banna's little group grew into the Muslim Brotherhood, ‘al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen’” (Wright 2012, 4). Since then, the movement has “undergone significant internal transformation” (Hadiz 2014, 127) and neo-Islamism is the latest, but not the last facet of such an evolution of ideas, tactics and even conceptual approaches.

The Muslim Brotherhood was the first popular Islamist movement in the Arab world, and managed to organise and spread throughout eighty countries since its inception (Wright 2012). The MB founder, Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), dedicated his teachings to addressing the cessation of the last Caliphate following the Ottoman defeat in World War I and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, aiming for a transnational Islamic state. While working toward this objective al-Banna became “increasingly aware
of the eroding social and religious values he so treasured”, and “rejected the passive posture of the Egyptian ulamas\textsuperscript{20} of his day” (Davidson 2003, 20). Observers such as Hadiz (2014), on the other hand, see the establishment of the MB related to the “growing discontent within the [Egyptian] petty bourgeoisie with its fate under British political and economic domination” (Hadiz 2014, 127). Generally speaking, the MB filled the political vacuum to lead the despairing and oppressed masses to draw on their past for a better future of liberty and social justice. . . . This movement thought that the Muslim world had lost its identity to European colonialism. The Brotherhood agreed that Muslims needed to draw on what they considered a pure Islam of Muhammad and his immediate successors to ensure their future. (Khatab and Bouma 2007, 58-59)

Islamism at this early stage (during al-Banna's life) was direct, simple and appeared to vaguely contrast with secularism, without an established agenda or complete blueprint. It called for Islam to take a bigger role in public and private lives, in opposition to Ataturk’s call for secularism in Turkey.

Hassan al-Banna viewed Islamisation as an absolutist ideology; Islam was seen as the only solution for political weakness, maldevelopment, imperialism, and later, the Arab-Israeli conflict. The MB became active in Palestine in the 1930s, just a few years after its founding, providing arms and training fighters to resist both the British occupation and the invasion of Jewish Zionist settlers (Hessler 2012).

While the Muslim Brotherhood grew and transformed into a major political party and social political movement by the 1940s, threatening the stability of the Egyptian monarchy and the British occupation of Egypt, other Islamic movements were launched

\textsuperscript{20} Arabic word for the Muslim theologists and religious scholars.
across the Muslim world, like the Indian-turned-Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami in 1941, and HT in 1953.

As the postcolonial era revealed its major political and economic challenges for the Arab and Muslim nation-state, more Islamic movements emerged. Some movements had stricter political agendas than the MB; still others were jihadists, focusing on establishing an Islamic state and finding military solutions for societal underdevelopment and secularism.

The MB constructed Islam as a modern political ideology, choosing not to focus on religiosity as a top priority, although al-Banna had originally established preaching, or dawaa, as one of the pillars of his new organisation. In fact, the vast majority of Islamic movements of the twentieth century focused on political affairs. This contrasts with the purely legal approach of the ulamas, who saw the implementation of Shariaa as the sole criterion for an Islamic state. Ulamas believe that the Islamic state should have the power to implement sharia from top to bottom, placing society back onto the path of Islam. This re-Islamisation of society is a duty of those in power (Roy 2013).

However, the emergence of MB took away the monopoly of religious interpretation from the ulamas and gave legitimacy to the involvement of knowledgeable lay people in religious matters and the subject of Islamisation. These lay people do not necessarily share the interests of the ulamas, who have historically been indebted to the state for their power. No wonder then that contemporary Islamists call them “ulamas el sultan” (scholars of sell out to their secular rulers) as a way of denigrating them and charging them with ethical incompetence.
Today, within the MB and similar Islamic movements, there is a widespread feeling that the cause of “society’s malaise stems primarily from a betrayal from within, rather than a domineering force from without” (Abdo 2000, 8). Al-Banna himself, though descended from a scholarly Sufi family, did not get along well with al-Azhar's traditional scholars, nor did he try to reform them directly and have them lead his new movement. Instead, he simply picked some al-Azhar scholars, mixed them with petty bourgeoisie businessmen, informal street preachers, doctors, lawyers, judges and women, and fused them all into the new MB (Parteger 2010). Such a mélange, which has lasted for eighty years, was not likely planned; more likely the composition of the Muslim Brotherhood has been influenced by a series of continuous, spontaneous gatherings around a common cause.

**Muslim Brotherhood: revolutionary or conservative?**

The MB ideology, as Roy (2013) points out, is not a revolutionary ideology, like Marxism or Nazism. He notes, “seventy years of cautious politics hardly qualify a movement as revolutionary” (Roy 2013, 15). The MB coexisted with Egyptian regimes for over eighty years without any serious coup plots or major revolutionary violence. Parteger (2010) observed the MB as being primarily a social movement that sometimes functions as a political party. Indeed, the MB is well rooted in diverse social services within their societies, providing charity and religious courses, initiating grassroots activism, instituting human rights work, journalism, and winning control of different union syndicates. These achievements and dominance in professional sectors like engineering, medicine and law during the last twenty or thirty years qualified them to be the most organized and effective opposition party in Egypt.
However, it should not be forgotten that between the 1930s and early 1970s the MB was without doubt a revolutionary political party which was even equipped for a time with an armed militia. In fact, MB created the notorious *Tanzeen Khass*, in late 1942 or early 1943, which was

a clandestine group within the organization designed to defend the society from both British and the government. But the secret apparatus also developed an aggressive, offensive capability of an extralegal nature, often expressed through hit-and-run attacks on British personnel and Egyptian police. The identity of those brothers belonging to the secret apparatus was unknown to the society’s general membership, and its leaders reported directly to al-Banna. In theory, he controlled the group and its activities. However, control was never complete, and herein laid a fatal flaw for the future (Davidson 2003, 25).

The MB movement officially renounced political violence after a period of considerable political tension that ended in the assassination of Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud an-Nukrashi Pasha by a young veterinary student in 1948, who was allegedly a member of the MB. The political violence escalated to the assassination of Imam al-Banna himself in 1949 (Mura 2012; Zahid and Madley 2006; Pargeter 2010). As Abdo (2000, 6-7) notes, however, the MB “became increasingly radical during the 1940s and 1950s”. Although, it had officially renounced violence, the organisation was not above encouraging violence in some circumstances.

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21 The MB called for jihad against Jews in the 1936–9 Arab Revolt in Palestine, sent many fighters to Palestine during 1930s and 1940s, was behind the dramatic riots in Palestine in 1936, and participating heavily in the 1948 war which ended up with the establishment of the state of Israel. The Syrian commander of the Palestinian *mujahideen* mission, Ezzedine al-Qssem, is considered one of the great MB military leaders of the time. The organisation regarded the British as imperialist oppressors in Egypt, and agitated against the British military occupation of the country, especially after the Palestine rebellion. During Nasser's 1956 war against so the called ‘triple aggression’ on the Suez Canal, and during the 1973 war against Israel, the MB sent many volunteers and fighters (Mura 2012, 59-60).
In 1952, the MB supported the Egyptian Revolution,\textsuperscript{22} led by the Free Officers Movement, which apparently started as a cell led by MB army officers as early as 1942 \textsuperscript{23} (Zahid and Madley 2006). After the MB was implicated in an attempted assassination of Egypt's president Nasser in the mid-1960s, it was deemed anti-government once again, banned and repressed.

Generally speaking, however, the MB has always strived to participate in formal politics and has run in open elections since the 1940s, (Zahid and Madley 2006) though some of the early al-Banna literature showed mistrust of democratic elections, stemming from its association with the British colonial authorities that carried over to local elections (Mura 2012, 61-85). It is worth saying here that Egypt had a sort of democratic experience from 1922 until the Free Officers’ coup in 1952, mostly under British colonisation\textsuperscript{24} (Traub 2007, par. 3). The establishment of MB during colonial Egypt, then its continuity during post-colonial era, has resulted in the movement being affected politically by the western liberal concepts of democracy and transition of power. Although, the adoption of some or all of those liberal concepts would arrive much later

\textsuperscript{22} The Egyptian Revolution of 1952, known in Egypt as the 23 July Revolution, began with a military coup d'état by the Free Officers Movement, a group of army officers led by Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser. The revolution was initially aimed at overthrowing King Farouk. However, the movement had more political ambitions, and soon moved to abolish the constitutional and aristocracy of Egypt and Sudan, establish a republic, end the British occupation of the country, and secure the independence of Sudan (Euben and Zaman 2009, 53).

\textsuperscript{23} According to al-Mahdi, The most important incident in the history of the Muslim Brotherhood is when Major Mahmoud Labib (the right arm of General Aziz Al-Masri while fighting with the Ottomans against Italy in Libya) together with seven low-rank soldiers that included Gamal Abdel Nasser and Khaled Mohey El-Din in 1943 went to pay allegiance to al-Banna, swearing on the Holy Quran and a gun to give birth to the Muslim Brotherhood Officers. The illness of Mahmoud Labib and later his death in 1950 gave Gamal Abdel Nasser leadership; many members in the secret organisation were trained by Nasser (al-Mahdi 2005; Zahid and Madley 2006; Pargeter 2010).

\textsuperscript{24} Egyptian King Farouk saw the Brothers as a useful counter to the power of the major secularist political party, nationalist Wafd Party (Delegation Party": Arabic: Hizb al-Wafd ) and the communists. During 1920s and 1930s, al-Wafd was instrumental in the development of the 1923 constitution and supported moving Egypt from dynastic rule to a constitutional, where power would be wielded by a nationally elected parliament. The party was dissolved after the 1952 Egyptian Revolution led by Nasser.
on, in the case of neo-Islamists, or not at all, in the case of the Egyptian MB, such as in their refusal to accept a women as head of state, even up until now.

Despite widespread imprisonment and torture of MB members and Nasser's accusations of a coup plot during the mid-1960s (which were never proven and always denied) and unlike MB splinter groups such as Islamic Group ‘Gamaa Islamiyya’ (‘IG’) or Islamic Jihad ‘Jihad Islamic’ (‘IJ’), the MB was never involved in armed uprisings, the 1952 military coup being a major exception.

From the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, the militants of IG and IJ were at the forefront of violent political activity. They killed dozens of foreign tourists, bombed banks, tour buses, and a café of a five-star Cairo hotel, assassinated cabinet ministers, attempted to kill president Mubarek himself, [most terrorism happened during Mubarek rule from 1981-2011] and carried out the bloodiest massacre in modern Egyptian history in the Pharaonic town of Luxor, in November 1997. Fifty-eight foreign tourists and four Egyptians were killed; some hacked to death with knives (Abdo 2000, 5).

The MB developed gradually, leaving behind much of its revolutionary baggage as a result of the harsh security measures imposed on them by the Nasser regime (1952-1970) followed by the relief provided by the Anwar el-Sadat presidency (1970-1981). Sadat gained popularity as the ‘believer president’ and made peace with religious forces by initiating a thoroughgoing Islamization of Egyptian society. Sadat rewrote the educational curriculum along religious lines and amended Article 2 of Egypt’s extremely progressive constitution to stipulate that Sharia – Islamic Law – was the ‘main source’ of the nation’s laws (Traub 2007, par. 10).
These institutional changes favored Islam and religiosity and contrasted starkly with Nasser's harsh nationalist secularism, contributing to the shrinkage of the revolutionary aspects of the 1970s MB.

Meanwhile, the newly emerged *takfiris* groups such as GI and IJ believed society and the government to be on the same path of *jahiliyyah* (religious ignorance) and recommended jihad to re-Islamise Egypt. The MB over the years viewed these extreme interpretations as wrong and un-Islamic. However, their efforts to Islamise Egyptian society and the bureaucracy without violence have been described as 'revivals' by some observers (Abdo 2000). These efforts did not work as well in nearby Arab countries.

**Transnational ‘copy and paste’ experiences**

On the international level, the MB spread to almost every Arab country in the early days of post-colonialism (1950-1960s), using the same literature, development and methodology of Egypt's movement. By the 1970s, the organisation spread into most of the Muslim world and into Muslim minority countries as well as within Muslim communities in the West. Fledgling branches might later reach complete independence, to the point of even changing their name. Yet the organisation that has spread its branches out over eighty countries has no great geostrategic design, as Roy (2013) observes. Parteger (2010, 9) thus concluded that MB is a;

transnational organization that emphasizes the independence of its national branches; it declares that its ultimate aim is to establish an Islamic state, but asserts its willingness to participate in the democratic process; it projects itself as pacific, yet some of its branches have been directly involved in violent action; it broadly rejects the West and Western values, yet is increasingly anxious to be seen in Western eyes as a moderate organization that can represent the voice of Muslims. (Parteger 2010, 9)
The organisation never stopped its general rhetoric about belonging to the worldwide Muslim community, or the ummah. Although this solidarity becomes more symbolic over the last few decades, the Palestinian cause has prompted MB action over the years.

The most sensitive topic for the MB is its alleged international organisation, Tanzeem al-Dawli. This closed elite is wrapped in secrecy and is the subject of much speculation. While some Muslim Brothers acknowledge the organisation as representing the MB’s international presence, transnational identity, and as a vehicle for transnational coordination and communications, others dismiss it as little more than a coordinating body, with no significant function (Pargeter 2010). Doctor Hassan al-Huwaidi, former deputy to the supreme guide (al-Murshid) of the organisation, described it as an advisory body that has no executive power (Pargeter 2010). This explanation is likely to be true, if MB reaction to Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1991, where the MB was split between supporters and opponents of the invasion, is taken as a guide. A similar division occurred over the participation of the Algerian MB branch in formal politics and government during the 1990s, while the Algerian army was massacring insurgents affiliated with the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and other Salafis jihadis groups. The reason behind this diversity is that each MB branch developed according to its domestic circumstances and struggles. Branches were autonomous and not directed by any central MB organisation.

Furthermore, MB branches disagree about domestic politics in Sudan, Yemen, Syria, and Palestine for various reasons. It appears more true than not that the MB is poorly prepared for international affairs and lacks a united political strategy; let alone
proper coordination and communication. The fact that Mohammed Morsi was ousted while Ennahda continued to share power with secularists is demonstrative of the lack of coordination amongst branches and incongruity in adopting policies regarding power sharing, acceptance of secularist ideologies and parties, and the level of concession they are willing to endure.

The greatest modern Islamist ideologist, Indian-turned-Pakistani Abul Ala Mawdudi (Maududi) (1903-1979) was the real manufacturer of MB’s political philosophy. His approach to Islam was quintessentially political, as Ayoob (2008, 67) explained:

Mawdudi accepted only politics as a legitimate vehicle for the manifestation of the Islamic revelation and as the sole means for the expression of Islamic spirituality, a position that correlated piety with political activity, the cleansing of the soul with political liberation, and salvation with utopia.

Mawdudi was the first contemporary Islamic thinker to write ideologically about the Islamic state. He believed the Islamic state to be a fruit of modernity, removed from classical Islamic thinking. The conflict in the Indian subcontinent between Indian Muslims and others, and their wish for separation in a new state (Pakistan in 1948) influenced Mawdudi to offer a concept of the modern sovereign nation-state, which might at first glance seem contradictory to the concept of the universal ummah. However, Mawdudi’s ‘state’ was based on the concept of God’s sovereignty (hakimiyyah), which would ultimately result in Muslims being governed according to Sharia along God's path (Ayoob 2008). While Mawdudi’s ideology was adopted and reproduced by later ideologues, Sayyid Qutb’s ideology was not, and is preserved as a unique case.
Sayyed Qutb is one of the most charismatic thinkers of the Muslim Brotherhood movement and he is said to be responsible for the Egyptian jihadi Salafi groups, which prospered in the 1970s. Qutb was an important MB leader during the 1960s and an influential ideologue with his famous theory of jahiliyyah. He added the latter to Mawdudi's principle of hakimiyyah (God’s sovereignty), to form a full-fledged theory with religious-political and philosophical implications. Furthermore, analysts such as Khatab observe that the exponents of more extreme versions of political Islam have used Mawdudi's theory, citing the fact that the current al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Dawahiri was deeply influenced by Qutb’s work (Khatab 2006, 1). Egyptian President Nasser hanged Qutb on 29 August 1966 for an alleged coup plot, which then triggered reactions and condemnations from around the world.

Contemporary Islamism is flexible enough in that its many varieties are tied to, sometimes, contradictory elements. The influence of Qutb, therefore, has not been overwhelming. Indeed, most Tunisian Islamists, including Ghanouchi himself, were influenced by Qutb's writings during the 1970s and early 1980s. But this was before the MB across the world denounced Qutb's extreme views, without denying that Qutb had been one of its prominent leaders (Khatab 2006).

It is worth adding that MB is anyway less revolutionary than the group of HT, which was established in the early 1950s calling for the global khilafah (caliphate). This group rejects what they call the ‘materialistic tools of change’, which literally means they reject the use of violence, revolution, and coup d’état in changing unwanted governments (Allani 2013). They continue to be present in relatively small groups around the world.

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25 Jahiliyyah refers to a new period of ignorance within the contemporary Muslim societies, a time akin to the pre-Islamic period of Arabian paganism when the community was ignorant of God and his commandments (Davidson 2003, 12).
and are considered terrorists in some countries and extremists in others, but operate almost freely in Western countries like Britain and Australia. Only two Arab countries in the world recognise HT as a legal political party: Lebanon and post-2011 revolution Tunisia.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the MB was oppressed by most Arab and Muslim regimes, along with other more radical Islamist groups, and denied legal status and unrecognised as a legitimate political player (Calvatorta 2012; Alexander 2012). The Afghan civil war (1989-1992) gave the more extremist Islamic groups the opportunity to compete with the MB through the military training they gained in Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s. One of these Afghani trained groups, al-Qaeda, was later found responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attack.

In fact, the Muslim Brotherhood sent many of their members from various Arab countries to contribute to the Afghani jihad. One of them, Abdullah Azzem, was Osama Bin Laden's teacher. While the Muslim Brotherhood does not deny this fact or their previous support of the Afghani jihad during the 1980s, they've denied any allegiance to Osama Bin Laden and condemn al-Qaeda's ongoing terrorist activities (Abdo 2000).

Islamism has experienced a significant evolution over the past twenty years, at times leading to contradictory messages and agendas. Islamism gained ground during the 1970s and 1980s, especially after the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat on 6 October 1981 and during the Afghan mujahedeen warfare against the Soviets. On the other hand, Islamists failed to rule in Algeria in 1992, when FIS was pushed aside in a military coup and over 200,000 civilians were killed in a decade-long civil war. The
bloody aftermath of that Arab world’s first democratic election had a ripple effect on the calculations of Islamist groups across the region (Roy 2012d).

Roy’s observation regarding the failure of political Islam after the aborted Algerian election in 1992 recognises the historic milestone for mainstream Islamism in the Algerian civil war of the 1990s. Also notable in the shift towards neo-Islamism are Sudan's failure to retain power, its misuse of power, and ongoing civil war.

As mentioned in the definition of neo-Islamism, the new Islamists are undergoing serious attempts to learn from past failures and make alterations, which entail inclusion, moderation and a civil Western style democracy, which assumes compatibility with Islam.

Since the early 1970s, Islamism’s division into maqasidis and dhawahiris has become more obvious and dramatic, as this school of Islamic thought divided into two camps: political violence, and grassroots Islamisation. The schism came about mainly a result of Egyptian nationalist President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s 1967 war against Israel, his plan to eradicate the MB, then his brief unity with Syria and war of intervention in Yemen in 1970. The MB, in a state of desperation, called for a review of old tactics, methods and even political thinking. On the other hand, an elite group of extremely radical Islamists, who possibly interpreted the works of the MB ideologist Sayyed Qutb incorrectly26, established their jihadist groups, which would become even more radical

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26 There was widespread debate during 1980s and 1990s between MB intellectuals on whether Qutb's ideas were responsible for the takfiri movements (jihadis) who emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Most leaders did not denounce Qutb or openly reject his ideas about Jahiliya and Hakimiya, although many called Qutb's literature adab nekba (literally: literature of catastrophe). Qutb's later works are filled with “a pervasive sense of despair about a world enveloped by a new jahiliyya and a concomitant hardening of his thought around a stark polarity between good and evil, the solution to which is as radical as it is unspecific” (Euben and Zaman 2009, 53).
after the Egyptian President at the time Anwar Sadat signed the 1978 peace treaty with Israel.

In this regard, Abdo (2000) stated that 1970s Egyptian Islamists, who advocated the creation of an Islamic society by Islamic means, and not by violence, led the revival and were “more organised and methodical than their predecessors had been” (Abdo 2000, 7). In fact, this grassroots effort towards Islamisation of the societal infrastructure was mixed with Islamists’ pragmatic attempts to maintain the system [that] reinforced abandoning its underlying principles. Islamism becomes compelled, both by its own internal contradictions and by societal pressure; to reinvent itself, but it [has done] so at the cost of a qualitative shift (Bayat 2007, 11).

**Conclusion:**

In general, Islamists had failed to offer clear and high quality social and economic programs nor to conceptualize civic modes of change until the success of AKP in Turkey in the early 2000s.

However, taking a deeper look at the tasks undertaken to change civil society, such as Islamising financial institutions, universities and high schools, and regulating the major blue and white collar labor unions; demonstrates some successful narratives. From a political point of view, however the Islamists’ provisional control of the unions and the illusion of Islamisation of different societal hubs resulted in no intellectual reform, Islamic revival, let alone any real progress towards the original MB political agenda.

In fact, the sudden disappearance of the Cold War tensions in the late 1980s showed that this economic, political and societal progress was more delusional than real. The Islamists' ability to mobilise the street and to be the most prevalent symbol of populism
within the Arab world over the last three or four decades has not necessarily led to organisational achievement by the Islamic movement as a whole. Furthermore, “the post-Cold War environment has made it easier for Islamic movements to overtly embrace aspects of capitalism” (Hadiz 2014, 129). Turkey's AKP adopted at early stages the neo-liberal economy, associated with conservative centre-right political values. The neo-Islamists of the post Arab Spring did the same, retaining the same economic system of Tunisia's Ben Ali, and Morocco's King Mohamed II. Today’s Islamists have no specific Islamised economic blueprints, let alone workable social, constitutional or juristic blueprints whatsoever (Roy 2011).

Neo-Islamists, in particular, appear to be invested in their parties' political failures (Roy 1994). This defeatist outlook and lack of effective blueprints have steered neo-Islamists into Machiavellian style politics. Acceptance of post-Cold War conditions, and then the hostile international environment following 9/11, has further pushed neo-Islamists into gradualism and maqasidis-type thinking and action. For example, while Ennahda was officially absent from Tunisia for over twenty years, the Turkish AKP relied upon its remarkable army of businessmen and considerable holdings. Islamist business leaders with their “self-identity, especially among the so-called Anatolian Tigers [are] members of this rising bourgeoisie [who] consider their newfound influence useful in advancing a ‘common good’” (Hadiz 2014, 129).

Arab Spring slogans, which has made by post-Islamist non-partisan youth and neo-Islamist cadres were empty of anti-Western and anti-American sentiment and focused largely on one theme: erhal, which is the Arabic world for ‘go’, chanting ‘The people want the change of regime’. This 2011 slogan spread from Tunisian streets, where
it was actually uttered as the awkwardly-used French word *dégage*, to Cairo's Tahrir Square, to Yemen and the rest of the Arab countries.

The development of the Egyptian MB, which spread to other countries including Turkey, Tunisia and Morocco, and the newer version of Islamism, neo-Islamism, both had roots in conservative religious reformist thinking and the violent revolutionary thinking of pre-1970s MB, according to many experts (Abdo 2000; Roy 1994; Filiu 2011). Hence, many observers still argue about whether MB has ever been a revolutionary movement or even a fascist movement, (Pipe 2008) or whether it has been always a conservative religious group.
THE RISE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF NEO-ISLAMISM

Neo-Islamism and other manifestations, such as the emergence of jihadi groups in the 1970s, have their origins in, or have intersected with, the pervasive Muslim Brotherhood movement.

Many academics and policy makers have paid special attention to the diversity within Islamism prior to and since the Arab Spring (Wright 2012). Others, like Daniel Pipes, (2006, 2008), have long depicted Islamism as a monolithic phenomenon, though he might see Islam in general as a diverse religion27. Pipes defined Islamism as deriving from Islam, but as a militant, “misanthropic, misogynist, triumphalist, millenarian, anti-modern, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, terrorist, jihadistic, and suicidal version of it”

27 Daniel Pipes (1949/... ) is an American historian, writer, and political commentator. He is the president of the Middle East and publisher of its Middle East Quarterly journal. His writing focuses on American foreign policy, the Middle East, Islam and Islamism. His controversial views towards Islam and Islamism generated enormous reactions from Arabs and Muslims in the USA and abroad. Pipes stated that Muslim practices can be categorized under one of three headings: ‘traditional Islam’, which he sees as pragmatic and non-violent, ‘Islamism’, which he views as dangerous and militant, and ‘moderate Islam’, which he describes as underground and not yet codified into a popular movement.
(Tassel 2005, 38). This view has been influential among sections of the policy-making community, especially within the United States (Cavatorta 2012b).

However, Islamism is not monolithic. On the contrary, Islamism is a diverse phenomenon, even within one country under the same socio-economic and political conditions, or operating under authoritarian or non-authoritarian regimes, within its constraints and cultural settings (Cavatorta 2012b).

Definitions of Islamism\(^\text{28}\) differ widely amongst its adherents, who sometimes contradict each other on a wide range of matters, including ideology, policy and goals. Sometimes the *tekfiris*\(^\text{29}\) declare each other *kafir* and in some countries this has led to bloodshed. This recently happened in Iraq, Afghanistan and Algeria and is ongoing in Syria\(^\text{30}\).

This chapter also defines neo-Islamism and distinguishes it from post-Islamism and neo-fundamentalism. In the process, it explores the internal characteristics of neo-Islamism, including a new form of religiosity, gradual Islamisation, and modernising, moderation and nationalist Islamism as well as pragmatic relations with the West.

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\(^{28}\) Boubekeur and Roy (2012, 3) note: [Scholars] have long been preoccupied with describing the phenomenon of political Islam, and have employed a variety of terms and labels to create a theoretical framework for categorising Islamist movements. This panoply of terminology includes: ‘fundamentalism’, ‘radical Islam’, ‘militant Islam’, ‘political Islam’ and ‘Islamism’. Academics have also tried to capture the changing nature of Islamism as a political ideology by using a host of additional qualifying labels, such as ‘neo’, ‘post’, ‘failure’, and ‘decline’ . . . until recently, ‘Islamism’ mainly referred to the ideology that employs Islam as a tool for political action. Islamism claims to recreate a true Islamic society, not simply by imposing the shari’a, but also by establishing an Islamic state through political means.

\(^{29}\) *Tekfir, tekfiri* and *kefir* are Arabic terms for heretic, a person who declares others heretics, and apostate, respectively.

\(^{30}\) The Syrian military resistance against the Assad regime, which started with Free Syrian Army (FSA) in late 2011 and early 2012, then dispersed into dozens of pro Islamist militias, many of whom are related to al-Qaeda in one way or another. By late 2013, the FSA was fighting al-Qaeda affiliated *tekfiris* groups as well as Assad’s formal army. (Dahi 2013)
A New approach to Islamism

Classifying Islamists into two camps, extremists and moderates, in terms of their commitment to peaceful or violent means of change, is the most common method used by researchers currently. I suggest, however, that today’s Islamists are divided into two major groups on the basis of their understanding of the Islamic religious sacred texts and the methodologies they use to approach them. These are, respectively, literalists (Dhawahir or Dhawahiris) and maqasidis, who adopt non-literal readings of religious texts.

Unlike the first classification, which might include other political stances of non-Islamic affiliation such as left, far right or nationalist, this second classification is unique to Islam. However, this classification is not based on a violent/non-violent stance, but on personal interpretation of sacred texts. In fact, all religions across the world can have both literalists and maqasidis, including personal or inter-personal interpretations of the same sacred text. Consequently, the same text can have a range of interpretations that, at times, totally contradict each other.

Literalists or dhawahir, who read and follow literally the sacred texts, might be violent or non-violent, extremist or non-extremist. They are “scriptists”31 (in reference to the sacred scripts) and range from al-Qaeda and its affiliated jihadists groups such as Ansar a-Sharia in Tunisia, to non-violent groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), the

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31 Scriptism refers here to literal interpretation of Islamic sacred sources, or the original scripts, using reason, in considering the use of metaphors, or examining the aims and surrounding circumstances of the original sacred text (namely the Quraan and Sunnah). This literal interpretation has been practiced since the early days of Islam, with some incidents even occurring during the prophet's life, lending them some legitimacy. Generally speaking, mainly the Salafis and Salafiyah practice scriptism, as opposed to the other four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, Maliki, Shafie, Hanbali and Hanafi, who tend to rely on reason in considering the general aims of Sharia, the circumstances and conditions related to the original text and the conditions of the text's contemporary application.
scientific Salafis and the Saudi pro-Government Wahhabis. The Egyptian al-Noor Salafi Party, which backed General el Sisi in his August 2013 coup against MB, also belongs to the literalist group.

The *maqasidis*, on the other hand, follow the aims and objectives of Sharia rather than its literal meaning. The debate between literalist and *maqasidi* ideologues goes back to early Islam and has lasted throughout fourteen centuries, involving theologians, jurists and interpreters or narrators of the Quran and *hadith*\(^\text{32}\). However, what has been at stake in the debates over fourteen centuries has varied between one generation and the next. Such debates may have been profoundly connected to a given generation; such as intellectual, sectarian or social-economic conflicts that took place within Muslim communities in specific historical contexts. However, the two ways of thinking, using the same logical techniques and the same verses of Quran or *hadiths*, have been almost always the same.

Contemporary political Islam has added a special flavor to such old-fashioned debates, which is the focus of Imam Shatibi’s\(^\text{33}\) notable work, *Muwafaqa’t fi Usool al-Sharia* (The Reconciliation of the Origins of Sharia). Neo-Islamists, in particular those of North Africa, notably Ennahda and Morocco’s Justice and Development Party (PJD\(^\text{34}\)), took special interest in *Maqasid a-Sharia* and Shatibi’s other works, which impacted

\(^{32}\) Hadith refers to stories that record the Prophet Mohamed’s life and are considered part of the *sunnah*, or the ideal life prescribed for Muslims.

\(^{33}\) Imam Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi was an Andalusian Maliki scholar, who died in 1388 in Granada, Spain. He is well known amongst modern Islamists and within contemporary Islamic thought for his notable work on the philosophy of Sharia, or the theory of the higher objectives and intents of Islamic Law. Imam Shatibi’s theory, which he discussed in the four-volumes work, *Al-Muwafaqaat fi Usool al-Sharia*, and translated and published into English as *The Reconciliation of the Fundamentals of Islamic Law*, was first published in Tunis, Tunisia around 1884-85.

\(^{34}\) The Moroccan Justice and Development Party (Arabic: حزب العدالة والتنمية; French abbreviation: PJD) is the ruling party in Morocco since 29 November 2011 and is considered the second most important neo-Islamist party in North Africa, after the Tunisian Ennahda party.
greatly on the evolution of neo-Islamism and contributed to its contemporary ideological shape.

Not all Islamic rival groups exist within the *maqasid*, although the MB and its affiliates belong to this group and constitute the majority of Islamists across the globe. Despite that, we find some MB figures such as their icon Sayyid Qutb, cannot be qualified as *maqasidi*, and almost everywhere, you may find minorities of literalists within a *maqasidi* Islamic movement, and vice versa.

Literalists, on the other hand, are varied and compete with each other for power and membership, but they remain the minority in the world of Islamists today.

Neo-Islamists are the most obvious manifestation of the *maqasidi* branch. This is seen in the thinking of such luminaries of the MB movement as Dr Ahmed Risouni, the PJD’s counterpart to Ennahda’s Ghanouchi. He is a scholar specialising in the *maqasid* a-sharia, advocating a path widely considered crucial to the development of neo-Islamism (Chamkhi 2014; Aktay 2013, 120; Risouni 2012).

**Definition of neo-Islamism**

As the term neo-Islamism is rarely used within the academic context, in journalism the term remains vague and ambiguous. Robin Wright (2012b, 9), however, insightfully described neo-Islamism as

more flexible [than other traditional forms of Islamism], informed, and mature in their political outlook. For them sharia is about values, civilization, and political context. Neo-Islamists are seeking the ultimate objectives of sharia but without bonding each situation to a certain religious text. They believe that Islam is dynamic and not a set of fixed rules and tenets, but rather an organic belief system that can adapt to or live with the times. Neo-Islamists can be progressive and, on some issues, even liberal. [The] Neo-Islamists trust the reform scholars.
Wright’s characterisation provides a description of neo-Islamist values and some of their activities; rather than delivering a precise definition or a method of distinguishing it from other types of Islamism.

In a recent paper, Roy (2012c) used the term ‘new Islamists’ to describe these old Islamist parties that are facing this new era of transition, from illegality under the old regimes, to power, noting the enormous changes in ideology and day to day politics:

The new Islamist brand will increasingly mix technocratic modernism and conservative values. The movements that have entered the political mainstream cannot now afford to turn their backs on multiparty politics for fear of alienating a significant portion of the electorate that wants stability and peace, not revolution (Roy 2012c, 18).

Within this context, Gerges (2013, 391) observed that the Islamist parties are slowly moving away from their traditional agenda of establishing an authoritarian Islamic state and imposing Islamic laws, “to a new focus that is centered on creating a ‘civil Islam’ that permeates society and accepts political pluralism”. The Islamist parties are increasingly becoming ‘service’ parties concerned mainly with the provision of social services and local public goods. Gerges added that “the Turkish model, [that of Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP] with the religiously observant provincial bourgeoisie as its king-pin and a pattern of linkage with the business classes and market liberalism, also acts as a reminder that Islam and capitalism are mutually reinforcing and compatible” (Gerges 2013, 391).

While the Arab new Islamists were deeply affected, and to some extent stunned, by the first Gulf war (then afterwards the Iraqi and Afghani wars post 9/11), Turkish neo-Islamists and others in Indonesia, Malaysia and elsewhere responded pragmatically to their local political challenges (Tomsa 2012; Bin Mohamed Osman 2011). Turkish neo-
Islamists constantly improved their methods and political performance over the last thirty years, but the landmark event that produced the most dramatic changes was the 1997 Turkish military coup that ousted Necmettin Erbakan's (1926-2011) pro-Islamist government. Since then, neo-Islamists have embraced democratisation, with or without the 'Islamic' label. Emerging democratic tendencies and pragmatism have placed Turkey’s neo-Islamists in a better position today to participate and rule in a free democratic society than the traditional Islamism of the 1970s and 1980s (Ergun 2012; Chamkhi 2014; Menderes 2006; Cavdar 2006).

More precisely, this neo-Islamism can be traced back to the 1990s, to the Sudanese Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi, (1932- ) who influenced other MB leaders and activists in the region, including Rached Ghanouchi, (1942- ) the founder of the Tunisian Ennahda. Ghanouchi admitted the influence of the Sudanese Islamic movement on Ennahda ideology, especially its pragmatism and favoring of the participation of women within the movement and wider society (Ghanouchi 2011e).

On this tendency towards pragmatism, Gerges (2013, 392) noted that

… increasing evidence shows that the balance of social forces among Islamists has shifted toward pragmatists. It is a generational shift that favors technocrats and professionals, such as engineers, dentists, doctors, attorneys, and teachers, who are open-minded and reformist, less obsessed with dogmas, identity, and culture wars, and more willing to build governing coalitions with ideological opponents, whether they are non Muslim, liberal, or secular. For example Ennahda in Tunisia prefers to form alliances with liberals and leftists, not with the ultraconservative Salafis.

The earliest experience of ‘Islamic governance’ (apart from the June 1989 Sudanese coup d’état led secretly by Omar Bechir and Hassan al-Turabi), involved the establishment of the first modern Islamist-secularist power sharing arrangement in Turkey. The Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, or RP), headed by the father of Turkish
modern Islamism, Erbakan,\(^{35}\) lasted one year (1996-1997) before the Turkish army and secular elite ousted the government and thereafter demolished the RP. Shock and political failure led the way to a younger leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the successful mayor of Istanbul, to review the coalition's methods and pave the way for Turkey's official version of neo-Islamism, the AKP, which has proven to be the most successful version to date\(^{36}\).

Professional pragmatic young Islamists such as Erdoğan played the Islamism versus secularism game in a new way. Erdoğan refused to be called Islamist or neo-Islamist, preferring instead to be called neo-secularist or simply conservative Muslim, and advocated a neo-secularism that does not contradict Islam\(^{37}\) (Kuru 2013; Yılmaz 2012; Taşpınar 2012).

\(^{35}\) Erbakan entered a coalition in 1996 with Tansu Çiller’s Correct Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi), or DYP.

\(^{36}\) Turkey has experienced substantial sustained growth since turning its economy around in 2001. Today, Turkey is the world’s 17th largest economy, and a member of the Group of Twenty (G20) Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (G-20). Turkey’s GDP (in million Euro) rose from 219,816 in 2001 to 441,600 in 2009; its GDP growth rate was -5.7% in 2001, strong from 2002-2007, -4.7% in 2009, and an estimated 8.2% in 2010 (Çelik and Çelik 2012, 7).

\(^{37}\) Ömer Taşpınar noted, “Autocratic regimes in the Muslim world often ban religious parties, which then go underground and turn violent. Turkey’s Islamists have taken a different path. Despite being repeatedly outlawed and ejected from power, pious politicians have shunned violence, embraced democracy, and moved into the mainstream”. The Economist noted in 2008. “No Islamic party has been as moderate and pro-Western as the AKP, which catapulted into government in 2002 promising to lead Turkey into the European Union”. He added that Erdoğan, who founded the party, rejects defining the AKP in religious terms. “We are not an Islamic party, and we also refuse labels such as Muslim-democrat,” he said in 2005. The AKP leader instead calls the party’s agenda ‘conservative democracy.’ (Taşpınar 2012, 127-135) The AKP’s journey from political Islam to conservative democracy is not just the result of political expediency or respect for the red lines of Turkish secularism. The evolution of Turkey’s capitalism under the leadership of Turgut Özal in the 1980s created an entrepreneurial Muslim bourgeoisie in the conservative heartland of Anatolia. The new Muslim bourgeoisie had a greater stake in politics—and became more engaged … they have been more concerned about maximizing profits, creating access to international currency markets, and ensuring political stability than about introducing Islamic law or creating a theocracy. Turkey now has thousands of such small and medium-sized export-oriented businesses, often referred to as ‘Anatolian tigers.’ The vast majority of them support the AKP. Beginning in the 1990s, the party’s assumption of political power gradually moderated the radical elements within Turkish political Islam” (Taşpınar 2012, 127-135).
Erdoğan has successfully avoided the ‘Islamism’ label and its disastrous legal consequences, whereby Turkish laws and the Turkish Constitutional Court may prohibit Turkish politicians from practicing politics or establishing any political party on religious grounds. Erdoğan's AKP denies being an Islamist or neo-Islamist party, despite Erdoğan’s close ties with MB movements in the Arab world, his support for their causes, and the provision of logistics for conferences, academic support, and economic and commercial agreements with newly elected governments post the Arab Spring, particularly in Tunisia and Egypt.38

The concept of secularism, however, varies significantly recently as 2008, the AKP itself was defined by the majority in Turkey’s Constitutional Court as being ‘anti-secular’ and only narrowly escaped a move to have it shut it down on those grounds (Kuru 2013).

While it is difficult to compare the Tunisian Ennahda Party with AKP due to historical differences and experiences in the modern battle between Islamism and secularism (Torelli 2012), particularly after the Arab Spring, leaders like Rashid Ghanouchi believe that Ennahda will take the path of AKP and will achieve the same success. A number of Arab MB intellectuals like Ghanouchi, Yussef Qaradawi and Salim al-Awaa, have gradually transformed the Islamists’ definitions of the state, citizenship, the Islamic nation and political participation in the last twenty years, and also, sometimes readjusted their goals accordingly. Such a transformation in ideology is

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38 Turkish foreign policy has played a very active role in the Arab world post the 2011 revolutions; Erdoğan himself travelled twice to Tunisia, at least once to Egypt, Libya and Morocco, welcomed the Syrian refugees and provided limitless logistic support for the Syrian National Council and even the Syrian Free Army. The Ennahda led government in Tunisia enjoyed special under carpet support during the first two years after the October 2011 election, including millions of dollars in government aid, delegates of dozens of Turkish businessmen to invest in the Tunisian economy, and so on.
necessary to align the party with the new religious youth who were the instruments of change in the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, and to encourage them to join or vote for the party in their first free elections.

**Differentiating between post-Islamists and neo-Islamists**

This is where the non-partisan so-called 'post-Islamism' forces (consisting of university students activists, white collar religious employees and newly graduated professionals), identified by Bayat (2011) and Roy (2011a, 2012c), join these newly renovated parties after the Arab revolutions. However, neo-Islamism is different from what Bayat and Roy called post-Islamism for four main reasons.

- First, neo-Islamists, unlike the post-Islamists, remain in traditional Islamic parties and prefer organisation and change through collective efforts undertaken by political/religious parties rather than through individual efforts.

- Second, neo-Islamists, unlike the post-Islamists; have not given up on the idea of Shariaa or shariatisation of the state and society, unlike post-Islamists; rather, neo-Islamists use gradualist tactics to further their agendas.

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39 The neo-Islamists belong to the historic revivalist and dawaa movement that led to the Muslim Brotherhood, which was established by al-Banna in 1928. Indeed, the Tunisian neo-Islamists who are mostly still cadres of the 1981 *Movement de la Tendance Islamique ‘MTI’* ('The Movement of Islamic Tendency' (Arabic: حركة الإتجاه الإسلامي *Harakat al-Itijāh al-Islāmī*) which changed its name to Ennahda in 1988, are debating today how to separate (or not) the dawaa activities from the political party. This challenge has not been solved yet, and is scheduled to be discussed in the 10th General Congress of Ennahda, to be held in 2015.

40 Shariatisation means to replace a secular law system with Islamic oriented laws, well known as Sharia.
The neo-Islamists, unlike the post-Islamists, do not explicitly give up the ideal of the Islamic state, though; they might do so in the foreseeable future.

Neo-Islamists; unlike the post-Islamists; continue to be deeply concerned about *dawaa* (religious preaching and spreading the call of Islam) as much as they become concerned about taking over power, democratisation, human rights, and fair treatment by governments.

However, the AKP in particular has maintained the narrative that it doesn’t promote shariatisation or an Islamic state and is happy to be called a secular party. Such stance is contradicted by the AKP’s unlimited support of MB in Egypt and the neo-Islamist parties across the MENA region in the recent years, especially after the Arab Spring. Having said that, many AKP supporters are more post-Islamist than neo-Islamist. Indeed, many members of the Alavi community vote for the AKP. Furthermore, the Fethullah Gülen group⁴¹ (known as *Hizmet Movement*), which enjoyed years of alliance with AKP before they their relationship broke down in 2010, cannot be classified as neo-Islamists, but post-Islamist par excellence (Torelli 2012; Schwartz 2011; Yilmaz 2012; Karen 2012; Aktay 2012; Kömeçoğlu 2014; Mneimneh 2011; Kuru 2013).

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⁴¹ Fethullah Gülen (1941- ) is a Turkish Islamic opinion leader and the founder of the Gülen movement, which is usually referred to as *Hizmet movement* or as *Cemaat* (the Community) by the broader public in Turkey. He currently lives in Pennsylvania, USA. Gülen teaches a modernised Anatolian (*Hanafi*) version of Islam, derived from Sunni Muslim scholar Said Nursi’s teachings. Gülen has stated his belief in science, interfaith dialogue among the People of the Book (Jews, Christians and Muslims), and multi-party democracy. He has initiated such dialogue with the Vatican and some Jewish organizations. Since late 2010, the AKP has been embroiled in a major conflict with the Gülen movement. Recently the Turkish government delayed the extradition case against Gülen that would have brought him back from voluntary exile in the United States (Wikipedia, 2013 see: Fethullah Gülen).
Consequently, the neo-Islamists across the MENA region, face accusations of exploiting democracy and the transition of power to establish an Islamic state, by arguing that Islamisation is compatible with it (Torelli 2012; Yilmaz 2012; Karen 2012; Aktay 2012; Komecoglu 2014; Cavdar 2006; Ergun 2012; Kuru 2013). Ghanouchi and others have had to fend off accusations of hypocrisy in their embrace of democracy and postponing an Islamisation program (Ghanouchi 2011a, 2011b).

Despite that, in using politically expedient tactics, neo-Islamists are contributing to an evolving ideology that may lead to them abandoning completely the aim of their forefathers, that is, the establishment of the Islamic state (Roy 2011a and 2012).

On the other hand, El Taleedy (2013) observed that the Egyptian MB failed to understand the requirements of political geography in building a national political consensus that would exceed the Islamist ceiling. El Taleedy distinguished it from Ennahda, which adopted universally acceptable politics and chose not to implement a mix of politics and dawaa, (or daw’wah; Islamic preaching), choosing pragmatism over ideological discourse. The mix of dawaa and the politics prevented the MB from going too far with the democratic experiment, alienating pro-democracy political actors and an international community distrustful of a democratic experiment led by Islamists (El Taleedy 2013, 56-57).

It may be said that neo-Islamism after the Arab Spring has turned out to be a mixture of ‘post-Islamist’ activism at the level of the individual and old-fashioned Islamic parties reinvented by the latest ideological developments and tactical choices. Theoretically, a post-Islamist could be a neo-Islamist, but the converse is not true. Neo-
Islamists could not be post-Islamists without giving up the idea of Sharia implementation and their political affiliations to the Islamic movement.

In this sense, neo-Islamism is more tactical than strategic and less likely to constitute a new ideology. The ideological shifts it contains are not fundamental. Neo-Islamists remain faithful to the dream of creating a state based on sharia, like the old Islamists. However, this may cause some confusion, as neo-Islamists like Erdoğan and Ghanouchi have tended to dispel the notion that they are ultimately seeking to establish an Islamic state. In fact, the neo-Islamists prefer to focus a gradualist approach, which requires patience, concession and sometimes secrecy, rather than slogans and emotive propaganda. Turkish AKP leaders in particular maintain that they are not Islamists, that they advocate secularism, and have no intention of implementing sharia law (Torelli 2012; Tugal 2009; Yılmaz 2012; Ergun 2012).

Ghanouchi has stated that he would not go so far as to advocate secularism, or dropping Sharia law from Ennahda's agenda. However, he confessed that secularism could be part of Islam as a means of achieving a separation of powers (interview with the author, Tunis: 25 April 2013). He previously triggered the sympathy of the Tunisian secularist elite, and widely surprised them in a lecture delivered at a think tank on 2 March 2012, in which he explained that secularism is not in contradiction of Islam. But he also said that religion should not be removed entirely from state affairs, as this option [carries] some risks whereby things would get out of control and social harmony would be endangered. The way to do it, thereafter, is to find a balance that would guarantee people’s freedom and rights, because religion is here to do exactly that. To achieve this balance we need to go back to the issue of distinguishing between religion and politics and adjust the parameters of what is constant in religion and that which is variable. (Ghanouchi 2012, 15)
He stated further that the separation of powers in Islam is a widening of *ijtihad* (Islamic jurisprudence) opportunities. In the absence of a church in Islam, the interpretation of the sacred texts should remain free and open (interview with author Tunis, on 25th April 2013). While almost all Ennahda public statements fail to mention promotion of shariaisation, they also do not signal its outright rejection.

As was the case in Turkey with APK since the early 2000s, Ennahda in Tunisia, and JDP in Egypt and Morocco, new developments and pragmatic strategies have allowed neo-Islamists to win most elections since the 2011 and 2012 revolutions (Gerges 2013; Khalifa 2012; Tomsa 2012). Despite the AKP repeatedly declaring that it is not an Islamic party, and Ennahda leader’s statement above, it is not clear that these organisations have given up their original missions of Islamising their states and societies. Rather, their tactics and strategies have evolved to execute the same old goals. When asked about Ennahda’s Islamic economy program, Ennahda economist Ridha Chkoundali, didn’t deny such a goal in the long term. He added that the party has not had enough time to prepare a distinctively Islamic alternative for the economy (interview with author: Tunis, 18 April 2013).

Finally, the Arab Spring bridged the gaps between post-Islamists, neo-Islamists and moderate liberals, nationalists, and human rights activists. These groups during the Arab Spring all came together against autocratic regimes, using modern tools of communication, ideas and techniques, in particular social media. The Arab revolutionaries of 2011 warmly embraced Twitter, Facebook and other outlets in pursuing their goals.
Characteristics of neo-Islamism

Further differentiating the phenomena, neo-Islamism is distinguished by the following six characteristics: the evolution of new forms of religiosity; gradualism of Islamism; modernising Islam; moderation; nationalist Islamism; pragmatic relations with the West.

1- New forms of religiosity: These new forms of religiosity can be seen in Islamists’ day-to-day private and public religious practices, demonstrated by more secularisation in private life and social context that in the past as Bayat (1996) observed in the mid-1990s. Bayat’s major example was that of the Mayor of Tehran saying that his generation is not ashamed of destroying a bad urban mosque in order to give way to the construction of a new highway. Roy also mentions a new generation of Islamists who would queue in front of International fast-food outlets, wearing jeans and branded western clothes as well as routinely attending prayers at the local mosque and watching al Qaradawi’s weekly ‘Sharia and Life’ show on al Jazeera TV channel. (Roy 2011a, 2012) Such new forms of religiosity are commonly shared between neo-Islamists, post-Islamists and even some salafists.

2- Gradualism of Islamisation: For neo-Islamists, the goals of shariatisation and an Islamic state require the adoption of AKP-style secularism (Gerges 2013). Their political parties focus on quantity rather than the quality of its members’ religious devotion largely because they are in need of loyal voters. In fact, the neo-Islamist parties are loose in terms of allowing non-Muslims to be members, which contrasts with traditional MB methods of thoroughly screening potential members (Pargeter 2010). It is no surprise then, that Ennahda in Tunisia, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in Egypt,
the Development and Justice Party (DJP) in Morocco, and the AKP in Turkey have opened their doors for membership to any citizen regardless of his or her religion or religious practice. Under these new rules, Tunisian and Egyptian Jews and Christians are free to join MB parties. That was not the case under previous MB procedures.

Also, some observers have noted that this neo-Islamist phenomenon has led to an environment where we have political Islamists without Islam. Al-Rahim adds that in this new Islamism, there is no explicit campaigning in the name of religion (Al-Rahim, 2011). AKP’s example demonstrates an effective socially conservative campaign upholding public (Islamic) morality and virtue, whilst fighting systematic corruption largely associated with the oldest centre-left Kemalist political party in Turkey (the Republican People’s Party – Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) (Aktay 2012; Komecoglu 2014; Gerges 2013; Garcia 2012). This is the case even though Erdoğan himself, his family and some of his cabinet members, were accused of corruption in the years of 2012-2013.

Another analyst, Ahmet Kuru (2013), distinguished two types of secularism of state: assertive and passive. Assertive secularism requires the state to play an active role in excluding religion from the public sphere and making it a private affair. Countries that embrace this form of secularism include France, Turkey (pre-AKP), Mexico, and until recently, Tunisia. Passive secularism, on the other hand, requires the state to assume a passive role in accommodating the public visibility of religion. The passive secularist state will not interfere with individuals’ code of dress, religious gatherings and rituals in public places, though it might organise them, and in some cases, support religious institutions with regular financial subsidies and support. This is the dominant paradigm in the United States, the Netherlands and Senegal, amongst others (Kuru 2013).
A major challenge to neo-Islamism has been assertive secularism, especially in Turkey and Tunisia, and to a lesser extent in Morocco and Egypt. The AKP softened up harsh Kamalist secularism in favour of a more comfortable version of passive secularism. With major help from the Gülen movement, AKP succeeded in moving Turkey towards becoming a religion-friendly country by defeating assertive secularists in elections over the last ten years, as well as pushing them back in civil society, sections of the media and sections of the bureaucracy. What Erdoğan defended in his 2011 visits to Tunisia, Libya and Egypt was passive secularism, not assertive.

As part of the ongoing and slow process of moving away from assertive secularism toward passive secularism, Ennahda has gone so far as to agree not to include Sharia as the main source of all laws in Tunisia's post revolution constitution.42

These political choices are widely discussed in the works of the latest MB ideologues, such as al Qaradawi and Ghanouchi (2011), and fit well within the ideological framework of gradualism and the Islamic public interest, or “common goodness” known in Arabic as ‘maslahah moursaleh’. Tariq Ramadan, a Western Islamist ideologist and academic and a role model for the neo-Islamists (and grandson of the MB founder Hassan al-Banna) declared that “what is good for the world must be good for Islam, and what is bad for the world and its people can no longer be considered good for Islam” (Boubekeur and Roy 2012, 206). Theologically, this new thinking requires validation from traditional Islamic scholarship. Its proponents were to find them in the works of some of Islam's greatest jurisprudence philosophers, such Abū Hāmid al-

42 One Tunisian journalist has already assumed the “death of Tunisian secularism” following Ennahda’s election victory in October 2011 (Bradley 2012, 17).
According to Aktay (2013, 120):

Islamism, with its idea of fiqh, is a political position that attributes greater priority to presenting applicable and easy ways for people of all levels within their daily lives. The association of ‘goodness’ in Islamic fiqh, with its strong emphasis on the concept of ‘utility’ (purpose) to fundamental principles, such as ‘the rules may change over time’, ‘expelling badness is better than attracting goodness’, ‘the essence of existence is neutral’, and others, allows it to be ‘practical and solution oriented’ and to be more critical and free even towards its own taboos. Consequently, one of the dimensions of the political is to show that the fiqh can find middle-ground solutions among all possibilities and through negotiations with others.

Gradualism is change that should occur in small steps. In politics, a gradualist believes that slow changes are better than rapid ones. The so-called neo-fundamentalists, according to Roy (2011, 2012), do not believe in gradualism and desire the Islamic state and a pious Islamic society instantly. Most of these forces see the neo-Islamists' steps of gradualism as political weakness and forbidden ‘haram’ concession. They even go as far as calling ideologists like al-Qaradawi and Ghanouchi ‘kafirs’ as Salafis have over the past twenty years. However, the aims of neo-Islamists and neo-fundamentalists are ultimately similar, especially in regard to the Islamic state and superiority of the Sharia over secular laws.

3- Modernising Islam: Modernisation in this context means the maximum level of acceptance of the tools of modernity and most of its concepts, as outlined by most scholars in their discussions of the post-Islamism (Bayat 1996; Cavatorta 2012a; Esposito and Burgat 2003; Roy 2008; Roy 2011). While modernisation does not necessarily mean

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43 It is worth mentioning that the latest Egyptian military coup on 3 July 2013 and the ouster of President Mohammed Morsi only serves to strengthen the position of revolutionary Islamists, proving that gradualism, vis-à-vis democracy and ‘moderate’, non-violent Islamism, does not get results. (see: Ghanouch 2014b)
Westernisation as a philosophical worldview, neo-Islamists would argue that Islam is compatible with modern science, inventions and research, and with most democratic and pluralist values that spread from the West. Ghanouchi himself wrote over twenty years ago about democracy as a legitimate technique in the Islamic state ruled by sharia. He sees the Western techniques of managing the state as acceptable because Islam’s sacred texts do not mandate a particular form of state (Ghanouchi 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). Furthermore, he recently stated that in the absence of a better system, democracy (as a technique to manage transition of power, election and so forth) remains the best option to prevent totalitarianism as well as the violence that has been too common in the history of Islamic societies (interview with author, Tunis: 25 April 2013).

4. Moderation: Neo-Islamist movements such as Ennahda developed and promoted themselves as moderate, tolerant movements from the start. When Ennahda came to power after the October 2011 election, the voice of moderation became even louder. On the other hand, the Egyptian MB, and in particular, former President Morsi, have failed to promote a similar image, despite their victories in fair, democratic elections, and their status as victims of the military coup which resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths and thousands of others imprisoned since July 2013.

Within the moderate Tunisian neo-Islamist context, observers like Cavatorta and Merone (2013) noted that harsh security measures and oppression had been imposed on Tunisians for decades, which pushed political players and Islamists to find alternatives and to make concessions on the go. Additionally, the rejection they faced:

made it possible and necessary for Ennahda to entirely re-elaborate how political Islam could contribute to the developmental trajectory of the country. From this elaboration flows the acceptance of the dominant discourse of democracy, liberalism, and market economy without
which the party would not have been able to find much space in Tunisia (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 859).

Moderation has involved a long journey for the Islamists, and they might have to prove further their sincerity and commitment to democracy, pluralism and peaceful political change, to the outside world. When asked whether Islam needs secularism, Ghanouchi has given vague answers such as

Islam has not endured for so long because of states’ influence but rather due to the large acceptance it enjoys among its adherents, in fact the state has often been a burden on religion ...

[Should] religion be entirely emancipated from the state and politics, this would also carry some risks whereby things would get out of control and social harmony would be endangered. The way to do it, therefore, is to find a balance that would guarantee people’s freedom and rights, because religion is here to do exactly that. To achieve this balance, we need to go back to the issue of distinguishing between religion and politics and adjust the parameters of what is constant in religion and that which is variable (Ghanouchi 2012, par. 13-14).

Ghanouchi’s statements demonstrate that Ennahda is being driven by the exigencies of politics, which allows for wide interpretation of religious and political doctrines. The constant changing of position, furthermore, depends on necessity and calculation of formulas that fall within *maqasid a-sharia* (aims or objectives of Sharia). Such elasticity is a core characteristic of neo-Islamists, especially after the Arab Spring, where they have had to govern in some countries, and face various harsh realities.

The Ennahda–led government in Tunisia (between December 2011 and January 2014) showed utmost respect for this historic agreement and towards the principle toleration. Ennahda's contribution to the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) was forty-two women, a larger percentage than all of the secular parties combined. Ennahda leaders “reassured Tunisian citizens that it [would] not interfere in their personal lives and … [would] respect their basic human rights” (Growder, Griffiths, and Hasan 2014,
With these assurances came tensions between the Jihadi Salafis and Ennahda, based on the belief that Ennahda's attempts to be seen as a 'moderate' Islamic party resulted in improper concessions in matters of religious doctrine.

Comparing Ennahda to Egypt's MB reveals Ennahda's political savvy, particularly with regards to the dozed off neo-Islamists. President Morsi was in office for roughly one year before the army ousted him. While in office, he issued a controversial decree pertaining to the judiciary that was perceived by his opponents as an attempt at a constitutional coup. For them, the act demonstrated Morsi and MB's tendency towards autocracy and a refusal to cooperate with the opposition, let alone to share power with those from outside the MB (Duran 2013).

5- Nationalist Islamism: The international jihadist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and the HT seek the collapse of the nation-state and reestablishment of the global unified Caliphate for all the ummah. Hassan al-Banna focused clearly on the Islamic union and Islamic state and encouraged the development of branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in neighbouring countries, including Syria, Libya, Lebanon and Sudan during his lifetime. Ideologues who came after him, such as Sayyed Qutb and Abu Ala Mawdudi talked frankly about the global Islamic community and an Islamic state that crossed racial and ethnic boundaries. Mawdudi focused mostly on a nation-state version of Islamic state, mainly because of his direct experience with the establishment of Pakistan in 1948 (Ayoob 2008; Euben 2006; Parteger 2010; Wright 2012b).
Neo-Islamism, on the other hand, has focused on what it has cultivated out of the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement between the major colonial powers after World War I (Al-Rahim 2011). The neo-Islamists tend to focus on domestic politics, though they sometimes make controversial or contradictory statements about such matters as; the first Iraq war (1991), the Palestinian Israeli conflict and oppression and imprisonment of fellow Islamists in various Arab states.

While neo-Islamists might have not completely forgotten the ideal of a single Islamic transnational state, they are currently more oriented toward nationally defined struggles rather than transnational affairs. Neo-Islamists, like other nationalists, represent affairs of the ummah mostly through diplomatic channels and have ceased to cause any geo-strategic threat to enemy states like Israel (Roy 2012e). Their parties do not accept members from other countries and their political and economic objectives are directed exclusively to the nation-state in which they live.

6- **Pragmatic relations with the West:** Generally, neo-Islamists desire good relationships with the United States and Europe. After the fall of Ben Ali and Mubarak, Ennahda and MB leaders met with American and European officials to discuss future relations. Some Ennahda leaders went to Washington early in 2011 to ‘negotiate’ with their American counterparts regarding the future governance of Tunisia. In general, MB

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44 Sykes–Picot, or the Asia Minor Agreement, was a secret agreement between the governments of the United Kingdom and France with the assent of Russia, defining their proposed spheres of influence and control in the Middle East should the Triple states succeed in defeating the Ottoman Empire during World War I. The negotiation of the treaty occurred between November 1915 and March 1916; the agreement was signed on 16 May 1916. The agreement effectively divided the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire outside the Arabian Peninsula into areas of future British and French control or influence. The terms were negotiated by the French diplomat François Georges-Picot and British Sir Mark Sykes. The Russian Tsarist government was a minor party to the Sykes–Picot agreement, and following the Russian Revolution of October 1917, the Bolsheviks exposed the agreement to the rest of the World. (See the agreement terms on: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/sykes.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/sykes.asp))
politicians have maintained consistent condemnation of terrorism and targeting of civilians despite their criticism of the American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which they have considered invasions (Abdo 2000). Western governments have not seemed to consider the emerging neo-Islamist governments as threats to Israel in the MENA region or to international peace and stability. Indeed, Germany, for example, was extremely annoyed by the overthrow of Egyptian President Morsi in July 2013. Similarly, while the American President avoided calling the military coup by its name, he did not name any security threat that the MB had caused or might cause in the foreseeable future.

Neo-Islamist Erdoğan and his party AKP enjoy a cooperative relationship with the USA and other NATO nations, as Turkey is an active and strategic NATO member. Erdoğan, furthermore, has been in constant preparation for Turkey to join the EU over many years, despite continuous rejection based officially on Turkey's non-conformance to the Copenhagen criteria\textsuperscript{45}, and unofficially and more loudly based on its religious and ethnic nature (Elshinnawi 2013; Gerges 2013).

Recent American foreign affairs interviews and leaked documents seem to suggest that the United States’ new strategy in the Arab world is to work closely with the neo-Islamists, supporting them in power both to replace the old autocratic allies and continue to fight \textit{jihadis} who are considered threats to American security (Elmaazi 2012).

As Elmaazi (2012) observes, the situation of the modern Islamist movement is similar to the developments of socialist parties, as seen in Europe during the peak of the

\textsuperscript{45} The Copenhagen criteria are the rules that define whether a country is eligible to join the European Union. The criteria require that a state has the institutions to preserve democratic governance and human rights, has a functioning market economy, and accepts the obligations and intent of the EU. These membership criteria were laid down at the June 1993 European Council in Copenhagen, Denmark, from which they take their name.
Cold War in the 1960s and 1970s, whereby they had to assimilate into the democratic liberal process over time. He was not certain though if the neo-Islamists would commit to liberal democracy as those social democrats did in Europe during the Cold War. He explains:

In Europe, when the fight against communism was at its peak, centre-left social democratic reformists acted as the best bulwark against revolutionary communism. The Social Democratic parliamentary parties were able to steal the communists’ thunder by subscribing to some of the basic narrative of Marxism, introducing major economic and social reforms; however, these parties also maintained a fundamental commitment to the tenets of liberal parliamentary democracy (Elmaazi 2012, par. 2).

Within the Tunisian context, the new religiosity and adoption of modernity before the uprising (while most Ennahda leaders and supporters were either in exile, in prison or underground) influenced the way in which Ennahda was re-established, behaved and, to an extent, changed during its revival in Tunisia after January 2011 (Cavatorta 2012a).

From the discussion above, we conclude that neo-Islamism’s adherents have adjusted their strategy and developed concepts, priorities and agendas of Islamic politics in response to the urgent question, ‘What went wrong?’ during last thirty or forty years. The impetus has been to redress prior failure to execute state shariatisation and societal Islamisation. In the absence of a proper definition, the author proposes the following definition of neo-Islamism:

Neo-Islamism is distinguished by an ethical and theological emphasis on Islam that combines social conservatism with political moderation. Neo-Islamists are united in the view that Sharia is not an immediate reform priority; however there are divisions over whether this is a tactical pause towards ultimate pursuit of Shariatisation, whether it should be diluted if introduced at some future point, or whether it should never be introduced.
Conclusion

With the sudden rise of extremists jihadis such as (ISIL) and Jabhat al-Nusra (the Syrian affiliated group of al Qaeda), the world’s attention has once again focused on violent political Islam rather than Islam and democracy. Unsurprisingly, Rachid Ghanouchi has stressed (Ghanouchi 2014b) that the current ISIL threat is a consequence of the West’s hesitation to support democracy after the Arab Spring, such as through support for the Syrian people’s uprising against the Assad regime.

Following the collapse of post revolutionary governments, some commentators immediately started talking about the ‘failure of political Islam’, or the ‘end of Islamism’ (Tadros 2014). In contrast, others such as Aktay (2013, 112) view the celebration of the ‘end of Islamism’ as an acknowledgement of authoritarian, anti-democratic regimes in the Muslim world. Such renewed talk is considerably uprooted from the reality on the ground; where armed Islamic groups, have taken over cities and lands in Syria and Iraq, prompting a new war on terror by a coalition of over 70 countries led by the USA.
To understand the state of affairs of Islamism and neo-Islamism before and after the recent Arab revolutions, a number of factors need to be examined. Most prominent among these are the motivations of the revolutionaries, the changing social and political context, and the role of social media in facilitating the protests and riots almost everywhere across the Arab world, as discussed in the introduction. In addition, a deeper understanding of the ideological aspects of Arab democratisation helps determine whether neo-Islamists, particularly in the Tunisian case, have simply used ‘ballotboxcracy’\(^{46}\) as a tool to achieve agendas other than those espoused by the original Arab Spring protesters. This has become a common theme given new political conflicts that have ensued in the aftermath of the Arab Spring (BBC 2013).

\(^{46}\) This is a journalistic term coined by the BBC that refers to a political system that has a democratic façade because of the presence of elections.
Having determined that region-wide democracy is not beyond imagination (Tessler 2012), other questions arise: what sort of democracy might emerge in the Arab world? Would neo-Islamists, as a dominant political force post-Arab Spring, stick to a liberal form of democracy as envisaged by Fukuyama (1997) and Lewis (1993), or something else? Will the Arab world be able to 'adapt' democracy to its own historical and cultural headquarters?

Prior to the Tunisian revolution and the Arab Spring, there were numerous studies published regarding the relationship between Islam, terrorism and global security threats. Today, researchers of political Islam and experts on the Middle East have had to adopt a paradigm shift regarding countries like Tunisia and Egypt, whose storylines about democracy have gone from ‘It can’t happen here’ to ‘Can it happen here?’ to ‘It’s happening here!’ (Council on Foreign Relations 2012, xv). Following the Tunisian revolution, the Arab Spring and subsequent victories of Islamist parties, the outlawed Islamists of yesterday have been transformed into the mainstream politicians of today. Without doubt, this new circumstance requires a new focus and a fresh approach, which we will explore in the fourth chapter of this thesis, which deals with Ennahda as a party in power. However, the latest military coup in Egypt, and the apparent comeback of old regime autocrats to power, suggest that sweeping generalisations about the region's political arena cannot be made.

Properly investigating whether neo-Islamists used ballot boxes to further their own, mostly hidden, agendas requires a discussion of the relationship between Islam and democracy, and why democratic tendencies came quite late to the MENA region
compared to the rest of the world, and if it has to do with the doctrines of Islamist ideology, and Islam as a whole, or other social and economic factors.

Many academics (Sadiki 2002; Bayat 2011, 2012; Bradley 2012; Chaney 2012; Esposito 1994; Gelvin 2012; Huntington 1993, 1996; Lewis 1993; Pipes 2006; Roy 2011, 2012, 2013; Sidiki 2002; Stepan and Linz 2012; Wright 2012) discussed the fundamental reasons behind the so-called Arab democratic deficiency and drew various conclusions from them. A discussion of the following matters is necessary:

1- Why does the Arab world have a democratic deficiency? Is the deficiency related to the nature of Islam and the structure of Islamist thought and action, or is it a result of other objective factors, such as social, cultural, historical and economic issues?

2- Are neo-Islamists willing to become real democrats, using the power of elections and the ballot box to impose their ‘non democratic agendas’? And, regardless of their success, are they willing to support free and fair elections?

These questions are pertinent because over the last few decades, extremist parties around the world (of the far right and far left) have used democratic procedures merely as an instrument,

either to polarize the population along communal cleavages (e.g., ethnic parties) or, in the case of Leninist, ultranationalist, and religious fundamentalist parties, to simply obtain power and then dismantle democracy altogether. Parties with such antidemocratic agendas should therefore be excluded from participation in democratic elections to prevent election-related violence and, in the worst-case scenario, a repeat of the events that unfolded in post-Weimar Germany (Tomsa 2012, 487).
Roy (2012b, pars 8) has shown skepticism about the neo-Islamists’ ability and readiness to become democrats, wondering “why would the Islamists, with no democratic culture to speak of, behave like good democrats who believe in pluralism? No doubt many activists are asking themselves the same question”.

Such reservations annoy neo-Islamist leaders, including Ghanouchi himself, who insist that they are genuinely democratic and that Islamists can and should be democrats as their religious teachings dictate (Ghanouchi 2011b, 2011c). At any rate, the Islamists are no longer enjoying a religious monopoly of the public sphere (Roy 2012). The Egyptian military coup, which was supported by the Salafist al-Nour Party, and in Turkey, the Gülen movement’s recent collusion with AKP shows that democracy might be the only practical choice in avoiding instability and civil war.

Analysts and observers categorise Islamists in general and the neo-Islamists in particular as going two different directions. First, the moderate Islamists, namely the neo-Islamists, who can be democrats and have a proven commitment to democracy. This view sees the neo-Islamists as needing a fair opportunity to develop and execute their self-styled democracy. These commentators might have observed the previous failures of moderate Islamists and MB movements in Sudan in the 1990s and later, or Algerian Islamists after the 1991 elections, but they give the emerging Islamists the benefit of the doubt (Bayat 2011, 2012; Chaney 2012; Esposito 1994; Gelvin 2012; Roy 2011, 2012, 2013; Sidiki 2002; Stepan and Linz 2012; Wright 2012).

On the other hand, Bradley (2012) sees the neo-Islamists as just the same as any other sort of Islamist, who have disguised their autocratic tendencies, and are using democracy as a tool to seize power. This point of view is supported by the Palestinian
Hamas’ victory in the 2006 elections, or more recently, President Morsi’s refusal to share power. Additionally, these commentators cite the AKP's imprisonment of journalists, their suppression of the Taksim Square activists, their ban of social networks such as Twitter (2014) and a refusal to significantly confront jihadi Salafists in Tunisia during Ennahda's rule in 2012 and 2013 (Bradley 2012).

On the other hand, as Islamists work and develop within their socio-economic spheres, the more general question can be asked: why is there a democracy deficiency in post-colonial Arab states? The most thought provoking explanation of this deficiency that the Arabs are immune to democracy movements, due to a desire to adhere to sharia law and proceed towards Islamisation.47

**Arab democracy deficiency**

Some scholars, have given a more diversified set of reasons for the Arab world’s democratic deficit before the recent uprisings, many of which do not rely on cultural explanations (Dalacoura 2007; Kramer 1993; Hashemi 2009; Tibi 2009 and 2012a and 2013). First, it has been observed that Huntington's view is contradictory to the emergence of democratic regimes in Indonesia and Turkey, which demonstrates that Islamists or Muslims in general, can play a constructive role in democratic institutions, (Turkish AKP) or at least could play an active role within the opposition (Indonesia’s Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera; PKS) (Tomsa 2012; Chaney 2012; Gelvin 2012; Stepan and Linz 2013). For the Arab world, scholars have given varying

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47 Daniel Pipes, in 2006 straight after Hamas won the Palestinian free election, wrote: 'The fact that majority-Muslim countries are less democratic makes it tempting to conclude that the religion of Islam, their common factor, is itself incompatible with democracy ... I disagree with that conclusion. Today's Muslim predicament, rather, reflects historical circumstances more than innate features of Islam. Put differently, Islam, like all pre-modern religions is undemocratic in spirit. No less than the others, however, it has the potential to evolve in a democratic direction.' (Pipes 2006, par. 2-3)
explanations, such as the effects of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the subservient status of women, fossil fuel-based wealth, and Arab specific cultural and/or institutional characteristics, many of these studies reach conflicting conclusions (Chaney 2012).

Scholars offer multiple explanations for this deficiency:

- The resources of the rentier state and oil money are used by those in power, causing delays in the democratisation process (Bayat 2012);

- Successful sultanism of various extremes across the Arab world have suppressed democracy (Stepan and Linz 2012);

- Islamic or Arab exceptionalism posits that Arabs and Islam are not compatible with Western-style democracy due to cultural and religious baggage (Lewis 2002; Chaney 2012; Huntington 1993)

- The institutional persistence of the unrelieved autocracy throughout history has worked to prevent democracy from taking hold (Chaney 2012; Lewis 2002)

- Western support of Arab autocratic regimes and violent Islamic militants has prevented the spread of democracy throughout the MENA region.

- Political Islam is viewed as antithetical to liberalism, and democracy is necessarily liberal (Chaney 2012).

Amongst these explanations five are worthy of discussion.

**The first is the exceptionalist’s view.** For decades, analysts believed that Arabia and the rest of the Muslim world were ‘immune’ from the “yearnings for freedom” (Feiler 2011, 12). Feiler’s observation resonated with those famously advanced in Samuel
Huntington's influential work, *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993, 1996), which argued that “humans are irreparably divided along religious and cultural lines, and that foremost among those is a fiery chasm that separates Jews and Christians from Muslims” (Feifer 2011, 12). This assumption leads to the conclusion that Islam is not compatible with pluralism and democracy. It is argued that Muslims, despite being vastly diverse in ethnicity and culture around the world (and the Arab world is fraction of the Muslim world), do not share the core desires of the West. Consequently, Muslims have learned from their religion to be hostile to pluralism, individualism and a free society (Feifer 2011). Other observers have gone to the extreme of relegating MENA to the margin of social science with the exceptionalist claim that these regions are a locus of ‘ugly movements’ (Beinin and Vairel 2011).

The French scholar, Jean-Pierre Filiu, also examined this treatment of the Arabs as being

‘unique’, which was not a badge of honour for them, ‘since the Arab ‘predicament’, ‘despair’, ‘impasse’, ‘lost opportunities’, ‘malaise’, (and even ‘cocoon’) were the topic of numerous essays, conferences and multi-layered programmes, ... the Arabs were the quintessential Other, lagging behind modernity and its countless rewards (Filui 2011, 5).

The code word of these campaigns was ‘deficit’, and the list of the Arab deficits appeared endless, from education, to infrastructure, to governance and technology, with a special focus on the shortcoming of women’s empowerment. Filui states that “Arabs are no exception, but the resilience of their ruling cliques has been exceptional” (Filui 2011,

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The latest Arab uprisings showed that the Arabs can fight bravely for freedom and justice at any cost: some two hundred in Tunisia and nearly nine hundred in Egypt lost their lives in the first few weeks of the Arab Spring. The fact that they were spontaneous grass-roots movements made the uprisings even more striking. The promoters of Arab exceptionalism lost their ground with the fall of Ben Ali, their theories completely destroyed after the fall of Mubarek (Filui 2011).

Roy (2013) stresses, however, that the claim that democracy is a unique product of centuries of Western Christianity is rather biased. “It is steadily becoming clear that ‘Islamic exceptionalism’ is an illusion: both the political and religious changes in Muslim societies are in tune with global trends” (Roy 2013, 18).

Asef Bayat (2013) agrees with Roy’s view above, criticising some observers as being distracted by minor events and failing to observe the underlying Arab society. They were concerned less with the theme of change than continuity, less with exploring internal forces of transformation than explaining how authoritarian rules endured. Many observers, wearing the ‘exceptionalist’ lens, focused on a narrow and static notion of culture (one that was virtually equated with the religion of Islam) to explain the status quo. Others who found little explanatory power in the ‘culturalist’ paradigm (because after all the major opposition to the pre-revolution regimes came from the rank of Muslims, especially the Islamists) pointed instead to oil and the rentier state as factors that presumably ensured stability and continuity (Bayat 2013, 589).

49 He added that:
while is true that the a complex chain of events in European history first gave birth to modern democracy, capitalism, and human rights, the notion that they were the offspring of Christian theology is highly questionable. For two centuries, Arab countries have been struggling to cope with challenges from the West. Different countries have tried different models- from enlightened despotism to revolutionary movements driven by charismatic leaders (and even including some short-lived democratic experiences). Over time, Arab societies have changed as a result of mass education and globalisation, both of which have altered their social fabric and their political culture (Roy 2013, 18-19).
On the other hand Larbi Sadiki, while rejecting the exceptionalism theory, stressed that the “route to democracy in this part of the word is not going to be a carbon copy of transitions elsewhere. This is not engaging in ‘exceptionalist’ scholarship about the ‘other’, for culture may not be inhospitable to good government” (Sadiki 2002a, 124).

*The second explanation concerns the Arab rentier state’s control* over resources, as illustrated above briefly by Bayat (2012).

Stepan and Linz (2013) argue that it would be more difficult to transition from a strongly sultanist regime if a powerful military institution were present. Being fortified by petrodollars further strengthens despots. Thus, countries that do not depend on a functional taxation system, industry or services, but rather oil revenues derived from renting drilling rights to business, will find such transitions especially difficult to make.50 Iran’s regime and the ruling families in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and the Emirates buy loyalty, or at least the silence of their discontented subjects with cash, the compensation increasing dramatically after the nearby Arab Spring revolutions. Bayat (2013) agrees that oil money, especially lots of it, does matter in buying off dissent, by helping to establish the ‘regime class’, which is

a class of loyalists who lend strong support to the incumbent regimes in exchange for state handouts, as in the Islamic Republic or Gaddafi’s Libya. But the rentier state is also developmental; it ‘modernises’, helping to establish the infrastructure of economic and social change, and classes of political actors who may come to question the very authoritarian states, which assisted to create them. The development processes under the Shah and the Islamic Republic in Iran, or those in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates exemplify the generative facet of oil income. (Bayat 2013, 590)

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50 These rentier states distribute the rent they receive to favoured clients and projects. The most lucrative source for rent in the Arab world is, of course, oil. Some Arab states derive well over 90 percent of their revenues from oil (Gelvin 2012, 7).
In the case of the Bahraini uprising, the neighboring rentier states were able to fix the problem by using their cash to fund military intervention by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and secure the sultanistic regime there. On the other hand, the presence of petrodollars in Libya had the opposite effect, speeding up NATO intervention, which helped rid Libya of a tyrant who had been in power for over forty years.

The third explanation concerns American foreign policy. Rather than emphasising cultural incompatibility with democracy, some observers blame hypocritical Western governments for the deficit of democracy in the MENA region, and thereafter their obsession with prioritizing self-interest and security rather than global democracy as an international diplomatic tool. Lahoud and Johns (2005, 23) wrote:

Graham Fuller\textsuperscript{51} observes how US policies have contributed to the radicalisation of Islamist movements. He writes, “despite its rhetorical stance in favor of democracy worldwide, Washington possesses an unspoken sense that representative governments in most Muslim states will be less acquiescent to American interests than the current generation of authoritarian leaders”. George W. Bush himself, the first time an American President referred to the lack of success of such policies, once observed, “sixty years of Western nations executing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe”. Indeed, Western nations were not only ‘excusing’, but also contributing to this lack of freedom in the Middle East.

Gelvin (2012) too blamed US foreign policy in the Middle East in particular, rather than Westerners in general. He elaborates:

Throughout the cold war, the United States sought to attain six goals in the region: prevent the expansion of Soviet influence; ensure Western access to oil; secure the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of a regional balance of power; promote stable, pro-Western

\textsuperscript{51} Graham Fuller is an American author and political analyst, specialising in Islamic extremism. Formerly vice-chair of the National Intelligence Council, he also served as Station Chief in Kabul for the CIA.
states in the region; preserve the independence and territorial integrity of the state of Israel; and protect the sea lanes, lines of communications, and the like connecting the United States and Europe with Asia. Authoritarian regimes were useful in achieving all these goals. (Gelvin 2012, 8)

The fourth explanation is the ‘sultanistic’ theory of the Arab states during the post-colonial era, (Stepan and Linz 2012) which necessarily includes the above two explanations and excludes the others.

The scorecard of the Arab Spring neatly divides by regime type; monarchies fared far better than republics (Yom and Gause III 2012). The eight Arab monarchies stand firm, with the exception of Bahrain, which had a large scale secular uprising (the majority Shia against the minority Sunni ruling family). The al-Khalifa clan has weathered the uprising for geopolitical and sectarian reasons, aided by the armed intervention of the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Saudi forces considered the uprising a standoff that pitted Shia Iran and the various regional Shia minorities against the Sunni Wahhabi Saudi Arabia and its ally America (Bradley 2012).

The Syrian case is reversed; the minority Alavit al-Assad regime is heavily supported by the region’s Shia population and, of course, the strong regional player, Iran. By June 2013, Hezbollah's pro-Iran Lebanese militia declared its strategic armed support of the al-Assad regime. Thousands of soldiers, and also frequent 'martyrs', were shown on satellite TV, al-Manar, fighting in various Syrian civil war zones.

To date, both Oman and Saudi Arabia have sustained minor revolts, while Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have remained virtually untouched. In both Jordan and Morocco, youth tried to mobilise the streets, but after some royal concessions, they failed to join in the Arab Spring (Way 2011).
Stepan and Linz (2013, 15-30) delivered an interesting interpretation of how the Arab authoritarian monarchies coped with social forces differently than those secular, economically liberal, autocratic Arab republics such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria. Patrimonialism and its extreme, sultanism, tend to arise when “domination develops an administration and a military force which are purely personal instruments of the master” (Stepan and Linz 2013, 26). Max Weber’s original definition of sultanism supposes that the ruler’s domination operates primarily on the basis of discretion, and in extreme cases, there is no autonomy for those with state careers. All officials, including generals and admirals, are best seen as being the ‘household staff’ of the sultan (Stepan and Linz 2013, 26). Stepan and Linz develop Weber’s term further, distinguishing between degrees of sultanism, as regimes can be entirely despotic or have many or few characteristics associated with sultanism. An extreme sultanistic regime is far less likely than other authoritarian regimes to concede and allow a peaceful transition of power that might lead to democracy. The presence of the sultan (as seen in the cases of Syria's al-Assad and Libya's Ghaddafi) makes negotiation or concession too difficult. In specific regard to the Arab monarchies, despite some of their leaders actually carrying the title ‘Sultan’, the monarchies range from pure to partial sultanism.

However, the military institution has also been used as a tool to defend the Libyan and Syrian regimes, for example, Gadhafi invented his own militias called revolutionary

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52 Stepan and Linz (2013, 26) give a clear example of sultanism in Rafael Trujillo, the dictator of the Dominican Republic from 1930 to 1961, who made his son a brigadier general when the boy was nine. In return, General Augusto Pinochet, the military strongman who ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990, could never have done such a thing, mainly because the Chilean military had a degree of established autonomy as an institution and would not have allowed it.
committees, on which he relied heavily to secure his regime, and marginalise the Libyan army. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) in Egypt defended the Mubarak regime before giving him up and trying to establish their direct military rule by issuing constitutional declarations and establishing a de facto junta prior to the first free presidential election and that resulted in Morsi’s win. Morsi’s overthrow by the military reversed most of the constitutional gains intended to protect the Egyptian people. A section of Egyptian society felt that they weren’t being protected by the constitution, particularly the Copts and a wide portion of secularists, who gathered in tens of thousands in Tahrir Square in June and July 2013 demanding the resignation of President Morsi.

On the other hand, recent history has shown the power of the military to bring a quick and nonviolent end to the Tunisian dictatorship. The popular revolt that took place between 17 December 2010 and 14 January 2011 was supported by the Tunisian military, resulting in a finalisation of their “regime change business” in much less time than many expected (Stepan and Linz 2013, 29).

The fifth explanation for the Arab world’s democratic deficit is ‘institutional persistence’ of ‘unrelieved autocracy’, which has accumulated over centuries (Chaney 2012). This explanation is built on a scholar’s historical approach that dates back to the French philosopher Montesquieu, and suggests historical developments in the Islamic Middle East, which was built on despotism, have made the region particularly prone to

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53 Libyan former Revolutionary committees started in late 1977 in response to Qadhafi’s promptings to secure his regime from any danger. As such, their role was to raise popular awareness, to prevent deviation from officially sanctioned ideology, and to combat tribalism, regionalism, self-doubt, apathy, reactionaries, foreign ideologies, and counterrevolutionaries. The revolutionary committees sprang up in offices, schools, businesses, and in the armed forces. Carefully selected, they were estimated at 3,000 to 4,000 members in 1985.

54 The SCAF went as far as bringing 14,000 revolutionaries before a military tribunal, subjecting many to prosecution and torture (Bayat 2013, 596).
autocratic rule (Chaney 2012; Lewis 1993). Accordingly, these historic control structures have left a legacy of weak civil societies where political power is concentrated in the hands of the military, autocrats or religious leaders. Chaney’s (2012, 21) results cast doubt on claims that Muslim theology, Arab culture, the Arab-Israeli conflict or oil wealth are systematic obstacles to democratic change. Instead, the available evidence suggests that the region’s democratic deficit is a product of the long-run influence of control structures developed under Islamic empires in the pre-modern era.

However, the theory of 'unrelieved autocracy' and 'intuitional persistence' is not consistent with the core facts. As mentioned above, during or after the Arab colonisation era, some parts of the Arab world had short forays or, in Lebanon's case, a long term constitutional democracy. Some countries have had what Stepan (2012) calls ‘hyper-democratic’ regimes, which basically mean systems without full democracy or with constitutional monarchies, such as Kuwait, Jordan, and Yemen. The MB and other Islamist parties participated in those regimes' political systems during elections, and sometimes formed coalition governments.

Yemenis had a 'hybrid' democracy in place prior to 2011. After experiencing their Arab Spring, Yemenis worked to get their full version of democracy, focusing on their ‘president for life’ dilemma, featuring President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a member of the General People's Congress. Al-Islaah (the Reform Party), Yemen's version of the MB, had been a static part of the government for quite some time and its leader, Abdullah al-Ahmar, was the parliament speaker. The affiliation with this hybrid semi-autocratic regime, however, did not stop al-Islaah from heavily participating in the 2011 Yemeni uprising, resulting in the ousting of President Ali Saleh.
The various autocratic Arab states were reinforced by secret police and instituted security measures that suppressed free speech, criticism of the rulers and their families, free press and free association. The Arab public, furthermore, grew tired of rigged elections and lack of election transparency, flaws that were rampant during the post-colonial period (Ghanouchi 2011a, 2011c).

The sultanistic Arab regimes, in fact, used all their resources to prevent legitimate democracies from forming, to include ‘war on terror’ fear-mongering against non-violent Islamist groups, and Western governments' turning a blind eye to their autocratic behaviour.

The sudden, yet painstakingly achieved political independence of the Arab states did not allow enough time for the major Arab renaissance forces, thinkers and intellectuals to pave the way to a transitional democratic populist modern state. Instead, military rulers seized power in most Arab countries, but not all, and began the so-called Arab sultanistic age over the last sixty years or so. These sultanistic regimes still exist in some Arab countries, resisting their people's eagerness for democracy and broader freedom (Bayat 2013; Stepan and Linz 2012). Also, it is worth noting that counterrevolutionary forces, which defended the regime militaries in Syria and Libya and tried to oust fairly elected governments in Tunisia and Egypt, have shown that without doubt, that some people in the Arab world support the sultanic regimes, either consciously or unconsciously, as a result of fear of the unknown.

There are several reasons for this. First, the campaign for democracy, freedom and peaceful power transitions in Arab societies across the MENA region never stopped. For example, the colonisation era of 1940's Egypt, the post-colonial era of Lebanon until its
civil war in 1975, and Tunisia from the 1970’s onward have experienced civil unrest, general strikes, protests and revolts. Most of these popular uprisings and protests involved demands for freedom, democracy and the transition of power, though other causes such as that of Palestine, the Iraq war in 1991, economic and workers’ rights may have also been present.

On the other hand, some sociologists argue that the Arab Spring, revealed cases where mobilisations emerged in the absence of ‘opening opportunities’ or when they were highly restricted or uncertain (Beinin and Vairel 2011). This view is represented by scholars who believe that the Arab world has not been immune to democratic change, though these changes came later than originally predicted, due to the almost insurmountable constraints and obstacles constructed by autocrats after World War II.

The desire for change within Arab nations did not help to resist these obstacles until at least the 2011 revolutions, though many separate attempts at small uprisings happened across the Arab world during last three or four decades. Notably, the Algerian democratisation of Chadli Bendjedid55 around 1988 ended violently by military coup in 1992 and resulted in a decade long civil war that dragged the country into autocratic rule and military dictatorship.

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55 Chadli Bendjedid, (1929 –2012) was the third President of Algeria; his presidential term of office ran from 9 February 1979 to 11 January 1992. In office, Bendjedid reduced the state's role in the economy and eased government surveillance of citizens. In the late 1980s, with the economy failing due to rapidly falling oil prices, tension rose between elements of the regime who supported Bendjedid's economic liberalisation policies, and those who wanted a return to the statist model. In October 1988, youth riots against the regime’s austerity policies developed into a massive uprising, known as the 1988 October Riots which were confronted by the military’s brutal suppression and left, as consequence, several hundred dead. Bendjedid called straight after for implementing a transition towards multi-party democracy. However in 1991 the military intervened to stop elections from bringing the Islamist Front (Front Islamique du Salut - FIS) to power, ousting Bendjedid and sparking a long and bloody Civil War (Addi 1998; Volpi 2013).
Islamism and democracy

From a theological point of view, democracy poses a formidable challenge for contemporary political Islam. Muslim jurists throughout history have argued that human laws made by a sovereign monarch are illegitimate because human authority is substituted for God’s sovereignty. Modern laws that are made democratically by sovereign citizens face the same problem of legitimacy. In Islam, God is the only sovereign and the ultimate source of legitimate law. So, the question to be asked here is: how does one reconcile the concept of popular authority with an Islamic understanding of God’s authority? (Abou El Fadl 2003, 4)

As per our earlier discussion chapter one, contemporary Islamism is part of the evolution of modern Islamic thought. For instance, the maqasidis current raw ideas and reformist thoughts, which they developed through a practical underground activism, and their attempts to gain legitimacy in the official political scene (as in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt), or simply within its casual political discourse (as in Turkey) ends in the neo-Islamism seen today. Mura (2012, 78) elaborated:

a great reformist like Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) had used the legal notion of maslahah, the ‘common good in Islamic jurisprudence, to re-consider the traditional prerogatives of the government, influencing he cultural climate preceding the foundation of the Brotherhood in the 1920s. Since the 13th century, the concept of maslaha had undertaken important conceptual shifts, allowing for doctrinal innovations … Al-Banna’s focus on ‘the interest of the people’ came to sanction these ongoing cultural transformations, bringing the Islamic notion of ‘common good’ –which had to maintain some moral and theological characterization as expression of the will of God- close to the liberal concept of ‘public interest’ or ‘general welfare’, to use Robert Mitchell’s translation of this term.
Al-Banna himself, as mentioned above, was against party politics, and against democracy as a tool of colonialism or Western domination and division. However by the early 1940s, he developed more positive views of democracy, which might have been due to British interference in the Egyptian political system at the time. Al-Banna formally engaged, for instance, in the mainstream political process, “even advancing his candidature to the parliamentary election of 1942. Although his candidature was withdrawn under pressure from the king and the Wafd in exchange for the promise to introduce some ‘Islamic laws’ prohibiting gambling and prostitution, this event reveals that al-Banna had begun considering the modern state as offering all the tools needed for the implementation of an Islamic system” (Mura 2012, 79)

Several contemporary ideologues of modern pluralist Islamism, who inherited al-Banna’s ideology, such as Hassan al-Trabi, Rachid Ghanouchi, Mohammed Salim al-Awwa, Tareq el Bishri and Yussef al-Qaradawi, would look even deeper into Western-style democracy, parliamentary representation, separation of powers and freedom of organisation, and link them all to similar traditions within Islamic laws and traditional jurists’ works, to reconcile Islam somehow with modernity. They will not disagree that the Islamic political system is based on *shura* (public or expert consultation), which is inspired by the Quran and taken from Prophet Mohamed's practices during over thirteen years of his statesman affairs and war battles. In addition, some MB leaders have propagated the concept of ‘*shura*cracy’ to refer to the Islamic political system. According to Fattah’s (2006, 59) survey of Arabs and Muslims across thirty-two Muslim

56 The first well-known of using this terminology is Mahfoud el- Nehneh, the founder and former leader of the Algerian branch of MB.
societies, Muslims would be more supportive of a democratic system and its institutions if they see it as a modern application of Islamic *shura*.

Some modern scholars have found a recipe to marry Islamic political rules (sometimes with spiritual guidance elements) and modern Western democracy. Contemporary neo-Islamist thinkers such as Rashid Ghanouchi reconcile theological concerns by distinguishing between legislation, which is mainly from God and the people's sovereignty as citizens in the Islamic state (Ghanouchi 2011a). In fact, according to Mura, (2012) al-Banna himself from his early passages on the immanent character of sovereignty, defined ‘truly Islamic government’ as:

> a servant to the nation in the interest of the people. It is not God or shari’ah that defines the ultimate ‘interest’ of which the Islamic government is an expression, but ‘the people’, here incarnating the locus of sovereignty and the space of public interest. This signals the integration and re-elaboration of modern national signifiers and the substantial resonance with modern theories of sovereignty of the state, in itself a further expression of al-Banna re-elaboration of the language of modernity (Mura 2012, 78-79).

In an interview with the author, (Tunis, 25 April 2013) Rached Ghanouchi revealed that during his four imprisonments between 1981 and 1985, he detailed the democratic principles in Islamic thought, which was first penned in the draft of his famous book: ‘*Public Liberties in the Islamic State*’ [Ghanouchi 2011a]. He then wrote a small booklet about the rights of non-Muslims in the Islamic state, and referencing the Constitution of Madina, where the prophet Mohamed granted full citizenship to the Jews and other non-Muslims within the newly established state of Madinah. Ghanouchi affirmed confidently that: “during 30 years of Ennahda life from 1981 to 2011 our discourse about democracy didn’t change and remained concrete”.

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Furthermore, those referred to by Moataz Fattah (2006, 27) as modernists, “accept new ideas, mechanisms, and values insofar as they do not contradict authentic and well-established sharia. They would accept that Allah deliberately left Muslims with some legislative vacuums [gaps] for the human mind to fill through *ijtihad* within the boundaries offset by *sharia*. Such observation applies directly to the neo-Islamists.\(^{57}\)

However, while Ghanouchi and other neo-Islamists mentioned their theories of Islamic oriented democracy within the last two or three decades, the post-Arab Spring neo-Islamists have, to date, failed to discuss the potential of instituting Sharia law or state Islamisation, likely due originally to the volatile new political environment. Hence, Ennahda rushed to disregard Salafi calls to make ‘Sharia as the main source of laws’ within the first few clauses of the new Tunisian constitution, proving they are progressing step-by-step along the path taken by Turkey's AKP. Egypt's MB and the neo-Islamist Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) seemingly hesitated to follow the AKP and showed a tendency towards Islamisation. They breached one of the main conditions necessary for the propagation of neo-Islamism: gradualism.

After observing the Arab uprisings in 2011, Chaney (2012) was not optimistic about the repercussions of Islamists winning the Arab heart. He claimed that the region’s institutional history showed that overwhelming popular support for Islamists might

\(^{57}\) Fattah also observed that, the neo-Islamists would practice *ijtihad* throughout the sacred sources of Islam, but the well-established and clear-cut verses of the Quran and hadiths are the only material that is not subject to skeptical scrutiny; yet the interpretations of these verses and *hadiths* are subject to *ijtihad*. The scholars of the past and *al-salaf al-salih* [the pious predecessors] carried out *ijtihad* to respond to the new challenges that they faced. Now it is time for contemporary Muslims to take their turn at *ijtihad*. Modernists think that their *ijtihad* rarely violates consensually agreed-upon fatwas (religious verdicts) of the past. If there is such a violation, a direct and clear reference to authentic sources of Islam must be made to justify the violation of the previous *ijma’* (consensus). Modernists find nothing in the Islamic authentic sources that hinders them from communicating with and learning from non-Muslims as long as the thinking of these outsiders does not violate authentic Islamic principles. To modernists, most aspects of democracy are compatible with Islam (Fattah 2006, 27).
undermine democratic efforts, by concentrating power in the hands of these emerging groups. In reference to the religious autocracy that followed Iran’s 1979 revolution, Chaney (2012, 22) concludes:

[The] recent past shows that Islamists are just as likely to establish autocratic rule as other groups in the absence of checks on their power. Thus, unless other interest groups (such as labor unions or commercial interests) check their power, Islamists may replace secular rulers and usher in a new wave of autocracy in some Arab countries.

Certainly, the experiences of Islamist governance over the last two or three decades in countries such as Afghanistan (with the Mujahedeen then the Taliban till 2002), Sudan, and Egypt from June 2012 to July 2013, have not been encouraging. On the other hand, there are many examples, like Turkey, Senegal, Malaysia and Indonesia, of Islamist parties committed to democracy and accommodating their established political and economic systems with varying degrees of success.

While near-term expectations for the Egyptian branch of neo-Islamists are diminished, Tunisia and Morocco's MB58 affiliates were holding on to their power59, due either to counter-revolutionary obstructions or to other circumstances related to the previous regimes.

Whatever Morsi's treatment of the Egyptian people for his or his party's political purposes, the period between August and October 2013 shows that military-backed unelected rulers have shown a remarkable lack of concern for the fundamental rights of

58 In Morroco, the neo-Islamists progress towards democratisation so far, and lack or real revolution during or post 2011 Arab Spring, shows that such progress is due to a certain cooptation and concession made by the king, rather than Morrocan democrats acting as agents of democratisation. However, the main characteristics of the Moroccan neo-Islamism, such as gradualism, pragmatism, tendency towards liberal political systems and neo-economy as well as abandoning sharia law as other similar states, remain in general the same.

59 up to January 2014 in Tunisia, while the Morrocan Islamists are still in power up-to-date as per May 2015.
the Egyptian people. Violations of human rights, civil liberties and freedom of the press have been well documented. Members of Egypt's Islamist FJP have become subject to a military campaign of arrest, imprisonment and ‘kangaroo court’ procedures (Dyer 2013; Tudoroiu 2013). Morsi’s alleged human rights violations pale in comparison.

It is worth considering that Egyptian neo-Islamists would not have necessarily established an autocracy like that in Iran. The Iranian revolution itself enjoyed a degree of democracy and transparent elections in the early days, though the established structure was not by any means a Western-style democracy. There is no doubt that the Iranian Islamic Republic’s democracy is marked by clerics' supervision and religious institutional constraints with conservative tendencies. The Iranian regime has been successful in insulating itself from anti-Islamic; rather, anti-wilayet faqih (the rule of Sharia’s top jurists) threats, and excludes secularist and liberals, not to mention non-religious, pro-revolution Shia and non-Muslims.

Instead, the neo-Islamists no longer talk about an Islamic state; they call for al-dawla al-madaniya, or a civil state. As Gerges (2013, 379) pointed out, even the old guard among the Egyptian MB, no longer advocates building an Islamic state explicitly, as they substitute ‘civil’ for ‘Islamic’ in an effort to avoid using the term ‘secular’.

The neo-Islamists thus continue to be committed to democracy, where possible, such as in Turkey, Tunisia and Morocco. In fact, in 2012 and under a coalition government led by Ennahda, Tunisia became the first Arab-majority country in thirty-seven years to receive a political-rights score as high as three on a seven point scale from Freedom House (Stepan and Linz 2013, 18-24). The new Tunisian constitution reflects a spirit of pluralism and tolerance. The neo-Islamists “have a vested interest in the
institutionalization of the political process that will protect them against the whims of autocratic military rulers” (Gerges 2013, 399).

The American commentator Noah Feldman praised what he called Islamic democrats for their authentic democratic tendencies, long before the Arab Spring of 2010. He observes the writings of

such Islamic democrats as Rashid al-Ghanouchi, a Tunisian Islamist intellectual living in exile in Paris, Abdolkarim Soroush, an Iranian who shuttles between Tehran, Cambridge (Massachusetts) and Princeton; the Egyptian journalist Fahmi Hwaidi; and the Qatar-based internet and al-Jazeera phenomenon Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Though these thinkers disagree on a wide range of issues, they share a view of Islam that emphasises justice, human dignity and equality, the rule of law, the role of the people in selecting leaders, the obligation of having consultive government, and the value of pluralism. All share a commitment to Islam as the starting place and ultimate ground for evaluating democracy, and all insist that Islam is not self-interpreting: ascertaining the will of God and coordinating quotidian social organisation require human effort.

Although Islamic democrats differ in their precise understandings of democracy, they agree that democracy requires much more than elections; it must also incorporate the basic rights necessary to make it both liberal and egalitarian: free speech, free association, freedom of conscience, and equality across race, religion, and gender. Moreover, Islamic democrats find the roots of values such as liberty and equality in Islam-in Qur’anic verses, prophetic Hadith that recount the actions of the Prophet, and Islamic legal tradition. (Feldman 2004, 60).

Ghanouchi confirmed this recently by stating (interview with author, Tunis, 25 April, 2013) that democracy is not perfect but is the least objectionable of options. It is of course open to be developed and to be criticised. Ghanouchi added that democracy has no

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60 Observers like Feldman mistakenly thought that Ghanouchi lived in exile in Paris, which is not the case. He lived in London since early 1990s until he returned to Tunisia within the first two weeks of the 14th January 2011 ousting of Ben Ali.
alternative yet, and that’s why he believes that Islam can add to democratic values, and take from them the techniques of managing disagreement and opposite opinions. Muslims have missed these tools for centuries and disagreements have been managed most of the time by the sword rather than shura. Shura was disabled throughout centuries of government. Ghanouchi criticises even other leaders of MB who still believe that shura in Islam is for guidance only; not an obligation to be undertaken by Muslim rulers (interview with author, Tunis, 18 April, 2013).

The post 9/11 ‘war on terror’ during the long decade of the 2000s may have been seen as a disadvantage for the democratisation process in the Arab world, and thereafter, the democratic development of Islamic movements across the region. On the other hand, the war on terror might have helped to trigger the revolts against decades long oppression that kick-started the Arab Spring. Despite the rhetoric, it turns out that the United States did not abandon local Arab dictators, and reportedly worked closely with notorious Arab autocracies in Syria, Tunisia, Yemen and Libya (Roy 2011a, Aktay 2013; Bishara 2012; Cavatorta 2012b; Gavin 2012a; Ghanouchi 2014a; Petras 2012; Feldman 2013) The war on terror empowered the already mostly aged and weak dictators “even more considerably and allowed them to stamp down not only on the genuinely violent groups, but also on all other opposition movements that had an Islamist agenda no matter how peaceful or moderate” (Cavatorta 2012a, 189). One of the key players, Tunisia's Ennahda Party, campaigned for a decade against Ben Ali through different channels of communications with the European Union, the American Administration and various human rights groups. Ennahda's warnings that Ben Ali was manipulating the ‘war on
terror’ to conduct acts of despotism, torture and other human rights abuses went unacknowledged until the time of the 2011 uprising (Sadiki 2002; Ghanouchi 2011b).

Regardless of academic stereotypes and the potential for democracy in the future, it should be noted that 300 million Muslims have been living under democracies for each of the past ten years in the Muslim-majority countries of Albania, Indonesia, Senegal and Turkey. Adding to that the roughly 178 million Muslims who are natives of Hindu-majority India, the total number of Muslims who are living in democracies outside the Western liberal democracies, easily exceeds half a billion, which is over one third of the Muslim population worldwide (Stepan and Linz 2013, 17).

Notably, the neo-Islamists who developed their ideas about Islam, democracy and role of Sharia twenty years or so ago have not shown themselves to be as adept, savvy, flexible and pragmatic as the younger neo-Islamist groups. Unlike Ennahda, the Egyptian MB never conducted a single joint meeting with secularists to discuss the problems of democratic transition, power sharing or governance alternatives. It is arguable that such overtures may have helped to prevent the erhal protesters’ reoccupation of Tahrir Square in June 2013, demanding President Morsi to leave power. The Tunisian branch of the MB, on the other hand, seems to have achieved, by regularly meeting with secular parties in a sort of opposition coalition since 2003, successful post-revolution power sharing experiences. Regarding the Egyptian MB’s isolation, Stepan and Linz (2013, 23) wrote:

The Muslim brotherhood’s website was still displaying its 2007 draft party platform, complete with nondemocratic features such as a rejection of the idea that a woman or a non-Muslim (two groups comprising more than half the populace) could ever be president of Egypt, and the recommendation that a high court composed of and appointed by imams should be empowered
to review all new legislation to ensure its compliance with shariaa. Small wonder, then, that a sense of growing distrust has continued to dominate the political atmosphere in Egypt.

Also, within the context of Muslim society, successful modernisation and democratisation cannot be achieved without taking into account local culture and religion, as Bassem Tibbi (2009) observed (9-40). Such an observation might explain why some neo-Islamist leaders were aware that Turkey’s AKP might provide good guidance, but not a copy and paste model61 (Gerges 2013, 407). Tibi (2009) points out to thus criticise Western understandings of Islam’s predicaments with modernity, saying:

Real Islam is the product of Muslims themselves. The reality is neither a reflection of divine scripture nor a deviation from what they think is right. It follows that Islam is always that which Muslims make of it and that historical, man-made Islam is not divine, despite all the efforts of the ulema to invoke God in it. In short, Islam changes with the course of development, in spite of whatever Muslim believers may think to the contrary. This reality of change stands in conflict with the ahistorical Muslim Salafist worldview. After years in research in Morocco and Egypt, John Waterbury coined the term ‘behavioral lag’ in order to describe the tensions arising from the inconsistency between what Muslims really do and what they think they are doing (Tibi 2009, 40).

What sort of democracy do Arabs want?

In his discussion of the common autocracy of contemporary Arab countries, Gelvin (2012) argues that compatibility is not an issue that requires serious discussion. “There is no reason to assume that Islam is any more or less compatible with democracy and human rights than Christianity or Judaism, for example” (Gelvin 2012, 7). Notably,

61 Gerges (2013, 407) noted that the Arab moderate Islamists: admire and wish to imitate the example of Turkey, even though they know little about the complexity of the country’s economy and lack [of] Turkey’s strategic economic model. What impresses them is Turkey’s economic dynamism, especially the dynamism of the religiously observant provincial bourgeoisie, who have turned Anatolian towns such as Kaysari, Konya, and Gaziantep into industrial powerhouses driving the growth of the Turkish economy.
as in many other societies, there are democratic and anti-democratic interests in the Arab world, and who wins is a matter of struggle.

Roy (2012d) goes further to criticise the assumption that democracy presupposes secularism. He notes that historically, this has not been the case. America's Founding Fathers were not secularists; for them, the separation of church and state was a way of protecting religion from government, not the reverse. The French Third Republic was established in 1871 by a predominantly conservative, Catholic, monarchist parliament that had just crashed the Paris Commune. Christian democracy developed in Europe not because the church wanted to promote secular values, but because it was the only way it could maintain political influence (Roy 2012d, 8).

Also, while criticising Huntington's view that religion, especially Islam, would limit the spread of democratisation, Stepan argues that neither assertive secularist societies (adopting a stance that is openly anti-religion) nor passive secularist societies require a complete separation between religion and the state for democracy to emerge. So what was needed for both democracy and religion to flourish? Stepan (2012) asserts his theory of ‘twin tolerations’, which he observes as a successful approach in post-revolution Tunisia. In this context, the “religious authorities do not control democratic officials who are acting constitutionally, while democratic officials do not control religion so long as religious actors respect other citizens’ rights” (Stepan and Linz 2013, 17).

The results of opinion polls on Arab attitudes to democracy are worth noting. Prominent scholars Mark Tessler, Amaney Jamal and Michael Robbins (2012) directly asked the Arab public their opinions on a variety of topics including the nature of their
ideal democracy and whether they are in favour of Islamic laws. Their 'Arab Barometer Survey' was conducted in two waves, occurring in 2006/2007 and 2010/2011. The study showed a remarkable lift and overwhelming and consistent support for democracy after the Arab Spring occurred. A majority of respondents surveyed in both waves of the Arab Barometer believe that their countries fall short of their ideal democracy. At the same time, they recorded a slight decline in their support for the role of religion in politics (Tessler and Jamal and Robbins 2012, 93), which explains the terminology shift in the early Arab Spring, trading religious and nationalist slogans for the secular and universal.

While that the vast majority of Arabs support democracy, the same surveys discovered that the respondents in every country, except Lebanon, agreed that the government should implement Sharia law. Meanwhile, in response to a number of questions about the preferred role of religion in the political system, in nearly all cases a majority preferred a system without a strong role for Islam or religious actors. The trio of researchers summarise:

[that] it is clear that the concept of law under the shari’a is popular, which highlights the positive connotation that shari’a has in many communities. Although other response patterns demonstrate that most individuals do not desire a harsh Taliban-style legal system and that the law should also be guided by the will of the people, there remains broad agreement that laws should be consistent with people’s understanding of the shari’a (Tessler, Jamal and Robbins 2012, 96-97).

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62 They carried out their first survey though face-to-face interviews of representative samples of men and women aged 18 and older in seven Arab countries: Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Yemen. The second wave of the Arab Barometer employed similar methods and was carried out in the previous countries except Kuwait, as well as in Egypt and Tunisia (where political conditions prevented the conduct of the surveys during the first wave), Iraq, Saudi Arabic and Sudan (Tessler, Jamal, Robbins 2012, 89-103).
In fact, a system based on Sharia could mean different things to different people and in different contexts, and that may depend on personal or localised interpretation of the sacred texts of the *Quraan* and *Sunnah*. To some, Sharia might signal ‘Talibanisation’, while to others; it may just provide the moral source of laws. However, the variety of responses is surely affected by socio-economic differences as well as by the ethnic, cultural and linguistic environment.

United States President Bush’s purported attempts to promote democracy in Iraq in 2003 (and later in other selected Arab countries) were unsuccessful because they lacked political legitimacy, and more importantly, caused democracy to be associated with military intervention, which offended Arab dignity in the first place (Roy 2011b). The Arab Spring was

[a] succession of indigenous upheavals centered on particular nation-states and delinked from Western encroachments, that democracy is seen as both acceptable and desirable. This is why the ritual denunciations decrying Zionism as the source of all the Arab world’s troubles, were so remarkably absent from the demonstrations … this also explains why al-Qaeda is out of the picture: the uprooted global jihadist is no longer a model for young activists and fails to find many takers when he seeks to enlist local militants for the global cause … al-Qaeda in short is a yesterday’s news, part and parcel of the old anti-imperialist political culture that the Arab Middle East is now leaving behind. (Roy 2012d, 9)

Roy’s conclusions about the natural demise of the jihadist in the process, however, are premature. In fact, the emergence of military uprisings in Libya and Syria demonstrates that insurgent Islamism is alive and doing well, though some are doing better than others due to their respective geopolitical conditions. Libyan rebels cooperated with NATO in order to get rid of Ghadaffi, then later on became a burden for the West, with strong militias located throughout Libya that threaten Western interests.
In Syria, on the other hand, they have lacked direct Western support, though, reportedly some regional countries such as Turkey, the Emirates and Saudi Arabia, have supported them with weaponry and logistic background.

The Islamist fighters in Libya, despite their inability to coalesce as a political force during the 2012 election, factor heavily in the daily political scene as armed militias cause severe security unrest. In Syria, which continues to struggle in a civil war between revolutionaries and the regime, the strongest liberation army groups are composed of Islamist and al-Qaeda style fighters who call themselves ‘Jebhaat u-Nusraa’ (Support Front) and other emerging jihadist brands. These fighters believe that a caliphate may be achieved in Syria. It is unlikely they would accept or promote liberal democracy and human rights if they were to be successful.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, the post revolution government in Tunisia has demonstrated that democratisation is a painstaking process; while in Egypt it has been an absolute and ongoing failure. Economic troubles and the new political diversity have further slowed the democratisation process and transition period. In addition, the sometimes unreasonable expectations of ordinary people who have suffered through decades of maldevelopment during authoritarian rule create pressure on these governments, as was seen in Tunisia before a new constitution could be approved and in Egypt, after the ousting of Mubarek. With that said, the ousting of Egypt's Morsi was undertaken through an organised army coup, ostensibly justified by the incompetence, including in the area of economic management, and Mubarek-type corruption, of the Morsi Administration. Events in Egypt and other Arab states beg the most important questions of the post-Arab
Spring: Can MB Islamists deliver a true democratic transition as promised? Is it possible for neo-Islamists, whether in Tunisia or elsewhere, to preside over smooth democratic transitions in the foreseeable future?

Neo-Islamists are the offspring of their societies, and they have evolved during last two or three decades. Most neo-Islamists desire democracy and the multi-party political system. Without a doubt, there have been some failures in trying to enact democratic transitions for various reasons, and some attempts might fail in the foreseeable future.

When it comes to a case study of a neo-Islamist party to explore further its moderation behaviour, democratic credibility and political openness, as well as reviewing whether it has the skills required to run a country post 2011 revolution, we chose the Tunisian Ennahda Party. In the next chapter we will examine the Tunisian postcolonial context where Ennahda emerged as major political force in the early 1980s, then a brief history and the general circumstances surrounding Ennahda’s conceptualisation of its political and ideological choices, as well as other external factors that contributed to Ennahda’s particular tendencies and historical direction.
The modern Tunisia nation-state’s borders are now almost exactly the same as when the state was founded under the Hafside Dynasty (1229-1574), though French occupation cut off part of western Tunisia and added it to Algerian soil. The 1534 Ottoman conquest of Tunisia under the command of Barbarossa Hayreddin Pasha led to direct Ottoman governance for decades, until the dynasty of Muradi Beys, starting around 1613. The last Tunisian royal family, the Husaynid Beys, ruled effectively from 1705 until the French invasion in 1881, but remained as a symbolic institution under French occupation until independence in 1957 when Bourguiba transformed the country into a republic. Both the Muradi Dynasty and the Husaynid Dynasty were self-governing states under the Ottoman crown, with close ties with the Empire.

As Stepan (2012) noted, the high degree of de facto autonomy that Tunisia enjoyed as a nominal province of the fading Ottoman Empire, allowed it to develop
(along with Egypt) the most liberal and rights-friendly policies in the Arab world. However the 1881 French invasion and subsequent colonisation until 1956, contributed to Tunisia's modernisation and bend towards European politics and liberal values, though sectors of Tunisian society rejected French colonisation and its liberal values altogether.

In 1846, two years before France banned slavery in its dominions, Tunisia abolished slavery after an effective campaign of arguments driven by both religious and secular groups. This was a first for the Muslim world, and occurred 19 years before the abolition of slavery in the United States (1865), 42 years before Brazil (1888), and 116 years before Saudi Arabia (1962) (Stepan 2012).

In order to better understand the social and historical circumstances of Ennahda’s birth, a study of Tunisia's contemporary postcolonial history is in order. Thus, the birth of the Tunisian republic is examined here, with its modern, French-style constitution and secular laws, the effects of the first two Tunisian presidents, Habib Bourguiba and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on the republic, the relationship between the state and Islam, and thereafter a discussion of the state's challenging relationship with the emerging political

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63 Habib Bourguiba (Arabic: حبيب بورقيبة, 3 August 1903 – 6 April 2000) was a Tunisian statesman, the founder and the first president of the Republic of Tunisia from 25 July 1957 to 7 November 1987. Bourguiba was a member of the Executive Committee of the Destour Party before he clashed with mainstream pro-Arabism and pro-Islam party vision, and he created the Neo-Destour Party in Ksar Hellal on 2 March 1934. From that moment, Bourguiba set out across country to try to enrol the majority of Tunisians from the countryside, thus creating a larger base for his newly formed party.

After independence on 20 March 1956, Habib Bourguiba was appointed the President of the National Constituent Assembly, and head of the interim government. At the same time, he acted as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia. On 25 July 1957, a republic was proclaimed, abolishing the monarchy and vesting Bourguiba with powers of president of the Republic. Bourguiba's long and powerful presidency was formative for the creation of today's Tunisian state and nation.

64 Zine al-Abidin Ben Ali (Arabic: زين العابدين بن علي, born 3 September 1936) was the second president of Tunisia, ruling from 1987 to 2011. Ben Ali was appointed Prime Minister in October 1987, and he assumed the Presidency on 7 November 1987 in a bloodless coup d'état that ousted President Habib Bourguiba, who was declared physically and mentally incompetent to resume his duties. Ben Ali was subsequently re-elected with enormous majorities, each time exceeding 90% of the vote; the last re-election was on 25 October 2009. He fled the country on 14 January 2011, nearly four weeks after the Jasmine Revolution kicked him out of the country.
Islam. Tunisia’s own Islamism emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, due to Bourguiba's call for a ‘Tunisian version of Islam’ and secularisation of the state-religious affairs relations, as small cells of intelligentsia. Its current form as a popular movement only showed up in the 1980s.

The main focus of this chapter is whether Ennahda’s very own evolving conditions from its birth in early 1970s, and its local Tunisian environment contributed to its uniqueness, and the tendency towards more liberal politics and adoption of democracy at early stages. Consideration is also given to whether the harsh active secularism of Bourguiba and Ben Ali’s post-colonial Tunisia has affected the transformation of Ennahda ideology over the years or not. These issues directly relate to the aim of examining the ways in which neo-Islamism has been shaped in general, wherever it is found across the region.

Still, each Islamic movement in each Arab or Muslim state is unique and differs at least in its localised conditions and socio-economic environment; Ennahda is no exception. The contemporary characteristics of Tunisian politics are analysed in this chapter, including their development through the unfolding of historical events related to the rise of the Ennahda Party. The discussion encompasses Tunisia's history from the early 1970s and aims to define the contemporary constraints that Tunisian neo-Islamism has had to endure since then.

**Tunisia’s postcolonial authoritarianism dilemma**

Between its independence in 1956 and 15 January 2011, Tunisia had only two presidents: Habib Bourguiba (1956-1987) and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (1987-2011). During both rules, regime policies remained similar, following Bourguiba's assertive
secular state doctrine. That is, the state played an active role in excluding religion from the public sphere and keeping it a private affair (Kuru 2013; Sadiki 2002a and 2002b; Prince 2012a; Alexander 2012). Bourguibism distanced itself from Arabism and the Islamic *ummah* ideal, and called for Tunisian nationalism with a Tunisian traditional version of Islam. (Salem 1984; Zemzemi 2011, Kallali and Ben Yussef 2012; Cherni 2011; Ayachi 2012).

**Bourguibism’s radical secularism**

During this period, the process of rebuilding Tunisia as a postcolonial republic from scratch (Bourguiba demolished the Tunisian Husaynid Dynasty$^{65}$ in 1957) was positive and progressive on some levels, but harsh and interrupted on others. Bourguibism is a postcolonial vision of the nation-state developed with French-style laicism and an overzealous focus on Tunisification. The latter entailed emphasis on Tunisia as a unique nation; Tunisian traditions and even Tunisian Islam (Mabrouk 2012; Salem 1984; Tamimi 2001; Zemzemi 2011, Kallali and Ben Yussef 2012; Cherni 2011; Ayachi 2012).

Arguably, the Bourguiba era improved the status of women, education and tourism. Bourguibism promoted secularism and Westernisation along the lines of Turkey's Ataturk, but without the later affiliation with a strong military institution. As the first postcolonial president, Habib Bourguiba followed a bare-knuckled policy of French and Turkish-style state-led ‘modernisation’ peppered with harsh denunciation of

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$^{65}$ Bourguiba demolished the Tunisian Husaynid Dynasty; which resumed its function throughout the French occupation from 1881 until 1956. He also put the last king Mohamed Lamine Bey under house-arrest until his death in 1961.
religious belief (Stepan 2012; Sadiki 2002a; Alexander 2012; Allani 2009; Mabrouk 2012).

Bourguiba promoted a clear separation between religion and state institutions. For instance, in 1956, the year of independence, he promulgated the Tunisian Code of Personal Status (CPS), creating a set of Westernised legal provisions regulating family law which were “unprecedented in the Arab and Islamic world” (Torelli 2012, 67-68). For Bourguiba and Bourguibism, the CPS became a symbol of secularism and modernisation at the forefront of the Islamic world. Bourguiba also nationalised the waqf or "pious trusts", which were, in effect, landholding foundations whose revenues paid for mosque building and maintenance, orphanages and other Muslim social programs. He cut the study of religion in public schools to a single hour a week, and required all teachers to be fluent in French as well as Arabic, in a clear attempt to exclude Zaytouna Grand Mosque University graduates from teaching, as they knew only the latter language (Stepan 2012).

From the early months of 1956, “the young Tunisia state mobilised all its resources to ensure its monopolisation of Islam” (Mabrouk 2012, 50). The government’s new elite headed by Habib Bourguiba cleverly mounted a systematic campaign to achieve two aims: the ‘Tunisification’ of Islam and the dismantling of religious institutions, as the Tunisian sociologist Mahdi Mabrouk notes (Mabrouk 2012).

The steps taken by the new state to monopolise Islam were: the termination of education through Zaytouna,\footnote{Zaytouna Mosque, also, Zaytuna, Ez-Zitouna or Ezzitouna Mosque (Arabic: جامع الزيتونة, literally, the Mosque of Olive) is a major mosque in Tunis, Tunisia. The mosque is the oldest in the capital of Tunisia, and the second built in North Africa. It covers an area of 5,000 square meters (1.2 acres) with nine} the termination of religious endowments; the prohibition
of all education provided by zawiyas (shrines where Quranic classes are taught), which were to become institutions exclusively dedicated to worship; the abolition of Quranic schools; and the legal prohibition of any activity in mosques other than prayer. Even religious instruction, such as sermons, was subject to prior administrative sanction (Mabrouk 2012, 52). The Zaytouna mosque, which was founded in Tunis in 737, is the oldest religious scientific institution in Africa, if not the world, and is more than two centuries older than Cairo’s al-Azhar University (Stepan 2012).

Rashid Ghanouchi, Ennahda’s founder and current president, grew up during this stage of independence and witnessed the secularisation imposed by Bourguibism. He writes:

In reality, Bourguiba’s victory was more a victory over Arabic and Islamic civilisation as a conqueror, and like the foreign invaders he took power. Then he began targeting religious institutions, the institutions that were the very life of Tunisia. At this time, everything revolved around the University of Zaytouna: traditional craftsmanship, Tunisian literature, and all thought. In a sense, all of Tunisia was produced at the Zaytouna. … [For] those who had been raised in an Arab and Muslim culture – the majority of Tunisian intellectuals who came out of the educational institutions affiliated to the Zaytouna – recognised the link between Arabism and Islam. They added weight to the importance of Arabic language and literature, the roots of Arab-Islamic belonging in Tunisia, which breathed into the spirit of resistance to foreign invasion … and served as a kind of shield for it against Europe. (Ghanouchi in Burgat 2003, 29)

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entrances. It has 160 authentic columns brought originally from the ruins of the old city of Carthage. The mosque is known to host one of the first and greatest universities in the history of Islam. Along with theology, the university taught jurisprudence, history, grammar, science and medicine. Zaytouna's libraries were the richest among North African counterparts, with several collections totalling in the tens of thousands of books. One of its libraries, al-Abdaliyah included a large collection of rare and unique manuscripts. Zaytouna mosque remained open for students during the French occupation (1981-1956) till Bourguiba downsized it to a faculty of theology at the University of Tunis (Ismail 2006, 141).
The Zaytouna Grand Mosque University and its associated religious foundations, along with other smaller religious establishments, were dismantled in 1958. Thus, a millennium-long tradition of education and teaching was terminated (Mabrouk 2012). This stage of the destruction of traditional Islam in Tunisia would provide a key reason for the resurgence of political Islam just a decade later. Zaytouna’s dismantling resulted in early clashes between the state and the sheiks and ulamas; that were suddenly marginalised, defeated and, basically, made redundant after centuries of prestigious social leadership. Frequently, Bourguiba publically mocked them and ordinary Tunisians denigrated zawatnas (Zaytouna’s scholars) as following an outdated Islam. In the words of Ghanouchi, “The generation that attended these institutions was like a defeated army” (Ghanouchi in Burgat, 2003, 30).

In this climate, President Bourguiba often expressed criticism of early Islamic figures such as the Prophet Mohammed and his companions (sahabah), degrading them through caricature. The greatest jihad in Bourguiba’s eyes was the struggle against ignorance, which in his opinion included religious heritage. The political elite mostly referred to him by as the mujahid al-akbar (the greatest jihadist). His hero status carried over into national television where his name was mentioned on a daily basis, until Ben Ali ousted him in November 1987.

On 18 February 1960, President Bourguiba shocked many Tunisians in an infamous speech, when he called on them to place the moral worth of work above all other values, including religious values. He decided, as a consequence, to challenge the religious fasting tradition of the month of Ramadan because it reduced the efficiency of

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67 According to Rashid Ghanouchi, at independence in 1956 there were between 25,000 and 27,000 people attending institutions affiliated with Zaytouna. On the other hand, there were only 4500 to 5000 studying at secondary schools created under the French occupation in European style.
the labour force with subsequent economic consequences (Salem 1984; Mabrouk 2012; Cavatorta 2012; Allani 2009).

Bourguiba also urged Tunisian women to achieve his vision of a secular modern Tunisia, in particular by disregarding women’s Islamic dress. He once removed the headscarf (hijab) of a Tunisian woman in public with the footage subsequently shown on national television. In one of his speeches, Bourguiba called the Islamic veil an ‘odious rag’ (Cavatorta 2012a). Furthermore, in 1981, after many Tunisian women returned to wearing the hijab, Bourguiba issued an infamous decree called ‘Manchour 108’ (Decree 108) which prohibited women from wearing the veil in government buildings, such as public administration buildings, schools and universities (Mabrouk 2012). This legal prohibition lasted thirty years, until the revolution in 2011, when the interim government of Mohamed Ghanouchi and his interior ministry allowed women to be photographed wearing their headscarves on their national ID cards and passports.

Conservatives of traditional and religious backgrounds criticised Bourguibism for its radical secularism and pro-Western culture. Islamists emerged in the early 1980s to establish the first real political opposition party, the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI). This party, despite being continuously banned until the 2011 revolution, constituted a threat to both Bourguiba and Ben Ali, attacking their regimes’ propaganda, challenging the legitimisation of their autocratic rule, and criticising their lack of democracy and political liberty. In return, its members were faced with torture, imprisonment and heavy anti-Islamist propaganda from the government.

During the colonial period, the traditional scholars of Zaytouna worked hand in hand with the Union Generale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT) whose first president,
Sheik Mohammed Fadel Ibn-Achour, was one of the top Zaytouna scholars and son of Grand Mufti Imam Mohammed Tahir Ibn Achour. During the resistance era, many Zaytouna scholars contributed to fighting French colonialism. Soon after independence however, Bourguiba pushed the UGTT to adopt his views of Tunisian nationalism and move away from Arabism, Islamism and universal Islamic identity. He alienated or eliminated all pan-Arab or Islamist UGTT leaders, and independence figures including Saleh Ben Youssef, who was murdered in Germany by a government intelligence agent (Salem 1984, 178-179).

Saleh Ben Youssef, who had close ties with the king of the Husaynid Dynasty; Mohamed Lamine Bey (1881-1961), was supported by the traditional authorities of Zaytouna Mosque, traditional artisans and merchants, and the people of Djerba, his birthplace, and the surrounding southern areas. Bourguiba was supported in the Sahel area, his home. Ben Youssef was seen as a promoter of pan-Arabism and Islamism, while Bourguiba was accused by the Youssefists of being too westernised and too slow to push for full independence from France (King 2009; Salem 1984).

The 1955 internal autonomy accords with France aimed at a self-governance agreement, to which Ben Youssef was opposed, was the tipping point for both men. In the following years, Ben Youssef organised a guerrilla war in the southern parts of Tunisia, which was quickly destroyed by the French air force with the full cooperation of Habib Bourguiba (King 2009; Salem 1984, 132).

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68 Ben Youssef was assassinated in Frankfurt on 12 August 1961. During the 1950s, he entered a battle for power against Habib Bourguiba. The struggle between the two men regarded the leadership of the Neo-Destour (the new Constitutional Party) and accession to control over the state in the past independent era. After Bourguiba won, and thereafter the merciless crackdown on his supporters in the late 1950s, Ben Youssef fled the country to Egypt where President Jamal Abd al-Nasser granted him a safe haven until he was murdered in 1961 (King 2009).
The next challenge for Bourguiba would be from the left, and radical Marxists in particular. Bourguiba saw the ‘Perspective Group’ (Affak) as a direct threat to the regime, and started a series of trials against its members during 1960s, eventually banning the Communist Party in 1963 (Allani 2009, 259).

The continuity of the Bourguiba regime in the 1970s, especially after Bourguiba was named President for Life in 1974, the failure of Ahmed Ben Saleh’s socialist economic reform plan, and thereafter, the economic crisis and unemployment in the mid 1970s, led the UGTT to engage in an open conflict with the regime. A bloody confrontation ensued between UGTT and the regime in the Black Thursday of 26 January 1978, where the Tunisian army was deployed with brutality, resulting in many casualties and leading to the arrest and the prosecution of a large number of unionists (Allani 2009; Sadiki 200, 60).

The third major episode of unrest came with the terrorist attack on Gafsa (South-west) in 1980, which was carried out by a group of Tunisian pan-Arabism dissenters, who managed to sneak in from Algeria and were supported by the Libyan government. This attack drove Bourguiba to mobilise the Tunisian army to the Libyan borders.

Four years later, Bourguiba would face his fourth major challenge, from the so-called bread uprising in January 1984, which was triggered when the government

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69 Ahmed Ben Saleh is a Tunisian politician and unionist, born in 1926, who was elected as Secretary General of UGTT from 1954-1956, and held high ranked roles within Destour ruling party. During 1960s he held various ministries under Bourguiba cabinet, and sometimes he held more than two ministerial portfolios at the same time. In 1961 Ahmad Ben Salah took charge of planning and finance. Rural and conservative opposition within the Bourguiba entourage foiled his ambitious efforts at forced-pace modernisation; especially in agriculture; adding to the bad reputation he gained by his famous socialist program. He was sacked in the late 1960s from all of his positions and in 1970 charged by the Bourguiba regime with treason. He fled the country in that year secretly, and didn’t come back from exile permanently until 2000.
eliminated the subsidy for this vital product. The uprising resulted in the sacking of a few ministers and the trial of UGTT Secretary General Habib Achour, who was sentenced to prison (Allani 2009, 262).

Bourguiba’s standing as the father of independence did not last long. By the late 1960s and the early 1970s, a new generation of Tunisians had been born who had not witnessed the fight for independence, nor did they support Bourguiba’s vision of Islam in secular state.

Yet “the children of independence, now the country’s youth, began not only to rebel against a tyrannical father but even began to reject the idea of such a paternity” (Mabrouk 2012, 53). Bourguiba viewed the Islamists of MTI as backward fanatics, who would destroy the progressive and pro-Western country he was building. He rejected the movement’s bid for legal recognition and launched the first of several crackdowns that jailed thousands of Islamists in the mid 1980s. By the summer of 1987, Tunisia teetered on the brink of civil war. The looming prospect of violent chaos prompted Prime Minister Zine al Abidine Ben Ali to depose Bourguiba in November 1987. (Alexander 2012b, 41)

Rachid Ghanouchi was sentenced to death during Bourguiba’s rule and later sentenced several times to life imprisonment during Ben Ali’s subsequent time in power. As Mehdi Mabrouk (2012) pointed out, the official religious policies undertaken during Bourguiba's long rule contributed to the emergence of Tunisian political Islam, and thereafter the “radicalisation of many aspects of Tunisian religiosity itself” (48-70).

Bourguiba's secularism was active, intellectual and somehow camouflaged by French-style civil governance, his understanding of which was acquired during his studies in Sorbonne, Paris in the early 1900s. Ben Ali's secularism, on the other hand,
tended to be more pragmatic, opportunistic, and actually harsher in its execution and security measures than Bourguiba's. Bourguiba and Ben Ali tried their best to wipe out political Islam with different methods, though most of the religious policies were profoundly the same. Although late in his rule Ben Ali opened up some religious outlets, such as Zaytouna Radio and Zaytouna Bank (Mabrouk 2012) and softened his security measures on headscarf prohibition, he stopped short of making any remarkable change in state policy towards political Islam.

Though he was not an intellectual like Bourguiba and his anti-Islamism sentiments were not as deep and ideologically aggressive as Bourguiba's, Ben Ali introduced one notable and infamous policy, which was uncovered instantly by state media during the 1990s. This policy called for the ‘cleansing of the sources’, and by ‘source’, Ben Ali meant the origins of Islamism. Some of Ben Ali’s opportunistic leftist entourage developed this policy, convincing Ben Ali to execute it in order to wipe out the Ennahda movement once and for all (Ghanouchi 2011; Mabrouk 2012; Zemzemi 2011).

While Bourguiba targeted Islamists during the last three or four years of his rule (1984-1987), his successor Ben Ali tried to wipe them out throughout his twenty-three years in power, particularly from 1990 until 14 January 2011 when he fled the country to Saudi Arabia.

**Ben Ali and Islam cleansing policies**

On 7 November 1987, Ben Ali came to power, ousting Habib Bourguiba, the President of the Tunisian Republic of over thirty-one years, in a bloodless ‘doctor's
coup'. It was a remarkable political feat from a man whose name at the time was no more than “an inconspicuous footnote in Tunisia’s public affairs, mostly in the obscure and unimportant domain of national security and the military” (Sadiki 2002a, 58).

It was alleged that Bourguiba, who was eighty-five years old, had dementia (Stepan 2012). The most reliable direct explanation for the coup d’état, however, was that Ben Ali’s advent to power was a much needed breather during 1986 and 1987 when the issue of succession was made manifest by the questionable wisdom of Bourguiba's insisting on politically motivated trials of Islamist dissidents of the MTI (Sadiki 2002).

Before Bourguiba's overthrow in 1987, civil and political unrest and almost daily protests filled newspapers and television screens across the country. Organised by MTI, demonstrations protested the unfair trial of its leaders. Bourguiba demanded the death penalty for MTI leader Rashid Ghanouchi, despite popular unrest and growing support for the Islamists across the country. There were rumours that MTI had a secret Tunisian army based cell (*khaliyah amneyah*) and had planned to save the country from bloodshed by staging a coup d’état on 8 November 1987, just one day after Ben Ali’s coup. Not surprisingly, one of Ben Ali’s very first actions as the new head of the state was to arrest the alleged members of the secret cell and remand them for trial. Ennahda has yet to officially acknowledge that it approved any plot to oust Bourguiba.

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70 The Medical (or Doctor’s) Coup is a Tunisian popular reference for the 7th of September 1987 coup d’état, where Bourguiba’s head of doctors was urged or forced to write a medical certificate stating that Bourguiba was mentally unfit or incompetent to discharge his duties as President of the Republic. This step was made according to a clause of the Tunisian constitution.

71 According to some sources, the MTI established a secret wing in 1981 that was dominated by Saleh Karkar, as well as Hamadi al-Jibali and Habib al-Mokni, and that became the vanguard of the movement, being responsible for ensuring both its secrecy and cohesiveness. The MTI leadership at the time “has vigorously denied these accusations, insisting that such claims are simply attempts by the regime to weaken their credibility and to find an excuse to repress them even further” (Pargeter 2012, 79).
In his first months in power, Ben Ali tried to heal the wounds of the Bourguiba era by releasing political prisoners, including MTI members and promising free elections, pluralism and an end to Tunisia's ‘president for life’ condition. The tense last few months of Bourguiba’s rule prompted Ben Ali to treat the critical situation with a much-needed facelift of the regime's image and credibility. Ben Ali even invited Rashid Ghanouchi to his palace in Carthage. At the end of that meeting, Ghanouchi made his famous statement: “We trust Allah, then Ben Ali” (Sadiki 2002b; Zemzemi 2011). After his release from prison and grant of presidential amnesty in May 1988, Ghanouchi declared: “Ben Ali refused to obey Bourguiba’s orders to kill Ghanouchi and his colleagues in prison and dared carry out the famous change; in doing this, he not only saved one person but the whole nation” (Allani 2009, 263).

In another bid for legal recognition, Rashid Ghanouchi changed the name of his party from MTI to ‘Ennahda (Renaissance) Movement’ in order to comply with a new law that forbade party names to contain religious references (Alexander 2012, Allani 2009). The Ben Ali regime, however, refused to recognise Ennahda as a legal party. The regime did allow the group to express their opinions almost freely through a licensed newspaper called *Al-Fajr* for six months before a crackdown in late 1990. Prior to the crackdown, Ben Ali, while refusing to formally recognise Ennahda, did not want to provoke this clandestine group that enjoyed strong popular support (Alexander 2012b).

Ben Ali also invested in the ruling party, which he inherited from Bourguiba. Sheikh Abdelaziz Thâalbi founded the Constitutional Liberal Party in 1920, which was known as Destour Party, to lead the country towards constitutional life, self-government,

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72 *Al Fajr* newspaper published its first issue on 21 April 1990, and was forced to cease printing by Ben Ali authorities in December 1990, due to accusation of publishing aggressive anti regime statements of Rashid Ghanouchi.
then at late stages, independence from the French. Bourguiba managed to split that party and form the neo-Destour Party in 1934, which was the ruling party from 1964 until 1988, where it picked up the name Socialist Destourian Party (*Parti Socialiste Destourien*, or PSD). Ben Ali changed its name again in 1988 to the Democratic Constitutional Rally (*Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique*, RCD) which was dissolved after the 2011 revolution. By the 1994 and 1999 Ben Ali re-elections, “the RCD developed into an octopus-like apparatus of two million members (in a country of ten million!) and it orchestrated a campaign for Ben Ali’s candidacy in 2004” (Filiu 2011, 15). The party ran campaigns to amend the constitution to allow him to run for re-election in 2004, 2009 and 2014, extending the three terms, fifteen years time limit and the maximum age to be in office.

Prior to the 1989 election, Ghanouchi signed Ben Ali’s National Pact, which was essentially a social contract between the government and civil and political groups intended to ‘manufacturing consensuses’ and build confidence between the regime and non-state actors. During this time (1987-1989) the pace and content of change was impressive, as Sadiki observed (Sadiki 2002a, 133).

Without a doubt, Ennahda ceased fire, either to heal its wounds or driven by the set of expectations promised in Ben Ali’s ‘new era’. Leaked news from the Ben Ali and Ghanouchi meeting revealed that the de facto president promised Ghanouchi that the legalization of MTI would be just a matter of time (Allani 2009; Ghanouchi 2011a).

According to Alaya Allani (2009), the years from 1987 to 1989 represented a short break in Ennahda's very long journey of confrontation with the regime. During this period, Ben Ali offered opportunities for the Islamists through three avenues. First, the
movement was permitted to take part in the High Council of the National Pact by the end of 1988. Second, the movement was allowed representation in the Islamic High Council, through it’s the second-in-charge Abdelfattah Mourou, in early 1989. Finally, Ennahda was permitted to take part in parliamentary elections of 1989. The movement was also allowed an Islamic student union (the *Union Generale des Etudiants Tunisiens* - UGET), established on 17 December 1988 (Allani 2009, 263).

The drafter of the National Pact was an academic named Mohamed Charfi, an extreme secularist, who would become the education minister in 1989. Charfi was allegedly the mastermind behind the cleansing program against Islam, which was executed later (Ghanouchi 2011; Allani 2009, 265).

Various civic groups and parties carefully negotiated the Pact prior to its implementation. These groups included the Tunisian League of Human Rights, UGTT and formal and informal political organisations, like the Tunisian Communist Party and Ennahda. The given reason for the discussions was that the authorities wanted to achieve national consensus in developing a roadmap for democratic transition. However, there was no mention of free elections or real democratic mechanisms that could accommodate multiple parties and a power transition. Instead, the Pact focused on the Tunisian Code of Personal Status (CPS). Ben Ali expected all parties to consent to the Pact, including the Islamists who saw that it contained un-Islamic clauses such as making adoption and consensual sex outside marriage legal, while criminalising polygamy and condemning Islamic physical punishment, such as stoning married adulterers to death, as against human and natural rights (Ghanouchi 2011).
According to Rashid Ghanouchi, who had just been released from prison in May 1988, the National Pact was a challenging test for his movement. It was a tough decision, but Ennahda chose to make concessions to avoid recurring confrontation:

The pact was a real crisis for the Islamic movement, which was keen to maintain the national harmony as the condition for the democratic transition, and to gain legal status in order to cut off the means of its enemies, who wanted to drag us to confrontation again so we would not have enough time to heal wounds and invest our previous sacrifices (Ghanouchi 2011a, 115).73

Despite signing this agreement, Ben Ali changed his position and began targeting the Islamists once again. The Islamists saw this aggression as evidence of the regime's penchant for totalitarianism and its desire to eliminate the Islamists from the political scene, selling it to the public as necessary to protect the country from extremism and terrorism (Ghanouchi 2011).

Islamist candidates received more public support prior to the election, however, than the government expected. Subsequently, security forces, Ministry of Interior informants and members of the RCD were sent to identify and spy on supporters of the Islamist candidates, leaders and organisations. Islamists subsequently received 13 percent of the nationwide vote with up to 30 percent in urban areas, but failed to win any seat outright due the electoral system in place at the time, which was a proportional system (Zemzemi 2011; Allani 2009; Ghanouchi 2011a).74

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73 This is an English translation of the original Arabic text.

74 Under a proportional representation "PR" voting system, if 30% of voters support a particular party then roughly 30% of seats will be won by that party. However, there are several different forms of proportional representation. Some, as in this case, are focused solely on achieving the proportional representation of different political parties while others permit the voter to choose between individual candidates. Ennahda candidates in the 1989 election ran as independents, and Ennahda supporters missed out on the opportunity to be represented.
As a result of the election outcome, Ennahda accused the regime of fabricating the election result, and public protests again escalated with violence followed by reprisals from the Ben Ali regime. Ghanouchi fled to Algeria in late 1989, then to Sudan before he finally travelled to London to seek political asylum.

The reasons behind the overnight crackdown on Islamists are unknown, though the Islamists themselves would often refer to conspiracy theories that call for an elimination of the ‘Islamic threat’. Alternatively, the alarming results of the 1989 elections could have showed Ennahda to be a viable threat to the regime, though it didn’t obtain more than 13% of the votes nationwide, which was nevertheless only second to the tally attained by RCD ruling party (Allani 2009; Ghanouchi 2011a, 2011b; Brown 1998a and 1998b).

After the 1989 elections, a confident Ennahda decided to go back to confronting the regime. It used the opportunity of the first Gulf War to influence public opinion by raising its own slogans against the government, among them being ‘eliminate the regime’ (Allani 2009). The government reacted immediately with the mass arrest of Ennahda cadres, banning the al-Fajr newspaper in December 1990 and dissolving the UGTE in March 1991. The official media and the security agencies portrayed Ennahda's opposition as an emergency crisis, propagating stories regarding the discovery of secret cells within the security establishment. By the end of 1991, the regime prosecuted around 300 top Ennahda leaders, 100 of whom were military personalities (Allani 2009, 265). According to Ennahda's official statements, more than 30,000 supporters were either arrested for casual interrogation or imprisoned and severely tortured by the end of 1992 (Ghanouchi 2011; Zemzami 2011).
By then, virtually all of the Ennahda leadership was imprisoned and its organisational capabilities within the country were destroyed. Although it was commonly understood that Ennahda was effectively dismantled in the early 1990s, many Tunisians, including Ben Ali and his security agents, believed it maintained a clandestine structure and presence in the country (Alexander 2012). Indeed, after its January 2011 comeback, and early April 2011 official recognition as a political party, Ennahda showed Tunisia its ability to move the masses, organise meetings, public gatherings, and rallies. The party opened branches at a furious speed in almost every major Tunisian city or town, outpacing other liberal, nationalist and leftist parties. By October 2011, national and international observers concluded that Ennahda's was clearly the most effective and organised election campaign (Cavatorta 2012).

Once Ben Ali crushed Ennahda in the 1990s, his regime went on to introduce a new strategy to prevent the Islamists from regrouping. The strategy, developed at a congress of the RCD, was called ‘Plan for the Cleansing of Sources’ (Mabrouk 2012, 57). Strangely, without fearing the provocation of ordinary Muslims, the full details of the plan were highlighted in the media in order to stimulate popular support. In fact, the main characteristic of the plan was to purify traditional Islamic resources from any item that could lead to politicising Islam or encouraging development of political Islam. According to Ennahda, rather than targeting just the ‘sources’ leading to political Islam, the plan targeted Islam as a whole religion and the common conscience of the Tunisian people (Ghanouchi 2011b; Zemzemi 2011).

Mehdi Mabrouk, an academic expert on this ‘cleansing program’, notes that the executors of the program were very precise about the sources to be targeted, namely:
Intelectual sources involved books, school programs, journals, newspapers and the mass media. As a result, there was little surprise when school texts were purged of rare phrases describing, for example, an old grandfather waking up early to pray. The minister of education at the time Mohamed Charfi, was the leading practitioner of pedagogical purification.

Moral sources involved personalities, finance and social elements. Imams and similar personalities faced harassment. Financial sources, such as major traditional traders and craftsmen, had provided financial support through zakat, something that the state now addressed. Social sources of support were varied but all received attention. Thus members of Ennahda were banned from employment, and other measures were taken against them including measures that abused their most fundamental human rights – even traditional head-shawls, which were quite different from the Islamic shawl or headscarf, were banned, as was the growing of a beard. Mosques in all educational establishments were closed, the buildings being used as archives instead (Mabrouk 2012, 57).

In the face of this ‘cleansing plan’, the Islamic revival within Tunisia in the late 2000s was noteworthy. The generation of youngsters born in the early 1990s hadn't experienced Ennahda's most difficult times and the consequences of government opposition. This generation was attracted to Islamist preachers such as al-Qaradawi, who had a weekly program (on Shariaa and life) on the al Jazeera satellite channel. This and many similar free to air religious programs reportedly contributed to the Islamic revival in Tunisia and elsewhere. As in Iran on the eve of the 1979 Islamic revolution, many sections of society expressed their religiosity by challenging the regime oppression towards what they considered to be native customs. While in Iran, the Qom Hawzah75 led the popular religious movement, and thereafter facilitated Ayatollah Khomeini’s leadership of the 1979 popular uprising; Tunisia's enlarging religious section lacked any

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75 Qom Hawza was established around 1922 by the Grand Ayatollah Abdul-Karim Ha'eri Yazdi in Qom, Iran and is now considered the largest and most prestigious Shia Twelvers’ religious institution.
obvious consensual leadership. Ordinary apolitical Tunisians reacted to protect their collective identities and support their freedom of religiosity, which they had held for over fourteen centuries.

In addition to that, during the 2000s, the Arab world was being flooded with satellite television channels, which were unable to be reached by any serious Arab state censorship scissors. These free-to-air satellite stations, like *al-Jazeera, Iqra* and *al-Manar*, broadcasted religious debates, many of them concerning Islamist propaganda and general political talkback shows which highlighted the urgent need for democracy, dignity and liberties. The revival was expressed in many forms, such as young people occupying the mosques for prayers and women wearing the headscarf. Post-Islamist religiosity was at its peak.

During the 1990s, however, Ben Ali’s plan was effective due to the harsh security measures imposed on Ennahda-affiliated citizens and their families. Ennahda leaders themselves and other observers criticised the cleansing program as a leftist crusade against Islam as a whole, not just against the Islamists and Islamism (Ghanouchi 2011; Zemzemi 2011). Former leftists had infiltrated the RCD and decided to form an alliance with Ben Ali both in order to bury Islamism forever and to acquire influential positions in the regime. Notable leftists included personalities such as Mohamed Charfi, Nacer Smaoui, Ahmed Haj Ali and Moncef Rouici. Ennahda argued that measures which appeared to target the Islamists to force them out of political life, were in fact a campaign against the most basic rituals of Islam, which even Bourguiba himself would not have dared to carry out (Ghanouchi 2011). According to Mabrouk (2012), without this

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76 Leftist academic Mohamed Charfi, (1936/2008) (appointed education minister from April 1989 to May 1994) was allegedly the main draf ter of this cleansing program.
undisguised Trotskyist tactic of ‘entryism’ undertaken by the left, Ben Ali would have never dared to undertake such an extreme eradication of Islam from public life. Indeed, in the late 2000s, Ben Ali permitted his son-in-law Sakhr el-Matri, to establish his own Zaytouna religious radio station and Zaytouna Islamic bank (Mabrouk 2012). This concession could have been due to some combination of the individual religiosity of Ben Ali’s son-in-law, and Ben Ali’s attempts to soften the side effects of the cleansing plan, which had gone feral against Islamic traditions and religiosity. In fact, in the late 2000s, Ben Ali tried to show himself as a religion friendly president as national television celebrated his pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and his attendance at most traditional religious events across the year such as Eid celebrations and fasting during the month of Ramadan.

The majority of the Tunisian intelligentsia supported Ben Ali against what they called *dhalamia* (obscurantism), referring to the activities of Ennahda prior to their ban in the early 1990s. They considered the regime to be fighting the same battle and joined forces to more effectively combat the Islamists. These intellectual groups stood historically (during Bourguiba’s rule) on the left wing in national politics. Except for a

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77 Entryism (also referred to as entrism or enterism) is a political strategy in which an organisation or state encourages its members to join another, usually larger organisation in an attempt to expand its influence and agenda. In a situation where the organisation being "entered" is hostile, the entrists may engage in a degree of subterfuge to hide the fact that they are an organisation in their own right. The French Turn refers to the classic form of entrist advocated by Leon Trotsky in his essays on "the French Turn”. In June 1934, he proposed that the French Trotskyists dissolve their Communist League to join the French Section of the Workers International (SFIO) and that it also dissolve its youth section to join more easily with revolutionary elements. The tactic was adopted in August 1934, despite some opposition.

In Australia, the practice was widespread during the 1950s, where Communists battled against right-wing ‘Groupers’, for control of Australian trade unions. The Groupers subsequently formed the Democratic Labor Party. Today the practice in Australia is often known as a type of branch stacking. In recent times RSPCA Australia has been described as being the victim of the practice. The National Farmers Federation and Animals Australia have each been accused of infiltrating branches of RSPCA Australia in an attempt to promote opposing policies concerning battery hens, intensive pig farming, and the live export of sheep. For further reading see: Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929-1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).
tiny minority who preferred to abstain, the majority openly supported the regime’s campaign (Mabrouk 2012).

**Radicalisation and deradicalisation climate**

The climate of fear caused by the danger of being arrested and accused of being an Islamist or a ‘member of an illegal terrorist organisation’ paralysed everyone who may have had an interest in advancing Islamist politics. This paralysis prevented community leaders and organisations, such as small business managers, associations and other elements of civil society, from speaking up (Ghanouchi 2011a; Zemzemi 2011).

Throughout the twenty-two years of Ben Ali’s regime, the government routinely emphasised the threat of Islamist extremism in order to justify its authoritarian rule. Islamists had grown to be a more threatening force than the leftists had been in the 1960s and 70s during the Bourguiba era. In fact, some leftist enclaves had been eliminated by official harassment or disappearance when leaders were simply bribed with government positions. This was the case with Samir Abidi, who had been a fierce leftist leader of the student union during the 1980s. Abidi became the media and information minister of Ben Ali in early 1990s, and participated in the cleansing program against Ennahda cadres and ideology. The other major reason for the weakening of the leftists by the 1990s was the fall of the Soviet Union and the wave of democratisation, which swept Eastern Europe in the early nineties (Mabrouk 2012; Sadiki 2002a).

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78 Later on, after the October 2011 elections and during the following two years of Ennahda's rule, leftist leaders fell in the trap of ideological conflict with Islamists and opposed almost everything proposed by Ennahda, good or bad, while a splinter group went even further to enter a sacred coalition with RCD leaders such as Beji el-Sebsi, the leader of Nidaa Tunis (Call for Tunisia), and his like. The independent leftists, leftist UGTT activists and some tiny Marxist parties who entered coalition of Jabhaa chabia (popular front) demanded since early 2013 the dissolution of the NCA, the ouster of the Troika government and remarkably, cessation of the work on the new constitution, in reaction to the assassination of Chokri Beliad, a famous leftist unionist who led the uprising of the Gafsa mine region back in 2008.
By using the Islamist threat and the Islamist-fueled civil conflict in Algeria as tools, the regime systematically suppressed human rights and avoided political reform. Ben Ali maintained that he was “ushering in democratic reforms in a ‘measured way’ so that religious extremists could not exploit freedoms” (Arief 2011, 6).

However, as Amnesty International and the US State Department concluded, Tunisian security forces were guilty of a wide range of abuses, including extrajudicial arrests, denial of due process, systematic torture and other mistreatment of detainees (Arief 2011).

By the early 2000s, evidence of the corruption of Ben Ali's family mounted. Jokes, rumours and disgust spread across the country, as the kleptocratic and insatiable family of Leila Ben Ali (nee Trabelsi, the wife of Ben Ali) and known as "the Trabelseya", caused discomfort even among other members and leaders of the RCD (Sadiki 2003; Alexander 2012). As Ennahda, its secular allies and human rights activists in exile or inside the country intensified pressure and lobbied the international community, international human rights groups and Western governments, Ben Ali was forced to allow more space for increased opposition activities (Alexander 2012).

As a result of domestic and international pressure from human rights groups such as Amnesty International and the special envoys of European Commission for Human Rights, by the early 2000s, hundreds of Ennahda leaders were gradually released from prison, due either to completing their sentences or to presidential amnesty. These leaders remained under daily surveillance, were prohibited from talking to the press, and in some cases, from performing routine family duties. There was also the ever-present danger of being sent back to jail (Ghanouchi 2011a; Cavatorta 2012b; Allani 2013).
Before the Tunisian revolution of December 2010, Ben Ali’s regime faced a smaller uprising in 2008, during which widespread unrest broke out in the impoverished phosphate mining region of Gafsa where unemployment was much higher than the national average. Corrupt businessmen allied with the regime, who employed most of their staff from outside the region, controlled the local mines. The government sent the army to control the situation, which was beyond the control of local police forces. Some thirty-eight people were detained, imprisoned, tortured and charged with offenses including forming a criminal group with the aim of destroying public and private property, armed rebellion and assault on officials during the exercise of their duties. A similar uprising took place in the southern town of Beni Gardene in 2009 (Filiu 2011, 15).

The leftist union leaders dominated this particular uprising, and records show no Islamist presence or effect. Upon his release, trade unionist Adnan Hadji stated that demands for improving deplorable conditions in the mines had been made via legal procedure, and that the demands were about important and relevant concerns including pollution, unemployment, disease and maldistribution of wealth (Arief 2011). All those involved in this uprising were paroled in November 2009, on presidential special amnesty.

By this time, a large portion of the left had forgotten about the Islamic threat and broke their sacred alliance with Ben Ali. This was primarily due to the harshness of his autocratic rule and the oppression of the political dissent after the massive campaign against Ennahda during the early 1990s.
Though Ben Ali tried to display more personal religiosity, through his pilgrimage with his wife Leila Ben Ali to Mecca, and unlimited support of his son-in-law Sakhr al Matri in establishing the Ezzeitouna [Zaytouna] Radio and Bank, he would pay an expensive price for his suppression of Islamists over a decade earlier (Cavatorta 2013). According to Ghanouchi (2011) and Mabrouk (2012), this had resulted in radicalisation within Tunisian society and the emergence of the *jihadi Salafis*, rather than more moderate versions of political Islam. To quote Mabrouk (2012, 69):

The current political landscape\(^{79}\) and the country’s political party map are not credible. It cannot be representative of political sentiment if only the left, the nationalists and the liberals are represented but the Islamists are absent, so that the official view of politics cannot conform to the reality of politics as it is experienced. This denial of reality and creation of a false alternative can only mask yet another mistake. Society cannot be changed by decree… and measures and decisions leave their traces behind … In addition the blinkered security system has ravaged society and has prevented any other moderate Islamic current from emerging.

During the Ennahda-led post-revolution interim government (2012-2013), the *jihadi Salafi* groups became much more of a threat, not only to state and wider society security, but also to the main party of political Islam: Ennahda. With a more open atmosphere of freedom to organise, freedom of expression and the freedom of the press, and in accord with the geo-strategic situation of the entire MENA region after the 2011 revolutions, the *jihadis* took up globalised agendas and inter-Arab states conflicts, and advocated local responses for local problems. As Roy (2008, 2011a) states, neo-fundamentalism, in the form of international *jihadi* groups, is a more globalised phenomenon, uprooted from its societies and local politics, than a consequence of a

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\(^{79}\) Most likely Mabrouk wrote this before the January 2011 revolution, though his study was published in 2012.
particular dictatorship's religious or political policies. History shows that the rise of neo-fundamentalism is due to MENA regional conflict, Persian-Arab geostrategic wrestling over the control of Persian Gulf, and most importantly, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the USA-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the global jihad movement is not the only explanation for the rise of Tunisian jihadis; in fact, social and economic reasons have accompanied the more fashionable global jihadist solution. Ben Ali's attacks on almost all religious citizens and on religiosity during 1990s, plus the harsh neoliberal economic policies which deepened the marginalisation, poverty and unemployment of the Tunisian youth, all helped to create Tunisia's Salafi phenomenon.

**The role of the Tunisian army**

Bourguiba's mimicking of Ataturk’s secularism in Turkey has played a major role in the creation, evolution and the resulting mosaic of Tunisian political Islam. The Tunisian military institution, however, has been immune to policies, security measures and intellectual wars against Islamism.

While the Egyptian army has been at the heart of the political scene for decades and remains so, Habib Bourguiba made sure that the Tunisian military never got too big or powerful for fear that it could develop into a competing power.

During the civil unrest in 1978 and 1984, which were caused by an economic crisis invested by the UGTT in general strikes that almost paralysed the country at the time; the Tunisian army was ordered to help restore security.\(^\text{80}\) Once security was restored, the army happily returned to their barracks. Bourguiba, who was a civilian politician in the first place and had been impressed with French-style liberal politics, kept

\(^\text{80}\) The most notorious event involving the Tunisian army was on the Black Thursday of 26th January 1978, where the Tunisian army was deployed with brutality (Sadiki 2002, 60).
the newly established Tunisian army deliberately out of politics during his rule. He went so far as to ban army personnel from joining the ruling party. Unlike neighbouring Algeria and Libya, Tunisia never endured a military coup, or even an attempted coup. Tunisia has never had a military strongman, and the army generals never involved themselves in policy making or lobbying (Barany 2011, 31; Stepan 2012). Tunisian Colonel Boubaker Benkraim explained that since the foundation of the Tunisian military post-French colonisation,

The army chiefs have accepted that they will be apolitical, and pass on to their younger officers this culture of ‘devotion to the homeland and loyalty to the Republic’, and that is why our country is not known by coups d’état and military plots, which was the spirit of almost all African countries during 1960s and 1970s. Our military schools are open to all Tunisians without exception, without social class or origin selection (Ayachi 2012, 227).81

Hence, by keeping the army politically weak throughout his rule, Bourguiba was relying on the party apparatus and loyal bureaucracy. The Egyptian scenario was less possible in Tunisia, partly because the military in Egypt had such sizeable economic interests.

While the weak status of the Tunisian army continued up to the 2011 revolution, Ben Ali’s Tunisia was a typical police state, comparable to the infamous and feared interior ministry in Egypt, the mukhabaret (intelligence services) in Syria, and the ‘revolutionary committees’ in Libya during the forty plus years of Gaddafi’s rule. Similar to some other militaries in Arab totalitarian states, the Tunisian army found itself overshadowed by far larger, more amply funded and more politically influential security agencies run by the interior ministry (Barany 2011).

81 This quotation is an English translation of the original French document.
After Ben Ali unleashed his thugs and the elite presidential guard against protesters in 2010, he ordered the army chief of staff, General Rashid Ammar to deploy his troops in support of the regime’s security detachments. General Ammar rejected this order and was soon placing his troops between the protesters and the savage security forces, thereby effectively saving the revolution and forcing Ben Ali to flee the country. For some observers, it was the “[sixty-three year old general], Rashid Ammar, who delivered the fatal blow to the regime, not by staging any kind of coup, but by refusing to shoot at the protesters” (Filui 2011, 21).

Indeed, on 9 January 2011, Ben Ali had ordered Ammar to crush the uprising in Tunis and the other major cities. The general moved in his tanks and units, but refrained from using violence, even to enforce a curfew. Presidential pressure intensified to implement a shoot-to-kill policy, but Ammar adamantly refused (Filiu 2011). Tension mounted between the military and the police forces, especially General Ali Seriati’s Special Forces and the Presidential Guard, among whom were the snipers who shot nearly two hundred protesters (Filiu 2011). Reports allege that in the morning of 14 January 2011, General Seriati intentionally dramatised his security reports to Ben Ali in order to get an unconditional green light for his repressive campaign (Filiu 2012, 21). This bad news overwhelmed the dictator with panic, leading to a discussion with General Ammar as a last resort. The army chief allegedly gave him his only option: to leave the country safely. Yet, there is a persistent rumour that General Ammar convinced Ben Ali simply to leave the country until things cooled down and security was restored, at which point he would come back to resume his duties as president (Filiu 2011, 21).
As Barany (2011, 31) states, with its “comparatively disadvantaged status and its officers’ disdain for the notorious corruption of the presidential clique, the military had no special stake in the regime’s survival and no strong reason to shoot fellow Tunisians on the regime’s behalf. As soon as Ben Ali found himself forced to turn to the soldiers as his last resort, he was doomed”. He had kept military spending low and the military’s role circumscribed to prevent a coup against his own rule. This had the unintended effect of making it a less effective tool for repression when the real challenge came (Lynch 2011b).

At the same Aouina military airport where Ben Ali’s presidential aircraft took off, General Ammar arrested General Seriati after requesting that he surrender his handgun. Swiftly, the army turned against Seriati’s commandos and hunted down the regime hardliners inside the presidential palace in Carthage (Filiu 2011).

After the revolution, and after Ennahda came to power, the Tunisian army withdrew to its constitutional role of guarding certain civic sites, and allowed the struggle to play out between the new democratic regime and its opposition (Usher 2011).

In conclusion, the postcolonial Tunisian army remained professional, and isolated from country politics and economic benefits to a great extent, though many soldiers started after the 2011 revolution to speak up against some earlier military corruption. Neither Bourguiba nor Ben Ali ever trusted the Tunisian army to protect them, made efforts to strengthen the army, or even let the army commanders share a piece of the pie with politicians, unlike Hosni Mubarak had done in Egypt.

The Troika coalition government led by Ennahda (2011-2014) furthermore, played a role in keeping the Tunisian army out of politics, as the interim President
Moncef Marzougui facilitated the retirement of General Rashid Ammar in 2013 and appointed a new Tunisian major commander whom he trusted. This way, the Tunisian revolution secured itself from an Egyptian style coup d’état, but not from terrorism, the assassination of two political figures, or political turbulence under Ennahda rule.

**Tunisian Ennahda Party**

The Ennahda Party (*Hizb Haraket Ennahda*) originated as the Tunisian branch of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood is said to consist of more than eighty similar organisations and political parties around the Arab and Muslim world (Wright 2012; Alexander 2012). However, Ennahda’s relations with today’s MB are confined to loose networking and intellectual affiliations, rather than organizational ties.

In early 1970s, leftist students and labour activists displayed their discontent with Bourguiba's authoritarianism, the worsening of economic performance and the ideological pressure of the international leftist movements. Islamists pulled deeper into politics in September 1969, when members of the Quranic Preservation Society broke off to gather around a university based group called *al-Jamaat al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Group) (Alexander 2012; Allani 2009). Rachid Ghanouchi and Abdelfatteh Mourou were the leaders of this group, which at that stage, wanted to create a form of religious resistance and stimulate moral awareness. They soon realised that with the influence of the left on the street, they should focus on more than religion and identity to reach a larger audience (Alexander 2012). According to Ghanouchi (2011) himself, the small group gathered for the first time in 1969 after his return from Paris. Not having a method of preaching *dawaa*, the Islamic call, they used *Tablghi Jamaeit*, (TJ) which is a grass roots method of speaking to people in the streets, in cafes and mosques. Ghanouchi had picked up this
preaching method from TJ members in Paris in 1969, particularly in the Belleville mosque in suburban Paris (Ghanouchi 2011a; Allani 2009; Mabrouk 2012).

On an intellectual level, Ghanouchi was obsessed with philosophy, and had returned to Tunisia with the ideologies of Mawdudi and the Algerian thinker Malek Bennabi (1905 – 1973) and various Muslim Brotherhood publications.82

These radical new voices during the 1970s were reactions to Marxists and leftists, who were seen as a threat to the Arab-Islamic identity by Ghanouchi. In 1971 and 1972, Bourguiba cracked down on leftist students83, which led to officials excusing minor Islamist activities, which were seen to counter the leftist forces. As early as 1973, Islamists began recruiting in secondary schools and on university campuses. In response, the regime started to fear that it was losing control of this social force it had supported as a counter to the left (Alexander 2012).

The Ennahda Party had its beginnings, as a legal body, in the government-approved Quranic Preservation Society. This society was apolitical and dedicated primarily to encouraging the piety and faithfulness of the rapidly growing numbers of Westernised Tunisians post-colonisation. The society was placed under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and supported by President Bourguiba as a counterweight to the country’s political left and was in stark contrast to Zaytouna Grand Mosque as a

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82 Malek Bennabi is an Algerian writer and philosopher, who wrote (mostly in French) about modern Muslim society with a focus on the reasons behind the fall of the Muslim civilisation. He is mostly known for the concept of ‘coloniability’ which is the inner aptitude of some societies to be colonised.

83 Confrontation between the leftists and the Bourguiba regime escalated in the early 1970s as an automatic result of distrust between the socialists and the government and remarkable financial difficulties after Ahmed Ben Saleh’s failed socialist experience during 1960s. Ben Saleh implemented an ambitious socialist plan when he was Economy, Planning and Education Minister uninterruptedly from 1957 until 7 November 1969, when Bourguiba sacked him and charged him with treason.

Ben Saleh's social planning included his infamous cooperative system between peasants and landowners, which generated a huge amount of discontent and anger from small businesses and land owners, allowing Bourguiba eventually to get rid of Ben Saleh and focus on a liberal style economy thereafter.
traditional hub of knowledge and learning (Ghanouchi 2011; Zemzemi 2011). Observed here is the state’s strategy that used the religious-activists-turned-political-activists to balance the leftists and vice versa whenever appropriate. The activities of this small and somewhat amorphous Islamist group drew the interest and attention of a growing audience of mostly university students. This accelerated the rise of MTI (El-Khawas 1996, 393).

In the late 1970s, the opposition, with the cooperation of the student movement, UGTE, and the workers union, UGTT, managed to generate social and political unrest. Since Ali Ben Ghadhehim’s famous 1864 uprising against high taxes and the later uprisings against French colonialists, local governments had not faced any major uprising until 1978, which saw serious economic riots, protests and strikes throughout the year.85

The violent government crackdown on protesters created a political void that the Islamists, who condemned the social action organised by the UGTT, began to fill on a large scale. The MTI activists learned valuable lessons from the 1978 riots and later from the 1984 riots; they would come to understand the social and political role of the street (Ismail 2006, 144; Allani 2009). Two factors helped the Islamists to gain ground. First, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat began the release of Muslim Brotherhood prisoners, several of them travelling to Tunisia and other Arab countries, to preach the MB call.

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84 Ali Ben Ghadhehim was the famous leader of the 1864 revolt, commonly known as "the revolt of Ali Ben Ghadhehim". This was a tribally led anti-tax uprising that shook the entire Kingdom then known as Tunis. Distinctive for the swiftness of its mobilisation, the development of far-flung coalitions between rural folk and urban centres, and its spectacular failure, it has had a lasting impact on generations of Tunisians.

85 The huge demonstrations in January 1978 marked the end of the traditional alliance between the UGTT and the ruling Destour Party. Two years later, rioting broke out in Qafsah, [Gafsa] to protest unemployment and poverty in the rural areas in the southwest (Al-Khawas 1996, 393).
Their influence gave stronger political content to Tunisian Islamism. Second, the emergence of the 1979 Iranian revolution provided the new Tunisian militants with a rich vocabulary to talk about economics and social issues (Alexander 2012). The books of the most famous Iranian Revolution ideologues, such as Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr\textsuperscript{86} (1935 - 1980) (in particular Our Philosophy, and Our Economy) and Ali Shariati\textsuperscript{87} (1933 – 1977) were widely known among Islamists at that time.\textsuperscript{88} The London based and Iranian backed weekly magazine, al-Alim, was the weekly intellectual and news channel for early Tunisian Islamists for years to come.

After years of loosely organised activism around a monthly intellectual magazine called \textit{al-Maarifah} (The Knowledge), Ghanouchi, Mourou and other early Tunisian Islamists formally declared the formation of the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) on 6 June 1981. (Allani 2009) By the year 1984, Islamists were active members within major trade unions and syndicates across the country. They become an integral part of the labour federation union, UGTT, when they had 70 members elected out of 220 delegates to the Union General Congress in 1984 (Ismail 2006, 144). By then, Islamists were competing equally with leftists and liberals in trying to gain control over the same social constituencies.

In a press conference, those early leaders declared their first manifesto, known as the 6th of June Manifesto (Arabic: \textit{Bayaa’n}). The objectives of this manifesto were

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\textsuperscript{86} Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr was an Iraqi Shia cleric, a philosopher and also the ideological founder of the Islamic Dawa’i'h Party in Iraq.

\textsuperscript{87} Ali Shariati was an Iranian revolutionary and sociologist, who focused on the sociology of religion. He is held as one of the most influential Iranian intellectuals of the 20th century, and considered by many the 'ideologue of the Iranian Revolution.'

\textsuperscript{88} While MTI did not have any difficulty learning from Iranian revolutionaries and Islamic revolution ideologues in the late 1970s and early 1980s, today, the rise of Salafis has made cross-sectarian learning almost impossible. The modern Ennahda party has had to distance itself from what Iran had become prior to the 2011 Arab Spring as the infamous Iranian theocratic regime, or the rule of the \textit{Mullahs}. 

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vague, calling for equitable economic reform, an end to one-party rule and a return to the ‘fundamental principles of Islam’ (American Foreign Policy Council 2012; Ghanouchi 2011).

As Torelli points out, the MTI refused to recognise the legitimacy not only of the incumbent regime, but of the Tunisian institutional system itself, which was perceived as a “conspiracy waged … by Western imperial powers from outside” (Torelli 2012, 70). It was clear that this new Islamic organisation wanted to re-establish Islam as a dominant factor in Tunisian society, in contrast to the type of nation that Bourguiba had created.

As mentioned earlier, its first leaders tried to register MTI as a political party, but Bourguiba’s regime refused it, and organisers were faced with imprisonment and torture until 1987 when Bourguiba was ousted.89 During the course of the 1980s, and until the election of 1989, MTI became younger and more populist in nature, and evolved into a well-organised social and political movement linked with the broader civil rights movement in the country (American Foreign Policy Council 2012).

Surprisingly, Ennahda gained relatively high levels of support during 1989 election; despite the poll’s undemocratic nature (Alexander 2012; Cavatorta 2012; Ghanouchi 2011; Stepan 2012).

89 In early 1984, several months after the bread riots had occurred, MTI leaders were released from prison. They managed to avoid confrontation with the government until August 1987, when eighty-nine of its members were arrested and charged with bombing four tourist hotels. When their trial began, there were huge demonstrations against the government. A month later, seven people were sentenced to death, sixty-eight were imprisoned from two years to life, and fourteen were acquitted. It was reported that Bourguiba was not pleased with these sentences. In October he ordered retrials and harsher sentences, possibly the death penalty, for all of them. If imposed, the harsher sentences would have worsened the situation in Tunisia by escalating the level of violence between the government and the militant groups. This order may have increased the pressure to remove the ailing Bourguiba from office (Al-Khawas 1996, 393).
From late 1990, Ennahda party members were accused of multiple violent plots and thousands of party supporters were arrested.90 Many of them experienced torture, unjust military tribunal hearings and exile (Arief 2011). During the last two years of the Bourguiba era, some MTI members were accused of bombing hotels in the coastal cities, threatening Tunisia’s vital tourism industry. In early 1991, some Ennahda members allegedly attacked an RCD office in Tunis, killing one civilian and throwing acid in the faces of others. For the new Ben Ali regime, the mass arrest and torture of Ennahda Islamists would be a priceless gift; they labeled Ennahda a terrorist group, using videos and pictures of the victims as propaganda tools. Ennahda insisted that individuals affiliated with Ennahda acted individually and that the leadership had no knowledge and gave no approval for such violence (Usher 2011).

Furthermore, in early 1991, the Ben Ali regime unearthed an alleged conspiracy to overthrow the government,91 which Ennahda denied at the time. In 1992, a Tunisian military court convicted 265 Ennahda leaders and members of plotting the coup. In addition, as mentioned earlier, more than 30,000 supporters were arrested or sentenced and thousands of others went into exile in more than sixty countries around the world. This exile continued for twenty years until the Tunisian revolution when Ben Ali fled the

90 To this day, some opponents accuse Ennahda of holding double standards and of hiding a violent, non-democratic agenda. Others simply observe that Ennahda has a wide variety of moderate and extremist militants within, as claimed by Ghanouchi. This variety exists in the context of celebrating the wide, and sometimes contrasting, difference of opinions and backgrounds. “Ennahda is a mixed bag. The top layers are genuinely ‘moderate’, but much of the base has a distinctly fundamentalist tilt. To date, the leadership has hardly reined in the base, nor is it clear it wants to”, observes American analyst Rob Prince (2012, par. 17).

91 The plan was allegedly to “infiltrate the army, the security forces and the customs service, and to destabilise the government by means of terrorist activities, protests, demonstrations and the call to general strikes. As a result, 300 military and civilian people were rounded up and charged with a plot to overthrow the government” (Al-Khawas 1996, 394).
country on 14 January 2011 (Alexander 2012; Al-Khawas 1996; Ariefff 2011a, 12-13; Stepan 2012; Allani 2009).

In June 2003, representatives from four Tunisian non-regime parties, Ennahda, Ettakatol, CPR (Congress for the Republic) and PDP (Progressive Democrats), all of which hold seats in the current constitutional assembly, with three of them ruling under the coalition, met in France in order to negotiate and sign a ‘Call of Tunis’ (Mabrouk 2012). This document endorsed the two fundamental principles of the twin tolerances:

1) any future elected government would have to be ‘founded on the sovereignty of the people as the sole source of legitimacy’ and 2) the state, while showing ‘respect for the people’s identity and its Arab-Muslim values,’ would provide ‘the guarantee of liberty of belief to all, and the political neutralisation of places of worship … The Call also went on to demand the full equality of women and men. (Stepan 2012, 96)

In an interview with the Financial Times just prior to his 2011 return to Tunisia after over twenty years of exile, Ghanouchi stated that his party “drank the cup of democracy in one gulp back in the early 1990s, while other Islamist movements ‘have taken it sip per sip’” (Usher 2011, par. 19). On another occasion, Ghanouchi explained that Ennahda had documented its belief in democracy, orderly transition of power and human rights since the first MTI manifesto of 11 June 1981 (Ghanouchi 2013a).

During the 2010-2011 revolution, Ennahda did not play a major role in the protesting as an organised party, mainly because it was still wounded by twenty years of prohibition, oppression and tough security measures. However, Ennahda never stopped its underground activities, and without doubt, many of its members participated in the revolution as individuals (Roy 2012; Stepan 2012; Wright 2012). In the months that followed the revolution, however,
its organisation and financial resources made it the most effective party in Tunisia. Ennahda enjoyed name recognition, national grassroots structures, money, and credibility that no other party could equal. It rallied a broad base that stretched beyond religious voters to include social conservatives, human rights activists, and voters who saw Ennahda as a representative of Tunisian identity (Alexander 2012b, par. 25).

Ennahda’s first decision after gaining legal status on 1 March 2011, was not to join the interim government, but instead to join ‘The Committee of Defending the Revolution’, an alliance of over twenty-five organisations including the UGTT. “The dictator has gone, but the dictatorship remains”, Ghanouchi told the thousands who greeted him at the airport when he landed in Tunisia back from exile, on 30th of January 2011. He added, that Ennahda would not work with the RCD (then still a legal party) or any of its elements because “only God can bring life from death. And we cannot bring a democratic system out of a corrupt dictatorial system” (Usher 2011, par. 27).

Between March and October 2011 elections the Tunisian post-revolution transition continued, planned by a type of democratic consensus and strongly influenced by Tunisia’s historical tradition of reformism and constitutionalism. Ennahda contributed to the plan in a non-dominant position, reentering Tunisian politics in a political space formatted by certain constraints, which provided a strong incentive for the democratic politics that it had in principle accepted long before (Guazzone 2013, 32). The steps to take after the elections were decided beforehand by a consensus of the major political parties represented in the Higher Commission for Political Reform, through a political agreement on 15 September 2011.

As Ennahda’s members were either in prison, underground or in exile during the earliest days of the revolution, Ennahda regained political ground by playing the victim
card. They organised ceremonies across the country in memory of dozens of Ennahda militants who fell fighting the dictatorship (Usher 2011). They mobilised tens of thousands of supporters in well-organised events. Later during the election campaign, the core leadership reached out to tens of thousands of former activists now out of prison, established offices in every city, quietly setting up sections for women, youth, students, public relations and the media, and held internal regional elections to select new leadership. One of the leaders explained, “given that we are an old party we have been able to revive our structures immediately after the revolution in January 2011. Some militants who have been for a long time in prison started working again for the party together with those who operated underground” (Cavatorta 2012, 7). Their long suffering at the hands of the despised regime “appealed to the coastal middle class, which they courted by claiming as their own the more liberal, progressive culture familiar to the Tunisian bourgeoisie. The verdict of the October elections was unequivocal: The government was theirs” (Pecastaing 2012, 54).

The Electoral Independent High Commission confirmed Ennahda's victory with 41% of the votes (89 seats out of 217 seats of the newly established National Constituent Assembly (NCA) followed by the Congress for the Republic ‘CPR', the Popular Petition Current, and the Alliance for Work and Freedom ‘Ettakatol’ in the fourth place. The remaining political parties split between them the remaining third of the seats.

According to Allani (2013, 133), analysts have attributed the rise of Ennahda to various reasons:

- unique use of religious references;
- the fragmentation of the left, centre-left and liberal parties;
-the length of the period of persecution that the Islamists were subjected to under Ben Ali’s reign;

-the fear of voters about the return of the Constitutional Rally (the ex-ruling party) on whom they placed blame; and

-Ennahda leaders’ commitment during the election campaign to respect the Family Code in place, which represented by their pledge not to force women to wear a particular clothing; not to restrict those who frequent bars and places of leisure; not to ban what was permissible under the civil government such as drinking alcohol and wearing bikinis; and not to interfere with the work of foreign banks.

A few weeks after the first free election of 23 October 2011, Ghanouchi went to Washington in a public relations and diplomatic move aimed to obtain support from the United States. He told the Council on Foreign Relations: “today we are not resorting to violence. People are free to do what they want, so they are learning how to exercise their freedom in a responsible way. Freedom needs training and exercise, and we are in the process of being trained” (Ghanouchi 2011e, n.p).

The coming years should provide partial evidence of the extent to which Ennahda has changed as a result of the process of democratisation within the organisation itself, and within the democratic transition of Tunisia. Ennahda’s literature for the 2011 election, titled ‘For Freedom, Justice and Development in Tunisia’ states, “The Ennahda Movement proposes to Tunisia to establish a political system that eradicates the roots of dictatorship … [It] is the parliamentary system, which guarantees public and private liberties” (Ennahda 2011).
Many of Ennahda's opponents would later on dismiss these statements as pure propaganda, while Ennahda politicians and leaders defended their position and blamed any faults of the election process on technical flaws. However, the evolution of Ennahda ideology from its declaration in 1981 until the overthrow of Ben Ali in 2011, showed no precedent in the experiences of other neo-Islamist parties in terms of harsh conditions of working underground for over thirty years, or in terms of adopting new techniques, making remarkable concessions and entering alliances with secularists, all in very short time, during the months prior and after October 2011 elections. Since then Ennahda has been pragmatically amending and changing its tactics and political choices.

Ennahda, composed of hardline MB followers, Salafis, and Sufis, is still undergoing a huge process of self-discovery. Many questions remain unanswered concerning the relationship between dawaa and politics, interrelations with liberal and leftist political parties and Islamic groups such as the fundamental Salafis, as well as the position of the state vis-à-vis Islam. The fact that Ennahda's exiled leaders, such as Rashid Ghanouchi, Amer Lareyed and Lotfi Zitoune, were in Europe over the last twenty years seems to have complicate matters. Furthermore, other leaders, namely Hammadi Jebali and Ali Lareyed, spent years in prison cells, denied basic rights including access to news media, and had been suffering from ‘political jet lag’. But Ennahda suddenly found itself having to recall its members from the diaspora, from prison cells and the underground.

**Conclusion:**

The suddenness with which Ennahda came to rule and share power in Tunisia lead to the questioning of its intentions and democratic credibility, as well as commitment to
free speech and religious freedom. Nevertheless, this neo-Islamist party remains rooted in its specific Tunisian socio-economic circumstances though it is descended ideologically from the broader MB movement.

Bourguiba’s promotion of both Turkey’s Ataturk and the French styles of active secularism might have contributed to the rise of Rachid Ghanouchi’s movement as early as 1971, that’s less than fifteen years after independence (1956). MTI in particular, emerged to defend religious rights and speak up on behalf of a vast section of pan-Arabist yet marginalised Tunisian citizens of the time.

Unfortunately, the rise of Islamism itself might be used as an excuse to delay democratisation, whether in Tunisia or elsewhere in MENA region.

Ben Ali transformed Bourguiba's legacy to develop a quite different autocratic regime. The regime took advantage of Algeria's civil war in 1992, later following up the campaign against Ennahda with a more thorough program of cleansing Tunisia of Islamism. By the early 2000s the regime had exploited concerns arising from al Qaeda and its affiliated global jihad groups, to oppress almost any dissenting voice in Tunisia, not just the Islamists of Ennahda and the emerging jihadi Salafis.

Ennahda's discourse and apparent political ambitions have changed dramatically since the early 1970s, transforming it from a conservative MB party into a neo-Islamist party that preaches pluralism and democracy. The next chapter examines the credibility of these calls for democracy and moderation while Ennahda was in power between December 2011 and January 2014. Such an examination might shed more light on the concept of neo-Islamism as it is applied in a concrete socio-political case study.
ENNAHDA AS A NEO-ISLAMIST PLAYER IN POWER

Ennahda, the political vehicle of one of the more prominent Arab neo-Islamist movements, was the first Islamic party to win a free election after the Arab Spring and the first Islamic party to lead a freely elected government in modern Arab history. Notably, Ennahda was also the first Arab Islamic party ever to share power with a secular party. By early 2014, it had become the first Islamic-led government to relinquish power\(^92\) without coercion, political unrest notwithstanding.

When Ennahda began leading the coalition government comprised mostly of Ennahda, Congress for the Republic (CPR)\(^93\) and Democratic Front of Work and Liberties (Ettakatol),\(^94\) in December 2011, law and order was almost absent in many parts

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\(^92\) On 28 September 2013, Ennahda became the first democratically elected Islamist party to voluntarily accept a plan to relinquish power. Some party members accused their leaders of giving in to the opposition. Ennahda is described as "the party of concessions" by many of its members and sympathisers.

\(^93\) In French, Congrès pour La République.

\(^94\) In French, Front Démocratique pour Le Travaille et Libertés, or FDTL, better known in Arabic as Ettakatol.
of the country due to the vacuum in state authority left by the fall of Ben Ali. Tunisians awoke every morning to depressing security reports. According to the International Crisis Group (ICG 2013, 1), the Interior Ministry stated that between February 2011 and February 2012, more than 400 police stations were attacked, and 12,000 individuals were arrested for looting, assault or attempted murder.

In this chapter, Ennahda is evaluated on the basis of three tests in order to determine whether it is capable of participating in and furthering the democratic transition in Tunisia. The first test, involving moderation, examines Ennahda's attitudes towards democracy, an open society and the free market economy, Tunisia’s non-Islamic political parties, and generally, tolerance of differing religious and political points of view.

The second test examines Ennahda's contribution towards remedying the post-revolution economic crisis. Has Ennahda been successful in resolving any of the country's economic problems during its relatively short time in power, and within the transitional circumstances? Does Ennahda have a viable economic policy to bring Tunisia out of its economic struggles in the long term?

The third test examines whether Ennahda's actions towards and reactions to Salafist influence have been successful (Prince 2012a; Alexander 2012; Allani 2013). Salafist influence includes terrorist threats, which Ennahda has experienced since its first day in power. More challenging from a political standpoint have been union strikes, coup attempts and hostility from ex-RCD activists and security forces. The Salafist question is particularly important because Ennahda's enemies and competitors within the secularist camp have used Salafists (mainly Ansar a-Sharia) or fear of Salafists to attempt to oust
Ennahda from power. Finalising (and leading the historic process towards) the new constitution, and thereafter moving the country towards new and permanent institutions have been declared Ennahda's most important tasks.95

**Chronology of events:**

A brief chronology of the relevant events between 2012 and 2014 is useful for a thorough examination based on these three tests.

In post-revolutionary Tunisia, Ennahda has played “a central role in the process of democratisation, having committed its considerable resources to the construction of a new plural democratic political system that would respect civil liberties and human rights” (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 859). However, the twenty-six months in power (December 2011 through January 2014) were not by any means an easy exercise for the Tunisian neo-Islamist party. Ennahda was met with challenges from inside the organisation as well as from the outside.

Internally, Ennahda suffered from various troubles.96 First, it has never demonstrated a clear plan to face the country's economic crisis. Additionally, it has

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95 Rachid Ghanouchi himself elaborated on this in February 2014: ‘finally, we decided to step down from our governing position without losing an election, facing a counterrevolution or coup d’état. We realised that although we had the right to retain power because of our electoral victory, the Tunisian people would not get a constitution without our stepping down… The opposition had withdrawn from the constitutional assembly and refused to continue drafting the constitution. We could have continued without them. But we would have produced a constitution for the Ennahda party, not the Tunisian people as a whole. So we took a difficult path towards general consensus.

After five difficult months of dialog, we reached consensus with other parties and Ennahda relinquished power in favor in favor of a neutral government. We were not obliged to leave power. We had the full right to retain it. We are not angels. We would like to have power. But we fervently believe that a democratic constitution is more important for Tunisia than Ennahda retaining power’ (Ghanouchi 2014b, par. 6-7).

96 From 4 August 2013 to 31 August 2013, Zogby Research Services (based in Washington DC, USA) surveyed 3031 Tunisian adults to gauge their attitudes toward the developments that unfolded in Tunisia after their revolution, finding a deeply unsatisfied electorate and extremely polarised society. Rating the Ennahda-led government in different areas of governance resulted in the highest score being in security of
received harsh criticism from its own cadres, supporters and electoral base due to the concessions made to outsiders. It has experienced infighting and a lack of consensus in its decision-making, especially between the hardliners such as Habib el-Louz and the moderate wing led by Abdelfattah Mourou. Its lack of experience in wielding political power has shown decision making to be a challenge.

Externally, Ennahda has suffered from both counter revolutionary forces that have had some success in regrouping and their long established hostile relations with the leftists of UGTT. These forces are comprised of various groups meeting around a major common cause: anti-Islamist rhetoric (Wolf 2014). Among these are supporters of the Ben Ali regime who were under the umbrella of the RCD. After the revolution and the dissolution of the RCD, they formed many new parties. One of the major parties is Nidaa Tounis, which is comprised of old regime supporters and allies. Established in early 2012 during the rule of Ennahda, Niddaa Tounis, is headed by charismatic leader Beji Caid el-Sebsi, (a veteran member of Destour as well as RCD, Speaker of Parliament in the Ben Ali era). The Popular Front, which is a coalition of various leftist parties, entered an alliance with Nidaa Tounis after the assassination of Chokri Belid in February 2012. The National Salvation Front ‘NSF’, established later, has more components than do Nidaa Tounis and the Popular Front, including various civil nonprofit organisations, and UGTT and security syndicates, which played critical roles in suppressing Ennahda during the autocratic era.

the citizens at 46%. Meanwhile other priorities came up by a two-to-one ratio out of the total score; such as: protecting rights for women, ending corruption in government, finalising the constitution, protecting freedom of the press, setting date for the next election, combating extremism and terrorism, expanding employment opportunities, protecting personal and civil rights, the high cost of living “scored only 25% which is second to priority”, and establishing an independent election body (Zogby 2013).
This alliance continually attacked Ennahda when it was in power. The secular groups placed blame on Ennahda for its soft stance against Salafist political violence. According to the ICG (2013, ii), there is “not much doubt that the non-Islamist opposition has displayed excessive and premature alarm and that it sometimes levels unsubstantiated accusations. Nor is there much question that it is finding it hard to accept the reality of Islamists governing their country”.

Leftist parties and UGTT activists decided to depose Ennahda at any cost and organised union strikes across dozens of work sectors. These strikes occurred almost daily, culminating in thousands of strikes in 2012 and 2013. This union-made chaos contributed to Tunisia’s economic crisis and to general discontent across the population.

In August and September 2013, the situation in Tunisia deteriorated nearly to Egyptian levels after the military coup that ousted President Mohamed Morsi. Tunisian President Marzougui later confirmed rumours that the opposition had been appealing to generals from the Tunisian army and security forces to attempt a coup, and that he eliminated such risk by replacements members of the Tunisian army leadership. Duran (2013, par. 21) noted:

[The] elimination of high-level officers in [the] Tunisian army by the President Moncef Marzouki is another factor that strengthens the possibility of Ennahda’s survival. Furthermore, that the army and the police in Tunisia are relatively weak makes it difficult to carry out an Egypt-like coup d’état in the country. Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the efforts of the opposition for convincing the police to carry out a coup d’état.
Ennahda's Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali resigned in early March 2013, immediately after the assassination of Chokri Belaid, General Secretary of the Democratic Patriots' Movement (PPD). Prime Minister Ali Laraaid (Interior Minister of the first cabinet), also a member of Ennahda, took over. From that position, Ennahda ceded control of the interior, defense and foreign ministries to independent technocrats; this was a concession secularists had been demanding for some time (Angrist 2013, 563).

After the assassination of National Constituent Assembly (NCA) member Mohamed Brahmi in August 2013, the situation worsened, and roughly sixty parliament members (MPs) resigned from the NCA. Many of these MPs joined the sit-in at Kasbah, where the opposition launched a tamaroud movement, similar to Egypt's when Morsi was ousted on 3 July 2013. Tunisia's tamaroud claimed to have gathered over 870,000 signatures, against a goal of two million, supporting a petition to dissolve the country’s parliament and substitute a government of "national salvation". In early August, Ettakatol's Mustafa Ben Jaafar, the speaker of the NCA, suspended the assembly’s work (Angrist 2013, 563). In Ben Jaafar's rush to freeze the NCA, he failed to consult two government allies: Ennahda and Moncel Marzougui’s party, CPR. This failure caused

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97 Most accusations pointed towards the Jihadi Salafi group Ansar a-Shariaa, being responsible for the assassinations of Chokri Belaid (on 6 February 2012) and Mohamed Brahmi (on 25 July 2013) and other terrorist attacks against members of the Tunisian army and security forces throughout 2012 and 2013 and even after Ennahda stepped down in February 2014. Despite accusations, no concrete evidence exists to condemn any person in particular. However, some rumours voiced through social networks, mainly Facebook, point towards a secret security cell linked to the lobby left over from the Ben Ali regime.

98 In French: Parti des Patriotes Democrats, which well known in Tunisia as Watad. The PPD is an extreme-left party, with a strong presence on university campuses; it was especially prominent in the 1980s. Several leaders of UGTT were former members. After the October 2011 election, the party entered a coalition of twelve extreme-left and Arab nationalist parties called the Popular Front (French: Front Populaire) (ICG 2013, 1).
tensions between the government allies, but eventually led to a dialogue supervised by Houssine Abbasi, the secretary general of UGTT.

UGTT served as an arbitrator between the parties in power and the opposition, despite the significant doubt about its neutrality expressed by many Ennahda supporters. On the other side, the opposition groups were openly planning Ennahda's ouster. They demanded the removal of the Ennahda government, generating public opinion with the help of the press. The Ennahda government, on the other hand, agreed to resign only if a new Constitution was drafted, an independent election commission was established, new electoral law was enacted and parties reached an agreement on the structure of the new government (Ghanouchi 2014; Wolf 2014).

Regional powers also got involved in the political crisis, Tunisia being the symbol of the democratic transition in the Middle East after the 2011 revolutions. It is noted that the UAE and Saudi Arabia are among the supporters of the anti-Ennahda groups in an attempt to reverse the wave of democratisation. In addition, France’s support of leftist groups, and the terrorist acts of some Salafi organisations are additional external factors that have threatened the survival of Ennahda (Duran 2013, par. 22).

The eight weeks of political deadlock within the NCA were punctuated with Popular Front protests and counter-protests from supporters of the Ennahda-led government. On 28 September 2013, Ennahda leaders agreed to participate in talks mediated by UGTT with the aim of protecting the country’s democratic transition by forming a caretaker government and scheduling parliamentary and presidential elections (Reuters, 28th Sep 2013).
Ennahda had already advocated the parliamentary system, to eliminate the possibility of presidential autocracy reoccurring as it had under Ben Ali. During its two years in power, furthermore, Ennahda managed to make various concessions on several issues affecting the non-Ennahda populace. In March 2012 the party announced that it would not insist that the constitution list Sharia as one or the only source of legislation. By October 2012, it appeared that Ennahda would prefer to give further concessions and would not insist that the insulting of religious values would be made a crime (apostasy). Angrist (2013, 562) states, furthermore, that by May 2013 “a compromise had been reached wherein neither the president nor the prime minister would exercise sole control over the executive branch”.

On 9 January 2014, the troika government effectively stepped down after the new constitution was signed by coalition leaders President Moncef Marzougui, the NCA speaker Moustafa Ben Jaafar, and the officially resigned Prime Minister Ali Laraaid. Mehdi Ben Joumaa, one of Ali Laraaid's ministers, took over as prime minister and formed an independent caretaker cabinet. The new prime minister, with this purported independent cabinet, is delegated to lead the country towards post-constitution parliamentary and presidential elections, which indeed took place before the end of 2014.

What is more important than the extent of Ennahda's visible moderation to-date is Ennahda’s political savvy, demonstrated during its two years in power. Since the October 2011 election, Ennahda has shown a high degree of socialising “into the mechanisms of compromise and bargaining, the very foundation of the liberal democratic game” (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 863).
A side effect of the Egyptian military coup in July 2013 was to shake up the Ennahda coalition. Ennahda's enemies called upon the Tunisian army and other security forces to take over, to ‘copy and paste’ the Egyptian counter-revolution experience in a coup d’état that supposedly protect the country from Ennahda's wrongdoings. (Duran 2013; Feldman 2013) The Tunisian army, as discussed earlier, was not brought up to be involved in politics. (This is unlike the Egyptian Army, which is a state within a state, with a wide range of income sources, such as industrial investments, shopping centers and political connections within Egypt and abroad). In fact, when President Marzougui eliminated the high level officers in the Tunisian army, he strengthened the possibility of Ennahda’s future survival, and confirmed that despite the professionalism of the army, some high-ranking generals have been seduced into buying the coup conspiracy (Duran 2013).

Besides the assassination of the two prominent opposition leaders, alleged terrorist groups camped near Kasrine in mid-western Tunisia also assassinated a number of Tunisian army officers in 2013. To date, there exists no clear information about who was behind these assassinations. The government of Ali Laraaid, however, made formal allegations against Ansar al-Sharia; the Jihadi Salafis group, banning them later as a terrorist organisation.

On the streets of Tunisia and particularly in Facebook discussions, allegations were made against various ‘ghosts’, such as secret cells within the Tunisian army or security forces. These ghost entities have the goal of destabilising the country in order to reinstate the Ben Ali regime, or at least to bring the RCD back into power. Such allegations stem from recent history, specifically regarding the role of snipers who killed
over 200 Tunisian protesters between 17 December 2010 and 14 January 2011. These snipers have never been found and could belong to the same mysterious groups behind the spate of terrorist acts and assassinations during Ennahda's rule in 2012 and 2013.

Opposition groups, however, alleged that Ennahda’s newly established security apparatus within the Tunisian army and security forces was to blame for the deaths. Regardless of blame, Ennahda’s reputation suffered because of the violence and instability during its time in power. The government’s inefficiency and incoherence was seen in their management of the frequent labour disputes and social protests which at times involved an overly accommodating response, and at others, a harsh reaction accompanied by forceful police repression (Guazzone 2013, 37).

Victim or not, Ennahda was blamed for four failures of administration. First, critics say that Ennahda emphasised divisive political and social issues during negotiations about what should and should not be included in the new constitution (Alexander 2013; Wolf 2013). Issues such as the national identity, the status of women, blasphemy, the nature of the political system and the state in general, had become propagandist tools rather than the standard issues of the election period. Still others (Alexander 2013) cite the pressure regarding these issues being due to Ennahda's internal diversity and the tension between pragmatists and Salafist hardliners.

Second, Ennahda has been accused by its secularist and leftist opponents of coddling the Salafis (Alexander 2013; Wolf 2014; Duran 2013). The softer version of this critique accuses Ennahda of double-speak, of condemning acts of terrorism and violent Jihadi Salafis, but taking little concrete action. Tougher critics accuse Ennahda leaders of openly encouraging extremism, either because Ennahda leaders actually
support a more extreme agenda, or because a strong and visible Salafi militancy strengthens Ennahda's support from secular voters and parties (Wolf 2014).

Third, some intellectuals, journalists and even Ennahda supporters have accused Ennahda of obstruction, foot-dragging, and making partisan decisions (Alexander 2013). Ennahda has been accused of delaying work on the new constitution and new elections in order to have the opportunity to shape a text that would impose its values and populate the state apparatus with loyalists. Critics furthermore accused Ennahda of stalling while it loaded the Interior Ministry and other offices with party loyalists rather than competent managers (Wolf 2014; Alexander 2013).

Finally, Ennahda has been blamed for failing to fix the economy. Instead, it has focused on ideological clashes with the opposition and on enhancing its power. It has neglected to address the social and economic grievances that fuelled the rebellion against Ben Ali (Alexander 2013).

Looking at the events of 2012 and 2013, however, it appears that non-coalition parties have been less concerned about whether the NCA achieved its task of forging a new constitution, and instead concentrated their efforts on removing Ennahda from power and keeping them out in the future.

In the process, the achievement of a safe and smooth democratic transition has been somewhat diminished despite Tunisia's success in retaining its fledgling democratic institutions. Furthermore, goals such as tolerance and mutual acceptance that should have dominated the rules of engagement in this transitional democratic scene have been overshadowed by murder, fear and divisiveness. Despite this, the constitution was ultimately enacted by early January 2014.
Moderation Test

Ennahda developed and promoted itself as a moderate, tolerant movement from the start. When Ennahda took power after the October 2011 election, furthermore, the official tune of moderation grew louder. The party at times seems obsessed with its image of moderation. However, the theory of moderation through inclusion does not apply to Ennahda (Cavatorta and Merone 2013).

Cavatorta and Merone (2013, 857-875) argued that Ennahda gained its prominence and success as a political party through a policy of ‘moderation through exclusion’. This runs contrary to most works on extreme-parties-turned-moderate that argue that moderation, namely the acceptance of democratic procedures, human rights, and a market economy, comes about through inclusion. The inclusion theory appears sound when one analyses a number of Islamist parties having contributed to the progressive democratisation of their respective countries. The Tunisian case, however, offers a different perspective on moderation. Cavatorta and Merone argued that Ennahda, through a painstaking process of exclusion, namely through repression and social marginalization, has led the party to shift from its extreme anti-systemic position of the 1970s to its mainstream position today.

Ennahda's path runs contrary to Turkey's AKP or the Moroccan PJD, which have come to embody the very notion of political moderation, accepting democracy and human rights, taking a market-oriented position on economic matters and a pragmatic stance on sensitive, strategic issues of importance for the West. In a strict institutional sense, Ennahda was not afforded the opportunity of participating in the political system before
January 2011, and cross-ideological cooperation with other ideological groups never occurred prior to the mid to late 2000s (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 871).

In late May 2012, Ghanouchi declared from Washington: (Ghanouchi 2012, par. 11, 15)

Islamists’ arrival to power does not mean that they will dominate the state, the society, and the revolution because they are the most popular party, as practiced by tyrannical systems. The state’s role is not to impose a certain way of life on the people. … However, when we faced serious differences around issues like sharia, choosing a presidential or parliamentary political system, freedom of conscious, the universality of human rights, we had to organize a national dialogue between the main parties to reach consensus. This lasted for nearly five weeks and we ended up reaching compromises around these different issues, hence we accepted to leave out any mention of sharia in the constitution because this notion wasn’t clear to the Tunisian people.

Observers like Cavatorta and Merone (2013) note that harsh security measures, torture and oppression were imposed on Tunisians for decades, requiring many political players including the Islamists to find alternatives and make concessions on the go. Additionally, the rejection the party faced by a large section of Tunisian society made it possible and necessary for Ennahda to entirely re-elaborate how political Islam could contribute to the developmental trajectory of the country. From this elaboration flows the acceptance of the dominant discourse of democracy, liberalism, and market economy without which the party would not have been able to find much space in Tunisia (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 859).

Ennahda as a neo-Islamist party has performed well in recent years to convince the outside world of its moderation and democratic attitudes. For instance, there is a significantly wide acceptance that the party has come a long way since its foundation in terms of its attitudes towards the fundamental principles of electoral democracy and basic human rights. As a matter of fact, since the 18 October 2005 ‘Collective’, (better known
as Call for Tunis)\(^99\) Ennahda no longer faced widespread rejection from the political and social representatives of many sectors of Tunisian society; “moderation is recognized as having been attained” (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 870).

In an internal study distributed within Ennahda members in exile, only few months before 2011 revolution, the organisation acknowledges its long journey from political stagnation and revolutionary naivety towards pragmatism and political moderation. According to the document Ennahda

started as a group dominated by rejection of most choices made by the post-colonial state in dealing with development and nation-state building. It was [Ennahda] acting from a revolutionary position. It was clear about what it didn’t want, but unclear of what it wanted as goals and objectives of change. As the years passed, the list of rejections shrunked, and has been replaced with a mentality of proactivism, realism and positivity; thereafter a reasonable method of change was arrived at, which was characterised by flexibility and gradualism (Ennahda 2010, 14-15).

However, almost everyone would agree that the party is very much influenced by the development of Rachid Ghanouchi’s political thinking during the last twenty to thirty years\(^{100}\) (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 860). Ennahda's historic leader continued Ennahda's evolution after 2011, coming up with more controversial concepts within the wider Islamist community. On 20 May 2013, he commented on Aljazeera TV Channel,

\(^99\) Call for Tunis is a meeting took place in Paris in October 2005, between representatives of various Tunisian opposition parties from inside Tunisia and outside, including Ennahda, CPR and Ettakatol, (the Troika parties) and eventually all the attendees agreed upon various principles of civic state and basic human rights to adopt post Ben Ali regime.

\(^{100}\) It is worth stating here that Ghanouchi’s *Public Liberties within the Islamic State* (1993), which he penned in jail after the declaration of MTI on June 1981, contains the major theoritical work that has only been available in Tunisia since Ben Ali’s ouster in 2011. Cavatorta and Morene (2013) describe it as the pillar of the attitudes and policy positions to public freedoms in the direction of cementing democracy as the only viable political system. Ghanouchi’s intellectual work continues to constitute significant development for Tunisia because it informs and seeks to constrain the actions of militants from this point onwards, as self reflection would be increasingly discussed and eventually accepted from within (868).

Cavatorta and Morene also observe that Ennahda reached the internal conclusion to support the creation of a ‘civil’ state, or in Arabic: ‘*dawla madaniyya*’, “openly subscribing to the idea that references to religion are purely identity-based and not sources for public policy-making” (861).
“we believe in Shari’ah and believe that is all justice and compassion. But the implementation of Shari’ah was marred by some vices like restrictions on the freedom of women, thought, and fine arts, as regrettably happened in more than one Islamic country” (Ghanouchi 2013, par. 20).

He went further to conclude that sharia never left Tunisia, adding that there were many breaches of Islamic laws but these should be addressed gradually through awareness and “within the laws of time, place, and reality” (par. 23). These statements were made in order to elucidate the party’s decision not to insist on including Sharia in the draft constitution (Voll and Mandaville and Kull, and Arieff 2012, 31).

In response to another question regarding Sharia in Tunisia, Ghanouchi replied with his usual pragmatism and use of metaphors: “People gave Ennahda their confidence based on the programme it presented. This programme is what we understand from the Shari’ah” (par. 25), while earlier on he said: “Part of Shari’ah is still vague, and we need to clarify it so that people can clearly see that Shari’ah is God’s justice on earth” (par. 24). He also stated that most Tunisian law is “derived from the first clause in the constitution, which states that this is an Islamic state”, adding, “so we are not trying to Islamise Tunisia, Tunisia is an Islamic state, but we are trying to correct some flaws” (Ghanouchi 2013, par. 24-25).

Ghanouchi delivered a thoughtful lecture, as the top ideologue of the Tunisian ruling party, on 2 March 2013, in the presence of Tunisia's major political leaders and academics, which caused controversy regarding “secularism and the relation of religion to the state, from the perspective of Al-Nahdha Movement” (Ghanouchi 2013). He observed that secularism is not a Western philosophy that fights idealist and religious
outlooks. “Secularism appeared, evolved, and crystalized in the West as a procedural solution, and not as a philosophy or theory of existence, to problems that had been posed in the European context” (Ghanouchi 2013, 6). He also concluded that the Islamic historical context differs from Western state-church relations, which require secularism as a mechanism to separate powers. It “is due to the absence of a church in Islam that what remains is the freedom of thought and interpretation. This will naturally lead to diversity in interpretations. … it is of the utmost importance that our heritage is devoid of a church” (Ghanouchi 2013, 12-13).

When asked whether Islam needs secularism, Ghanouchi has given vague answers such as

Islam has not endured for so long because of states’ influence but rather due to the large acceptance it enjoys among its adherents, in fact the state has often been a burden on religion … [Should] religion be entirely emancipated from the state and politics, this would also carry some risks whereby things would get out of control and social harmony would be endangered. The way to do it, therefore, is to find a balance that would guarantee people’s freedom and rights, because religion is here to do exactly that. To achieve this balance, we need to go back to the issue of distinguishing between religion and politics and adjust the parameters of what is constant in religion and that which is variable (Ghanouchi 2013, 13-14).

Such pragmatic and diplomatic answers in public statements have become typical of Ghanouchi’s post-Arab Spring thinking. When John Voll asked whether Islam is compatible with democracy, Ghanouchi stated, “I don’t answer that question, because I think democracy is a part of Islam; if a system is not democratic, it can’t be identified as being Islamic” (Voll et al. 2012, 31-32).

Ghanouchi’s statements suggest that Ennahda is driven by the exigencies of politics, which allow for wide interpretation of its doctrine. The constant policy
repositioning depends on need and formulaic calculation within *maqasid a-sharia*. This elasticity is a core characteristic of neo-Islamism, especially post-Arab Spring.

The elections held after the revolution, were somewhat reminiscent of past conflicts between earlier versions of the contemporary parties. Between the UGTT strike of 1978 against the Bourguiba regime and the bread riots of 1984, the Islamists of the Islamic Tendency Movement under Ghanouchi quarreled with trade union activists, particularly with the leftists of the era. The groups also clashed in various debates within Tunisian universities at the time. The left and the UGTT prevailed, becoming the major protagonists of the 1978 general strike. Most current Ennahda politicians, as well as the UGTT and leftist opposition leaders, were active players at that time and still remember old wounds. As a result, large sectors of “UGTT still today have a very difficult time reconciling with Ennahda, although their ranks also include many Ennahda members and sympathizers” (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 867). There is no doubt that this shared historical legacy (Wolf 2014) has had some bearing on the post-October 2011 outcomes, contributing to the general sense of polarisation in society.

Whatever grudge UGTT holds against Ennahda, the widespread dissatisfaction and frustration with the Ennahda-led government from its first year in power concerned economic and political matters as well as security threats. Perhaps due to the enormous pressure of finding itself within a mass of chaos, Ennahda intentionally turned its attention towards finalising the constitution, arguing over the new constitution’s critical points, party vision and position, instead of improving employment levels, economic performance and social harmony. Furthermore, the Salafis “became more aggressive, marching in the streets attacking bars, art galleries, and opposition political figures”
As a consequence, secular leaders held Ennahda responsible for the country’s general deterioration.

Ennahda initially refused calls for resignation for over sixteen months, particularly immediately after the assassination of Chokri Belaid. Finally in late October 2013, Ennahda's pragmatic and most moderate leaders decided “they served their party’s longer term interests better by accepting the roadmap and agreeing to resign” (Alexander 2013, par. 15). A quartet of Tunisia’s most influential civil society organisations, UGTT, Chamber of Commerce, the Human Rights League (LTDH)\textsuperscript{101} and the bar association developed a roadmap to help the Ennahda coalition and the opposition navigate through the crisis.

As mentioned earlier, in June 2005, Ennahda signed the 2005 “Call for Tunis” with major non-regime parties led to the parties becoming the preeminent entities represented in the new NCA; agreeing that:

1) any future elected government would have to be ‘founded on the sovereignty of the people as the sole source of legitimacy’; and

2) the state, while showing ‘respect for the people’s identity and its Arab-Muslim values’, would provide ‘the guarantee of liberty of beliefs to all and the political neutralization of places of worship’… The Call also went on to demand ‘the full equality of women and men. (Stepan 2012, 96)

The Ennahda–led government respected this historic agreement and for the ‘\textit{twin tolerations}’ principle\textsuperscript{102}. Ennahda contributed forty-two female members to the NCA,\textsuperscript{103}.

\textsuperscript{101} The organisation’s name is usually abbreviated LTDH for its French name: \textit{La Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de L’homme.}

\textsuperscript{102} Step\textsuperscript{n} describes twin tolerations as both the state and religious citizens tolerating each other in a vertical turned into horizontal direction:

[The] first toleration is that of religious citizens towards the state. It requires that they accord democratically elected officials the freedom to legislate and govern without having to confront denials of
which is more than all of the secular parties combined. Ennahda leaders “reassured Tunisian citizens that it [would] not interfere in their personal lives and … [would] respect their basic human rights” (Growder, Griffiths, and Hasan 2014, 123). With these assurances came tensions between the Salafis and Ennahda, with the latter being accused of making concessions in matters of religious doctrine (Ottaway 2012; Nield 2013a and 2013b; Fadel 2013).

Comparing Ennahda to Egypt's MB reveals Ennahda's political savvy, particularly with regards to adopting neo-Islamism. President Morsi was in office for roughly one year before the army ousted him. While in office, he issued a controversial sort of constitutional coup, which demonstrated Morsi's tendency towards autocracy and a refusal to cooperate with the opposition, let alone share the administration with the opposition and politicians from outside the MB (Duran 2013).

103 The Egyptian JDP (the electoral vehicle of the MB) if given the chance, could have developed policies and methods of becoming a successful neo-Islamist party. However, consecutive wins in both parliamentary and presidential elections in 2012, and gaining the upper hand in constitutional debates, led Egyptian Islamists to think they had a blank cheque to dominate the political scene and Islamise Egypt straight away. That said, during the MB's brief rule, civil life and liberties in general were relatively normal and met at least the minimum of revolutionary aspirations.

An exception may have been the matter of the Coptic demonstrators who were killed, particularly in demonstrations at the Maspero building in Cairo and the burning and destruction of Coptic churches. Though accused of causing or condoning these attacks, the pro MB government denied them, pointing the finger at anti-Morsi forces.

104 The political crisis was triggered by President Mohammed Morsi's decree giving him extensive new powers. Following widespread protests and strikes by parts of the judiciary, Morsi rescinded most of his decree on 10 December. However, he refused to postpone the referendum, despite opposition demands.

In December 2012, the new Egyptian constitution gave the military greater autonomy than it had ever enjoyed before but relations with the Brotherhood worsened as public disenchantment with Morsi grew and the army polished its own PR. The Egyptian Army chief and Defence Minister el Sissi warned of intervention a week before the 30 June protests. Morsi when refused to step back, el Sissi took the opportunity to strike at him (BBC, 24/12/2012, Guardian 2/7/2013).
Ennahda, on the other hand, had been eager to share power, to make concessions and stick to the civil secular state, despite occasional controversial statements from some Ennahda leaders. It is worth noting Ennahda's awareness that its victory in October 2011 did not deliver an absolute majority that would have allowed it to monopolise power, in contrast with impressive results in the Egyptian elections being viewed by the Muslim Brotherhood as a mandate to act strictly according to its own agenda.

Furthermore, the power shift in Tunisian political life, that is, from the secularists to the Islamists may be the most important outcome of the Arab Spring to date. If the factions can’t get along, the friction could bode ill for the democratic evolution across the region. Not surprisingly, Western governments have closer ties to the secularists, and were counting on them to moderate some of the Islamists’ more conservative positions. That was certainly the case in Tunisia, where the Islamist Ennahda party and secular parties agreed to share positions on the committees that are drafting a constitution. The elected Constituent Assembly likewise chose a secular president and an Islamic prime minister (Kitfield 2012, par. 24).

Furthermore, Ennahda as a doctrinally diverse party with the largest following in the country (according to the 2011 general election), has shown signs of internal strife. For instance, NCA member Habib el-Louz has been accused by secularist social media of supporting the Jihadi Salafists and of being their spokesman within Ennahda. El-Louz made controversial statements demanding that sharia be incorporated as the main source of the constitution and laws. Hamadi Jebali, the first Ennahda Prime Minister, was accused of being affiliated with Ben Ali’s party, RCD and not being firm enough with the criminals and election cheats under Ben Ali’s regime. Ennahda’s own hardliners protested and argued that the October 2011 election endowed them with democratic legitimacy; because they won the election, Ennahda should act according to its will, and other parties
should simply wait until the next election to attempt political change in their favour. They stubbornly opposed the pragmatists’ willingness to compromise, especially on religious matters throughout Ennahda's period in government. (Alexander 2013; Wolf 2014).

Furthermore, there were conflicts over authority within the party as well. Alexander (2013) explains:

[Some] of these tensions are generational, with younger activists challenging Ghanouchi’s long rule. These conflicts sometimes overlap with philosophical tensions or with tensions between activists who stayed in Tunisia and endured Ben Ali’s repression and those who went into exile. Other tensions concern the locus of ultimate authority within the party. Hardliners on the party’s shura council contend that the council holds ultimate authority. They have used their positions to challenge Ghanouchi’s control over the party (2013, par. 8).

In conclusion, Ennahda’s journey towards moderation, which has travelled from the 1970s through its arrival in power in late 2011, has been quite a long one. It is a “journey towards moderation in so far as it accepts the dominant values and discourses that the majority of the international community subscribes to” (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 862).

During two years in power, Ennahda did not show visible signs of reversing its practice of moderation, although the party has suffered from challenges and power struggles within a mostly hostile environment. Such practical development sheds light on whether the attempt to reconcile Islam with democratic politics is inherently problematic or contingent on the factors addressed in this study.

Ultimately, although there has been plenty of opportunity to watch Ennahda in power over two years, this transitional period is not sufficient to determine with certainty

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105 Such as Ghanouchi’s subsequent belief in democracy as an integral part of Islamic teachings, while other Ennahda leaders may still doubt the Islamic status of democracy.
whether Ennahda's future will be a deep, strategic Islamisation, or to be representative of an inclusive process in a secular political system. The defeat that Ennahda suffered at the hands of Nidaa Tounis in the October 2014 general elections will no doubt exert influence on this future direction.

**Economic test**

Ennahda’s October 2011 platform focused primarily on economic issues, namely reducing poverty, promoting economic initiatives, developing tourism and creating jobs. The party therefore, presented itself mainly as pro-development (Tonta 2012, 187), but without a proper blueprint of how it would be achieved.

After his party’s victory, Ghanouchi promised during a visit to Washington DC in 2011 to “introduce reforms that will develop the free market; encourage more free investment, both internally and externally; develop the judiciary system towards more justice and more independence so as to secure the investors” (Ghanouchi 2011e, par. 23). Ennahda’s October 2011’s election campaign promised “to implement an economic and social plan aimed at providing jobs for all Tunisian men and women, offering all the amenities of a dignified life, achieving balanced regional development and promoting investment in all economic sectors” (Ennahda 2011, 5).

The ambitious programme went further to advocate a four year economic model named ‘Recovery, Revival and Excellence’ to be implemented from 2012 to 2016. This four year plan had several goals: to transform Tunisia into a regional financial centre with international influence; to encourage business listings on the stock exchange; to strengthen the independence of the Central Bank, allowing it to become a mechanism for developing the banking sector; to improve Tunisian banks’ capitalisation levels by raising
the ceiling for bank capital and creating tax-free savings facilities; to attract internationally renowned banks to the Tunisian economy; and to improve legislation related to health and transport insurance (Ennahda 2011, 22-23). Nevertheless, few aspects of Ennahda’s platform feature an Islamic economy; only two notable projects might be classified as pertaining to Islamic finance. This is despite the fact that Turkey under the AKP and many Gulf countries have managed to integrate them coherently as part of a neoliberal economy in the region. Ennahda modestly proposed to pass appropriate legislation to establish Islamic banks or Islamic departments within conventional banks, and endeavours to use the Islamic banking mechanism to attract public funds as traditional and Islamic bonds (sukuk), prepare integrated legislation for Islamic insurance and encourage the creation of solidarity (takaful) departments within existing companies (Ennahda 2011, 22-23).

Ridha Chkoundali, an economist and one of the drafters of Ennahda 2011 election program, said that following Ennahda’s extensive internal and external discussions, they decided to use the liberal economy, alongside the Economy of Solidarity and its social aspects (Économie sociale et solidaire de marché), which will integrate Islamic practices such as zak’aat and waqf (interview with author, Tunis, 18 April 2013). Questioned about whether such mixing of the liberal economy with economic solidarity is considered by his party as a step towards an Islamic economy, Chkoundali replied:

“No, no! It is only a current vision of what we should do, but we do not have currently a clear and complete version of the Islamic economy … such a project needs lots of work and we all know that Ennahda has been persecuted and in exile, and in a less than one year we achieved our current version. … Surely, in the future there is an urgent need to integrate the Islamic teachings into the

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106 The solidarity economy can be seen as: part of the ‘third sector’ in which economic activity is aimed at expressing practical solidarity with disadvantaged groups of people, which contrasts with the private sector, where economic activity is aimed at generating profits, and the public sector, where economic activity is directed at public policy objectives, or as a struggle seeking to build an economy and culture of solidarity beyond capitalism in the present.
economy, and add things which we see it beneficial to the Tunisian society … The Islamic economy derives from maqasid al-sharia [objectives of Sharia], so, everything that benefits people is Islamic” (Interview with author, Tunis, 18 April 2013).

Ennahda acted as if no contradiction existed between economic neoliberalism and the Islamic precepts of economics, either because of a lack of alternatives, or because neoliberalism is compatible with Islam. Either way, Ennahda's stance added extra tension to the already tense Ennahda-UGTT relationship after the revolution.

Habibi (2012, 5) concluded that Ennahda’s goals and economic vision “reflect a strong commitment to free enterprise capitalism, with an active role envisioned for small and medium-size enterprises”. As mentioned in the third chapter, Ennahda lacked well-defined and coherent policies regarding the economy, internal politics, international affairs or social policies, apart from some general references to pan-Islamic and pan-Arab cooperation and social justice (Torelli 2012, 79). By its first attempt to obtain legal recognition in June 1981, Ennahda appeared more interested in economics than other fields. The Iranian revolution and the circulation of books from top Iranian revolutionary thinkers during the early 1980s created Ennahda's special interest in the critique of capitalism, from a Shia Islamist's point of view. Ghanouchi himself acknowledged the influence of Iranian philosophers such as Shariati on various occasions (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 861). At the time, most North African or Iranian Islamist thinkers searched for an Islam-compatible ‘third way’ between the market economy of the imperialist West and the command economy of socialist countries. Within this context Cavatorta and Merone (2013) note, 

[It] can be argued that the critique of capitalism dominated the economic agenda of the party during the 1970s and 1980s . . . While the party maintains in some ways that this third way is still
potentially pursuable, it is quite evident that it has moved significantly towards the acceptance of a market economy integrated into the global neoliberal system as the only way for Tunisia to develop. There has been for instance no real debate about the free trade agreement that links Tunisia so closely to the European economies and even though the party seeks to attract more gulf investment into the country, the neoliberal logic is the same given that the gulf economies are fully part of the process of neoliberal globalization. It is revelatory that today the constituency of reference of Ennahda is largely composed of merchants, traders, and business people rather than the fully disenfranchised (mouhammishin) who find instead representation in the extra-institutional Salafist movements or in marginal leftist groups (861-862).

Furthermore, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist sentiments have become over time considerably diluted within Ennahda, and neo-Islamist parties in general. However, anti-capitalism was quite strong within neo-Islamism prior to the 2011 revolutions, with the exception of Turkey's AKP. Habibi (2012, 4) argues that

the supporters of Islamist movements in recent decades came from four socioeconomic groups: a) counter elite businessmen and professionals, b) frustrated intellectuals, c) unemployed or underemployed university and high school graduates, and d) urban lumpen proletariat. To these one could add the large group of urban and rural poor, who developed sympathies for Islamist movements mostly in response to the financial assistance and social services that Islamists have offered in poor neighborhoods.

Torelli (2012, 79) observes that Ennahda is “more popular among the poorer social classes and, because of its Third-Worldism, has also always been anti-capitalist, although in a rather veiled manner”. However, Ennahda’s electoral programme supports the development of a typical neo-liberal economy and not a serious attempt to come up

107 There has been unprecedented cooperation with the USA and Europe on several fronts after the Arab Spring. For instance, Ennahda acceded to American demands for a crackdown of Salafist activism in the aftermath of the attack on the US embassy in Tunis in September 2012. “There is a sense that the policies Tunisia pursued in this respect under Ben Ali will not be much altered” (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 862).
with a “third way”, let alone an anti-capitalist solution. (Boughzala 2013) Within this context Habibi (2012) argues that Ennahda’s centrist model can be described as “inclusive capitalism … [as] opposed to what many critics have described as the crony capitalism that was in place under the pre-uprising regimes in Egypt and Tunisia” (Habibi 2012, 5). Apparently, neo-Islamists perceive inclusive capitalism to be a free enterprise economic system in which the benefits of economic growth and development are distributed among all citizens rather than being reserved for a small political and business elite.

After Tunisia’s revolution, domestic unrest and conflict in neighboring Libya took a heavy toll on the region’s economy. Tunisia’s economy contracted by 1.8 percent, as tourism and activity in unionised sectors declined sharply. To help households and businesses cope with the effects of the recession, authorities stepped up public spending and injected liquidity into the economy. But these measures led to inflation and losses in foreign reserves. Despite this, Tunisia recorded the lowest fiscal deficit and public debt ratio of all the Arab countries in transition in 2011. The country also posted the highest unemployment rate of this group of countries, which includes Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco (IMF 2012).

Ennahda displayed a significant degree of pragmatism on foreign policy matters while it led the government and in its economic relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In April 2013 the Ennahda-led government agreed to IMF’s conditions for a twenty-four month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) in the amount of US$1.74 billion, which is equivalent to around 400 per cent of Tunisia’s quota in the IMF (IMF 2013). Notably, radical Islamist parties such as HT, which represents a tiny
minority with the Islamist mosaic in Tunisia, harshly criticised the government, accusing it of bending to the pressure of neo-imperialist institutions.

Tunisian neo-Islamists and the MB in Egypt during President Morsi’s time resumed\textsuperscript{108} the neoliberal economies of their predecessors (Challand 2013, 182), with aspirations of neo-Islamism faring as well as it had in Turkey. The AKP’s blend of Islamism and neo-liberalism proved to be a timely political and economic project, as it sealed a victory in the November 2002 national election\textsuperscript{109} (Elshinnawi 2013). Karaman (2013, 3416) explains:

Upon assuming office, the AKP strictly adhered to the IMF-supervised crisis management programme that had begun in April 2001, which was initiated by the previous administration, in the wake of one of the most severe economic crises in Turkey’s history. The IMF-crafted anti-inflationary debt management programme mandated checks on spending for public services and social reforms. The compliant AKP quickly implemented policies cutting public spending, controlling wages, significantly rolling back agricultural subsidies and privatising state-owned enterprises, as well as natural resources.

Nevertheless, the process of socio-economic openness has yet to develop an individualistic conception, and runs the risk of the populace remaining anchored to the classical concept of \textit{ummah}, although the emerging forms of Islamic associations are based on people's more personal relationships with Islam (Torelli 2012). Ishay (2013, 378) observed:

\textsuperscript{108} Benoit Challand (2013) observed: ‘Ennahda took an ambiguous stance in labour actions and demonstrations, in particular in spring 2012 when Ennahda’s Interior Minister was accused of using the same repressive policing tools as Ben Ali to quell popular demands’ (Challand 2013, 182).

\textsuperscript{109} A notable difference between Ennahda and AKP, is that the latter had support from Anatolian business people who would benefit from neoliberal, world market oriented policies. These policies are also a weapon for the Anatolian business cartel, against their rival big Istanbul businesses. Ennahda has neither a constituency that resembles the Anatolian big businesses nor the circumstances that surround AKP's economic choices (Kuru 2013; Goskel 2013; Komecoglu 2014; Habibi 2012).
Beyond the immediate economic challenges, there is a widespread sense among the MB and Salafists that the free-market capitalist approach pursued by Ben Ali and Mubarak had increased socio-economic inequity, and further, that the social tensions associated with neo-liberal economics had provided a pretext for political repression in both countries.

But pro-market policies did not immediately lift Tunisia from dire economic circumstances. Ennahda came to be blamed for the country’s continued economic doldrums. MacFarquhar (2012b, par. 16) state:

[Critics] say that the party lacks financial expertise and is so focused on putting an Islamic stamp on the new constitution that it has neglected developing even a rudimentary economic vision.

Its promise to create 20,000 new public-sector jobs compounds the problem, the critics say. ‘They are learning how to run the machine while operating it,’ … senior officials say that the public is expecting too much too fast. "It’s like you get married and you want a baby boy with blue eyes one month later’, says Abdelfattah Mouru, a Renaissance Party founder. ‘It is not up to the government alone to make the rain and the sunshine’.

Yet Ennahda did receive international support. The World Bank approved a $500 million loan in mid-2012 to help carry out economic changes designed to foster job creation. The United States, furthermore, provided about $300 million in aid and the European Union provided $400 million over two years. Qatar bought an entire $500 million Tunisian government bond issue in 2012 (MacFarquhar 2012b).

Ennahda’s focus on the economy was understandable. Zogby’s (2013, 1-5) survey entitled “Tunisia: divided and dissatisfied with Ennahda”, concludes that Tunisians do not fear ‘Islamisation’ of the country, and that the topic is not a major factor in the public’s discontent with the government. Rather, the poll makes clear that the majority of Tunisians are disturbed by the government’s failure to deliver on the political and economic promises of the revolution. The poll, furthermore, shows that the Tunisian
public has a long list of non-religious priorities, with economic, security, and governance issues dominating the top of the list. However, Ennahda supporters and non-supporters alike share such concerns.

A 2013 survey by the International Republican Institute asked Tunisians to name the three most important problems facing Tunisia. Seventy-three percent of respondents named unemployment, while 63 percent referred to the economy and financial crisis. Despite their frustration with the economy, Tunisians’ appraisals of their personal situations did, in fact, improve. Thirty percent of respondents indicated they had enough income for survival plus additional expenses such as new clothes and eating at restaurants. This represented a 13 percent increase from IRI’s January 2012 survey (IRI 2013).

**Salafi Test**

The contemporary image of Ennahda style moderation might be superficially compared to post 2011 Tunisian Salafism, in terms of belonging to Islamism more generally. In fact, Ennahda’s motivations for adopting an accommodationist approach remain unexplored and overshadowed by a flurry of conspiratorial rumors concerning its relationship with Salafism. The party’s opponents have been eager to paint Salafis as ‘Ennahda’s militia’. This argument ignores major tensions between the two movements and gives short shrift to Ennahda leaders’ rationale for adopting this inclusionary approach. (Marks 2012, par. 2)

The emergence of the Salafis after the 2011 election offered a serious challenge to Ennahda’s claims of monopolising representation of Islamic interest. The Salafis offered “a much more radically conservative interpretation of Islam in politics and social life …
[they] challenged such monopoly, shocking both Tunisian society and foreign observers” (Torelli, Merone, and Cavatorta 2012, 141).

Despite the fact that many Salafis opposed party politics and believed participation in democracy to be haram (forbidden by Islam), and the electoral regulations forbade religious parties from running for office in the NCA election of October 2011, Salafists ran in various regions as independents. None of these Salafists won a seat, casting doubt on their level of popularity (Donker 2013, 214). Nahdawis claims that the real number of Ansar a-Sharia members across the country does not exceed a few thousand, even though it was the major Salafi grouping.

The prestigious International Crisis Group published a report in February 2013, titled: “Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge”, which observed

As elsewhere throughout the region, the Salafi phenomenon has been steadily growing – both its so-called scientific component, a quietist type of Islamism that promotes immersion in sacred texts, and its jihadi component, which typically advocates armed resistance against impious forces. It made initial inroads under Ben Ali’s authoritarian regime, a response to the repression inflicted on Islamists in general and An-Nahda in particular. A new generation of young Islamists, relatively unfamiliar with An-Nahda, has become fascinated by stories of the Chechen, Iraqi and Afghan resistance (ICG 2013, i).

On the other hand, Merone and Cavatorta (2013, 5) observed that the emergence of the Salafis as a political force was “one of the most interesting and surprising outcomes of the Arab Spring”. They forcefully and publicly emerged across the region, and in particular, in violent hotspots like Libya, Yemen and Syria. Salafism is not monolithic, however; it is a complex phenomenon where different interpretations of the sacred texts give rise to different methods of political and social engagement. Yet they have something that ties them together. They have a strong appeal to a particular section
of their respective communities: disenfranchised youth (in Arabic: *muhammasheen* or *mustad’afeen*). Salafism apparently “transforms the humiliated, the downtrodden, disgruntled young people, the discriminated migrants, or the politically repressed into a chosen sect (al-*firqa al-najia*) that immediately gains access to the truth” (Merone and Cavatorta 2013,10).

Nevertheless, throughout 2011 and 2012, Ennahda attempted to defuse the Salafi ideology and their demands with pragmatism and political correctness. Because Tunisian Salafis, unlike the Egyptian el-Nour Party, did not have a political party to participate in the October 2011 election, and because many Salafists voted for Ennahda, the Ennahda leaders consistently entreated them to consider a more patient, gradualist approach to Islamising reforms (Marks 2012). The most significant evidence of these attempts is a leaked video of a meeting between Salafi leaders and Rachid Ghanouchi, which quotes the latter saying:\footnote{In April 2012, in the setting of continued protests for inclusion of Sharia in the constitution, Rached Ghanouchi has a phone conversation with a Salafi activist discussing what strategy to follow concerning public Islam in the country. The taped phone call was leaked months later. Donker (2013, 218) states, ‘He attempted to convince the activists to take a more ‘gradual’ approach. In doing so he outlined in detail what this actually meant- implying the close interrelaration 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 secular 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 thousands. 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 (Donker 2013, 218).
Thus, on many occasions in 2012 Ennahda leaders announced that in the new democracy, “there is room for everyone” (Torelli, Merone, and Cavatorta 2012, 145). Providing legal status to Salafis parties such as Jabhat al-Islah (RF) and HT became a way of symbolising the success of Tunisian democracy. Granting such status was conceived as a method of showing the futility of autocracy, oppression and dictatorship, as well as confidence in the adoption of a moderate political stance and an open-minded culture.

Over time, Ennahda found itself in an increasingly uncomfortable position, caught between non-Islamists who accuse it of excessive leniency and laxity in dealing with the security threat and Salafis who denounce it whenever it takes a harder line. Based on circumstances – a flare-up in violence or a wave of arrests – the party is condemned by either the former or the latter. (ICG 2013, i)

Indeed, this position has contributed to the division between pragmatic and moderate leaders and those hardliners with Salafist tendencies, as well as between its leadership’s more flexible positions and the core beliefs of its militant base.

Politically speaking, such tensions give rise to “an acute dilemma: the more the party highlights its religious identity, the more it worries non-Islamists; the more it follows a pragmatic line, the more it alienates its constituency and creates an opening for the Salafis” (ICG 2013, ii). Although the Tunisian jihadist Salafis are electorally weak, they continued to pose a specific symbolic threat towards Tunisia’s sense of modernity, liberalism and contemporary connections with Europe.

The major Salafi Jihadist group, which caused trouble for the Troika government, is Ansar a-Sharia, which organised less than three months after Ben Ali fled the country on 14 January 2011. Abu Ayadh al-Tunisi (his real name Seifullah Ben Houcine)
dominated the group as the Emir (supreme leader). He is a jihadist who allegedly fought in Afghanistan during the battle of Tora Bora, and in 2003 he was deported to Tunisia on international terrorism charges. Once released from prison after the revolution of 2011, he started gathering followers thanks to the contacts and the prestige that prison gave him. In addition, the group [could] count on a prominent spiritual leader, Shaykh Khatib al-Idrissi, who had condoned the use of violence against the Ben Ali regime, was in prison for two years and enjoys significant credibility (Torelli, Merone, and Cavatorta 2012, 149).

It is worth restating here that a number of Ennahda leaders have Salafi ties, and that they influence Ennahda internal politics. These hardliners use their positions on the shura council to pressure the moderate wing. Those moderates have remained sensitive to Salafi interests in order to protect their right flank and perhaps to moderate Salafi behavior (Alexander 2012).

To conclude, Ennahda has distanced itself significantly from traditional Salafism and integrated itself into democratic institutions of governance. This was achieved by giving up the two fundamental objectives of traditional Islamism: the creation of an Islamic state and the thorough application of sharia laws. Ennahda attempted to integrate the Salafists, during its first year in power, prior to the dramatic assassinations of Belaid and Brahmi in February and July 2013, for several reasons. First, there is a degree of understanding of where Salafis came from, theologically and philosophically speaking, and many Ennahda members hold similar views. Second, the inclusion of Salafists in the political game might benefit Ennahda electorally, given that Salafi radicalism might be softened or neutralised if they joined the political system.
Finally, Ennahda could use Salafist radicalism to highlight its own political moderation … Extreme Salafism can provide Ennahda with the ultimate moderate image, arguing that it is defending democracy and human rights by acting as a rampart against Salafism (Alexander 2012; Torelli, Merone, and Cavatorta 2012).

**Facing Ansar a-Sharia**

Unfortunately, events took a dramatic turn on the evening of the attack on the American embassy in Tunis in September 2012. In response, the ruling coalition cracked down on Jihadi Salafis, due to unprecedented local and international pressure. The security forces started a campaign that targeted the leadership and followers of Ansar a-Sharia. This led to the arrest and imprisonment of many of them but not Abu Ayadh, discussed below, who became a fugitive (Torelli, Merone, and Cavatorta 2012, 18). After the assassination of Chokri Belaid, the crack down on Ansar a-Sharia worsened too.

Abu Ayadh has declared that one of the ultimate goals of his movement was to wage jihad abroad. He openly praised Osama Bin Laden at the time of his death, calling him *shahid* (martyr) and referring to him as ‘our leader’¹¹¹ (Torelli, Merone, and Cavatorta 2012, 150). There is insufficient evidence to prove, however, that Ansar a-Sharia was responsible for the assassinations of the two political figures and at least a dozen security forces and army personnel. Ansar a-Sharia has never declared war on the Tunisian government, or even considered itself pressed to act against it. On the contrary, it has stated that: “Tunisia is *dawaa*-land [peaceful call for Islamic teachings] and not an

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¹¹¹ There are official and unofficial accusations that Ansar a-Sharia is recruiting young jihadis and organising safe passage into Syria to fight or to join mostly al-Qaeda-related groups. The ICG (2013, 7) reports that “close to 2000 Tunisians, including jihadis, are currently fighting in Syria, on their return to Tunisia; swell the ranks of those who have remained at home”.
arena of open conflict between belief and unbelief that would justify resorting to violence” (Merone and Cavatorta 2013, 21; ICG 2013, 9).

All of the above suggests that Ennahda’s relationship with Salafists during its time in government was fraught. The nature of the relationship was perhaps best depicted in competition between their respective cadres. While Ennahda was trying to use its utmost pragmatic and diplomatic skills to deal with the Salafists ‘brothers’, nasty territorial wars had in fact ensued for control of the country’s mosques. Until 2011, all of the mosques in Tunisia had been under the rigid control of the Ben Ali regime, which appointed the imams for every prayer and issued lists of acceptable topics for Friday sermons (MacFarquhar 2012a, par. 5-6). After Ben Ali's ouster, these mosques, under the control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ennahda's Noureddine el-Khadmi, were the subject of clashes between Ennahda and other groups. An estimated 500 of 5000 mosques were seized by Salafis (Allani 2013; Alexander 2012).

**Conclusion**

The major finding of this chapter is that Ennahda’s attempt to bring together Islam, democracy and free market has involved a very complex process of internal as well as external struggle. The problem was not just being stuck between two hostile competitors (the Left and the Salafis) but also the dilemma of resisting the old regime forces that remained entrenched.

How all of these factors interact in the context of a struggle to chart a new political and economic path will be important for future studies. At the very least the mix of factors ensures current and coming instability, and demonstrates that Ennahda cannot always get what it wants, and that it always feels insecure. The recurring question is
whether it was ever possible for Ennahda to emulate the AKP experience while in power, given the sorts of interests existing in the Tunisian context that do not exist in Turkey, such as a vibrant and aggressive Salafis movement.

Nevertheless, although neo-Islamist conceptions of AKP-style economic prosperity, freedom and human rights for all may have lost some of their lustre, “the Islamist conceptions of values and society are still appealing in the face of pervasive corruption and the widespread hostility towards the United States and its allies across the Middle East” (Crowder, Griffiths, and Hasan 2014, 124). Thereafter, we can expect a widening divide between increasingly pragmatic neo-Islamist groups and those ultra-conservative and literalist Salafis. Although *jihadi* Salafis will continue to believe in the armed struggle, they are more likely to treat Tunisia as a land for preaching, not for jihad (ICG 2013, 9). Having said this, the situation leaves the doors open to the possibility of Tunisia being used as a base to conduct violent jihad elsewhere. In fact, the summer of 2014 saw civil war in neighbouring Libya between the *jihadi* militias and General Khafter, who is backed by el-Sisi regime of Egypt and other petroleum countries, such as Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The repercussions of such developments for Tunisian democracy cannot be positive.
CONCLUSION

Can the neo-Islamists become real democrats? The answer to this question partly depends on whether neo-Islamism will continue to be a major factor in the region after the Arab Revolutions and whether Tunisian-style neo-Islamism will continue to be influential in Tunisia and the broader Arab and Muslim world. However, the 3 short years of Ennahda’s participation in the Tunisian democratic transition showed that the version of political Islam it represents can be a genuine democratic player.

This thesis has focused on debates about the commitment of the Arab Spring’s neo-Islamists to democracy and pluralism. Traditionally, such a focus would hinge on drawing distinctions between moderates and radicals, on the basis of their support or opposition to liberal democratic reforms (Schwedler 2011, 348). However, this study has addressed the phenomenon of neo-Islamism through a new classification of literalists, or scripturalists (dhawahiris) and maqasidis. This has enabled a better understanding of the formation of neo-Islamist thinking. The maqasidi way of thinking has proven to be necessary to enable neo-Islamists to contribute constructively to democratisation.

**Neo-Islamism defined**

The study has brought to light five characteristics of neo-Islamism as a socio-political phenomenon: gradualist Islamisation, modernisation, moderation, nationalistic Islamism, and pragmatism in Western relationships. It has been shown that neo-Islamism
employs tactical measures such as gradualism and pragmatic relations with the secularist elite and the West, and implements ideological reforms closely related to the concepts of democracy, civic participation and peaceful transitioning of power.

Based on observations of its characteristics and preferences, neo-Islamism is defined as follows:

Neo-Islamism is distinguished by an ethical and theological emphasis on Islam that combines social conservatism with political moderation. Neo-Islamists are united in the view that Sharia laws is not an immediate reform priority, however there are divisions over whether this is a tactical pause towards the ultimate pursuit of shariatisation, whether it should be diluted if introduced at some future point, or whether it should never be introduced.

Having said that, the enormous pressure imposed by the Jihadi Salafis and other traditional Islamist movements for instant shariatisation and the realisation of the caliphate may push neo-Islamists in either direction.

**Neo-Islamism and illiberalism**

This study has also concurred with the view that neo-Islamists may be politically illiberal while democratic (Roy 2013, Hamid 2014b). Despite remarkable ideological reforms, neo-Islamists continue to carry out painful soul searching related to the preservation of their basic existence. This contemplation has been made more difficult within the chaos, civil wars and changes of power in countries affected by the Arab Spring. The need to evolve amidst the chaos might lead over time to adoption of new agendas that swing to the liberal or illiberal ends of the spectrum, including varying levels of commitment to democracy and civic participation. In various scenarios, neo-
Islamism may morph into post-Islamism, where shariatisation is not on the agenda and Islam serves as only a moral guide.

It is crucial to keep in mind that neo-Islamists remain the legitimate children of their religious communities and wider societies. There is no particular reason to suggest that Islamic “reform” would lead inevitably, for example, to liberalism in the way that the Protestant Reformation led, eventually, to modern liberalism.

In modern Europe, the decline of the clerical class and mass literacy laid the groundwork for secularisation. On the other hand, while the Arab and Islamic worlds have experienced a weakening of clerical power, religion remains the dominant societal influence, even if its power has declined in the political sphere. While the reformist impulse has coincided with political Islam’s ascendancy, Arabism, which is not inconsistent with religion, has always been tolerated. Thus, the reasons for secularisation in the Arab world lie in post-colonial trauma and challenges posed by pressures to adhere to Western-style modernisation (Hamid 2014b).

**Future of Ennahda and neo-Islamism in general**

Ennahda's participation in Tunisia's newly free political arena has been observable for only about three years, which is insufficient time to make definitive statements about its democratic behavior. As Guazzone (2013, 42) stated, Ennahda’s transformations engendered “by its evolution from movement to a party in the coalition government must be considered one of the factors determining Ennahda’s behavior in government”. The party has repeatedly stressed that it remains committed to a democratic regime based on Islamic principles and that such a position is compatible with liberal democracy and the protection of basic individual liberties. Feuer (2012) observed that the first claim finds
ample support in Ennahda's first year in power, as it showed solid commitment to broad participation in elections and the principle of the separation of powers. On the other hand, Ennahda would prioritise building a society in which public life is guided by a collective religious identity over the protection of individual freedoms that might conflict with such identity. This is evident in the long, painstaking argument over Salafi female students wearing niqab at university in 2013 and the decision not to include Islam as ‘a’ or ‘the’ source of laws in the new Tunisian constitution.

There were failures, however, during Ennahda's control of government between December 2011 and December 2013. While it was responsible for a number of bad decisions throughout the period, Ennahda found itself putting out fires in circumstances beyond its control. For example, Ennahda could not have been responsible for the deterioration of the security environment in the Grand Maghreb (North Africa) after Libya's civil war or the legacy of previous regimes’ policies and personnel. Nor did it have any control over the worsening of the socio-economic situation caused by the combined effects of the global, and in particular, the European economic crisis. Still, while it had the opportunity, Ennahda failed to develop and implement sound economic and security policies due to the appointment of incompetents based on cronyism and nepotism. It also may be said that Ennahda gave too much priority to consensus and unity rather than to consistency and efficiency (Guazzzone 2013, 48).

**Neo-Islamism vs. counter-revolution forces**

Unfortunately, the rise of Islamism itself might be used as an excuse to delay democratisation for decades in Tunisia or elsewhere in the MENA region (Challand 2013). Ennahda’s attempt to bring together Islam, democracy and the free market
involved a complex process of internal and external struggles. The problem was not just being stuck between two hostile competitors (the Left and the Salafis) but also the dilemma of resisting the old regime forces that remain entrenched, as seen in recent electoral developments in Tunisia.

While opposition elements have accused neo-Islamists of carrying totalitarian ideologies that run counter to Arab Spring aspirations of freedom and democracy, neo-Islamists have maintained their commitment to such values. Ennahda, for example, remains loyal to the imperatives that have emerged out of its development in Tunisian social and political history, though it is descended ideologically from the broader and presently much varied MB movement.

What is clear is that the political turbulence of the post Arab Spring has brought neo-Islamist parties to crisis point, especially with the rise of ISIL. But Ennahda leader Ghanouchi has argued that the Middle East is at a crossroads rather than in crisis. On one hand, the region is experiencing a rise in extremism and instability, but it is also moving towards democracy, development and progress. He noted that Tunisia is the ‘last shining candle of the Arab Spring’ from which other countries in the region could learn (Ghanouchi 2014b).

It is also clear, however, that the 26 October 2014 elections resulted in a sobering defeat of Ennahda, which only managed to attain 69 parliamentary seats against the 88 won by Nidaa Tunis, the party of the old establishment. Tunisian veteran journalist Abdulatif Fourati likened the election to an earthquake for the Nahdawis (Ennahda partisans and followers). This devastating blow came despite Ennahda's concessions to its
opponents during the Constituent Assembly and its later ceding power ten months before the 2014 elections (Fourati 2014).

Considering all the impediments it confronted, however, Ennahda's achievements to date are arguably quite a distinctive compared to the Egyptian MB. Tunisia’s success has been due to neo-Islamist adoption of ‘consensus politics’ (Ghanouchi 2014b) under circumstances in which it could not possibly rule on its own. Ennahda found itself under enormous pressure from both Salafis within and outside Ennahda, and secularists whose most powerful defender has become the 500,000 strong UGTT led by communists, socialists, and Arab nationalists (Ottaway 2012, 3). Achieving consensus in the face of the opposition was a preferable alternative to dragging the country back to the pre-revolution era of authoritarianism and dictatorship. However, the same success in achieving consensus while in power has been responsible for the idea that there has been inertia and indecisiveness within Ennahda, contributing no doubt to its electoral defeat.

**The Tunisian democratic model**

It is true that Ennahda’s 2011 electoral victory was not as decisive as that of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 2011 and 2012. But domestically, Ennahda faced strong opposition with a grassroots base in the form of trade unions and leftists. The Muslim Brotherhood, on the other hand, did not face opposition groups with such well-established bases of support, which helped lead to a false sense of invincibility. Also, unlike the MB, Ennahda has not had the burden of facing a military with strong economic and political claims. Finally, Ennahda's practice of inclusiveness and consensus building has proven to be decisive in placing Ennahda as a major player in Tunisian politics (Lesch 2014, 73).
While it is too early to conclude that the Tunisian democratic transition has been secured, Sezgin (2014) concluded that if there is any model of Muslim democracy after the Arab Spring, it is Tunisia, not Turkey.

In fact, it could be argued that Turkey has a lot to learn from Tunisia’s compromise and tolerance based politics. Sezgin (2014) and Gerges (2014), for example, viewed the repression following the 2013 Gezi demonstrations in Turkey as reflecting the increasingly authoritarian and police-state tendency of the Turkish regime. As recent Freedom House, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reports suggest, Turkish democracy is in steady decline.

By contrast, Tunisians adopted a new, fairly democratic constitution in January 2014 with the backing of an astounding 94 percent of the national assembly. In Turkey, however, the parliament failed to reach a consensus to produce the country’s first civilian constitution, mostly due to the ruling AKP’s insistence on establishing a presidential system of government (Sezgin 2014).

The importance of Tunisian success with its democratic transition and its own version of political Islam is not limited to its borders. Countries all over North Africa followed Tunisia’s lead by rising against their authoritarian leaders and calling for authentic democracy and rule of law. As Flick (2013, 197) stated, “As the catalyst of the Arab Spring, Tunisia has served as a weathervane of hope to these countries, revealing what democracy and rule of law could be”.

Therefore, neo-Islamist groups could be expected to play integral political and societal roles in Tunisia and in its neighboring countries.
Despite setbacks, neo-Islamism remains a source of hope for the region. With the rise of emerging jihadist militias such as ISIL, there is, in fact, an urgent worldwide call to cooperate with, strengthen and support neo-Islamist bids to convert their societies’ economic and political crises into smooth transitions to democratisation. This is certainly the wish of neo-Islamist leaders such as Ghanouchi, but whether their dreams become reality soon or not at all, only time will tell.

**The limits of this study**

Ennahda's case sheds light on neo-Islamism's possible future scenarios, against the background of a region full of societal and political instability. Their chances of success and failure in the coming years depend on each state and each case, and importantly, the outside world's reaction to the neo-Islamist political tendency. This thesis is exclusively about the neo-Islamists, and focuses on those in Tunisia. Therefore, it has the following limitations:

**Short period of assessment:** The Ennahda case study is taken as an example of the evolution of neo-Islamism after the Arab Spring, not as a concrete example of neo-Islamist political success. Despite Ennahda’s pragmatism, moderation, willingness to share power with non-Islamists during the so-called Troika ruling era, it is still difficult to make a final verdict about the party, unlike the AKP in Turkey or the MB in Egypt.

**Intersection with Civil Islam:** This is not a study of Civil Islam or post-Islamism; neither is it a study of Islamism fundamentalism or Salafi Jihadism. References to such tendencies were only made to develop comparisons when needed with neo-Islamism. Kömeçoğlu (2014) described ‘Civil Islam’ as an evolved ‘post post-Islamism’, which shares some characteristics with neo-Islamism. Kömeçoğlu argued that Civil Islam
delivers uncorrupted and untransformed Islam into a non state-centric political ideology. “The main focus of Civil Islam is on the spiritual development of individual Muslims and the promotion of the general conditions for human flourishing, including a robust civil society, human rights, religious freedom, peace, ethics, social justice, and the rule of law” (Kömeçoglu 2014, 17). However, while Civil Islam might fit perfectly with the goals of old Sufi schools such as the Hizmet Movement in Turkey, it does not fit the goals of the neo-Islamists, who, while keen on calling themselves Muslim democrats, do not share an ideology comparable to Sufi groups.

Post-Egyptian coup and the failure of Political Islam: This study did not aim to address the ‘end of Islamism’ or the Islamists’ frequent failures as per Roy (1993) and a few others after the 2011 Arab Revolutions. It is significant that Tadros (2014) and others began discussing the failure of political Islam, or ‘the end of Islamism’, as soon as the Muslim Brotherhood fell in Egypt after the July 2013 military coup. Additionally, Aktay (2013) described analysts who celebrated the ‘end of Islamism’ as societal acknowledgement of the failures of the authoritarian, anti-democratic regimes in the Islamic world. This claim, however, has been debunked several times over the past thirty years and does not take into account contemporary conflicts where armed Islamic groups are taking over cities and lands in Syria and Iraq, sometimes with popular support.

The evolution of neo-Islamism: This thesis posited that neo-Islamism is an ongoing evolutionary political phenomenon. There continues to be oscillation between an interest in intellectual reform and in developing a modern political party in Ennahda's political developments. Although Ennahda has shown promise, it must learn to “deal with the state administration and must overcome its internal contradictions: being a movement
that through almost all the period of its activity has developed an ideology that differs from what it now seems to advocate” (Torelli 2012, 73). In this regard, it is still possible that Ennahda will dismiss the need for shariatisation in the future; or quite the opposite, declare a set of Islamic blueprints to solve all social problems. Thus, the evolution of Ennahda is still worthy of continuous study in relation to the future of neo-Islamism.

Overall, however, Ennahda has shown itself to be a credible democratic neo-Islamist option for Tunisia.
# Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Al-firqa al-najia:</strong></td>
<td>the promised sect, which is generally used as religious puritanical sentiment for the Salafis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caliphate/Khilafah:</strong></td>
<td>Islamic state, usually seen as a transnational Islamic state, which covers vast lands and a variety of ethnic groups, who share Islamic belief.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dawaa:</strong></td>
<td>(also: dawah, dawa) literally (Arabic) means a call for something. Generally meaning to invite others (normally non-Muslims) to Islam, through preaching, and can be in modern days apply to non-practicing Muslims too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dawla al-madaniya:</strong></td>
<td>literally (Arabic) means civil state. The term used by contemporary Islamists to showcase the civic nature of Islamic state, in reaction to their opponents’ accusation of theocracy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dhawahir/Dhawahiris:</strong></td>
<td>(as opposed to maqasidis) who use scriptist methods in their interpretations of the Islamic sacred sources, particularly that of Quran and Sunna.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fatwa:</strong></td>
<td>legal pronouncement made by an accredited scholar as a judgment or verdict on a particular sharia matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fiqh:</strong></td>
<td>Islamic jurisprudence, which technically covers all aspects of life. The outcome of the scholarly effort of fiqh is called sharia, or Islamic law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hakimiyyah:</strong></td>
<td>God’s sovereignty. In the contemporary Islamic thought, this term is used to assert that God alone is the true sovereign and thereby to question all human claims to political authority as well as the legitimacy of ‘man-made-laws’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Haram:</strong></td>
<td>Not permissible in Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Halal:</strong></td>
<td>Permissible in Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hijab:</strong></td>
<td>Islamic head cover, or veil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ijtihad:</strong></td>
<td>literally means to struggle to obtain an objective. Is the process of achieving an Islamic legal decision through independent reasoning and interpretation of the sacred Islamic sources. The opposite is taqlid, which means following precedent or existing practice without questioning it. The person who has the scholarly credentials to conduct ijtihad is called a mujtahid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Islamisation:</strong></td>
<td>shariatisation with broader societal and economical contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jahiliyyah:</strong></td>
<td>refers to a new period of ignorance within contemporary Muslim societies, a time akin to the pre-Islamic period of Arabian paganism when the community was ignorant of God and his commandments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Jihad:** literally (Arabic) making efforts or struggle. The term has been used technically to describe any armed struggle by Muslims to defend or advance Islam against any threats or against its enemies.

**Jihadis:** Muslim militants who believe in jihad as a religious responsibility. Recently, this term has been associated with contemporary Islamists who adopt violence for achieving their political ends, often within transnational context.

**Jihadi Salafis:** The jihadists who are ideologically framed by Salafism movement.

**Kufir/ kafirs/ tekfiris:** kafir, tekfir, and tekfiri are Arabic terms for apostasy, heretic, person who declares others heretics, respectively.

**Maslaha:** common good, which within Islamic jurisprudence means the common good; that might not be covered by particular evidence from Quran and Sunna.

**Maslahah moursaleh:** (see maslaha)

**Maqasid a-sharia:** Objectives and aims of sharia, within the approach of Islamic Laws philosophy.

**Maqasidis:** the scholars and promoters of maqasid a-sharia.

**Mujahid al-akbar:** the greatest jihadi. The term used by Bourguiba refers to the hadiths regarding the greater jihad, which means struggle against one’s inner temptations, as opposed to ‘lesser jihad’, which connotes armed struggle.

**Muhammasheen:** disenfranchised.

**Sahabah:** companions of the Prophet Mohamed, who usually regarded as the most righteous generation in Sunni Islam.

**Salafis/Salafism:** members of Sunni puritanical movement of salafiyah (salafism). Salafis favour a return to a practice of the so called salif al-salih, the righteous ancestors or the original guided first three generations of Islam. Today, the Salafis are known for their strict literalist interpretation of Quran and Sunna. The Jihadi Salafis as well as Wahhabism are considered offspring of the historic Salafi movement.

**Sharia** (also: shariaa, shariyah, shari’aa): Islamic laws

**Shariatisation:** the movement to restore sharia laws dominance over all aspects of life.

**Shura:** literally (Arabic) consultation. Some scholars and modern Islamism have upgraded shura from a religious political moral value, to a decision making system, which might be able to synthesise Islam with representative democracy.

**Shuracracy:** a term mixing between shura and democracy, first used by the late Algerian Islamist Mahfoud el-Nehneh during 1980s and forth.

**Sufis:** Muslim mystics, who normally marginalise the political matters and secular affairs within Muslim societies.
**Ummah:** the global Muslim community.

**Ulamas:** Islamic religious scholars, who often have the credentials of making ijtihad.

**Ulamas el sultan:** derogatory term, meaning the ‘sell-out’ ulamas.

**Wahhabis:** a modern Islamic puritanical doctrine of reform and renewal attributed to Muhammed ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-87) who allied himself with the House of Saud. Today Wahhabism has served as the official ideology of the Saudi regime.

**Waqf:** Islamic pious trust.

**Wilayet faqih:** Guardianship of the juris consultation elite. This relatively modern concept within the Shia sect of Islam, establishes the authority of the faqih (the alim or scholar) or the top expert in fiqh (Jurisprudence) over religious as well as political matters. First developed by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1963 as a theory to breakthrough centuries of Shia political and scholarly stagnation.

**Zawiyas:** shrines of Sufi legends, which have been highly regarded by Sufi followers over centuries.
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