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**The Metamorphosis of Social Movements into Political Parties. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Tunisian al-Nahda as Cases for a Reflection on Party Institutionalisation Theory**

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11 Abstract  
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14 The article studies newly established parties with roots in social movements. Using the  
15 post-Spring development of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Tunisian al-Nahda as  
16 in-depth empirical cases, the study reflects on prevalent theoretical explanations for the  
17 transitions of social movements into political parties. The article argues that extant  
18 literature on party system institutionalisation and on the development of social  
19 movement do not adequately explain the driving factors for the transition process of  
20 movements into parties. A focus on party systems does not take note of the dynamics of  
21 movement-party relations, while social movement theory remains steeped in  
22 conceptions of institutional evolution and ‘natural progression’ in politics. When  
23 rethinking party institutionalisation, it needs to be recognised that it is a precarious  
24 process during which features of social movement activism overlap with the formalised  
25 engagement that characterises political parties. The comparative study of the Muslim  
26 Brotherhood-led Freedom and Justice Party and the Tunisian al-Nahda Movement and  
27 its al-Nahda Party exemplifies that the degree to which leading parties emancipate  
28 themselves from the guardianship of their ‘mother-organisations’ is an essential factor  
29 for democratic state-building.  
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39 Keywords: Muslim Brotherhood; al-Nahda; party institutionalisation; social  
40 movements; parties  
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## The Metamorphosis of Social Movements into Political Parties. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Tunisian al-Nahda as Cases for a Reflection on Party Institutionalisation

### Introduction

There is little hope for democratisation in the Middle East today. The venture known as the Arab Spring has largely failed. Egypt has reinstated an authoritarian presidential regime led by President ‘Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi, one that is – regarding its system of governance – not dissimilar to that of President Hosni Mubarak, albeit one that practices more severe levels of repression to crush any opposition. Other states – Libya, Yemen and Syria - are embattled in civil war, relegating hopes of democratic change to a distant memory. Perhaps Tunisia is the one remarkable exception, as it, despite many setbacks and grave challenges, remains on the path of democratic state-building.

The contrast between the Egyptian and the Tunisian situation inspires this article. These country cases have been the focus of insightful research which takes three main directions: firstly, enquiries of institutional factors (Bellin, 2011; Albrecht, 2015); secondly, investigations into the strategic behaviour of main protagonists of change (Tadroz, 2018; Albrecht & Bishara, 2011; Abdelrahman, 2015) and, finally, studies of ideological trajectories (Zollner, 2018; Cavatorta, 2018). This set of literature gives significant insight into the political paths of both countries; yet, beyond these contributions, this article poses the thesis that the metamorphosis of social movements into political parties took different trajectories in each case. It is this divergence that explains the failure of democracy-building in the Egyptian case, and its relative success in the Tunisian example. The article thus adds to existing research, which sets out persuasive arguments that informal networks and social movement organisations played a crucial part in ousting long-lasting authoritarian regimes in the MENA region. Amongst these are studies that compare phases of democratic mobilisation by drawing parallels to other incidences of sudden political change (della Porta, 2014), those which specifically look at the histories of political protest in the Middle East (Chalcraft, 2016; Abdelrahman, 2015), and contributions which aim to contextualise the protests of 2011 (Gerges, Fawaz A., 2015). While these works specifically focus on the role of social movements as protagonists for challenging authoritarian regimes in the region, there is nevertheless little research on their role in post-revolutionary\* democracy-building and even less on the transition of social movements into political parties during this phase.

The few studies that do take a closer look at the role of parties in post-revolutionary Egypt and Tunisia predominantly adopt a structural position, one which is dominated by theories on party system institutionalisation. This perspective assumes a priori that political parties are guarantors of an evolving democratic system of governance and that democratic pluralism and party competition are signifiers of democratic state-building. However, parties have first to undergo a process of formation, self-definition and institutionalisation before they become the bearers of democratic values. Granted, while the notion of a genuinely independent party that epitomises democratic values might be just an ideal, the critical point here is that most new parties in evolving democracies develop out of social movements. Party system perspectives overlook this crucial point and therefore, as we will see, present us with an

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\* I refer to ‘revolution’ in the popular use of the term, but do not further engage with the debate whether the political change of 2011 in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia constitute indeed a ‘revolution’ in terms of political science.

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3 incomplete and sometimes misleading picture of democratic state-building. In contrast to the  
4 prevailing party system perspective, this article follows the work of Randall and Svåsand as  
5 and also Basedau and Stroh who emphasise the importance of party institutionalisation  
6 (Basedau & Stroh, 2008; Randall & Svåsand, 2002). It considers, so Basedau and Stroh  
7 ‘...the process in which individual political parties that participate in elections experience an  
8 increase in organisational stability and value’ (Basedau & Stroh, 2008, p. 2)  
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10 The Egyptian and Tunisian cases provide us with rich empirical material for theory-building  
11 on the development of parties. In both countries, social movements were central to ousting  
12 authoritarian leaders; moreover, in both examples, core movements transitioned into political  
13 parties. Also, Islamist movements and their parties were leading actors in efforts to build new  
14 state/political institutions. The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) with its Freedom and Justice Party  
15 (FJP) and the al-Nahda Movement (NM) with its al-Nahda Party (NP) will, therefore, be the  
16 primary focus of the empirical part of this discussion. It is remarkable that two organisations  
17 with similar religious-political frames that are rooted in ‘Ikhwani’ ideas and, because they are  
18 Islamists, stem from same social movement family, are so dissimilar in their transitions into  
19 political parties. It is this fact which leads us to hypothesise that there is a relationship  
20 between the transformation of social movement organisations into political parties, on the one  
21 hand, and the success/failure of democratic development, on the other hand.  
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24 The contribution of this article is to focus on the development of social movements into  
25 political parties during this process, thus aiming to answer the following questions: What are  
26 the terms and conditions that propel organisations that were part of the politics of contention  
27 to re-invent themselves as the representative body of a new political system? What are the  
28 subtleties that drive social movements towards formalising their political activities? This  
29 article follows the suggestion of Basedau and Stroh that the infusion of democratic values  
30 and, herein, particularly the aspect of party autonomy, is an important element for the  
31 development of democratic parties (Basedau & Stroh, 2008, pp. 7-10). Democratic values can  
32 only be expressed if new political parties do not act as the political arm of social movement  
33 organisations, but instead become autonomous from their social movement roots. The case of  
34 the Tunisian NP evidences this; its process of institutionalisation as a political party started  
35 well before the Jasmine Revolution; compared to the FJP, this was pursued more stringently  
36 and progressed much further. In contrast, the example of the Egyptian MB shows that the FJP  
37 remained an extended arm of the ‘mother-organisation’, acting merely as its political branch  
38 rather than as an independent party.  
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#### 44 **Party System Perspective: A Useful Approach?**

45 Considerable theoretical research exists on structural aspects of forming new political  
46 institutions and legal frameworks during democratic transition. Without taking account of the  
47 fact that most political parties in post-authoritarian settings evolve out of social movements,  
48 party system institutionalisation is the dominant approach to the study of democratic state-  
49 building. As such, party competition in free post-authoritarian elections is an indicator of the  
50 progression towards democratic governance. This approach takes a structural view which  
51 regards party competition as a fundamental element of the democratic process. Dahl’s  
52 *Polyarchy* has given impetus to this debate, arguing that the major characteristic of successful  
53 democratic transition processes lies in the proliferation of parties and their consolidation  
54 within the political system (Dahl, 1971, pp. 1-47). As his emphasis regarding post-  
55 authoritarian transition is on party-pluralism within a system of governance, he overlooks the  
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3 impact of social movements in democratic transition processes. Following in Dahl's  
4 footsteps, O'Donnell and Schmitter point out that elections generate a 'contingent consent'.  
5 Parties and politicians, which they see as the actual holders of power, agree on the procedural  
6 norms of the electoral process (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, pp. 59-61; Schmitter & Carl,  
7 1991, pp. 82-83). Along those lines, analysts who commented on the post-Arab Spring  
8 elections in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011 looked at the spectrum of parties, seeing the emergent  
9 pluralism as evidence of change (Tavana, 2013, pp. 51-61; Pickard, 2013, pp. 133-148). As  
10 such, the freedom to form parties, irrespective of whether these have Islamist, nationalist,  
11 socialist or liberal leanings, was regarded as part and parcel of an evolving open and  
12 pluralistic party spectrum.  
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14 Granted, the party system approach provides us with a useful macro-perspective of the party  
15 spectrum and a valuable assessment of elections. In the case of Egypt, numerous political  
16 parties were formed or gained legal recognition in 2011. According to the Carnegie  
17 Endowment for International Peace, over 80 parties were created across the political  
18 spectrum; at least 50 of these were non-Islamist (Carnegie Endowment for International  
19 Peace, 2014). The Tunisian case shows a similar explosion of new political parties. 110 new  
20 parties were registered during 2011. In the first post-authoritarian election to the Constituent  
21 Assembly, 81 different political parties and many more independent candidates competed for  
22 seats (Bollier, 2011). As in Egypt, most new parties were secular, ranging from nationalists  
23 and liberals to socialists. The elections show that in both countries the secular camp was  
24 fragmented and thus paved the way for the victory of Islamist parties. In Tunisia, NP  
25 galvanised parts of the electorate through its appearance of unity. NP thus became the largest  
26 single party in the election of the Constituent Assembly in October 2011 with 37.04% of the  
27 overall votes, thus securing 89 of 217 assembly seats. In Egypt, the MB's FJP emerged as the  
28 largest political party with 37.5% of votes, thus ensuring 235 seats (including 22 seats of  
29 parties which were part of the Democratic Alliance); the second largest party was al-Nour  
30 Party which won 27.8%. In all, Islamist parties became a leading political force in both  
31 countries.  
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34 If one assesses the Egyptian and Tunisian cases purely by the range of parties which  
35 competed in the first election, it would be reasonable to deduce that Egypt and Tunisia were  
36 well on their way to establishing democratic pluralism. It would confirm Dahl's views on  
37 party pluralism and contestation or O'Donnell and Schmitter's concept of 'contingent  
38 consent' (Dahl, 1971, pp. 1-16; O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, pp. 59-61). After all, the  
39 legalisation of many parties in both countries during 2011/12 introduced party pluralism, and  
40 the elections to national legislatures in both states could be regarded as a sign of free political  
41 contestation. A party system perspective cannot, however, explain the subsequent divergent  
42 political trajectories of the Egyptian and the Tunisian cases, one which is marked by  
43 democratic failure and the other by a tentative success. The fact that Egypt, despite its  
44 seemingly promising electoral landscape and its electoral optimism, abruptly abandoned its  
45 process of democratic transition, clearly challenges the thesis that the primary evidence for  
46 democratic state-building lies in party-pluralism and the fair competition of parties in the first  
47 free elections.  
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50 Setting aside the value-laden debate about the relationship between Islamism and democracy,  
51 the fact needs to be taken into account that the majority of new parties in post-authoritarian  
52 settings have roots in social movement organisations. It throws up questions on why social  
53 movements take the path of institutionalisation to then re-configure as political parties. As  
54 this approach introduces a micro-perspective that requires researchers to pay close attention  
55 to processes that shape new parties, it is a departure from structural explanations that focus on  
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3 party system institutionalisation. As in the case of Egypt and Tunisia, it requires taking note  
4 of the institutionalisation of key-parties such as NP or the FJP with a particular eye on intra-  
5 organisational developments. It is this micro-perspective which give us answers to why one  
6 became an agent of democracy-building while the other became a stumbling block to the  
7 democratic transition process. Social movements, at least those which formalise their political  
8 involvement to establish political parties, are themselves the subject of the complexities of  
9 political transformation. Crucially, this means that we need to recognise that the dynamics of  
10 building formal institutional representation run parallel to the formation of a new  
11 constitutional framework. Research on democratic state-building thus needs to differentiate  
12 between party system institutionalisation and party institutionalisation and, in turn, recognise  
13 that neither the numbers of new parties nor the building of new institutional framework is in  
14 itself a conclusive indicator for either the triumph or, indeed, for the potential collapse of  
15 democratisation.  
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### 17 18 19 **Party Institutionalisation: a Theoretical Conundrum**

20 In the case of post-Spring Egypt and Tunisia, two social movement organisations that formed  
21 political parties stand out, namely the MB and al-NM. The MB initiated the formation of the  
22 FJP and the Tunisian NM which was the basis for the subsequent NP. The fact that these are  
23 two Islamist organisations is of less relevance here, albeit it supports the comparability of  
24 both cases. The shared ideological frames of both organisations allow us to discount the  
25 argument that Islamist movements/parties *per se* are unable to engage in democratic  
26 processes and thus encourage us to search for alternative explanations. Of course, there  
27 remains much to be debated on the extent to which individual Islamist movements/parties  
28 embrace democratic values by incorporating liberal values that are usually associated with  
29 secular humanist perceptions – a discussion which is linked to the so-called ‘participation-  
30 moderation’ thesis (Schwedler, 2011, pp. 347-376; Cavatorta & Merone, 2013, pp. 857-875).  
31 But beyond this related debate, it remains an undeniable fact that al-Nahda, the MB and their  
32 subsequent political parties had an enormous bearing on the evolving post-revolutionary  
33 landscape. Both organisations acted and reacted in distinct ways to the new opportunities and  
34 responsibilities that came with building a new political order. While Islamism can be  
35 discounted as having a causal impact on (the success or failure of) democratisation, the key to  
36 understanding the different trajectories of the MB and the NM lies in the in-depth exploration  
37 and comparison of these cases to then reflect on the link between democratic state-building  
38 and party institutionalisation.  
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42 As will be shown in this section, presently conceived models and theoretical presuppositions  
43 on the process of institutionalisation do not adequately capture the dynamics and outcomes of  
44 the transition from social movement to political party. Neither the emphasis on the  
45 administrative effectiveness of the new party and, related to it, its efficacy within a new  
46 system, nor the postulation that parties are more adept in influencing state-building than  
47 social movements, are plausible explanations for the process of party institutionalisation.  
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49 The term ‘institutionalisation’ is often used broadly to describe all kinds of dynamics related  
50 to social as well as political transformation and is usually linked to the implementation of  
51 more effective organisational structures and bureaucracies. This view of the process, which  
52 particularly focuses on internal structures and the administrative makeup, is epitomised by  
53 Huntington, who describes institutionalisation as ‘the process by which organisations and  
54 procedures acquire value and stability’ (Huntington, 1968, p. 12). Of course, his work is  
55 concerned with operational effectiveness and less with value-infusion as a dimension of  
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3 democratic parties (Basedau & Stroh, 2008, p. 8). It is this emphasis that relates Huntington's  
4 work directly to analyses of party system institutionalisation. Because democratic state-  
5 systems are more heterogeneous and pluralistic, it is implicitly asserted that movements  
6 require higher levels of organisation, discipline and structure, thus pushing them to acquire  
7 the format of political parties. State-structures are, following this logic, at the centre of the  
8 process with the assumption that the party systems to which these movements adapt are the  
9 causal drivers of the transformation from a movement to a party. This explanation of parties'  
10 institutionalisation processes is a guiding thread in the works of Michels, Dahls or  
11 Huntington.  
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13 The thesis that the adaptation to the political system drives the process of party  
14 institutionalisation shows, however, fundamental problems. In fact, this view does not make  
15 sense if one considers that an institutional framework has not yet been finalised. At the stage  
16 when the majority of parties gain their legal recognition, neither the party system nor the  
17 constitutional framework is settled. To illustrate this inevitable logical flaw that forms the  
18 basis of explanations related to party system perspectives, let us consider the Egyptian and  
19 Tunisian cases. In both instances, the sequence of events highlights that most social  
20 movements cum parties, amongst them the MB and NM, handed in their party platform  
21 applications in spring 2011, that is before substantial issues related to the system of  
22 governance were settled. In Egypt and Tunisia, negotiations about a constitutional format of a  
23 future political system followed only after the first pluralistic elections of 2011. Hence, the  
24 formation of the NP or the FJP cannot be the result of adaptation to an existing political  
25 system. The cases demonstrate that the process of transition from social movement to  
26 political party does not follow the development of a democratic system and, consequently,  
27 cannot be initiated by it.  
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30 The concept of institutionalisation from movements into parties as brought forward by  
31 Huntington, Michels, but also by Tarrow and other prominent authors who inspired social  
32 movement theory, reveals another major caveat. It is related to the notion that parties are  
33 better organised and perhaps even on a higher evolutionary level of development. This thesis  
34 reminds one somewhat of scientific evolutionism. For example, Michels, whose work  
35 *Political Parties* influenced generations of researchers on party politics (Michels, 1962),  
36 suggests that these are the product of 'natural' development. It leads movements to adopt  
37 structures that enable them to progress to the sphere of formal politics. Describing non-  
38 institutional forms of political participation as radical and anarchic, he contends that  
39 revolutionary features are eventually superseded by 'oligarchic' structures (Michels, 1962,  
40 pp. 342-356). He incorporates this position in his 'iron law of oligarchy' which indicates that  
41 a conservative trend is at play that ultimately 'tames' social movements. In sum, Michels  
42 equates institutionalisation with a natural progression towards adopting top-down leadership  
43 structures that ultimately pushes anarchic movements to reform internally and thus prepares  
44 these to assimilate into the political system. It is noteworthy also that he regards more  
45 conservative political positions and moderation as inevitable by-products of this  
46 development.  
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49 Even if one disregards for now that ideas about evolution are problematic, the application of  
50 Michels's iron law as the explanatory framework for the transition of the MB bears problems.  
51 For one, the MB constructed an oligarchic structure long before it committed to non-violence  
52 (Michell, 1993, pp. 163-183); moreover, the institutionalisation of bureaucratic structures  
53 occurred decades before voices about formulating a party-platform first appeared (Wickham,  
54 2013, pp. 76-95). As such, the MB's highly developed administrative hierarchy, which is  
55 based on a stringent top-down line of command and a bottom-up selection process, makes the  
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3 organisation a flexible and efficient network. It allows the organisation to operate as a mass-  
4 organisation, while it manages to maintain its capacity as an organised political opposition  
5 that proves resilient to recurrent waves of persecution (Zollner, 2015, pp. 44-46). Michels's  
6 theoretical suggestion of a sequence for institutionalisation processes is therefore not valid –  
7 at least not in this case. The assumption that there is sequence is however not the only reason  
8 why Michels's 'iron law of oligarchy' is flawed as his theory also gives no room for instances  
9 when a conservative, oligarchic tendency impedes party formation and party  
10 institutionalisation. In the case of the MB, reformist factions pushed for the creation of a  
11 party in 1996 and 2007, while the conservative oligarchic leadership in the Guidance Council  
12 resented this aim (Zollner, 2015, p. 52).  
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14 Beyond this, the burden of evolutionism looms over Michels's work. Although more recent  
15 political science discourses often reject the idea of 'natural' progression as an outdated  
16 concept, it comes as a surprise that debates about party institutionalisation still hold on to this  
17 notion. For example, Tarrow, as one of the grandmasters of social movement theory, assumes  
18 that there is a 'natural' drive behind the transition from movement to party. He puts the  
19 process down to bureaucratisation (Tarrow, 1994, pp. 215-232), thus following a rationale  
20 that reminds of Weber. According to Tarrow, organisational and administrative shifts within  
21 social movements aid their adaption to changes in ideational frameworks. While he remains  
22 unclear on the finer details of the dynamics, he takes up the concept of rationalisation to  
23 argue that it sets social movements on the path towards institutionalisation into political  
24 parties. This process seems to be underwritten by the assumption that the process is  
25 unstoppable and linear, driven by the conjecture that parties have a more evolved practice of  
26 influencing political life. To him, access to formalised platforms and institutions gives  
27 bureaucratically evolved organisations the opportunity to express political positions fully  
28 (Tarrow, 1994, pp. 215-232). The problem with Tarrow's explanation is that organisations'  
29 histories are interpreted retrospectively, making the theoretical model hard to contest. As  
30 such, one could indeed argue that there is a linear development from the charismatic  
31 leadership of Hasan al-Banna to then reach its zenith as a political party in 2011 with the  
32 establishment of the FJP. However, the case of al-Nahda does not fit quite as neatly into this  
33 schema, unless one is willing to amalgamate the leadership of Rashid al-Gannoushi with the  
34 bureaucratisation process itself.  
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38 Offe objects to Michels and Tarrow, arguing that the progression from social movements to  
39 political parties is not inevitable (Offe, 1990). Dealing with the case of the Green Party in  
40 Germany, his study has fundamental transferable theoretical implications. His argument is  
41 twofold. For one, he illustrates that, despite the 'temptations' of formal politics, some  
42 movements deliberately opt to engage in informal politics (Offe, 1990, pp. 241-247). In the  
43 Egyptian and Tunisian cases, there were plenty of social movements, some with an immense  
44 capacity to mobilise people and significant levels of bureaucratisation, that nonetheless did  
45 not take a step towards institutionalising as a political party. Secondly, Offe recognises that  
46 the process of institutionalisation is usually far from smooth. The study thus encourages to  
47 scrutinise intra-organisational dynamics and offers a way to explain tensions between various  
48 factions within the movement and the evolving party. In the case of the MB, one can see that  
49 tensions between reformists and orthodoxy simmered over the formation of a party for more  
50 than a decade before the Arab Spring (Wickham, 2013, pp. 76-119; Zollner, 2015, pp. 52-53).  
51 The establishment of the FJP was by no means an inevitable outcome, let alone smooth  
52 process. What makes Offe's otherwise convincing study objectionable is that he re-  
53 introduces the concept of an 'evolutionary' progression (Offe, 1990, p. 240) through the  
54 back-door. He holds on to the view that a progressive development is at play when a  
55 movement chooses to develop into a party, but he takes this position a step further,  
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3 suggesting a sequence of stages that social movements have to pass through along the path to  
4 institutionalisation from inception as a protest group to full potential as a party.

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6 For the same reasons as stated above, Offe's argument that there is a sequential progression is  
7 questionable. Like Michels, Offe also relates institutionalisation to the development of intra-  
8 organisational hierarchies and clear administrative structures. The MB and the NM are  
9 counter-cases. The MB had developed lines of command and executive order long before the  
10 FJP was established. In fact, the MB showed a more evolved degree of bureaucratisation than  
11 most established political parties in Egypt, including iconic parties such as the nationalist  
12 Wafd Party. NM in pre-revolutionary Tunisia had also established clear bureaucratic order,  
13 with the slight difference that the movement was operating more like a party than a broad  
14 social movement. Unlike the MB in Egypt, which regarded welfare provisions, religious  
15 training and broader social transformation as part of its remit, NM placed more emphasis on  
16 its political aim and, accordingly, used civil society platforms as its main stage (Murphy,  
17 2011, pp. 299-305; Haugbølle & Cavatorta, 2011, pp. 323-341). The above examples show  
18 that the concept of institutionalisation from movement to party hardly reflects the degree to  
19 which organisations are efficiently structured; if anything, the high degree of  
20 bureaucratisation in the case of the MB hindered its development into an independent  
21 political party. However, the works of Tarrow and Offe seem to make exactly this inference  
22 by relating the concept to evolutionary progression.

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25 Institutionalisation is furthermore not directly linked to the capacity to influence public policy  
26 or political decisions. Whether it be Huntington, Michels, Tarrow or the theories they  
27 influenced, there is a widespread assumption that parties have more political clout than social  
28 movements and that this constitutes the driving force for the process of institutionalisation  
29 from movement to party. What, however, is the evidence for this view? If this position is  
30 correct, it would be logical that the majority of social movements, particularly the most  
31 influential and best organised of them, rush to become political parties. Of course, there is  
32 undeniable evidence of the surge in the number of new parties in the early phase of  
33 democratic transition. The Egyptian and Tunisian cases show a sharp increase of party  
34 licence applications in 2011, which seems to have peaked in the weeks before the first  
35 elections (High Judicial Elections Commission, 2011). The number of new registrations  
36 declined after the first elections, indicating that, once the playing field is established, there is  
37 less appeal to formalise the transition into a party. Ergo, the trigger for institutionalisation lies  
38 not so much in the openness of a political system, but rather in the potential for influencing  
39 political life. Further evidence here is the fact that many social movements, whether in Egypt,  
40 Tunisia or in other states that are subject to democratic state-building, do not attempt to  
41 'institutionalise' their activities and hence do not move on to become political parties.

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44 The data on post-Spring Egypt is overwhelming. Key-movements, particularly on the secular-  
45 left side of the spectrum and those with a self-declared post-ideological stance, remained  
46 active as protest movements. Noteworthy examples are the April 6 Movement and the wider  
47 egalitarian Tahrir Youth Movement, the so-called Shabab al-Tahrir, but also later the  
48 Tamarrod Movement. Many of these movements pursued a vision of direct democracy and  
49 largely rejected the notion that democratisation requires movements to adapt to an  
50 institutional structure. For them, the institutional structure epitomised an elitist and corrupt  
51 system. Hence, they deliberately limited their activism to the informal political sphere,  
52 pursuing a radical vision of perpetual revolution and declining to transition into a party.  
53 Despite this, these movements were able to sustain the mobilisation of large numbers of  
54 protesters to join in demonstrations. The examples show that there is not an immediate  
55 correlation between political opportunity and the capacity to exert political power.

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3 In fact, we should not assume that parties have more political clout than movements,  
4 particularly during periods of democratic transitions. The events of the spring and summer of  
5 2013 in Egypt, which ultimately led to the removal of President Muhammad Mursi, show that  
6 social movements such as the anti-Mursi Tamarrod Movement can exert immense pressure  
7 on a political framework that is still fragile (Elyacher, 2014, pp. 452-471). The mobilisation  
8 against the Mursi government also shows that parties, particularly those that were less  
9 successful in the 2011 election, opted to align themselves with anti-MB movements. In some  
10 cases, political parties regressed and deliberately broke the 'contingent consent' to vocally  
11 support anti-MB social movements. It was the case with the Free Egyptians Party and the  
12 Reform and Development Party or the Tagammu', the Popular Socialist Alliance and the  
13 Egyptian Socialist Democratic Party. Marginalised by formal politics, these parties opted to  
14 realign themselves with social movements and, in fact, encouraged the mobilisation of anti-  
15 Mursi protests rather than aiming for a new electoral contest through formal channels.  
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18 These observations challenge assumptions on institutionalisation on several levels. The  
19 examples indicate that pro-democracy movements may rather opt to operate as informal  
20 political actors, thus avoiding the electoral political contest altogether and, in addition, that  
21 parties may reverse their commitment to formal politics by realigning with social movements  
22 if it is advantageous for them to do so. Thus, the argument that it is the prospect of  
23 developing a formal democratic framework which encourages the transition of movements  
24 into parties, as suggested by Tarrow, cannot be correct; rather party institutionalisation is  
25 driven by the prospect of having an immediate political impact. Indeed, the appeal of entering  
26 parliament or the opportunity to participate in the constitution-writing assembly is a pull  
27 factor, as these platforms offer pathways to instantaneous influence. If opportunities are  
28 restrained, it stalls the development of new parties and might even signal the return of social  
29 movement power. Moreover, even if social movements evolve into parties, they do not  
30 necessarily adopt conservative tendencies and oligarchic structures. It puts in doubt Michels's  
31 thesis that institutionalisation, conservatism and moderation are interlinked (Michels, 1962,  
32 pp. 163-183). In fact, there is little evidence that social movements that transition into parties  
33 give up their commitment to radical political change, at least not as long as the political  
34 system is unsettled. Thus, the Arab Spring gives credibility to Bermeo's position that social  
35 movements do not necessarily moderate during democratic transitions (Bermeo, 1999, pp.  
36 120-140). In fact, the Egyptian case shows that social movements and new political parties  
37 might continue to pursue their radical vision. Paradoxically, this might destabilise the  
38 democratisation process, even if the parties or movements regard their vision as radically pro-  
39 democratic.  
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#### 44 **Why Are Boundaries Important? Or, Why Are Social Movements Distinct from** 45 **Parties?**

46 The above section demonstrates that existing theories on party formation are highly flawed.  
47 Explanations which correspond the process to the state system or which assume that the  
48 institutionalisation of parties is directly or indirectly linked to the development of  
49 bureaucratic lines of command, seem to overlook the obvious. While all aspects of political  
50 life are in fluctuation during the time of post-revolutionary state-building, organisations  
51 within this framework are also not fully formed entities. Relatively fixed coefficients seem to  
52 be the features attributed to either social movement or political parties. In fact, party  
53 institutionalisation could be defined as the process during which a social movement modifies  
54 to such an extent that it sheds its appearance as an informal political actor to become a  
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3 political party. There is thus the assumption that there are characteristics which set the  
4 boundaries between social movement organisations and political parties.  
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6 Most 'classics' on social movements, amongst them Tilly; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald;  
7 and Diani highlight that the distinguishing element between a party and a social movement is  
8 related to where it operates: either in the formal or informal political sphere. Standard  
9 definitions of social movements emphasise that these act in opposition to the state and that  
10 they pursue their contentious politics through informal platforms which lie outside the control  
11 of the state-system (McAdam, Doug; McCarthy, John D.; Zald, Mayer N., 1996, pp. 7-12;  
12 della Porta, Donnatella; Diani, Mario, 2006, pp. 20-23). Most authors regard as elemental  
13 features of parties that they compete in the electoral contest, thus aiming for a nomination to  
14 act as the representative of the will of the people; this commitment to democratic practice is  
15 also reflected in their organisational set-up which, at least in theory, should have a democratic  
16 makeup. There is then a basic accord that political parties can be identified in this way  
17 through their constitutional framework and intra-organisational democratic processes.  
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19 More recent studies on political parties and social movements question the consent that these  
20 two entities are distinct from each other. For example, Chambers regards a political party 'as  
21 a relatively durable social formation which seeks offices or power in government, exhibits a  
22 structure or organization which links leaders at the centres of government to a significant  
23 popular following in the political arena and its local enclaves, and generates in-group  
24 perspectives or at least symbols of identification or loyalty'. His view indicates that parties  
25 are the midpoint between formal politics and informal grass-roots activism (Chambers, 1967,  
26 p. 5). While Chambers deduces this position from studying American parties, there is also a  
27 growing trend within Social Movement Theory that regards the boundaries between social  
28 movements and political parties as somewhat fluid. Goldstone is a leading proponent of this  
29 thesis; he emphasises the lack of clear delineation, arguing that the dividing lines are loose,  
30 permeable and indeed 'fuzzy' (Goldstone, 2003, pp. 1-26). He also suggests that parties and  
31 movements have overlapping aims -- both are determined to influence politics. According to  
32 Goldstone, it is therefore difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between informal and  
33 formal politics, particularly in instances where social movements and political parties work  
34 together to achieve their goals. Although he focuses mainly on the inter-relationship between  
35 social movements and parties in established democracies, he goes on to emphasise that the  
36 distinction between the two is even more obscure during processes of democratisation  
37 (Goldstone, 2003, pp. 1-26).  
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41 Research from post-communist Eastern European and the South-East Asian context supports  
42 Goldstone's thesis (Desai, 2003, pp. 170-196; Glenn, 2003, pp. 147-169). The Egyptian and  
43 Tunisian cases also confirm that many parties act more like extensions of social movements  
44 than independent representatives of a voting constituency. Of course, the overlay is not based  
45 on conjoined structural elements; parties have constitutions, executive and legislative  
46 structures, all of which should ensure that they are independent bodies which are externally  
47 and internally guided by democratic principles. Democratic party constitutions were also the  
48 fundamental requirement for the legalisation process of parties in Tunisia and Egypt (Harakat  
49 al-Nahda, 2011; Freedom and Justice Party, 2011). Looking at the FJP in more detail, the  
50 constitution states that members of the Party Leadership Council and Executive Committee  
51 are elected by the party's General Assembly (Freedom and Justice Party, 2011; Egyptian  
52 Elections Watch, 2011). FJP leaders also had to relinquish seats in the Brotherhood's  
53 Guidance Council, Shura Council or any other 'official' body of the mother-organisation.  
54 Outwardly then, the FJP fitted the profile of a democratic and independent party. Thus, at  
55 least in legal terms, the FJP was autonomous from the internal structures and the nomination  
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3 processes of the MB. Notwithstanding this, new parties are often inseparably linked to social  
4 movements – some more deeply than others.

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6 Parties are often influenced by the ideological frames of social movements and, beyond this,  
7 closely interlinked with and, indeed, dependent on these movements' power of mobilisation,  
8 their clout in informal networks and the political impact that these endow. The issue here is  
9 not that they are interlinked, as it seems to be the case with all parties, nor that there is such  
10 an interrelationship, but rather it is the extent to which the party is merely the political arm of  
11 a social movement. In the Egyptian case of the MB, this link between social movement and  
12 party was maintained through personal influence and via the 'pledge of allegiance' of leading  
13 FJP members to the MB leadership. Most importantly, the Guidance Council used the top-  
14 down line of command that is the backbone of the MB's internal hierarchy to interlock itself  
15 with its party. To ensure that opponents did not subvert the newly established party, the  
16 Guidance Council ordered full members of the MB to take-up party-membership and to run  
17 for specific party-positions. Hence, despite the outward independence of the FJP decision-  
18 making councils and leadership bodies, it was the 'mother-organisation' that approved  
19 candidates and encouraged their selection, thus ensuring that the MB leadership continued to  
20 be able to shape party policy, electoral strategies and mobilisation tactics. The implication  
21 here is that the FJP was an unrepresentative, undemocratic and a non-independent extension  
22 of the MB elite. This elite hid in the upper echelons behind the MB as an influential social  
23 movement organisation without being publicly accountable. The newly established party did  
24 not, at least not primarily, represent a voting constituency, but instead the top-down will of  
25 the 'mother-organisation' as embodied by the organisation's Guidance Council (Trager,  
26 2011; Zollner, 2015, pp. 52-54). Ergo, in the case of the MB and the FJP, the boundaries  
27 between social movement and party were in fact fictional. The FJP acted more like a political  
28 arm of the MB.  
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31 The MB/ FJP would seem to be an extreme case, but other examples of the post-Spring era  
32 demonstrate that this overlap between parties and movements is a common phenomenon and  
33 not limited to Islamists. Examples here are the ties between the Egyptian Social Democratic  
34 Party and the National Association for Change and later, from early 2013 onwards, the  
35 Tamarrod-Movement; in Tunisia, Nidaa Tounes became a melting pot, bringing together the  
36 ousted Bourguiba and Ben Ali elite with left-leaning movements and organisations including  
37 Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT). Thus, Goldstone's theoretical observation seems to  
38 be correct that '...state institutions and parties are interpenetrated by social movements, often  
39 developing out of movements, in response to movements, or in close association with  
40 movements...' (Goldstone, 2003, p. 2). Moreover, whether it is the case of al-Nahda, the  
41 MB/FJP or other new parties, there is evidence that this overlap is particularly pronounced in  
42 the period of democratic state-building. It throws up the fundamental issue of whether the  
43 interrelationship is not only part of the process of party institutionalisation and thus proof of  
44 healthy party life, and furthermore a sign of democratic state-building.  
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47 Indeed, Goldstone indicates that the lack of boundaries between social movements and  
48 political parties signifies the transition towards a more open political system. If this is the  
49 case, does this mean that the lack of boundaries maps out successful democratic transition?  
50 Authors such as Glenn, who studies the post-communist era of democratic transition, and  
51 Desai, who analyses the South-Asian context, take this position (Glenn, 2003; Desai, 2003).  
52 However, the comparison between the MB/FJP and NM/NP challenges this position. With an  
53 eye on key-characteristics then, social movement activism and political party representation  
54 need to be kept apart to be able to assess the progression of parties' institutionalisation. While  
55 the boundaries are fuzzy, the demarcation between movement and party is not only important  
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3 for theoretical reasons but has real implications for the process of democratic state-building.  
4 As social movements and political parties play different roles in political life, the equilibrium  
5 between the peoples' will as expressed through a representative system on the one hand and  
6 the expression of political discontent against abuses of the system on the other hand can be  
7 easily disturbed. As we will see, relatively clear boundaries are necessary to ensure  
8 successful democratic state-building; while a lack of distinction between social movement  
9 activism and party politics jeopardises the democratic transition process. Thus, this position  
10 rejects Goldstone's thesis that the fuzziness of boundaries indicates a healthy environment  
11 that is fundamental to democratic state-building.  
12

13 The post-Spring constellation in Egypt which showed a high degree of overlap between  
14 movements and parties was not a sign of successful democratisation; on the contrary, the  
15 level of dependency of new parties on their 'mother-organisations' meant that they were  
16 acting as an extended political arm and thus merely representing their interests. The case of  
17 the Egyptian MB and its FJP illustrates that the lack of boundaries can be detrimental to the  
18 process of democratic state-building overall. Despite concurring with the legal framework,  
19 the FJP was effectively run by the MB's Guidance Council. The MB was not the only  
20 movement that used party politics just as an outward appearance. Parties belonging to the  
21 secular and left also show traits of dependency upon their mother-organisations. The  
22 Egyptian Social Democratic Party is an example of this which showed clear links to the  
23 National Association for Change, a movement that was linked to the Nobel Prize laureate  
24 Mohamed ElBaradei. In effect, new parties acted on behalf of a closed circle of unelected  
25 leaders; a religiously inspired elite as in the case of the MB, a liberal-left elite as in the case  
26 of ElBaradei's National Alliance or a capitalist-right elite as in the case of Naguib Sawiri's  
27 Hizb al-Masriyyin al-Ahrar (Free Egyptians Party). These elites differed in their ideological  
28 references but had in common that the social movement organisations they represented  
29 regarded the political system merely as an instrument. Thus, unelected bodies imposed their  
30 social and political vision by pulling strings behind the scenes but showed limited appetite for  
31 cross-ideological and cross-party negotiation and consent-building.  
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34 This throws up the thesis that new party need to emancipate themselves from their 'mother-  
35 organisations'. Only when they no longer act as its extended political arm, is it able to seek  
36 'contingent consent' through formal political platforms (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, pp.  
37 59-61). Contrasting Egypt's MB with Tunisia's NM, we can see that boundaries between  
38 social movements and evolving political parties are indeed important. Although NP was at  
39 least until 2015 formally interlinked with the NM and although the NP continues to have  
40 close ties to NM until today, the development of the party-side was quite advanced before the  
41 onset of the democratic transition process. In fact, the groundwork for NM's aptitude to  
42 reinvent itself as a party was laid long before the Arab Spring, when the organisation decided  
43 to adopt a clear political profile and presence (Cavatorta & Merone, 2015, pp. 27-42;  
44 Haugbølle & Cavatorta, 2011, pp. 323-341). Its strength as a social movement was less  
45 framed by fundamental socio-religious change, as by its engagement as a pro-democracy  
46 opposition and civil society actor. The focus of Rashid al-Ghannoushi's writings and  
47 speeches did not suggest that NM's objective is the Islamisation of society. For the same  
48 reason, the organisation invested relatively little in building a presence in the social welfare  
49 sector or the area of religious *da'wa* (calling). It is not to say that NM was no longer a social  
50 movement actor with a wider agenda of political change. But the wider social movement did  
51 not attempt to use its mobilising capacity to undercut formal political structures. In fact,  
52 NM's social movement activities remained secondary to its attempts to enter party politics.  
53 As such, it was not working towards the goal of establishing an Islamic state and was not  
54 striving for gradual socio-religious change by attempting to Islamise society. The primary  
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3 emphasis of NM thus, long before the Jasmine Revolution, was on politics; social movement  
4 activism was secondary and directly fed into this focus. It found expression in the writings of  
5 Rashid al-Ghannoushi who managed to inspire the NM to be a politically moderate Islamist  
6 movement, despite a legal ban and draconian state repression. This configuration also  
7 explains why NM's political element was well-developed once the legal ban was lifted in  
8 2011. The political faction of NM was the driving force on the political platform while its  
9 social movement segments were largely restricted and remained on the sidelines. Only in the  
10 post-revolutionary phase did tensions between al-Nahda as a party and al-Nahda as a  
11 movement appear. In early 2016, figures affiliated with the wider social movement of al-  
12 Nahda raised concerns criticising the lack of socio-religious activism. Rather than tightening  
13 up relations, this confrontation led NP to formally end its ties to the religious and social  
14 movement activities of NM.  
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17 With an emphasis on party politics, NP pursued its engagement for political reform through  
18 established institutional avenues. As such, it participated in negotiations with its political  
19 competition and rivals. Despite having won most seats in the first parliamentary elections, NP  
20 emphasised the need for cross-party consensus in constitutional negotiations and in running  
21 the transitional government (Bellin, 2013, pp. 5-6; Cavatorta & Merone, 2015, pp. 31-32). In  
22 all, its political strategy was informed by the awareness that only a broad national alliance  
23 with its socialist counterpart as a partner in democratic transition could pre-empt attempts by  
24 the political elite to reinstall a regime not dissimilar to Ben Ali's. Although there were  
25 undoubtedly major differences between NP and the secular parties, the final product was one  
26 of negotiated compromise. Its emphasis on political negotiation through formal structures can  
27 be evidenced in the prolonged constitution-writing process. The NP's commitment to the  
28 democratic process indicates that it acted as a representative party with the ability to reconcile  
29 diverging interests.  
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32 While circumstances aided the transformation of al-Nahda from its social movement roots  
33 into an independent party, this development is usually not smooth. What obstructs this  
34 development, at least in the phase of state-building, is the fact that it allows the leadership  
35 elite of an influential and well-organised social movement to take part in shaping the state's  
36 future while hiding behind a veneer of impartiality and democratic practice. By ensuring that  
37 individuals who are the preferred choice of the Guidance Council take key positions in the  
38 party leadership and its councils, the MB was able to circumvent intra-party and intra-  
39 movement debates on policy-decisions, while the party was able to count on MB support for  
40 controversial decisions thus pre-empting any potential for intra-party rebellion. Beyond this,  
41 the FJP was able to rely on the MB's political expertise and its reputation as an opposition.  
42 (Zollner, 2015, pp. 54-62). The MB furthermore supported the FJP through material and non-  
43 material resources. An example of non-material resources which had a direct impact on the  
44 FJP's mobilising capacity is the fact that the Guidance Council commanded MB members to  
45 support and campaign for the party actively. MB's grass-roots units were mobilised during  
46 the election campaign, members of the MB were 'conscripted' to join street rallies or  
47 volunteered in door-to-door campaigning. The MB also provided and maintained social  
48 media sites and website campaigning, set up in MB offices. Of course, this gave the MB and  
49 its FJP an advantage over other newly created parties regarding having an impact in  
50 constituencies around Egypt's urban areas. The control of the Guidance Council guaranteed  
51 that the FJP was perfectly positioned in preparations for the parliamentary elections of 2011.  
52 Thus, the election results were not only a victory for the FJP as it became the largest faction  
53 within parliament, but they were a triumph for the conservative MB leadership. However, the  
54 top-down control subsequently restricted the party's ability to act as 'a reconciler of interests'  
55 in negotiations with opposition parties and movements, particularly with those that feared the  
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3 dominance of the MB. Correspondingly, the electoral defeat of parties that worked in  
4 opposition to the MB, such as the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, the Egyptian Freedom  
5 Party or the Tagammu<sup>4</sup>, led directly to the rise of anti-Brotherhood demonstrations. As these  
6 parties revived their links to movements, the defeat of secular parties in the ballot boxes  
7 turned into battles on the street against the MB.  
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9 On reflection, the comparison between the Egyptian and Tunisian outcomes demonstrate that  
10 Goldstone's thesis needs to be qualified. His observation that the distinction between parties  
11 and social movements is blurred in established democracies is credible. The empirical  
12 evidence for Egypt and Tunisia confirms the supposition that movements and parties are even  
13 more indistinct during the process of democratisation. However, it is misleading to draw from  
14 this that the processes of democratisation must be fundamentally on course when we observe  
15 higher levels of overlap between social movements and subsidiary parties. In fact, it seems  
16 that just the opposite holds true. The case of the Tunisian NP throws up the hypothesis that  
17 the clearer the boundaries between a social movement as mother-organisation and its progeny  
18 as a political party, the more likely it is that the new party can hold to the legitimate pursuit of  
19 politics through formal political channels. The explanation here is that the new party acts less  
20 as a lobby group for the social movement in question or, as in the case of the MB in Egypt, as  
21 the mouth-piece of a small unelected clique. Having installed party boundaries means that it  
22 is more likely to act authentically as the representative of the electorate. Hence, establishing  
23 firm boundaries is essential for the survival of democratic transition processes.  
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26 The transition of a social movement into a political party is not complete with the  
27 establishment of a political party. It is not finalised when the new party takes its seats in  
28 newly established institutions nor even then when it forms the new government. It is only  
29 absolute when (relatively) clear lines of demarcation between parties and the social  
30 movements from which they were delivered are established. Social movements need to  
31 withdraw from the formal institutional sphere and as such reverse the initial strategy that led  
32 them to use formal platforms to increase their influence and promote their agenda. In other  
33 words, the parties need to evolve into entities which are distinct from their social movement  
34 origins.  
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### 38 **Conclusion: Transition from Authoritarianism and the Process of Democratisation**

39 The comparison between the transition processes in Egypt and Tunisia shows that the  
40 numbers of newly established parties and the ideological range represented by these are poor  
41 indicators of whether democratic transitions are, or will ultimately be, successful. Contrary to  
42 common wisdom, party pluralism and political competition cannot authenticate, let alone  
43 assure, that democratic transition is on the right track. Data available on the range of political  
44 parties striving for representation in formal platforms can give us a hint as to whether  
45 frameworks which were previously governed by autocratic leaders are indeed open to ideas  
46 of democratic competition. However, to evaluate whether states are indeed experiencing a  
47 substantial change of direction, one needs to look more closely at the dynamics of the  
48 transition of social movements into political parties. This focal point calls for an investigation  
49 of two subsidiary issues. One deals with the institutionalisation of social movements; the  
50 other invites us to reflect on the boundaries which make social movements distinct from  
51 political parties.  
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54 The question of the institutionalisation of social movements leads us to examine the process  
55 whereby social movements formalise their organisational aims, thus integrating into an  
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3 evolving formal state-system. As these social movements are no longer in opposition to the  
4 state, they become principle carriers of an evolving formal system and, in fact, shape the new  
5 system. There is the general assumption that the transition, both of social movements to  
6 parties, but also of state-systems from the ejected authoritarian regime into democratising  
7 frameworks, is 'natural' and 'evolutionary' (Michels, 1962; Tarrow, 1994; Offe, 1990). The  
8 empirical cases, however, demonstrate that the transformation from social movements to  
9 parties is often flawed and incomplete. In fact, a major obstacle to successful  
10 democratisation occurs when the pre-existing structures of a social movement impede the  
11 development of the party as a sovereign construct independent of its 'mother-organisation'.  
12 For the same reason, the evolving state-system which depends heavily on newly formed  
13 'independent' parties remain fragile. This paper, therefore, contends that the formation of  
14 boundaries in newly established parties, i.e. clear internal structures and ideational  
15 independence from their social movement roots are all important in determining the success  
16 of democratic transition. In fact, they might be useful delineators in determining distinctions  
17 between authoritarian systems and democratic state-building. The comparison of the Tunisian  
18 and Egyptian cases shows that the transition from social movement to political party  
19 progressed further in the case of NP than in the case of the FJP.  
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22 Beyond the contribution made in this article, there is much room to revisit related debates. In  
23 particular, arguments as presented in this paper also have implications for the 'participation-  
24 moderation hypothesis' in so far as both new parties, as well as social movements, need to re-  
25 define their role as political platforms in evolving democratic systems. As the Egyptian case  
26 clearly shows, there is no question that social movements are an alternative to formal  
27 platforms of opposition in authoritarian regimes, but it must be recognised that their success  
28 in mobilising 'the street' can effectively undermine the legitimacy of new formal institutions  
29 during the phase of democratic state-building. Furthermore, there is no doubt that political  
30 parties are an essential building-block in establishing democratic systems, yet they can also  
31 fundamentally undermine the accomplishment of political representation. Hence, further  
32 research is necessary to investigate the issue of 'moderation' of social movements and  
33 political parties in the process of democratic transition. Michels and Borneo offer opposing  
34 views on this matter (Michels, 1962; Berneo, 1999). Certainly, the fact that the MB  
35 persisted with its 'radical' vision of social change throws in question Michel's position that  
36 the transition to political party leads to moderation because oligarchic elite structures have no  
37 interest in pursuing drastic changes. Borneo's position is that democratisation does not  
38 necessarily require that social movements and new parties sacrifice their convictions on the  
39 altar of democratisation. However, she does not sufficiently recognise that both social  
40 movements and new political parties need to aspire to establish a formal institutional  
41 framework. It requires reconciliation on the one hand but also demands clear boundaries on  
42 the other hand. Conciliation though runs contrary to the fundamental features of both social  
43 movements and political parties. As such, social movements are defined by their opposition  
44 to the system, while parties seek to maximise their power through competition within the  
45 system. Effectively, the transition of social movements into political parties and, parallel to  
46 this, the construction of a democratic state-system are processes which are prone to instability  
47 and failure.  
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