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The Role of Islamist Political Parties In Tunisia and Egypt in the Wake of the Arab Spring

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Following the Arab Spring that began in January of 2011, the role of Islamist political parties has become a point of contention in trying to determine what will happen in the future of the affected countries. The Arab Spring started in Tunisia and spread very quickly through the region to other countries like Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and Jordan among a multitude of others. It has had far-reaching effects that have forced some governments from power while also spurring some small, but even more major political protests all over the Arab world. At first the Arab Spring had nothing to do with Islam and it was not even Arab in practice; “demonstrators were calling for dignity, elections, democracy, good governance, and human rights.”¹ These demonstrators were not concerned with creating a Muslim state or anything in that sense, but were more concerned with cementing individual rights.² This string of political protests would confuse political analysts because it bore almost no relation at all to previous political movements that had occurred in the Middle East or Arab world. Tendencies of previous movements to call for *sharia* law or invoke anti-American sentiments would not be seen here during the first round of protests, and the growing Islamization process that had become customary within the Arab world did not occur.³ However, following the original motives of this democratic movement, certain Islamist political groups have found themselves in positions of power, this time achieved through democratic elections that contain a higher level of legitimacy than ever before. With this new found political power, it has yet to be seen where each country will head in terms of the political influence of Islam. In this paper, Islamist political parties from both countries will be examined in a couple of different regards: how Islamic these

¹ Roy, Olivier. “The Transformation of the Arab World.” *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 23, No. 3. National Endowment for Democracy and The Johns Hopkins University Press. July 2012. Pg. 5

² Roy, pg. 5: “Unlike any Arab revolutionary movements of the past sixty years, they were concerned with individual citizenship and not with some holistic entity such as ‘the people,’ the Muslim *umma*, or the Arab nation.”

³ Roy, pg. 5: “It simply would not follow the script which holds that the centrality of the Arab-Israeli conflict is fostering an ever-growing Islamization within Arab societies, a search for charismatic leaders, and an identification with supranational causes.”

Islamist political parties are and how much they will try to invoke Muslim practices and values into their new democracies.

In this sense, the purpose of this paper is to examine how and if the original causes of the Arab Spring have turned from purely democratic to more religious, invoking Islamic principles into Islamist political parties that either have begun to, or will begin to make up large parts of the newly instated governments. The countries of Tunisia and Egypt will be examined each for specific reasons. Tunisia, as the state where the Arab Spring began, overthrew its president and saw a moderately-Islamist political party win heavily in the first election. Following Tunisia, Egypt became the center of the universe for a few weeks when the world saw violent protests erupt calling for the resignation and overthrow of the dictatorship that had been in power for just about thirty years. With their own elections occurring following months of unrest and public displeasure, a party with Islamist roots also won a heavy handed majority within the new government.⁴ This was predictable because these Islamist political parties had ties to conservative and religious values that a vast majority of both countries' populations could relate to.⁵ In a time of extreme upheaval, it makes sense that many people would vote for what they know can work and has worked.⁶ The two cases relate to each other in that they were two of the first countries to experience the political unrest in the Arab world that would define 2011 and beyond, but they have also taken similar steps in the formation of their fledgling governments in electing Islamist political parties into power.

The Arab Spring is a relevant issue because it has forever changed the course of politics in the Arab world. Since the foreign policy of the United States has a large interest in the region

⁴ Roy, pg. 5: "Predictably, The Egyptian and Tunisian elections brought ballot-box triumphs for Islamist parties."

⁵ Roy, pg. 6: "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Tunisia's Ennahda party were able to attract votes from well beyond their respective hardcore bases because they looked like credible parties of government."

⁶ Roy, pg. 9: "In a word, the Arab Spring masked large reservoirs of underlying conservatism in Arab societies."

due to its relationship with Israel, it is directly affected by this movement. With this in mind, the movement's ties, however intended or unintended, with the religion of Islam are important to note because of the sheer size of the Muslim worldwide population. What must also be examined is the influence of Islamic terrorist groups within these Islamist political parties. If new Islamist governments are funding terrorist groups like it has been said that Iran has done in the past,⁷ the formation of these new governments and legislatures directly affect people all over the world with any anti-Muslim tendencies. Thus, the entire world is affected by what occurs in the aftermath of the Arab Spring due to the new trend of globalization.

Specifically, three groups will be discussed in depth because of their relevance to the political climates in both Tunisia and Egypt. First, the Ennahda, the Islamist political party that has taken the majority of the country's new constitutive assembly. The second group to be examined will be the Muslim Brotherhood. As a group that originally fostered violent tendencies with heavy-Islamic roots, the Muslim Brotherhood has grown to become a more peaceful group that supports Islam-based law while at the same time not going as far as to invoke the need for *sharia* law. The third and last group that will be discussed is that of the Salafist al-Nur Party, Salafists for short, which has garnered support in Egypt mainly but have also been tied to Islamist parties in Tunisia. For the purpose of this paper, I will only analyze this group in its relation to other Islamist political parties within Tunisia and its position as an oppositional to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, but not as its own entity. These three groups, though not all of them are specifically political parties per say, all have at least a social component to them and so they are influential enough to be considered a part of the political sphere. In the same sense that

⁷ Takeyh, Ray. *Hidden Iran*. Times Books. New York. 2006. Pg.6: "On the one hand, Iran is no longer a radical state seeking to upend the regional order in the name of Islamic legitimacy. Yet Tehran's penchant towards terrorism, its approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and its relations with America are still derived from a self-defeating calculus compromised in equal parts of domestic political considerations and ideological imperatives."

charities and other faith-based organizations are not political, the fact that they act in the public realm make it so that they are considered to be at least a part of political discourse. In terms of speaking of these groups or parties as part of the public dialogue, it can be said that Islamist political parties face a dangerous challenge in that there is a clash in ideologies between strictly Islamic policies, like strictly following *sharia* law, and truly democratic participation.⁸

Participation is, after all, the basis of democracy, a process that relies wholly on the input of its constituents. There is a fear that Islamist political parties are only using the democratic system in order to gain majorities within governments in order to enact *sharia* law, but evidence of this happening is lacking.⁹

Going off of this fear of a level of trickery involved in Islamist politics, I want to clearly point out now before the deep analysis of this paper begins, that Islamist political parties should not be immediately tied to radical extremism, similar to that of the Ayatollah system in Iran or even radical Muslim terrorist groups. Viewing these groups as such is a symptom of Western thought to perceive groups with ties to Islam as inherently evil. This is a dangerous trend, because it only causes resentment on both sides of the divide.¹⁰ For the purpose of this paper, it is important to set aside preconceived notions of radical Islam in order to understand that Islamist political parties are not necessarily an inherently bad prospect in terms of the future safety of the

⁸ Hamzawy, Amr and Marina Ottaway. "Islamists in Politics: the Dynamic of Participation." *Carnegie Papers*. No. 98. 2008. Pg. 5: "On the ideological level, there is a fundamental tension in Islamist parties and movements between the notion that law must be based on God's word, thus conform to Islamic law or Sharia, and the idea that in a democratic political system laws are made on the basis of majority rule by parliaments freely elected by people."

⁹ Hamzawy, Amr and Marina Ottaway, pg. 6: "However, evidence does not support the idea that the choice of political participation by Islamist parties and movements is simply a ruse: a plan to exploit the potential of the democratic process to reach positions of power and then immediately abolish the democratic process altogether and impose a theocratic state."

¹⁰ Cole, Juan. *Engaging the Muslim World*. Palgrave Macmillan. New York. 2010. Pg. 2: "This policy of confrontation... poses the direst of dangers for the United States and for the world. It is a policy for the most part pushed by the ignorant and the greedy, the ambitious, or the paranoid. It is a policy issuing from the darkest corners of the American and European soul. These militant attitudes and the constant demonization of others – mirrored against the West in radical states in the Middle East – have ratcheted up conflict between the West and the Muslim world."

United States and its allies.¹¹ The East and the West, although fundamentally different from each other in many regards, both culturally and politically, are still united through the fact that both still comprise this one single planet.¹² As such, it would be pertinent for both sides of the divide to engage in dialogue to achieve a certain level of peace and understanding. I have not discussed this as a means to preach on the issue, but I want to ensure that any reader of this paper will make the distinction between the two. You must understand that while there may have been a small number of examples in which this comparison has reason, the majority of these new Islamist groups should not be connected with radical extremism or terrorism. Although this idea is not specifically geared towards the two countries of Tunisia and Egypt, it is necessary because it involves the entirety of the Arab world.

To understand the Muslim world a little better, I want to give a brief introduction to the Muslim faith.¹³ Islam's founder is Mohammed the Prophet, born in Mecca in 570. When he was around forty years old, the archangel Gabriel appeared to him for the first time in a cave outside of the city. For all subsequent visits from angels, Mohammed wrote down what was revealed to him; the collection of these writings makes up the Koran, Islam's book of teachings and doctrines. The most important aspect of the religion is its adherence to the *shahaada*, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet," as the first of five pillars within the faith. The next four are the *salaat*, praying towards Mecca five times per day, the *haji*, the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in your life if you are able, the *siyam*, fasting during the month of Ramadan,

¹¹ Cole, pg. 4: "That I should now be urging understanding of and engagement with a wide range of Middle Eastern political forces, including fundamentalists, signals not an agreement with them but a pragmatic conviction that as citizens of a single globe, we have to settle our conflicts through dialogue."

¹² Cole, pg. 5: "In fact, the rationale for analyzing these two worlds separately can itself be questioned – they permeate one another and cannot be thought of as necessarily in opposition, although obviously there are major issues that divide their politics and public opinion."

¹³ Demerath III, N.J. *Crossing the Gods: World Religions and Worldly Politics*. Rutgers University Press. 2003. All of the following information about the origins and foundation of Islam and its practices comes from the chapter entitled "Four Islamic Societies and Four Political Scenarios" pgs. 61-91

and lastly, the *zakaat*, giving alms to the poor, often enacted through a state tax. The legal system that comes off of Islam is called *sharia*; it has facets that mention everything from the status of women, slavery, alcohol and the charging of interests on loans. Modern Islam lacks one centralizing force, very much different from the days of the large caliphates of Baghdad, Damascus and Cordoba. This has caused an effect of creating many local communities centered on local mosques. This has led to many offshoots into different directions, including the two largest factions of the Sunnis and Shiites with even further splintering into more groups like the Sufis and Baha'i. The Sunnis represent the majority of the worldwide Muslim population claiming more than ninety percent. The Koran has provided an image of an unchanging culture, though¹⁴ and attempts to modernize it have been deemed blasphemous by some.¹⁵ It might even be said that this image of being unchanging has influenced reactions to the Arab Spring and Islamist political parties in general all over the world.

To start to discuss in depth the issues pertaining to the development of Islamist political parties within these countries, it is fitting to begin with Tunisia. Tunisia is where this whole movement began. The entirety of the Arab Spring started when, on December 18, 2010,¹⁶ a man named Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Sidi Bouzid to protest police and government corruption. This was not just a random act of defiance, but an inevitable action that was to be taken in order to protest what had been going on in the country for twenty-three years under the presidency of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. Then-Prime Minister Ben Ali took over the Tunisian

¹⁴ Demerath, pg. 65: "On the one hand, [the Koran] provides a unique record of the faith's founding vision – one that is long enough to provide a wide variety of theological and moral guidelines but also one that is short enough to be memorized in its entirety not just by holy men but by ambitious schoolchildren eager for prizes...On the other hand, this very document for the ages tends to bind Islam to its past."

¹⁵ Demerath, pg. 65: "Satirizing the old is a major source of the new, and at the end of the day, expunging blasphemy is as futile as banning slang."

¹⁶ Middle East Constitutional Forum's Timeline of Constitutional Transitions in the Middle East seen here: <http://www.righttononviolence.org/mecf/timeline-me/#top>

government on November 7, 1987, and deposed its former president, Habib Bourguiba.¹⁷ Ben Ali took the reins of power from Bourguiba because of general discontent felt all over the country. Complaints of unemployment and unequal distribution of resources were points of contention, among many others.¹⁸ As Prime Minister, Ben Ali already “controlled national security forces, had a power base in the armed forces, and had already accrued a considerable degree of influence in governing circles,”¹⁹ and because of this it would have been assumed that he would take power in a coup d’état, but in order to retain national stability, he did not choose this route.²⁰ Islamists in the country also supported the Ben Ali takeover, as Bourguiba had acquired a sort of cult-like following that had begun to replace traditional Islam as the leading religious or spiritual staple.²¹ When Ben Ali took over, he stressed continuity, but also a level of change in that he wanted to amend the constitution and the government that were in place. He also stressed Tunisia’s solidarity with other Arab nations. Like many other Arab leaders before him,²² Ben Ali smartly called upon Islam in order to legitimize his claim to power and also appease the Islamists that had supported him in his original coup.²³ After he took power, his first act was to create a new government that contained many of his former generals and fellow members of the armed services of the country.

¹⁷ Ware, L.B. *Ben Ali’s Constitutional Coup in Tunisia*. Middle East Journal. Vol. 42 No. 4. 1988. Pg. 587

¹⁸ Ware, pg. 587: “The transition from Bourguiba to his successor had been long, arduous and filled with acrimonious debate over issues of crucial importance to the nation: significant demographic changes, unemployment, unequal distribution of resources by region and class, economic stagnation, ossified political structures, Islamist agitation, and a promised but persistently postponed pluralism.”

¹⁹ Ware, pg. 589

²⁰ Ware, pg. 589

²¹ Ware, pg. 589: “The Islamists took the view that Bourguiba’s megalomaniac cult of personality aimed at the total eclipse of the role of traditional Islam should play in the evolution of social and political ethics.”

²² Demerath, pg. 68: He makes mention of former Egyptian presidents like Nasser and Sadat and states, “Yet like his predecessors in office, Mubarak also plays the mainstream Muslim card in his search for legitimacy.” For some context, at other places in the chapter, Demerath speaks of how Egyptian presidents had kept ties with leading Islamic groups and have even not charged certain Islamic activist groups for committing crimes in order to appease Muslim majorities within their country.

²³ Ware, pg. 592: “Formally bracketing his address with an invocation and a Quranic verse, he prudently adopted a tone of Islamic moral probity.”

Seeing as how he had been in the military since he finished his schooling, Ben Ali's presidency would always reflect his ties to the military.²⁴ He trained and studied extensively at many schools and bases including a couple in the United States.²⁵ It was clear from a very early start that his presidency and the new government would have deep roots in the actions of the military. Along with Ben Ali himself, the military would also begin to show some of its own ties to Islamist practices, having been infiltrated by the Jordanian-based Islamist Liberation Party that had ties to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.²⁶ I say this to point out that in the years throughout Ben Ali's presidency and even before, Islam and its considerations have long been a part of the social and political scenes, and now from this we can deduce that it had even entered the realm of the military. Islam would only grow in its importance. Islamic groups were a part of moving Ben Ali's government forward and had faced criticism from some, but support from others from within the government. Ben Ali created councils regarding religion, specifically Islam, within his new government, although there were obvious attempts to somewhat secularize them in general.²⁷ However, it is important to note, for future actions of Islamist political parties to make sense in before, during and after the Arab Spring, that the government under Ben Ali did not formally recognize any political party that called itself Islamic.²⁸ This is important to note because members of the MTI (Islamic Tendency Movement), later called Ennahda, were repressed within the government due to their ties to Islam. In fact, the Ennahda, translated into Renaissance in English, changed their name in 1988 in order to shed their obvious relation to

²⁴ Ware, pg. 596: "It was certain from his actions that the military establishment in daily sociopolitical transactions to a much greater degree in the future so as to guarantee the calm and continuity the ne president promised the nation."

²⁵ Ware, pg. 593: "In the course of his career, he perfected his studies in artillery at Fort Bliss, Texas, and graduated from the Intelligence and Military Security course at Fort Holabird, Maryland, eventually earning a degree in electrical engineering."

²⁶ Ware, pg. 596

²⁷ Ware, pg. 598: "On November 27, the president renamed the Faculty of Sharia and Theology the Zaytuna Faculty of Theology and appointed several well-known laymen to the Higher Islamic Council, its governing board."

²⁸ Ware, pg. 598

Islamist politics.²⁹ The Ennahda and other religious political parties were banned because the government “asserted that religious parties could be vehicles for extremism and that by preventing political parties from becoming channels for intolerance, hatred, and terrorism, it promoted societal tolerance.”³⁰ Although it can be said that Ben Ali, later in his regime did allow some religious parties to form, the Ennahda was always excluded from gaining any large-scale influence within the government.³¹ I think that the Ben Ali government banning religious parties from forming and denying giving them any legitimacy has actually helped cause the upswing in Islamist politics and other religious political parties following the Arab Spring. The acts of repression that Ben Ali partook in were clearly one of the main causes of the start of the protests in Tunisia that would quickly spread to other places, and the new large role of Islamist political parties can be traced directly back to this repression. Now that Ben Ali’s anti-religious party government is gone, they can feel free to mobilize and come together to form instruments of change.

It is now clear why there was such an increase in Islamist political activity, but now the issue that remains is where it will go from here. As stated previously in this paper, the Ennahda was successful in securing a majority of the Constitutive assembly during the first election. Just how Islamist the new governments will be, in both Tunisia and Egypt, has become the most pressing question. The term Islamism has evolved over the years. Whereas it used to imply the

²⁹ Ware, pg. 598

³⁰ Pike, John, ed. "En-Nahdha / Ennahdha (Renaissance)." *GlobalSecurity.org*. N.p., 05 2011. Web. 12 Dec 2012. <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/tunisia/en-nahdha.htm>>

³¹ Pike, John, ed. "President Ben Ali failed to extend official recognition to the presumably largest opposition movement, the Islamic movement al Nahda, and to several smaller opposition groups. The strongest political group, al Nahda, though not legalized, participated in the 1989 elections by supporting independent slates and by running its own candidates. It is estimated that al Nahda received about 17 percent of the vote, yet none of its candidates received a majority in their respective constituency."

strict adherence to *sharia* law and the formation of an Islamic state,³² now it has come to mean a very diverse number of things. Internal debates have started where Islamists themselves are forced to face the question of how strictly they want to or need to stick to their previous tenets. Democratization has become a defining force within Islamist political parties. In recent decades, globalization and the spread of ideals over state lines, and specifically other world views found in regions other than purely Muslim-based ones, has caused Islamist practices and perspectives to adapt to their new environments.³³ Islamists have been exposed to secularism and the call for the attention to human rights advocacy. Due to calls for democracy, Islamists have been forced to give up their ambitions for a perfect Islamic state. Although Islamic groups have in the past operated charity organizations, they have also opposed unions and land reformations that lend themselves to the modern worldwide economic system.³⁴

Some Islamist groups do not like the idea of sharing power with other non-religious parties. Although some efforts have happened in which they try to appear more willing to compromise. For example, in Tunisia there has been a denouncing of *sharia* by the Ennahda, but that still does not account for the fact that as an Islamist party, they support a ban on alcohol and the wearing of the veil for women. There is a sharp divide that Islamist political parties must face in Tunisia but also in other countries that will determine the direction in which these new governments head. “Islamist movements throughout the region are constrained to operate in a democratic arena that they did not create and that has legitimacy in the eyes of the people.”³⁵

This is important to note, because when it comes down to it, one thing that all of the protests that comprise the Arab Spring all had in common is that they relied heavily on the people. It was the

³² Roy, pg. 13: “Ennahda’s leader Rachid al Ghannouchi has explicitly rejected the concept of an ‘Islamic state,’ and cites Turkey’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) as a model of post-Islamist religious-minded and conservative party.”

³³ Roy, pg. 12: “When [Islamists] went into exile, it was more often to Europe than to Mecca.”

³⁴ Roy, pg. 13

³⁵ Roy, pg. 14

people who were unhappy, the people who protested, and the people who deposed their repressive governments. The new issue is how the Islamist parties can attract these same people into supporting them so that they can have success in the new governments.

Islamist parties in Tunisia, like the Ennahda, benefitted from the new call for democratization even though they had almost nothing to do with how it started.³⁶ The Islamist parties, although supportive of the movement, were not the start and therefore were able to come out of the background to gain support from the protesters. Because of this, they are now the center of the new political system in the country. The Ennahda has willingly accepted the calls for democratization, perhaps though in a self-preserving strategy.³⁷ As previously stated, the original protests did not call for the Islamist parties to take control, so they need to be willing to compromise with more modern ideals so that they can retain power, as the Ennahda has done. Salafists in Tunisia, although, have not been as successful at doing this.³⁸ The main point of the protests was not to create an Islamic state, so in that non-religious regard, these Islamist parties are almost irrelevant. People in the Middle East, Tunisia included, want governments that will truly help the development of their countries into modern international forces, while also maintaining an allegiance to their cultural Islamic values.³⁹

³⁶ Roy, pg. 7: "...the Islamists of Egypt and Tunisia...benefitted from a democratization process that they did not trigger."

³⁷ Roy, pg. 7: "[Islamist parties] may accept the demands of the democratization process more willingly (Ennahda) or less willingly, (the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood), but accept them they will, or they will find themselves sidelined."

³⁸ Roy, pg. 11: "(In Tunisia, the Salafists have lined up on Ennahda's right by opposing democracy and demanding immediate implementation of *shari'a*.)"

³⁹ Roy, pg. 14: "The 'Islamic' electorate in Egypt or Tunisia today is not revolutionary; it is conservative. It wants order. It wants leaders who will kick-start the economy and affirm conventional religious values. It is not ready to plunge into reviving the caliphate or creating an Islamic republic."

To its supporters, the Ennahda party is “an example of how a balance can be struck between modernity and Islam.”⁴⁰ They support the Western ideals of civil rights and democratic practices. They support gender equality and the notion of citizenship based on rights. However, they do have very clear ties to Islam and the party “advocates a more overtly Islamic identity and society for the country.”⁴¹ It is important to note though, that the political role of the Ennahda, and in that case any political party in the Tunisian political system, is new and therefore specifics about policies and actual laws are not available. Keeping this in mind, they have promised to do certain things in order to make sure Islamist policies do not distract them from more pressing issues that concern the country as a member of the international community: “Though the party has said little about specific policies, this suggests it will try not to become distracted by issues such as alcohol consumption or blasphemy that some pious Muslims and extremists have been trying to push into the political sphere.”⁴² With a forty percent majority won in the new election, it is safe to say that the Ennahda party will have a great influence on Tunisia’s new constitution, set to be completed very shortly.⁴³ Because it is expected to be completed so shortly and implemented sometime in the spring, it is only a matter of time until we will know what direction, Islamic-influenced or not, they are heading in.

The situation in Egypt started under similar pretexts. Protests erupted just over one month after they began in Tunisia on January 25, 2011 centered in Tahrir Square in Cairo.⁴⁴ These protests turned violent, when, as will be discussed later, Mubarak and his tendency to oppress

⁴⁰ Lewis, Aidan. *Profile: Tunisia’s Ennahda Party*. BBC News. Oct 2011. Web. 12 Dec 2012.

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15442859>>

⁴¹ Lewis, *Profile: Tunisia’s Ennahda Party*

⁴² Lewis, *Profile: Tunisia’s Ennahda Party*

⁴³ Picard, Duncan. *The Current Status of Constitution Making in Tunisia*. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. April 2012. Web. 9 Dec 2012. <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/04/19/current-status-of-constitution-making-in-tunisia>>

⁴⁴ Middle East Constitutional Forum’s Timeline of Constitutional Transitions in the Middle East

and action taken against the state, forced the military to take violent action against the protestors. The military, however, would only do this for 5 days, when on January 31, 2011, it refused to use force against the people of Egypt.⁴⁵ These protests were demanding the end of the thirty-year long presidency of Hosni Mubarak, a former general who had taken over in a coup following the assassination of Anwar Sadat.⁴⁶ Sadat himself was instrumental in securing peace in the region after the Six Day War with Israel and famously met with Jimmy Carter and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and signed the Camp David Accords to secure peace between Israel and Egypt.⁴⁷ During his presidency, he tried to tie his own secular politics to the religious community by releasing members of the Muslim Brotherhood from prison that his predecessor, Gamal Abdel Nasser, had imprisoned. His attempts were unsuccessful in gaining the support that he had hoped for from the more fundamental Muslims and many of his own supporters turned against him because it appeared as though he was forsaking his own political values in order to garner support. In 1981, a group of extremists assassinated him, making him the fourth Egyptian head of state to be killed in the 20th century alone.⁴⁸

Mubarak stepped into office and completely changed voting laws that could prevent him from continuing his presidency. When he ran for president, in elections that were more like simple “yes or no referendums,”⁴⁹ he always won with over ninety percent of the vote. Like his predecessors and Tunisia’s Bourguiba, he denounced fundamental Islam or extremist religion in general as dangerous to the “democracy” that he held so dear. Yet also like his predecessors, he is smart enough to realize that occasionally he must play the Muslim card in order to gain legitimacy from his Muslim-ruled population. However, should these Muslim extremists or

⁴⁵ Middle East Constitutional Forum’s Timeline of Constitutional Transitions in the Middle East

⁴⁶ Demerath, pg. 68

⁴⁷ Demerath, pg. 68

⁴⁸ Demerath, pg. 68

⁴⁹ Demerath, pg. 68

fundamentalists ever act against the state in any manner, he was quick to react and oppress them. With the rise of Islamic activism, there was also a rise in state-sponsored oppression. “The violent conflict between the movement and the state [had] become so entrenched and routinized as to form part of the ‘normal’ way of Egyptian life.”⁵⁰ During the first eleven years of Mubarak’s presidency, there were over 1,500 government-inflicted casualties in the country, along with 25,000 arrests and twenty-seven death penalty rulings.⁵¹ The state even suppressed non-extremist Muslim groups that had done beneficial things for society, such as charitable acts. For example, following an earthquake in October of 1992, local and smaller Muslim groups were able to respond more quickly to the damage and began immediately helping those in need, so in order to show that the state could be more helpful than the Muslim groups, the government outlawed any group other than itself from providing earthquake relief.⁵²

Seen through examples like this, normal people in Egyptian society, the non-extremist Muslims or simply members of other religions or social classes, had to deal repeatedly with the conflict between the extremists and the government. Most people in the country, due to the conflict between state and religion and the general failing of the Mubarak presidency, saw many problems form. There was a huge economic gap between the upper, secular class that was favored by Mubarak and the lower, religious class that Mubarak was simultaneously trying to appease but also stamp out. There was also a large generational gap. Young people during his presidency saw their futures as dim and further constant alienation by the state had caused a lot of them to turn to religion, as an oppositional force to the state. With Mubarak’s cronies controlling most of the government and the religious majority residing at the bottom of the social

⁵⁰ Demerath, pg. 69

⁵¹ Demerath, pg. 69

⁵² Demerath, pg. 69

strata, there was little room for a centrist majority that could have helped to prevent the protests of 2011 by trying to find political middle ground in many different areas of governance.

One group that could have helped with this search for compromise is the Muslim Brotherhood. We can see that there are definitive reasons why they were never used as a mediating force at first, but the group has been evolving since its inception into a more trustworthy force. The Muslim Brotherhood began as a radical political movement and had huge numbers underground. They have large numbers in countries across the Arab world. Understandably so, they were considered to be a terrorist group at first and were responsible for the killing of two prime ministers during colonial times. The Brotherhood was one of the groups seen as fundamental during Nasser's presidency as well and was perceived as holding the country and government back from true modernization.⁵³ Like was stated earlier, some of its leaders were imprisoned by Nasser, but later released by Sadat in order to appease the religious majority. I believe this shows just how far-reaching their influence was. Since jailing and imprisoning only some of their leaders caused such an outrage, when they were released, it caused Sadat's own supporters to turn against him and might have even led to his eventual assassination.

However, just like the concept of Islamist politics in general, the Muslim Brotherhood was forced to adapt and evolve over the years in order to appeal to a larger audience. They experienced growth from a violent leftist Islamic group into a civil group with members in the upper class like doctors, lawyers, engineers and university professors. The call for democratization and modernization in the Arab region has affected the Brotherhood as well. "The new generation calls for debate, freedom, democracy and good governance."⁵⁴ Also, the

⁵³ Demerath, pg. 67

⁵⁴ Roy, pg. 9

usual methods of condemning Zionism and other anti-Israeli sentiments have been noticeably absent from their rhetoric since the Arab Spring started.⁵⁵ This shows that outright hatred of any group, religion or race is a concept that either has been or will be adopted by the new generation of Muslim Brothers. Tolerance, as a social and civil norm, is now permeating their society. The new *religiosity*⁵⁶ of the younger Brothers, and newer Islamists in general, lends itself to democratization because “it delinks personal faith from religious traditions, collective identity and external authority.”⁵⁷ In this sense, a new level of individualism has risen within the minds of these Islamist peoples. “Religion has become more and more a matter of personal choice, whether that choice be the strict Salafist approach to Islam or some sort of syncretism, to say nothing of conversion to another religion.”⁵⁸ Religion is now what the people want to make of it; Islam is for some no longer a cultural tradition that they have to strictly adhere to, though people can choose to do just that. The new element is that there is even a choice involved at all.

A strict adherence to *sharia* law or the Koran in general is supported by the group known as the Salafists. The Salafist al-Nur party is a group of fundamental Muslims that have been a part of the Arab political scene across the Middle East for years now. In Tunisia, they support the imposition of *sharia* within the new constitution that is currently being drafted, and in Egypt they have been both outspoken opponents to the recently-modernizing Muslim Brotherhood while also supporting a former Muslim Brother in the first presidential election. However, they have also been seen as an oppositional force to the Muslim Brothers by “allying themselves with Brotherhood dissidents.”⁵⁹ The Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood will forever be linked within Egypt as two groups that are trying to determine what Islamist politics actually means and

⁵⁵ Roy, pg. 9

⁵⁶ Roy, pg. 10: A term used by Roy to describe a new Muslim spirituality of sorts that lends itself to modernization rather than strict adherence to Koranic law.

⁵⁷ Roy, pg. 10

⁵⁸ Roy, pg. 10

⁵⁹ Roy, pg. 11

how Islam should be implemented into the new government. But with the constant modernization process that the Muslim Brotherhood has been undergoing for decades now, it is up to the Salafists to determine exactly what their next move will be in terms of garnering support within the new government and in society in general.

The Muslim Brotherhood presents itself as being a tolerant force in the Arab world, and in Egypt has called itself the protector of the minority group comprised of Coptic Christians along with other branches of Christianity including Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics and other Protestants. The thing we will have to wait and see about is whether or not they will further these preliminary actions into complete religious freedom on an individual basis rather than just trying to protect some simple civil rights for some religious minorities.

In the recent presidential election in Egypt this past June, Muslim Brotherhood member Mohammed Morsi was elected. This shows the level of support that the Muslim Brotherhood has within mainstream culture. It was seen as a group that had already achieved some sort of legitimacy and could therefore be trusted to carry out the important task of heading the new government. Many Brothers were elected into the new parliament and efforts have begun to try to construct the new constitution. Although, picking up any newspaper, it can be seen that this is not going well. There have been both protests in favor of and against Morsi and the Brothers.⁶⁰ The situation is developing literally daily at the time of writing this paper, so it cannot be said exactly what will happen. In the same regard as Tunisia, the world will have to wait and see how the situation will play it.

Having said that, I think it is safe to say with some level of certainty that the new constitutions will have elements of Islamist politics with a never-before seen level of

⁶⁰ *The New York Times* has a webpage that is dedicated to updating the different crises that have erupted because of the discontent caused by the formation of the new constitution. It can be seen here, with its last update being December 12: <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/egypt/index.html>

modernizing and tolerant democratic ideals. I say this for a few reasons. First, in predominantly Muslim countries in a predominantly Muslim region, it would be very difficult to completely disregard the religion of Islam totally in the formation of a new set of laws for its Muslim populace. If we look at the example of our own country, even though there is no explicit mention of Christianity, there are definitely Christian elements contained within the Constitution. The same will happen in both Tunisia and Egypt. Both of the newly elected governments have majorities contained with Islamist groups that have promised a strict adherence to the principles of the Arab Spring in its call for democratization and equality, but they cannot ignore the fact that many people within their countries believe in having elements of *sharia* law contained in their legal systems, even if this only means a ban on alcohol or the wearing of a veil. The Ennahda says that they will try to look past these little considerations in order to work on the more pressing matters, but perhaps just the fact that they are on the plate at all shows their importance. Any recognition at all by the Ennahda has symbolically shown that, even though they want to stress the unimportance of these ideas, they are still important enough for the issues to be raised at all. Therefore, the reflection of Islamic principles is unavoidable.

Islam is, in a way, constantly adapting to our modern, globalized world. So now the question becomes, if these new constitutions will have elements of Islam, what exactly are the elements of Islam that they will show? If Islam has come to mean something new, the Muslim elements found within the new laws could have nothing to do with more traditional Islam. If for example, tolerance is spreading within the Muslim faith, than wouldn't an Islamic element be supporting equal gender rights or religious freedom? New generations within the Muslim Brotherhood have aligned themselves with the protection of religious minorities within Egypt. If the new *religiosity* of the Muslim faith means that it can be adapted in a very personal, individualistic manner, does that mean that adherence to the original five pillars of the Muslim

faith will not be included in law because now not every Muslim has to follow them? Again, younger generations of Islamists have said they want to “construct their own brand of Islam, one that feels more like a matter of conviction and less like an inherited habit.”⁶¹ Islamists need to consider, while constructing the new constitutions, which facets of the ever-changing Muslim faith they will want to incorporate into them.

The modernizing principles that will be seen within the new constitutions and new governments will be numerous, if the original tenets of the Arab Spring are upheld. Truly representative government, universal suffrage, gender equality and religious freedom should all come under this umbrella of modernization. The presence of the military and corrupt police was one point of contention that led to the start of the Arab Spring, especially in Tunisia, so there will be a crackdown on those. Although, the military in Egypt has a very strong influence over the government, and it might even be said that the government does not even fully have control over its own armed forces, so this will definitely prove to be a challenge in future governance within the country.⁶² Trying to create economic structures within the countries that can foster real competition in the international market will also be a very important issue. The gap created by the Mubarak regime between the upper and lower classes will have to be addressed, along with high unemployment within the younger generation within Egypt, as well as the young urbanites of Tunisia. The trend of Arab nations being isolated socially, politically and economically from the rest of the world will very soon meet its end.

The self-immolation of Mohammed Buoazizi started a chain of events within the Arab world that have forever changed the course of international politics. Protests broke out all over

⁶¹ Roy, pg. 10

⁶² Roy, pg. 14: “To impose an Islamist form of authoritarianism, the Islamists would need either control of the police and army or their own parliamentary forces, none of which they have. In Egypt and Tunisia, the army remains outside Islamist control (in Egypt, it may be outside anyone’s control), and it is not identified with the former regime the way the Imperial Iranian Army was in 1979.”

the Middle East and Muslims spoke of the ills committed by oppressive regimes. The Arab Spring that followed saw a flourishing of not only democratic ideals, but also of internal discussion that will change the way that Islam, and what it means to be a Muslim, is perceived within the region. Islamist political parties seized the opportunity within Tunisia and Egypt to come to power amidst extreme uncertainty. While they have been somewhat successful in unifying their respective countries in the wake of such an uprooting event, there is still a lot of work to be done in order to achieve what the original protests sought to accomplish. The Ennahda and the Muslim Brotherhood, along with the influence of the Salafists, need to decide how far they will allow Islamic principles and traditions permeate their new constitutions within the governments that they have recently won majorities in. It is safe to say, that for what will be the first few, formative years of these new governments, Islamist political parties will have very large roles in the construction of the new social and political framework of both Tunisia and Egypt.

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