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# Islamism and the state after the Arab uprisings: Between people power and state power

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## Between people power and state power

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This paper examines the varieties of Islamism, distinguished those focused on the state, such as the Muslim Brotherhood from trans-state jihadists and non-political Salafists. They are seen as functions of state formation in the region. The paper assesses the changing fortunes of these rival Islamist movements before and after the Arab Uprising and in different Arab countries

## Introduction: Islamism, the state and socio-historical changes

For a brief moment during the 2011 Arab uprisings, Islamism seemed to have become somewhat irrelevant. A year later, with the electoral gains made by many Islamists movements in the newly democratic atmosphere that then characterized the region, they appeared to be back on top of (and dictating) the political agenda. At the time of writing (early 2015), the wheel has turned again and neither democratic- nor Islamist-oriented institutional evolutions seem to be making headway.

A large (perhaps the largest) part of the apparent difficulty in delineating the Islamist factor relates to identifying and explaining political Islam/Islamism. Whatever Islamism may be—and the perspectives that we will be proposing in the following are analytical distinctions, not the 'real face' of Islamism—the generic representations of the phenomenon that tend to dominate the political debate are commonly formatted to fit pre-existing explanations of political and institutional behaviour.[1] Beyond pointing out that political Islam has many faces,[2] we contend that making analytical distinctions within political Islam to reflect broader path dependencies is crucial to understanding the role, and fate, of Islamism during and after the Arab uprisings. Specifically, the many faces of Islamism reflect the different models of state governance that have predominated in the Middle East region (and beyond) over the years. This is particularly the case for those Islamists that we categorise as 'statist' to emphasise the close connection between national structures of governance and the strategies of activists in their particular socio-cultural and socio-economic circumstances. It is those statist Islamists that have, due to their aspirations to

acquire state power, been most obviously affected by regime change, reform, or hardening during the Arab uprisings.

But Islamism is evidently not always best defined by its relationship with the state. For 'non-statist' Islamists, the uprisings and their aftermath hold a different significance, even though they too are affected by the changes in the relationship between the state and statist Islamists. We distinguish non-statist Islamists by the primacy they accord to their relationship to the community instead of the state. This very broad category includes quietist grassroots movements inspired by salafism as well as violent transnational jihadi organizations, although important distinctions exist between them. Whether they seek to avoid politics altogether or have a vision of a political community not bound to the modern nation state, these groups compete with statist Islamists for the Islamic high ground, thereby indirectly shaping national political landscapes. Crucially, these modalities of Islamist activism do not always correspond neatly to divisions between groups but can coexist within the same organization: the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, has strong statist and non-statist orientations, although the former commonly structures the latter. Conversely, following the Arab uprisings, traditionally non-statist salafi formations engaged in state-level politics (most notably the Egyptian Nour Party).

In the following, we present an analytical perspective on the evolution of the relationship between Islamists and the state grounded on this distinction between two path-dependent configurations of contemporary Islamism. In section 2 below, we discuss how forms of governance and developmentalism influenced political Islam in the preceding decades. Then in section 3 we focus more specifically on the dynamics of statist Islamism in the context of these political evolutions before, during and since the Arab uprisings. Section 4 follows the same approach to elucidate non-statist modalities of Islamist activism. In section 5 we offer some explanations for the differential outcomes, particularly between Egypt and Tunisia, in the wake of the uprisings.

**Islamism and evolving models of governance and development**

Seen from the vantage point of the politics of the nation-state, the evolution and diversification of Islamism reflects trajectories of state formation and socio-economic development in the Middle East and the rest of the developing world. In 1960s and 1970s debates dominated by modernization theory and class analysis, Islamism hardly featured in political analyses of Middle Eastern and other Muslim-majority developing countries. When it was considered, it tended to be dismissed as a rear-guard battle from traditional social forces heading for the dustbin of history.[3] State-builders focussed on developing strong institutions and a modern socio-economic system, generally inspired by liberal or socialist models. The modernist and authoritarian-populist Nasser regime had crushed the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, by then the leading Islamist movement in the region, in the second half of the 1950s. But the Nasserite model, widely assumed to exemplify the shape of things to come in the region, lasted barely a couple of decades. By the mid-1970s, Arab-socialism was falling apart in most of the region, while 'anachronistic' regimes such as those of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States were beginning to promote a rather different developmental pathway allying economic modernism with patrimonial rule and religious legitimation strategies.

In the 1980s, in the wake of the Iranian revolution, Islamism was deemed to be concerned primarily with the establishment of an 'Islamic state'. It was viewed, in part, as a kind of nationalist and revolutionist movement seeking to capture the institutions of the state to implement top-down its preferred new social order, just like other such movements from the left and the right had done previously throughout the region. In practice, the growing autonomy and internal fracturing of Islamist movements in the 1980s owed much to the Islamic revolution. The Muslim Brotherhood mostly applauded the revolution and saw it as evidence that Islamism could succeed in taking state power.[4] Salafis, on the other hand, opposed it on principle and condemned Khomeinism on sectarian grounds. Arab regimes were able to withstand the challenge, in part because of their coercive resources, and in part because the mainstream Islamist movements at the time calculated that they lacked the societal base to launch an Iranian-style revolution.[5] The failure of the jihad in Egypt to launch a large-scale

popular insurrection in the wake of President Sadat's assassination in 1981 suggested to many Islamist activists that Arab societies were not ready for an Islamic revolution. When revolutionary Islamism failed by and large to be replicated outside Iran, the challenge to the state posed by political Islam was deemed by some scholars to have failed.

With the increasingly evident failure of state modernism and developmentalism, and the growing influence of the Saudi model, dependent on oil rents, Arab states entered a phase of 'post-populism'.[6] This was reinforced in the 1980s and 1990s by the spread of neo-liberalism to the region under pressure from the International Monetary Fund. Post-populism represented a means whereby authoritarian regimes could strengthen themselves even as they abandoned the old populist social contract, by diversify their constituencies and diluting potential political opposition from civil society. This entailed combinations of increased dependence on external sources of revenue (or 'rents'), limited political opening, and some 'outsourcing' of governance to non-state actors such as Islamist charities. From the perspective of regimes, Islamism also served the broader purposes of neoliberal reform to the extent that it fostered self-help strategies on the part of local populations, providing not only spiritual services, but also educational, medical and financial support.

The post-populist turn towards neoliberalism created new domestic environments for social and political activism. Islamist movements made headway in society because they proposed a model of religious solidarity that responded, and adapted, to the downscaling of the role of the state throughout the region. As democratizing discourse entered the region after 1990 some Islamists movements portrayed their new involvement in electoral politics as a means of nurturing a 'good' Muslim society (and as such an endeavour which could be intellectually reconciled with their ideological emphasis on God's sovereignty).

In parallel, however, post-populist regimes adopted more sophisticated versions of "divide and rule" by which they sought to control rising Islamism, particularly through provoking or exploiting "culture wars"[7] between Islamist and secular actors. Absent the interest aggregation and mediation function of democracy, competition in civil and political society was played out on the

terrain of morality and identity, with the cultural sphere (that is influence over education, media and cultural production) being the only one to which authoritarian regimes devolved any substantial power. This had the effect of depoliticising public discourse as a whole in many Middle Eastern countries and strengthening movements, like Islamism, that prioritized culture and identity.[8]

The 'culture wars' waged by Islamist activists against secular civil society, and *vice versa*, militated against unified oppositions to regimes in many Arab states. The Islamist movement itself was divided along many lines from the 1980s, including between those that favoured accommodation with the regime and participation in pseudo-democratic politics (the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist parties), those that sought disengagement from state-level politics altogether (salafis) and those who sought to imposed their vision of an Islamic order via the violent overthrow of the existing social and political system (jihadists).[9] Within each of these categories, furthermore, differences over strategy existed. Nevertheless, during the 1990s Islamism grew to constitute the principal (if not sole) viable alternative to secular authoritarianism in much of the region, a reality that was emphasized but not invented by regimes that sought to frighten the western democracies into keeping them in power.

After 11 September 2001, analyses inspired by the 'war on terror' tended to categorize Islamist movements primarily in relation to their use of violent rhetoric or practices, overlooking the different articulations and trajectories of Islamism.[10] However, as Francois Burgat indicates, over-emphasis on one type of violent Islamism overshadowed other forms of Islamist activism.[11] Using violence as the main distinction among Islamic movements obscures important structural similarities and overlaps between jihadi and salafi groups, in particular their shared ambivalence toward state-level politics and attempt to operate beyond or in defiance of the state. Shifts in state-society relations did not affect them in the same way as they did those Islamists that sought state power. The focus on Islamist violence parallel to the increased focus of the international community on 'hard' security issues was matched by a 'hardening' of the Middle Eastern states and a political discourse dominated by securitization. Keen to tap into the external support offered under the rubric of the 'war on terror', regimes cracked down on violent and non-violent Islamist opposition alike.

The 2011 Arab uprisings marked another re-articulation of the relationship between the state and Islamism. The process of regional 'state weakening', which arguably began with the external shock of the US invasion of Iraq and toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003,[12] continued with regime changes in Libya and Yemen, as well as the civil war in Syria. The weakening of state power in all these cases vastly increased the salience of non-statist salafi and jihadi movements. In Egypt and Tunisia, the Arab uprisings fundamentally challenged the 'cronyistic' development strategies pursued by the Mubarak and Ben Ali regimes. In neither case, however, did the Islamist beneficiaries of these uprisings offer compelling alternatives to this economic model. Ennahda in Tunisia—and the political class as a whole—remained vulnerable to bottom-up pressure from the marginalized ('*muhammishin*'), who looked to salafism as a more promising vehicle for social inclusion.[13] The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was pushed aside by the military after a lacklustre year in power which, if it did not disprove the claim that 'Islam is the solution', cast doubt on the capacity of Islamism's oldest movement to implement it. Political discourse there reverted to familiar 'war on terror' territory, as the state relied more than ever on virtually unchecked coercive power to deal with the 'Islamist threat'.

**Islamist Variations**

In the following section, we track the evolution of statist and non-statist Islamist activism in the region in light of changing state dynamics. We do not claim that these trends encapsulate the entire complexity of contemporary Islamic activism or that the substantive differences we identify will necessarily retain their significance for all time. Our orientation toward national state institutions as our focal point is a heuristic devise enabling us to map the contemporary patterns of interaction between Middle East regimes and Islamist activism and understand how specific trajectories of state and Islamist governance can come together to either strengthen or weaken a polity.

*Statist Islamism*

For some scholars 'political Islam' refers to those groups and movements that actively engage with the state and national-level politics, unlike

'fundamentalism', which eschews formal politics and focuses on the social sphere.[14] Recognizing that 'the political' extends deeper than the state level, and also acknowledging the well-established conceptual problems with the term 'fundamentalism', [15] we use the term 'statist Islamism' to refer to institutionalized participation in the politics of the nation state. This variant of Islamism is exemplified by the Muslim Brotherhood, although it has outgrown the Brotherhood as an organisation. The model of political action and the ideological programme elaborated by Hasan al-Banna, and more recently by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Rached Ghannouchi and others, have been highly influential and embraced and adapted across the Middle East: actors like Ennahda in Tunisia, the Saudi 'Sahwa' movement, or Islah in Yemen, have Brotherhood roots or links. Ideologically, this current has come closest to reconciling Islamic doctrines, and the sharia as the source of all legislation, with liberal forms of democracy. Socially, it has grown within the middle classes in the Arab world and is intrinsically connected with the expansion of education, urbanisation, and other facets of 'development' in the region over the course of the 20th century.[16]

In the main, statist Islamists have not been revolutionaries in the sense of seeking to overturn the existing social order. Their Islamism, rather, evolved as a reformist discourse through which often lower-middle class activists could connect with a broader popular constituency and challenge the claims of the (usually more secularized) establishment to speak for the nation. They also appealed to the aspirations and fears of dissatisfied middle classes, which, generally speaking, sought the improvement, rather than destruction, of existing systems. Islamism's claims were thus advanced not on the basis of challenging social hierarchies or the economic model, but in terms of an attack on corruption, moral laxity and neglect of religion, all of which, in their view, produced the socio-economic ills of the community. The economic problems were to be solved not by a drastically new system of governance or redistribution of wealth but by elites' recognising and acting upon their obligations to Islam and sharia.

Statist Islamism evolved in line with shifts in models of state governance and, concomitantly, forms of societal activism. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and elsewhere, had often been 'moderate' to the extent it was willing—where

permitted—to work within existing systems and broadly accepted the centrality of the nation-state as the locus of political identity.[17] Hasan al-Banna had rejected party politics as divisive and elitist, in line with the rest of the nationalist movement in Egypt at the time. Brotherhood intellectuals such as Sayyid Qutb and Muhammad al-Ghazzali supported nationalisation and developed ideas reconciling socialism with Islam in ways that reflected and helped inform the official ideology that was Nasserism. Following the limited political opening under Sadat more 'liberal' democratic ideas and practices were incorporated into the movement—in contrast to other components of the resurgent Islamist movement that shunned or confronted the state.

'Moderation' was a growing trend among Islamist groups through the 1980s and 1990s. This corresponded to a time of partial political liberalization across the region. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood entered elections for the first time in 1984. In Algeria, the sudden and ill-structured political liberalization of the late 1980s enable the Islamic Salvation Front to mobilize voters and to become the leading political party of the ill-fated Algerian democratic transition (which ended in the 1992 military coup). In Tunisia, Ennahda slowly made gains throughout the 1980s during periods of political liberalization that culminated in their participation to the 1989 parliamentary elections; a short-lived opening that would prove inconsequential as President Ben Ali entrenched his power by closing down the political field in the ensuing years. In Jordan, the local branch of the Muslim brotherhood would eventually gain the approval of the monarchy to form a political party, the Islamic Action Front, in 1992. In Morocco, faced with the unwillingness of the main Islamist movement of the country al-Adl wa-Ihsane to formally recognize a monarchic system of governance, the Moroccan King, Hassan II, facilitated the entry into politics of another Islamist formation in 1996. This party, which would later become the Party of Justice and Development, was allowed to participate in formal politics because it was willing to recognize the legitimacy of the monarchy.

Over time, the possibility of aggregating demands for political inclusion increased as those movements 'moderated' their ideological programmes as a result of political learning and strategic adaptation to a partially free political environment.[18] In the three decades or so prior to the Arab uprisings, Islamist

groups had softened core ideological goals (such as the establishment of an Islamic state) and instead embraced norms related to human rights and democracy. There was, however, a 'ceiling' beyond which Islamist movements would not moderate. [19] Although the high-profile activities of Muslim Brotherhood parliamentarians and the ideological innovations of 'New Islamists'[20] contrasted markedly with the image of Islamism as a revolutionary, counter-system, force, this *wasatiyya*, or centrist, trend was by no means dominant within Islamism as a whole. Not only was it contested from within the Brotherhood and like-minded groups, producing internal tensions and schisms, but it was also rejected outright by grassroots movements, most notably salafis. The non-statist trends inside and outside the Muslim Brotherhood thus structured, to a great extent, the political horizons of the statist ones. Nonetheless, ideological and behavioural moderation enabled Islamists to sell their programmes to more secular-leaning constituencies as well as to a sceptical, if not Islamophobic, outside world.

*Non-statist Islamism*

Non-statist Islamism is not so much 'apolitical' as it is 'infra-political'--local-level organisational, preaching and charitable activity. Grassroots activism is central to political Islam as a whole, as local networks help to structure support for, and seek to constitute, an Islamic society. While *da'wa* (proselytising) has taken many forms over time, contemporary grassroots Islamism tends toward a conservative interpretation of the 'fundamentals' of Islam—a trend most evident in salafism. Islamist parties across the region have tended to emerge from and link with networks of charitable associations and other grassroots institutions.

Salafism, which may be the most important grassroots Islamist phenomenon of recent decades, encourages a focus on the community rather than the state. Although it tends to be ultra-conservative, with an ideal society inspired by teachings and practices from the time of the prophet, salafis' articulation with traditional Muslim customs is not as straightforward as it might seem. The ease with which salafi actors can find their public in Muslim communities depends on their ability to insert their theological approach into the pre-existing religious practices of the local community.[21]

The ability and willingness of the state to cater for marginal groups diminished considerably from the late 1970s in the context of economic restructuring. As populist-authoritarian regimes metamorphosed into post-populist ones, large sections of society were forced to rely on self-help strategies, kinship networks and other 'informal' mechanisms to compensate for exclusion at the national level. Grassroots Islamism operated alongside, or sometimes in place of, such existing support mechanisms. Salafis tend to promote an ascetic lifestyle and consider consumerism to be a distraction from religious duties. Such perspectives appeal to disenfranchised youth for whom consumerism may not be an available option.

Salafi and jihadi movements across the region are also directly influenced by political changes initiated at regime level. Salafis' avoidance of formal political engagement has benefited them at the grassroots level, sometimes with the approval of the state authorities. Indeed, salafis have benefited from the intolerance of regimes towards statist Islamists and jihadists. Although salafis have not completely escaped state repression, particularly post-9/11, because states have finite resources at their disposal, regimes have tended to concentrate their repressive strategies on politicized and armed Islamists. In allowing or facilitating the expansion of Islamist grassroots infrastructure, regimes signalled their limited capacity to govern peripheral, rural or 'informal' urban areas. This has left by default, and sometimes by design, the social field more open for salafis. Many regimes have sought to channel activists from politically active and militant Islamism toward a less overtly threatening salafism. In Egypt, the contemporary salafi movement originated (like the Muslim Brotherhood and the jihadis) in the student movement of the 1970s, and developed as a 'safe' alternative to these two movements through the 1990s.[22] In Algeria, after the banning of the Islamic Salvation Front and the armed confrontation with Islamist guerrillas in the 1990s, the military-backed regime was content with the growth of salafism as an alternative to both political and armed activism.[23] Yet, even if many grassroots activists, for principled or pragmatic reasons, eschew politics, their activism has played a role as part of a broader Islamist movement in building constituencies for Islamist parties.[24]

So called jihadis, advocates of the establishment of an Islamic order through the use of violence, have been a persistent trend in Arab politics in recent decades. Typically they endorse jihad in furtherance of an idealized Islamic community on ideological/theological grounds, although some also turn to violence in response to the attempts by the state to repress other forms of Islamic activism, which, as highlighted by Hafez, make armed struggle a meaningful strategic choice for these organizations.[25] Even if leaders of jihadist groups may come from relatively well-off backgrounds (with Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri being good cases in point), violent activism commonly takes place among marginalized or dislocated communities. Jihadis generally emphasise a warrior ethos that shuns material possessions and rewards. They emerge particularly where the authority and legitimacy of the state are contested, absent or have been undermined and generally represent by-products of uneven, stalled, or indeed reversed, processes of state formation, as well as of the transnational flows of ideas and people encouraged by globalisation.

Jihadi movements of the 1980s and 1990s generally failed to capture state power due to the superior military capabilities of the incumbent authoritarian regimes – viz. the Algerian civil conflict of the 1990s – as well as their inability to mobilize large constituencies favouring radical change. As the security capabilities of Arab regimes increased, national-based Islamist guerrilla movements increasingly turned toward more transnational forms of action to compensate for a lack of domestic success.[26] The trajectory of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria, which reinvented itself as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, and finally as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) illustrates well this trend.  Overall, jihadi failures in the face of coercive states have led to the concentration of violent Islamism in places where central coercive power is weak. The migration of Al Qaeda in the Arabic Peninsula (AQAP) from Saudi Arabia to Yemen is one example. The further weakening of state power in Yemen, as well as in Libya, Syria, and Iraq has correspondingly opened up opportunities for renewed violent activism in these countries.

**Islamism following regime change: explaining differential outcomes**

In seeking to understand Islamism's ongoing relationship with the state, it is important not to focus solely on the impact of 'regime change' (or failure, or resilience). Beyond the immediate significance of regime change or revolutions, the uprisings opened up new possibilities in the general evolution of the state structure and mode of governance across the region. It is more useful to view the transformations in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen—as well as Syria, Iraq, Morocco and other countries where regimes remained in place—as part of a continuum of political change that impacted the short and medium terms prospects of Islamism.

*Statist Islam and the Uprisings*

Statist Islamism can, generally speaking, claim credit for the expansion of the political sphere in the Arab world, as a potential driver of democratization. In some cases, Islamists showed themselves to be highly adept at building structures of mass inclusion in authoritarian settings in which elite circulation was absent (Egypt). In others, this political effort could only take place after the fall of authoritarianism (Tunisia).

The uprisings of 2011 directly challenged the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes. They also challenged statist Islamism. They were able to mobilise significant numbers of people around slogans not related to religion or identity, something that struck at the heart of the 'culture wars' framework that had served to neutralise dissent for decades. Hopes were high that societal unity would carry the day. In mobilising on political and economic issues directly (bread, justice, freedom) protesters challenged all parties, but especially Islamists, to explicitly link their culture and identity claims to concrete plans for political and economic renewal. While statist Islamists can build political parties with substantial popular appeal, these dynamics are only supportive of democratization processes when they become institutionalized. Beyond the revolutionary moment of 2011 the challenge for the countries of the Arab uprisings is to institutionalize both the increased level of elites' circulation and the increased level of mass inclusion resulting from the revolution in order to make them sustainable in the longer term.

What the experiences of the Arab uprisings illustrate is that outcomes were as much the result of the choices made during and in the aftermath of the uprisings as they were of longer term path dependencies. Islamists faced key challenges in using the new opportunities to establish their presence in the post-uprisings political space. First, statist Islamism was diversifying, and particularly in Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood no longer had the political field to itself. Due in part to the process of estrangement that had taken place within the Islamist firmament from the 1980s, however, the new engagement did not take place in a way that coherently linked statist and grassroots challenges together. What has been termed 'political' or 'democratic' salafism, as embodied by Egypt's Nour Party, was shunned by many within the broader salafi sphere.[27] This contributed to the intra-salafi fracturing that became apparent following the ouster of President Morsi into those in the statist sphere that continued to support Morsi as a legitimate leader and those that endorsed the military takeover (or who chose to leave the national politics once more). Secondly, Islamists also struggled to win the support of protest movements that saw them as 'hijackers' of the revolutions—a factor encouraged both by the evident deal-making that was occurring between the old regimes and Islamists (particularly in Egypt and Yemen) as well as by many Islamists' 'accommodationist' track records. The longstanding antipathy between Islamist and secular actors (part of authoritarian divide and rule strategies) outlasted the overthrow of dictators. At the same time, statist Islamists struggled to consolidate and expand grassroots support for a political path fraught with compromises that seemed to fly in the face of long-cherished Islamist values. The contrasts between Egypt and Tunisia illustrate some of the principal factors that determined whether statist Islamists could effectively use the opportunity provided by the uprisings.

*Egypt:* While the fall of the Mubarak regime opened the door to a reconfigured political sphere, the political class as a whole (Islamist and non-Islamist) failed in the crucial transition period—due to a range of domestic and international factors—to realise a constitutional framework that would guarantee elite circulation. The Egyptian case is indicative of the vicious circle that a struggle for power at the top of the state, and legacies of authoritarian rule that precluded cooperation in civil society, can create. The actions of the statist

Islamists (especially Muslim Brotherhood), of the military institution and of the elites from the former regime (particularly in the judiciary) prevented the routinisation of multiparty and electoral politics.

For one, the contending political actors failed sufficiently to bridge the numerous divides that had segmented Egyptian politics over the previous decades. Even though the Muslim Brotherhood commanded a substantial following, as evidenced by the electoral performance of its political offshoot, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and Morsi's (albeit narrow) victory, it failed to translate this support into deal-making on a constitutional framework. On the one hand, owing to legacies of mistrust from the Mubarak period, the Brotherhood and most other Islamist forces were unable to sustain an alliance with secular political parties or the revolutionary youth. On the other, despite early attempts to demonstrate its willingness to work with the existing coercive structures of the state (as represented by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces), the Brotherhood failed to convince the military and security apparatus that it was a reliable political partner.

The inability of the contending political forces to find mutually acceptable 'rules of the game' meant that growing popular opposition to Brotherhood rule did not spur further democratisation and was instead directed toward the 'exceptional' measure of a military coup in the absence of working institutionalized processes to mediate between contending interests. The high level of mass inclusion that occurred during the uprisings was then temporarily institutionalized via a 'neo-populism' centring on the personality cult of Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi and the prestige of the military,[28] rather than being linked to the principle of a rotation of elites. The resurgent military regime in Egypt has destroyed the Muslim Brotherhood's ability to connect with its constituencies and hence function as a vehicle for inclusion—even a parallel one—as it had in the past. The Brotherhood has weathered repression from the regime before, but as Saad Eddine Ibrahim recently pointed out, the 30 June 'Revolution' that precipitated a military coup four days later was the first time the Brotherhood had faced a mass popular rebellion.[29] The sheer scale of this uprising, exaggerated as it may have been, seriously damaged the Brotherhood's image as a popular movement in the region and hence as a conduit for democratisation.

The new Sisi regime in Egypt has its founding solidly grounded in a myth of popular sovereignty represented by the popular uprising of 30 June. Large numbers of secular intellectuals support the eradication of the Muslim Brotherhood even if they do not support the retrenchment of military-led authoritarianism in Egypt. In this respect, the Egyptian trajectory can be presented as a case of tentative return to the old culture wars encouraged by the new military regime.

Islamists were not mainstreamed as conservative parties in an institutional framework that guaranteed a regular rotation of political elites and Islamism's capacity to act as a vehicle for mass inclusion was so undermined that even if some form of elite circulation is established it will likely assume a 'decorative' form (façade democracy, pseudo-democracy), lacking a meaningful democratic connection with the electorate. The potential of the Muslim Brotherhood and political Salafis to become handmaidens of democratisation was lost.

*Tunisia*: A democratizing Arab state can be seen as a direct institutional outcome of the 2011 Arab uprisings in only one case, that of Tunisia. Rather than facilitating a return to authoritarian rule (either directly by taking advantage of their political success or indirectly by inciting their opponents to grab power for themselves) or undermining the capabilities of the state institutions, the Islamists of Ennahda contributed to the stability of the post-revolutionary democratic institutions and practices. The normalization of statist Islamism is tightly imbricated into the process of consolidation of multiparty democracy in the country.

As significant as the actual revolutionary uprising and foundational elections of 2011 were the processes of democratic consolidation that occurred subsequently (or in parallel). In this period the Islamists of Ennahda governed in coalition with leftist parties, and struck deals over the constitution and the holding of new elections with the main secularist forces of the country. Ennahda chose to tone down Islamist ideological claims and appeal to middle class voters via their general conservative outlook and 'good governance' programme. This downgrading of the ideological claims of statist Islamism in a 'democratizing' institutional context is best illustrated by the agreement reached on the new constitution with secularized parties, which resulted in the absence of direct

references to the sharia in the text of the constitution. By making concessions on the constitutional framework and on their utilisation of executive power, Ennahda facilitated the acceptance by social and political actors across pre-existing ideological divides of a democratic model in which most political parties estimate that losses today can be compensated by gains in the future.

The mainstreaming of Ennahda is also exemplified by the decision of the Ennahda-led government to hand over executive power to a technocratic government that was more acceptable to the opposition a year ahead of planned parliamentary and presidential elections. In the 2014 parliamentary elections, Ennahda came in second position, thus illustrating the 'normality' of an institutionalized Islamist party in a functioning multiparty democracy characterized by a rotation of elites. Rather than seeking to have an immediate impact on the state institutions and state governance, statist Islamists in Tunisia have prioritized becoming an entrenched, mainstream party with a say in public and political life regardless of whether they are in opposition or in government. From an agent-centric perspective, it could thus be said that the strategies of the key actors of the Tunisian transition were conducive to a consolidation of democracy. But for Ennahda and it secular rivals to deepen their support bases and ward off the threat of 'culture wars', the daunting task of narrowing socioeconomic inequalities must be tackled. In such a case, statist Islamists move from purely cultural and moral claims as their main source of legitimation and become a party grounded on socio-economic policies that are drafted to appeal to a non-ideologically defined electorate.

*Non-Statist Islamism and the uprisings*

The post-2011 trajectories of salafis and jihadis in the countries of the Arab uprisings are also tied to both the general political evolution of the different states, and in particular to the success and failures of their statist Islamist rivals. However because jihadi actors do not primarily have a state-centric agenda, their local engagement varies according to circumstances, from the deterritorialized mode of action of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb[30] to the centralized control of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Regionally, two main post-uprisings developments strengthened the jihadi trend, which was briefly deemed to fall into irrelevance at the time of the uprisings. First, the multiplication of civil conflicts and the reduction of state capacity (Syria, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Yemen) has increased the number of locations and of potential recruits for armed jihadism. Jihadi operations moved to those areas where armed resistance against the state seemed possible, legitimate and effective. Thus at the beginning of 2012, pre-existing jihadi networks in North Africa, particularly AQIM, redirected their efforts southwards towards Mali to join the challenge to the Malian state led by returning Tuareg from Libya. In the North African context, the dis-organization of the security apparatuses of the old authoritarian regimes allowed them to operate more freely.[31] Similarly, in Syria, al-Qaeda-supported Iraqi networks redeployed themselves on the Syrian battlefield to oppose Asad's government (and more secularized rebel groups) by creating the al-Nusra front.

In conflict zones like Syria and Iraq, salafis and jihadis are more directly creating structures of popular inclusion—albeit on a divisive sectarian basis—as the state institutions are unable or unwilling to do so. This is indicative of the continued weakness of the state post-uprisings (despite it being 'hard' and 'fierce')[32] as well as the limited abilities of the statist Islamist parties to incorporate mass constituencies in such circumstances. There is evidently a causal relation between the ongoing violent confrontation between authoritarian state elites and statist Islamists and the reduced ability of both to address satisfactorily issues of mass inclusion.

When it is in control of territories, jihadism has proven to be an effective, and fairly economical, ideological and legal resource for groups seeking to enforce obedience and conformity among fragmented or traumatised communities, such as in the case of state weakening or collapse. The appeal of the jihadi model may relate to its simplicity and the ease by which it may be 'rolled out' in different contexts.[33] Even if the leaderships of groups like the Islamic State and Ansar al-Sharia (both in its Yemeni and Libyan declinations) are not 'organic' to the populations they seek to rule, they can garner consent by striking deals with (i.e. 'buying off') tribal and other local authorities, appealing to disaffected Sunni youth and enforcing a recognisable—even if not

welcomed—legal regime. The case of ISIS illustrates the evolution from infra-politics to the transnational politics of jihadism when the constraints of state control are relaxed. The organization is primarily concerned with, on the one hand, the micro-management of societal issues through religious regulations and, on the other, sustaining its capabilities to wage transnational warfare against opponents of their creed.

The transnational dimension of jihadi activism has also been strengthened by a particular regional combination of successes and failures of democratization after the Arab uprisings. The failure of democratisation and the failure, apart from in Tunisia, of statist Islamism of the Muslim Brotherhood "brand," amidst the Syrian conflict and the Egyptian military coup have ensured the continuing relevance of a jihadi ideological discourse, which had been threatened when it appeared Islamist movements could gain power democratically. In 2014, with the rebirth of ISIS and the sectarian conflict in Iraq and Syria, the ideological attractiveness of jihadi discourses may also have increased.

The transnational and regional dimension of jihadism in connection with the post-Arab uprisings conflict goes well beyond the countries of the Arab uprisings themselves. In addition to the circulation of jihadists within the Arab world, 'foreign fighters' are increasingly drawn from Muslim populations based in Europe.[34] Such dynamics, which are actively promoted by jihadi movements, illustrate that they are not solely the product of failures of democratization in the Arab world but reflect wider problems of social and political inclusion and alienation.

This means that states not currently in the throes of civil war will not necessarily escape jihadist or salafi activism. Across the region the salafi trend continues to act as a refuge for political (or armed) activism in the countries of the region for different reasons in both democratizing and non-democratizing countries. In Egypt the increase in repression and political blockage following the military coup has inexorably pushed would-be political activists back into either pious withdrawal or, for some, violence. In Tunisia, the rapid rise of Ansar al-Sharia in a context where an Islamist-led government was in charge of the country illustrated the dissatisfaction of many of the actors of the revolution (particularly the unemployed urban youth) with the slow pace of change and the

pragmatic political approach taken by Ennahda. Thus, even in a context of strengthening and democratizing state institutions –that is in 'successful' democratic transitions– the uneasy process of turning revolutionary citizens into 'well-behaved' voters ensures that those constituencies that still feel excluded and/or unhappy from the dominant political consensus can find alternative avenues of inclusion via non-statist Islamist movements.

**Conclusion**

The different embodiments of Islamism in the region, their successes and their failures, track the rise and fall of different models of governance far more than they follow the fate of particular regimes. It is the degree and nature of transformation in state-society relations, through the formal and practical positioning of Islamist parties that directly influence the evolution of post-uprisings Islamism. As O'Donnell and Schmitter already noted regarding the democratic transitions of the 1980s, the plasticity of identities is a crucial component of the political process during such transitional periods.[35] Because of historical trajectories, some Islamists movements faced a more arduous task than others in reinventing themselves and in contributing to an overall transformation of the political ethos in the post-uprisings situations. Thus Ennahda in Tunisia, with its well-considered reformist approach, its non-conflictual relations with a weakly politicized military, and organizational superiority over an emerging salafi movement was better placed than the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (or in heavily militarized and fragmented Libya and Yemen). This does not necessarily mean that the former was bound to succeed and the latter bound to fail, but rather that the strategies devised by each actor were crucial in tipping their countries towards or away from democratic consolidation. When, as in Tunisia, Islamist parties participate in a working multiparty system, accompanied by an increase in civil liberties, they can contribute to democratic consolidation, stability and enhanced state governance. Where Islamist movements are violently excluded, as in Egypt after the 2013 military coup and the ban on the Muslim Brotherhood, the opposite results.

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