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The Impact of Political Islam on Transitional Democracy
in Egypt and Tunisia following the Arab Spring

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Abstract

Political Islam's active and major role in affecting transitional democracies is one of the most important aspects of understanding the Arab Spring and its aftermath during the change of political landscapes in the Middle East and North Africa. This thesis examines the intersection of political Islam and transitional democracy within the framework of the Arab Spring, primarily focussing on Tunisia and Egypt, the two principal countries that successfully overthrew their authoritarian rulers and regimes.

The Arab Spring included widespread protests and revolutionary movements throughout the Middle East and North Africa, fundamentally altering the political landscape and bringing Islamic groups to prominence within governments. Understanding the role of political Islam in these situations provides an opportunity to grasp both the prospects and obstacles faced by emerging democracies. The experiences of both Egypt and Tunisia demonstrate the controversial outcomes caused by political Islam, considering that Ennahdha attempted to advocate for a moderate approach that supported political pluralism, while the Muslim Brotherhood's government has faced a lot of opposition and criticism which ultimately lead to a military coup.

In this case, a comparative analysis would be very important to outline how political Islam could facilitate or obstruct the democratic transition. This research contributes to our understanding of how complicated and hard it is to build democracies in countries that inherit a majority of Muslims by taking such dynamics into consideration. Islamic political parties have a significant impact on this process, particularly following significant political upheavals like the Arab Spring. This will provide invaluable insights for academics, decision-makers, and political players in navigating the difficulties of integrating political Islam within the frameworks of emerging democracies.

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Term
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Turkey)
AST	Ansar al-Sharia (Tunisia)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CPR	Le parti du Congrès pour la République (Tunisia)
Ennahdha	Ennahdha Movement (Tunisian political party)
EU	European Union
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party (Egypt)
ISIS	The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NDA	National Dialogue Assembly (Tunisia)
NCA	National Constituent Assembly
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama (Indonesia)
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (Egypt)
UGTT	Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail
USA	United States of America

Introduction

Statement of research problem

The study of political Islam has always been significant in examining the relationship between religion and politics, as well as understanding the reasons behind the lack of democratic progress in countries with a majority of Muslims. In 2010 and onwards, sparked by the Arab Spring movement, which spread across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), shedding light on the significance of political Islam in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt.

These uprisings produced a unique political environment in which Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennahdha in Tunisia emerged as key players influencing the course of democratic transitions. This phenomenon sheds light on the challenges of incorporating political Islam into modern frameworks of administration, especially considering the complicated relations of democratic norms with Islamist ideology, coupled with the processes of transition that follow authoritarian rule.

Ennahdha, the political Islamic party in Tunisia, adopted a moderate strategy that encourages political plurality and dialogue to strengthen its credibility. While the Muslim Brotherhood, following their win of the presidential elections, faced numerous challenges in its efforts to establish an Islamic state. This idea encountered significant opposition and rejection, ultimately resulting in the military coup that ousted President Mohamed Morsi in 2013.

Tunisia and Egypt's experiences appropriately illustrate the conflicting and contradictory consequences of political Islam on transitional democracies. Despite Tunisia's traditional recognition as one of the few countries to successfully transition to democracy, Egypt has struggled to establish democratic politics due to its complex social structure and governance style, contributing to the country's increasingly divisive political climate.

The outcomes of the two cases clearly demonstrate the significant role that political Islam plays in transitional democracies, given that understanding transitional democracy in Egypt and Tunisia requires an understanding of political Islam's influence. This study, therefore, tries to explore the way political Islam can shape the landscape of democratic transitions, showing both its potential as a driver of change and as a source of contention on the path toward democratic governance.

Motivations, Aims, and Research Question

This research's significance has roots in both personal and academic perspectives. Being a Tunisian who lived directly through the Arab uprising and the governance of Ennahdha and being quite familiar with political developments in Egypt, I am aware of how sensitive democratic transitions can get. This experience gave me an insight on how complicated democratic transitions can be. However, the decision to focus on Egypt and Tunisia is not only based on my personal experiences.

In fact, from an academic standpoint, the uprising that has occurred in those countries following years of authoritarian government is particularly noteworthy since it has generated a snowball effect in other Middle Eastern and North African countries. This phenomenon is most evident in Egypt and Tunisia, where both countries succeeded in toppling their dictatorial presidents and establishing new governments. During this transitional phase, political Islam emerged as the most visible and potent force defining transitional democracy. Political Islam in Egypt differed significantly from political Islam in Tunisia; therefore, the implications on democracy in both countries are likely to be extremely diverse. This prompts a further exploration to comprehend, from a comparative standpoint, the influence of these two events on transitional democracy.

In order to ensure a rigorous academic approach, I have critically reviewed the existing literature on democratic transitions in the Arab world. This assessment has revealed substantial gaps in academic sources with respect to the particular cases of Tunisia and Egypt. This research will fill these gaps by examining the dynamics of democratic transition in these

two countries. It is this scope that justifies itself by observing a void in academic knowledge and exploring how uprisings in these contexts have impacted the process of democratization.

The issue of democratic transition is especially significant as it has become evident that an uprising does not necessarily lead to an automatic process of democratization—a topic that will be explored in greater detail throughout this thesis. My interest also stems from how Tunisia moved away from an authoritarian regime to enter an era characterized mostly by political uprisings and uncertainties. This thesis will, accordingly, seek examples from the occurrences in Tunisia and Egypt to shed light on challenges and opportunities that present themselves during their democratization journeys.

The political contexts of both Tunisia and Egypt present valuable case studies for academic research. My academic interest rests in political science, with a particular emphasis on comparative politics in the MENA region. A core understanding of the comparative socio-political analysis of the impact of political Islam in these two countries will be very important for scholars and policymakers. Such research will hopefully bring greater insight into the challenges that political parties face in post-Arab Spring environments.

The analysis of Egypt and Tunisia in this research is significant as political Islam has played a leading role in both countries in post-uprising contexts. In this context, Islamist parties were given the chance to lead and influence political decisions according to their ideologies and objectives, as well as prevailing socio-economic and historical factors at play. However, it would appear that the diverging democratization trajectories of both countries underlined the importance of identification of complex and dynamic interplays of political Islam with the democratization process as necessary for consolidation in the MENA region.

Most research on political Islam and its relationship to democratization has been limited to comprehensive theories of democratic transition. Theories of democratic transition, such as those by John Locke (1974), stress the significance of natural rights, social contracts, and the consent of the governed to establish a democratic form of government¹. Using these premises, one can evaluate how the Islamist parties, like Ennahdha of Tunisia and the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, navigate challenges in governance after periods of upheaval.

¹ Shapiro, I. (2003). "John Locke's Democratic Theory". From the Book "Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration".

A central feature of the literature on the role of political Islam in democratization is the related debate over the question of whether or not Islam and democracy are compatible. Some scholars, such as Muhammad Khatami (2000), argue that the principles of democracy coexist with Islamic beliefs quite well. As one might expect, when a majority of a population espouses Islamic values, the democratic system can be tailored to reflect such ideas².

This perspective contradicts the fact that secularism is a necessary factor for the implementation of democracy and justifies the possibility of an "Islamic democracy," in which religious and democratic norms coexist. Moreover, the theoretical aspect is an important component of the relationship between secularism and religious leadership. In a context where the influence of the '*ulama*'—the Muslim religious scholars—is on the decline while political Islam is on the rise, concepts of legitimacy, authority, and religious interpretation at the level of governance and how these processes influence democratic processes are called into question. This relationship is important to keep in mind when analyzing the challenges faced by Islamist parties, both in Tunisia and Egypt.

Research Gaps and Contributions

While some literature has gone into political Islam's role in Tunisia and Egypt separately, few works have been conducted comparatively to assess the effect it had on democracies in transition. The current study aims to fill the knowledge gap by comparing the impact of political Islam on the democratic trajectory between Tunisia and Egypt. Perceiving opportunities and challenges faced by the democratization processes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, it tends to provide insights into the research community and policymakers. The comparative analysis of Ennahdha with the Muslim Brotherhood would contribute significantly to how varying leading styles and organizational structure shape Islamist movements in democratic outcomes.

To further explore this research problem and clarify the objectives of this study, the following research question will be addressed:

- ❖ How did political Islam impact transitional democracy in Tunisia and Egypt after the 'Arab Spring'?

² Khatami, M. (2000). "Islam, Dialogue and Civil Society".

More precisely, this study will be built on the hypothesis that Ennahda contributed positively to the process of transitional democracy in Tunisia, while the actions of the Muslim Brotherhood led to the failure of transitional democracy in Egypt. This leads to additional inquiries:

- ❖ How did Ennahda facilitate the success of transitional democracy in Tunisia, and what challenges did it encounter?
- ❖ In what ways did the Muslim Brotherhood contribute to the failure of transitional democracy in Egypt?

Research Design and Tools

To answer these questions, I will resort to desk research to collect the data that will be analyzed, utilizing secondary sources and examining prior research, studies, journal articles, and textbooks to facilitate the interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of the data.

Primary research will not be considered since performing primary research in Tunisia and Egypt would be extremely challenging due to logistical and temporal constraints. Furthermore, in both countries, this may be limited due to political conditions: Egypt has grown into an established authoritarian regime, while Tunisia is experiencing democratic decline. These conditions hinder research, particularly that which is critical of government policy and/or requires interviewing former decision-makers. Political instability, governmental restrictions on researchers, and security concerns inhibiting safe fieldwork complicate access to the respondents.

From a social perspective, the logistical challenges of contacting respondents and scheduling interviews are considerable and risky. From an economic point of view, the limited financial budget restricts the scope and depth, making fouled surveys or interviews difficult to conduct. Thirdly, access to data resources is highly restricted. Desk research thereby becomes instrumental for a number of reasons:

Firstly, it serves as the foundational basis of the research, allowing me to leverage existing data and information. The approach is generally time-saving and resource-saving since I do not have to start collecting from scratch. It is quite advantageous given the financial and temporal constraints connected to the collection of fresh data.

Literature reviews, a key component of desk research, will help in reaching an in-depth understanding of prevailing theories, methodologies, and findings associated with the topic. It will further help in assessing the gaps in the literature, through which I can build my research to address these gaps so that the research is based on previous scholarly theories but not a duplication of the research.

Furthermore, desk research will give an idea about the historical, social, and political context within the study under investigation, which will provide bases necessary for the interpretation of existing data and the drawing of valid conclusions.

Structure of the Thesis:

This thesis will be divided into four chapters. The first chapter, the introduction, will review prior scholarly research on the subject, beginning with an overview of political Islam and an analysis of existing theories and concepts related to political Islam, democratization, and its relation to transitional democracy.

In the second chapter, I will examine the case studies of Tunisia and Egypt, focusing on Ennahdha's ideology in Tunisia, its rise to power, and the effects of its governance, successes, and challenges on transitional democracy in Tunisia, with a similar analysis for Egypt. The many effects of political Islam in both countries will be analyzed comprehensively.

The third chapter will focus on findings and conclusions by providing an analysis and evaluation of the various case studies and results presented. It aims to give a detailed analysis and comparison of different factors that influenced democratic transition in both countries and the role of leadership within both parties. This study will consequently support the ulterior evaluation initiated regarding the democratic transition in terms of its success or

failure thereof. This will be based on various factors and norms taken from the important scholars cited in the literature review in addition to the case studies discussed in Chapter 2.

The concluding chapter will highlight the significance of this study for policy and future research, offering policy recommendations within democratic frameworks and suggesting new directions for subsequent research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

1. Overview of Political Islam

The term political Islam originated in the late 20th century to describe Islamic movements that encompass Islamic principles into politics and society. Scholars of Muslim societies more often use the terms Islamism, or political Islam, to refer to modern movements that aim to reinstate the foundational texts of Islam—primarily the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna (Hadith)*—into modern social and political contexts. Those movements seek to re-establish what they extract from the sacred texts as divine expressions and prescriptions against what Islamists see as a decline in moral norms resulting from Western cultural hegemony and corrupt Muslim leadership³.

Islamists engage in comprehensive critiques of individuals, institutions, and practices that do not align with their standards of divinely mandated political engagement. According to Max Weber's terminology (1964), Islamism consists of the belief in salvation through active participation in worldly affairs, often against existing secular institutions⁴.

In understanding political Islam, it is necessary to probe into its constitution, expansion, as well as its ideological patterns. The origin of political Islam can be traced to Egypt in the 1920s with the institution of organizations such as *Jama'iyyat al-Shubban al-Muslimin* and the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*). These movements came into existence as a reaction to the so-called threat against Islamic identity for the protection of the presence of Islam in society as an intrinsic part of the cultural heritage of the country, increasingly challenged by modernist Western movements and values⁵.

In addition, the rise of political Islam was more than a response to foreign cultural influences. It was also due to the decline of the '*ulama*', the scholars who are dedicated to interpreting and studying Islam and developing its doctrine. *Ulama* were seen as the

³ Eubem, R. and Zman, M. (2009). "Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden".

⁴ Weber, M. (1964). "The theory of social and economic organization."

⁵ M Nafi, B. (2017). "The Islamists: A Contextual History of Political Islam."

custodians of Islamic values, and their decline provided an opening that political Islam could reinforce⁶.

Political Islam developed parallel to the peak of Western imperialism and was very instrumental in leading resistance movements for independence in many regions. For example, in Egypt it was against the British occupation, while in Lebanon an organization like Hezbollah started to emerge, an organization that can be described as a political and militant organization that backed the Islamic way of governance and rematched against Western interference⁷.

It is possible to trace political Islam back to the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood and its leader, Hasan al-Banna. Founded in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood aimed at the establishment of a state governed by *Sharia*. By the 1940s, it would grow significantly and attract all sectors of Egyptian society into its fold, becoming a powerful political force. This growth alarmed the then secular nationalist government, leading to the imprisonment of several of the members of the Brotherhood⁸.

The primary goal of the Brotherhood was to build an Islamic state in Egypt but, at the same time, promote the re-awakening of Islam and the unity of Arabs. Al-Banna would preach and teach these ideas and built Islamic schools and mosques to preach his message. The aim was to instill Islamic values in society, thereby paving the way for a Sharia-governed state⁹.

For Hasan al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood, the ideologization of Islam means explaining it as a comprehensive system of ideas, an ultimate solution applicable to every aspect of state and society, and to human existence. This perspective positions Islam as a necessary foundation for governance, extending its influence into personal lives. The ideology of Al-Banna has found a resounding echo in contemporary Islamic thought¹⁰.

⁶ Eubem, R. and Zman, M. (2009). "Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden".

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Hefner, R. (2011). "Democratization in an Age of Religious Revitalization".

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Eubem, R. and Zman, M. (2009). "Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden".

Scholars such as Euben and Zaman (2009) note that most of the arguments made by the Islamic scholar and doctrines have their main arguments from his framework. Indeed, Al-Banna's arguments shaped the socio-economic models expressed by prominent figures like Khomeini, Mawdudi, and Qutb, whose main theories in their interpretations concerning Islamic government and moral economy emanate from him. Such an ideological legacy underlines the enduring relevance of al-Banna's vision within the broader discourse of political Islam¹¹.

While it is impossible to confine Islam within a restriction of one definition or doctrine, placing varied ideologies within the larger context of political Islam becomes an imperative as there are different methods of interpretation and application of Islamic principles to the modern world in different ways. The approaches have broadly been classified as under¹²:

1. Islamists: Generally modern, Western-educated individuals who attempt to impose *Sharia* through political means. The Islamis work towards the capture of the state and its institutions so as to promote their version of Islamic law.
2. *Ulama*: The *ulama* are the traditional Islamic scholarly class, and they conceive of themselves as Islam's official and legitimate interpreters. They do not propose that the *ulama* should pursue any role other than that within the religious domain, standing in respectful distance from ruling political elites. This completely opposes their position from that of the Islamists. While the Islamists have little good to say about the *ulama*, most of them make their appeal and bolster their authority by adopting positions that are roughly similar to those of the *ulama*.
3. Salafists: Salafists aim to purify Islam literally by interpreting the texts of the *Quran*, disregarding its historical and contextual subtleties. While the focus is not like that of the Islamists, it would apply the *Sharia* in politics, while on the other hand, Salafists apply in politics the literal meaning of Islamic precepts.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² فالج الخوالدة.(2018). "الإسلام السياسي: المفهوم والأبعاد".

4. Sufis: Sufism is more an inner aspect of Islam that instills a spiritual dimension in a person. It focuses on personal devotion and mystic experiences rather than political involvement. This normally sets them in conflict with the Islamists and Salafists, who perceive their approach as not attentive enough to the political side of Islamic legislation.
5. Modernists: Modernists believe in the reevaluation of Islam in the light of modern challenges and the ability of society. The modernists are against strict adherence to traditional interpretations by the ulama because such rigidity prevents contemplation of the *Quran* and its application to present situations. So, they say it is not Islam that holds them back but unyielding interpretations. For these views, modernists are frequently maligned by Islamists as traitors to real Islamic values, having sold out to Western values.

Political Islam today characterizes the Islamic political movements and another movement by only their goal to institute the values and laws of Islam in society and governance. This very idea has brought much debate as some countries have disapproved of the combination of Islam and politics and thus have completely integrated *Sharia* in governance, as in the countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia. In contrast, other countries have seen huge political involvement by the Islamic groups that follow political Islam¹³.

Rached Ghannouchi (2013) believes an interrelationship between religion and state has existed since the beginning of Islam. He refers to the role of the Prophet Muhammad himself as *imam* and as a political and military leader. Muhammad also developed the *Sahifa*, or a constitution, which detailed agreements among the immigrants, his followers, and other tribes—all considered part of the *umma*. This historical precedent underlines the lack of separation between religion and state that exists in Islamic tradition¹⁴.

Political Islam encompasses all ideologies and orientations, from the far right to the far left, reflecting the diversity found on the political landscapes of Arab-Muslim countries. It

¹³ شوقي زكي جرجس، ع. (n.y). "العلاقة بين الدين والسياسة في إفريقيا".

¹⁴ Ghannouchi, R. (2013). "The State and Religion in the Fundamentals of Islam and Contemporary Interpretation".

encapsulates all kinds of ideologies and orientations that show how varied the political contexts of the Arab-Muslim countries are. This is manifested in a number of movements, such as Ennahdha in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood or the Islamic Front Party in Jordan, in which more moderate versions of political Islam are assumed. In general, these movements treat Islam as having provided comprehensive solutions to problems affecting society, including its cultural, legal, and economic dimensions¹⁵.

The diversification of Islamic political movements finds its origins in the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hasan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928, as well as his key ideological influence. The movements, with the earlier mention, can be labeled into categories such as ¹⁶:

1. Islamic Political Movements: These are movements formed in the "brotherhood" tradition. They are peaceful and function within an established political and social system to bring about change through pragmatic and diplomatic means, as opposed to revolutionary: for example, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahdha in Tunisia.
2. Islamic Salafi Movements: Traditionally concerned with education and religious purity, these movements surged in their political stance as part of the developments within the MENA region, although usually they do not directly politically confront any other groups.
3. Jihadi revolutionary movements: Those are *Salafi-interpreted* movements that advance revolutionary change, even in a more militant way.
4. Islamic Liberal Movements: These movements seek to address the issues of religion and society through liberal and often Western-influenced solutions; hence, they support democracy, separation of religion and state, promotion of women's rights, and freedom of thought—all in response to the failures of Islamic governance.

¹⁵ عبدالله الصمدي (n.y) "الإسلام السياسي في الشرق الأوسط وجنوب شرق اسيا".

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Another, rather more neutral, classification has been suggested, which focuses on the ideological foundations provided for such movements¹⁷:

1. Religiously-based Movements: These movements depend on some sort of interpretation of the Islamic doctrine and belief, hence their preoccupation with the application of Islamic rules interpreted by them. These are mainly insular, resistant to outside influences, and possibly violent in pushing their aims of establishing an Islamic *caliphate*.

2. Political Movements: These movements take inspiration from their Islamic cultural and historic heritage. They interpret issues and difficulties of the modern world through their religiously prefabricated context. Through trying to adapt and apply Islamic theories and principles to political and social contexts in order to give meaning to political action by justifying it on religious grounds.

In the study of political Islam, researchers have debated its validity and impact. According to the International Crisis Group on the Middle East, the term itself should be disregarded because it tends to create a division from the whole entity of Islam, suggesting it is an American construct. On the other hand, some scholars consider Islamic movements not just a necessary force for the development of societies and politics but also a means through which a governing system—elastic toward ambiguity in modern times—is derived from an Islamic core¹⁸.

While others, such as Mustapha Jazar and Abd al-Ati Mohamed Ahmed, say political Islam is not a new phenomenon, but rather its roots are related to the first century of the Islamic calendar, the *Hijri* calendar. According to this approach, one identifies the succession issue, which came out after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, leading to the *Shia* and *Sunni* sects. In due course, the succession struggle gradually developed into systems of different "*madhahib*", or schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Thus, these different schools emerged through a mix of rulers and people, alongside issues of fair distribution of wealth. The growth of these differences promoted the emergence of greater conflict and violence based on the different interpretations of the *Quran* and other holy scriptures in addition to

¹⁷ Anser, L. (2015). "Democracy and Political Islam".

¹⁸ Khoulada, S. "Political Islam: The concept and dimensions".

political interests. It has been a common phenomenon throughout the ages as to how religious matters have been used to support any particular group's claim to political authority and legitimacy¹⁹.

However, the meaning of political Islam has differed among different researchers and has indeed always been a topic of argument. To give a complete definition, Talja B. (2018) discusses political Islam as movements related to the application and adaptability of Islam to human life. These movements are to apply Islamic values to societal and political spheres to provide a human being with a balanced society and life. They also believe that Islam is not just a religion but a political, social, and cultural institution. In essence, political Islam references movements that are religiously motivated and seek to apply the governance principles of Islamic '*sharia*'²⁰.

2. Democratic Transitions and Political Islam: Theoretical Perspectives

After providing a comprehensive definition of political Islam, it is important to proceed with the understanding of democracy and how it is related to political Islam. The origin of democracy can be attributed to many theorists. The concept of democracy can be traced back to various theorists. Among diverse definitions, it is the concept of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) that is the most relevant in this specific study, for instance, emphasizing the general will and asserting that the people's collective will is the foundation of any democracy and political order²¹.

However, Ian Shapiro (2003) critiques Rousseau's theory of being idealistic and inherently unattainable. Shapiro instead offers the theory of democratic legitimacy proposed by John Locke that has formed a basis for contemporary principles of democracy. As Hashemi Nader (2009) suggests, it is impossible to understand the relation between secularism and democracy without understanding Locke's (1689) ideas, which in turn can be implemented to study the case of Islam and democracy²².

¹⁹ Layachi, A. (2015). "Democracy and Political Islam".

²⁰ Talja, B. (2018). "Political Islam and Authority: Theoretical value and ideological background".

²¹ Shapiro, I. (2003). "John Locke's Democratic Theory". From the Book "Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration".

²² *Ibid.*

John Locke's (1689) political philosophy, while not an explicit endorsement of democracy, laid essential groundwork for its development. His concepts of natural rights, the social contract, and the right to revolution against tyrannical rule were profoundly influential in shaping modern democratic thought²³.

Locke (1689) argued for a separation between church and state and freedom of religious conscience, undermining the authoritarian conception of legitimate political authority based on the divine right of kings. He advanced a new interpretation of Christianity that emphasized toleration, religious liberty, and the moral equality of Protestant churches and believers²⁴. This reinterpretation served as a critical precondition for his political theory of state-society relations.

Against the claims of the divine right of kings, such as those advanced by Filmer in his work, Locke (1689), on his part, presents in the *Two Treatises of Government* that in the state of nature men are naturally equal and free and that there is no moral foundation for political authority apart from voluntary "consent" given by the governed. The political philosophy of Locke, although divinely providential in origin, emphasized that because men are by nature free and equal, the majority should prevail, with limits to protect individual natural rights. This set the framework for representative democracy with constitutional limits²⁵.

Enhancing the idea that political order and democracy can be promoted by religious toleration, Hashemi (2009) draws a parallel between the time when John Locke developed his ideas in 17th-century England and the period of reform within Iran during the late 1990s. In both contexts, illiberal and undemocratic values and doctrine have dominated, but neither has a democratic tradition firmly established²⁶.

²³ Dunn, J. (1969). "The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the *Two treatises of Government*".

²⁴ Dunn, J. (1969). "The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the *Two treatises of Government*".

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Hashemi, N. (2009). "Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies".

In this light, Hashemi (2009) discusses the arguments of the Iranian reformist leader Muhammad Khatami, who attempted to reinterpret the teachings of Islam in correspondence with democratic values and institutions. It is an attempt at reconciling fundamental democratic principles with the religious and cultural context of Iran, which Khatami's vision of "Islamic democracy" represents²⁷.

In fact, the most recurring theme in the literature on Islamic political thought is the compatibility of democracy with Islam as viewed by Khatami (2000). As democracy and secularism are not necessarily tied together, according to him. Democracy is only conducted through the practice of adhering to the popular will. If the majority in a Muslim society hold Islamic values, then applying democratic principles will result in an Islamic regime. Khatami (2000) embraces political pluralism, party competition, and parliamentary debates within an Islamic framework, believing that the majority will decide to live according to Islamic principles through free elections²⁸.

In making the case for the compatibility of Islam and democracy, Khatami (2000) sees no contradiction between Islam and core democratic principles such as popular sovereignty, political equality, representative government, and majority rule. He argues that while Islam requires following divine law, this is not incompatible with democracy so long as the majority in a Muslim society hold Islamic beliefs. A further corroboration of this view comes from the concept enunciated in the *Quran* called '*shura*' or consultation, which does take on, at least in one understanding, the elements of representative democracy²⁹.

However, Khatami (2000) rejects this interpretation of Islam brought about by the present regime of Iran as inimical to true democracy and the cause of deficiency and defeat for Islam and Iran³⁰. He believes that institutions such as the Assembly of Experts and Guardian Council have overstepped the intended role of overseeing the Supreme Leader and are now making decisions for the people³¹.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Milani, M. (2001). "Iran's Reform Movement and Khatami's Domestic Political Agenda."

²⁹ Esposito, J & Vol, J. (1996). "Islam and Democracy".

³⁰ Khatami, M. (2000). "Islam, Dialogue and Civil Society".

³¹ Khatami, M. (1998). "Islam, Liberty and Development".

In response, Khatami (2000) advocates for a form of "developmental democracy" that links democratic practice with economic development³². He urges "restoring social capital" and "settling differences" between the government and people in order to "save the country from threats and crises," founded on the view that Islam and democracy are compatible and that democratic reforms would cure what has been woefully lacking in the contemporary Iranian system³³.

Within this framework, Islamic political theorists like Muhammad Khatami (2000) and Rached Ghannouchi (1993) define democracy based on basic principles-majority rule, political equality, popular sovereignty, representative government. Rached Ghannouchi (1993) contends that there is no inherent conflict between Islam and democracy because the democratic principles are identical³⁴.

The argument made by Ghannouchi (1993) that democracy as a concept is only tangentially related to the condemned practices and values is what Hefner (2005) refers to as the conceptually innovative move.³⁵ He argues that democracy is no more than a mechanism for making political decisions and carries no further implication for the content of those decisions. This would enable Ghannouchi to foster the idea of political pluralism, party competition, and parliamentary debates within an Islamic framework, provided there is a national consensus on the regime's fundamental Islamic character³⁶.

When comparing the perspectives of Khatami (2000) and Ghannouchi (1993), one can see that an effort was made to address some of the basic issues that Islamic thought needs to address in order to reach a satisfactory agreement with democracy. Both scholars contend that, provided the majority of people maintains Islamic beliefs, democratic ideals can coexist with an Islamic form of governance³⁷.

³² Hashemi, N. (2009) "Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies".

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Ghannouchi, R. (1993). "Public Liberties in the Islamic State".

³⁵ Hefner, R. W.. (2005). "Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization". Princeton University Press.

³⁶ Bahlul, R. (2005). "Islamic Perspectives on Constitutionalism".

³⁷ Hashemi, N. (2009). Islam, secularism, and liberal democracy : Toward a democratic theory for muslim societies.

On the other hand, the literature recognizes the major obstacles to reconcile religion and democracy, including where popular sovereignty fits vis-à-vis "religious guardians," free and independent thinking within a conservative religious framework. While the ideas of Khatami and Ghannouchi have become quite influential, they remain very much subject to further debate and analysis in the domain of Islamic political thought.

3. Secularism and Democracy

In this regard, in order to deeply comprehend how political Islam could influence the transitional democracies, it is necessary to discuss how the challenging concept of interrelationship between secularism and democracy could be seen. This correlation, as emphasized by many scholars, is particularly emphasized by Hashemi (2009). From a political perspective, secularism refers to the separation between religion and state. Charles Taylor (1998) categorizes secularism into three distinct aspects³⁸.

This first dimension of secularism is the independence of the public sphere from religious interference, which consequently means religion should have no place in public life. It also connotes the privatization of religion in people's lives and a separation of religious practice from other aspects of life. The latter dimension of secularism requires the expulsion of religious institutions from state institutions and from the public and civic spheres. Third is the understanding of the inherent evils of religion itself, which, therefore, should not play any role in the lives of human beings³⁹.

The concept of secularism and liberal democracy is predominantly forwarded by Western democratic states, which argue that it represents best practice in democracy. This argument is based on an underlying view that religion and democracy are two concepts with fundamentally opposite characteristics: one being dogmatic, with pretensions of absolute truth and, therefore, not discussed; the other emphasizing egalitarian principles, the right to choose, and non-discrimination. Democracy manifests itself through free and fair elections, which is in utter contradiction to what religion throughout history stood for. Christianity, for

³⁸ Taylor, Charles. (1998). "Modes of Secularism."

³⁹ *Ibid.*

instance, had the potential for huge influence on political and social life through the institution of the church, similar to the very notion of a *caliphate* in Islam⁴⁰.

In discussing the role of religion for the promotion or deficit of democracy, scholars present an opposing view to the notion that secularism is mandatory for fostering liberal democracy, contending that religion can play a great role in the promotion of equality among believers and indeed act as a catalyzing force for democracy. Alexis de Tocqueville (1840) observed that in the early part of 1831, Christianity was closely related to the concept of democracy in the United States, as if the preponderance of US citizens believed the two to be inseparable. He noted that Christianity promotes equality and freedom, emphasizing that, if properly understood, religion can be a fundamental and beneficial element in a democratic society. According to Tocqueville (1840), Christianity is concerned with the relation between men and God and has no concern with people's civil and public life⁴¹.

Yet Tocqueville (1840) also pointed out that not all religions provide the practice of democracy. He argued that Islam, for example, contributes to democratic deficiencies. He said that the *Quran* rules, dogma, and legislation have already pre-ordained behavior for everybody, including civil behavior, so liberty of action is reduced and personal willingness is neglected. This perspective suggests that while some religions, like Christianity in the context of the United States, can support democratic principles, others, like the nature of Islam as observed by Tocqueville (1840), might develop rigid boundaries that prevent democracy overall from taking hold⁴².

While Rorty (2009) contrasts Tocqueville (1840) in arguing that society is better off without religion, he nonetheless postulates that societies will eventually outgrow it. Rorty (2009) argues that the involvement of religion in the political sphere and in institutions can discriminate against those who are not religious or have other beliefs than the enshrined ones. He believes that religion should be privatized, and its presence in the public sphere can threaten democracy itself⁴³.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Tocqueville, A. (1888). "Democracy in America."

⁴² Hashemi, N. (2009). "Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies".

⁴³ Rorty, R. (2009). "Philosophy and Social Hope".

On the other hand, Huntington (1996) believes that the separation of the state and religion is necessary. He believes that the main factor in the influence of the Western culture is this separation, and the Western civilization has been molded positively by it. Huntington (1996) believes that the emphasis of Islam on theocracy and its denial of Western values make it impossible for the two to complement each other in democratic principles⁴⁴.

To fully grasp the concept of democracy and the conditions necessary for its validity, Robert A. Dahl (1971) has pointed out eight essential conditions⁴⁵: The freedom to form and join organizations, freedom of expression, the right to vote, eligibility for public office, the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, alternative sources of information, free and fair elections and institutions making governments dependent on votes and other expressions of preference

While these conditions somehow provide a foundational definition of democracy, Stepan and Linz (2013) argue that they are inadequate. According to them, a constitution that provides ways of maintaining and applying democratic values, minority rights, and fundamental liberties; a legal-bound government accountable to institutions like constitutional courts; is also essential for the consolidation of democracy. An intensive civil society was also necessary for the democracy's continuity, effectiveness, and consolidation⁴⁶.

In that respect, and in relation to religious entities and individual actors as participants in the political realm, Stepan (2000) provides the concept of "twin tolerations." This theory outlines the minimum limits and rules regarding the freedom of action for political institutions in their interactions with religious authorities and groups, as well as the reciprocal relationship of these religious entities with political institutions. Stepan (2000) acknowledges that even within the confines of liberal democracies, politically identified religious groups are active in the political arena⁴⁷.

Stepan (2000) extends that while some scholars consider core attributes of Islam, such as the lack of separation between religion and state and including fixed laws in the *Quran*, to

⁴⁴ Huntington, S. (1996). "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order".

⁴⁵ Dahl, R. (1971). "Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition".

⁴⁶ Stepan, A. & Linz, J. (2013). "Democratization Theory and the Arab Spring".

⁴⁷ Stepan, A. (2000). "Religion, Democracy, and the "Twin Tolerations".

be incompatible with democratic principles and people's choice, one needs to look into this issue more delicately. In the opposite direction from Huntington's (1996) belief, who regarded democracy as nearly impossible in the Islamic countries due to cultural clashes, Stepan emphasizes the multivocal nature of religion. He points out that while some Islamic fundamentalists undeniably foster undemocratic values, there are those Islamic thinkers who insist that Islam is compatible with democracy and individual choice. For example, the *Quran* says, "there is no compulsion in religion," which reveals a tolerant perspective in Islam⁴⁸.

To support his argument, Stepan (2000) would indicate that Islam, per se, is not undemocratic in nature because of the diversities in Islamic expressions. He would further point out that a majority of Muslims actually live in democracies, semi-democracies, or near democracies such as Bangladesh, Turkey, and Indonesia. Stepan stresses the importance of considering the role of political institutions, rather than Islam itself, as significant obstacles to democracy in Muslim-majority countries. Among other factors, international geopolitics, ethnic conflicts, and economic challenges have been very instrumental in contributing to the democratic deficit in such countries⁴⁹.

Indonesia, for example, is an outstanding anomaly in debate and discourse on the compatibility of Islam and democracy. It stands in marked contrast to the prevailing scholarly assertion that Islam and democracy are inherently incompatible. As the country with the largest Muslim population, numbering approximately 230 million, it is also known as the third-biggest democracy in the world and obtains the highest ranking in democratic governance in Southeast Asia⁵⁰.

Following the collapse of the authoritarian regime in 1998, Indonesia embarked on a democratization process that saw the introduction of regular elections. Despite the strong predominance of Islam and Islamic civil society, so far the country has maintained a democratic framework. According to scholars, such an outcome was assured by the specific historical and cultural context of Indonesia, which shaped a kind of moderate Islam. Evidence from research indicates that Indonesian Muslims have always opposed the application of *Sharia* and instead supported the Pancasila ideology. Being one of the state's

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Buehler, M. (2009). "Islam and Democracy in Indonesia".

philosophical-foundational pillars, it is a compromise between the ideals of both the nationalist and Islamist parties, building around the values of humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice⁵¹.

The fragmentation of Islamic civil society has further contributed to the decentralization of Islamic practices and religious leadership. Major Islamic organizations, like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, have contributed greatly to pushing forward the modification of a more tolerant, more pluralistic understanding of Islam in Indonesia. These organizations have played critical roles in maintaining the democratic ethos within the country by promoting a kind of Islam that coincides with democratic values and principles⁵².

When discussing democratization in countries dominated by political Islam, Turkey also stands out as a significant example. As Murat Somer (2016) pointed out, democratization involves not only continuous social and political institutional changes but active support for democracy and human rights by religious actors. Consequently, the concrete measures and policies that those actors have taken should be determined for the means to increase state accountability with a view to helping human rights and civic freedoms legally and institutionally⁵³.

Murat Somer (2016) highlights that the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has governed Turkey since its democratic election in 2002, contributed to the democratization process, particularly between 2008 and 2010. During this period, AKP cooperating with secular-liberal civil society, media, and academia restricted military influence and promoted a reform that would increase democratic participation, freedom of speech, and civilian control over the military. Additionally, the fulfillment of some human rights conventions and the party's efforts on Europeanization and democratization allowed Turkey to join the discussion and negotiation process with the EU, since it was decided by the EU that Turkey sufficiently met the political criteria set out in Copenhagen⁵⁴.

⁵¹ Sugito, N. Aulia, R. Rukmana, L. (2020). "Pancasila as the Establishing Ideology of Nationalism Indonesian Young Generations".

⁵² Buehler, M. (2009). "Islam and Democracy in Indonesia".

⁵³ Somer, M. (2016). "Conquering versus democratizing the state: political Islamists and fourth wave democratization in Turkey and Tunisia".

⁵⁴ Dagi, I. (2008). "Islamist Parties and Democracy: Turkey's AKP in Power".

Despite these initial reforms, democratic decline in Turkey was traced through erosion of civil society, electoral manipulation, heavy-handed policies, and mass repression of opposition. Somer argues that partial democratization success, as in countries like Turkey, may be achieved by historical predispositions of religious entities for compromise rather than sticking to a strict Islamist agenda against secular socio-political institutions. This flexibility, whereby the objective of Islamization is not considered paramount, continues up until now to make the political Islamic parties, such as AKP, more willing to reform and compromise with the secular elite⁵⁵.

4. Theories of democratization

When discussing various democratization theories, it is essential to reference the "third wave" of democratization. The third wave followed the first that happened in the 19th century in Southern Europe, the second one after World War II, and it finally started with the Portuguese Revolution in the 1970s, further on sweeping Latin America and Asia. Further economic development under the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, and with some promotion from the United States, led the European Community to make great contributions to the consolidation of democracy with the inclusion of new members⁵⁶.

Modernization theory is also worth mentioning in this context, stating that some endogenous factors such as economic development and economic equality, consequently creating various social classes, are essential to the possibility of democratization. According to the critical variable theories, modernization originates from social changes such as industrialization or rationalization and is expressed as economic growth or technological advance. Dichotomous theories argue that modernization is a process whereby traditional societies acquire modern attributes, transitioning from a closed to an industrialized economy and from a closed to an open social structure, providing a comprehensive framework for analyzing social change.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Somer, M. (2016). "Conquering versus democratizing the state: political Islamists and fourth wave democratization in Turkey and Tunisia".

⁵⁶ Huntington, S. (1991). "Democracy's Third Wave".

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

One of the major interpretations of democratization theories is that of democratic transition. According to O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), democratization can be viewed as a process through which an authoritarian regime gives way to a democratic political system—a process, they argue, characterized by the interval between the breaking down of an authoritarian regime and the installation of a new order. They emphasize that liberalization, the easing of repression and expansion of civil liberties within an authoritarian regime, is different from democratization and constitutes a regime transformation towards democracy. They note that democratization often follows the internal breakdown of the authoritarian elite and thus gives way to former negotiations with opposition groups and the rebirth of civil society. The process of democratization is based on the interplay between hardliners and softliners in both regime and opposition, which, in turn, produces the possible depth of democratization.⁵⁸

Morlino (1987), in his discourse on successful transitions, emphasizes that successful transitions rely upon the mutual influences between regime and opposition during the transition process. He asserts that successful transitions are marked by different forms of negotiations and alliance-making between regime and opposition factions, while acknowledging transitions as fluid, uncertain processes that might end up in either liberalization or renewed repression⁵⁹.

Stepan (1971), on the contrary, focuses on the military's role in the liberalization process, arguing that transitions can overlap with the schisms within the military. He highlights that both internal elite conflicts and external opposition, as well as mass mobilizations, are crucial factors. The interaction between these factors shapes the transition process, emphasizing the complexity of interactions between regime and opposition forces⁶⁰.

5- Theories of Democratization and the Arab Spring

Democratization theories, while valuable, often significantly lack a strategic approach in regard to appropriate contexts such as the MENA region and with respect to politico-societal transitions in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Spring protests. In view of this deficiency, Samuel Huntington (1991) provides a relevant theoretical framework with which

⁵⁸ O'Donnell, G & Schmitter, P. (1986). "Transitions from Authoritarian Rules"

⁵⁹ Morlino, L. (1987). "Democratic Establishments: A Dimensional Analysis".

⁶⁰ Stepan, A. (1971). "The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil".

to approach this discussion: "replacement" and "transformation." As Huntington (1991) contends, democratization usually occurs through either or both processes: replacement and transformation⁶¹.

Replacement occurs when an authoritarian regime is toppled due to economic collapse, mass uprisings, or loss of public trust or a military defeat by force. Transformation, in contrast, takes place when the ruling elites, having presumably come to see the inadequacies of the incumbent system, take the lead in efforts to transform it into a more democratic form⁶².

This framework can, therefore, be used in understanding the case of Tunisia and Egypt within the MENA region. The fall of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia in January 2011 is an explicit illustration of replacement. Later on, transformation governed by the Ennahda party encountered severe challenges due to tensions between secular and Islamist camps against democratic consolidation. Yet, in Egypt, the stepping down of President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 was also merely a replacement, and the expected change in the presidency of Mohamed Morsi proved to be very short-lived due to heavy opposition from secularists and the military, thereby ending up with the removal of Morsi and a return to military rule. A series of these different examples brings forth the complex dynamic within the process of democratization in the MENA region and, on the other hand, more strongly illustrates the pivotal role that political Islam has played in shaping both the facilitation and hindrance of those transitions⁶³.

The Arab Spring, which began on December 17, 2010, was sparked by the self-immolation of a Tunisian street vendor. That one act of protest led to a number of uprisings and demonstrations throughout the Arab world, spreading from Tunisia into the further escalation in Libya, Egypt, and Syria. Throughout this research, the term "Arab Spring" will be primarily used to describe the wave of revolutionary demonstrations and protests; varieties of opposition in general that emerged early in 2011 and resulted in the overthrow of rulers in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen-both through violent and non-violent movements. Additionally, they reflected widespread dissatisfaction with

⁶¹ Abushouk, A. (2016). "The Arab Spring: A Fourth Wave of Democratization?"

⁶² Huntington, S. P. (1991). "The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century".

⁶³ Abushouk, A. (2016). "The Arab Spring: A Fourth Wave of Democratization?"

governments in other countries such as Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Sudan, which also experienced similar methods of protesting and governmental responses of violence.

The MENA resistance movements all shared certain characteristics in their strikes, demonstrations, and utilization of social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to organize protests. A common slogan of these protests was "*Al Shaab Yurid*" ("The people want"), symbolizing the collective demands of the protesters⁶⁴.

In December 2010, the self-immolation of Bouazizi in protest of a local official in Tunisia was an act of rebellion that immediately resonated with the rest of the Tunisian population and ignited demonstrations across the country. On January 14, 2011, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the authoritarian president, was overthrown, ending decades of dictatorship in Tunisia. The fall of Ben Ali therefore inspired an active hope across the whole MENA region, as nearly all of its countries were facing similar economic hardship, poverty, and overall repressive regimes. Indeed, on February 11, 2011, millions of protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square pressed the President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, to resign, which is also the second big victory of the protesters⁶⁵.

Events of the Arab Spring have often been compared with the 1989 revolutions known as the Autumn of Nations. A clear comparison in this respect is the snowball effect, where the collapse of communist governments occurred rapidly, leading to the adoption of political pluralism. The outcomes of the Arab Spring were, however, very dissimilar. While countries like Tunisia and Egypt were facing political instability and security concerns, the cases of Libya and Syria developed into conflicts and civil wars. The wave of unrest or revolution hardly touched the Gulf countries⁶⁶.

This divergence in outcomes has led to criticism of the term "Arab Spring" for drawing parallels from the Autumn of Nations. The term has been deemed to be far from predicting the democratic trajectories that many expected the affected countries to follow.

⁶⁴ Mansfield, E. & Snyder, J. (2012). "Democratization and the Arab Spring".

⁶⁵ Plattner, M. (2011). "Comparing the Arab Revolts: The Global Context".

⁶⁶ Abdel Salam, E. (2015). "The Arab Spring: Its Origins, Evolution and Consequences ... Four Years On".

Instead, the Arab Spring produced vastly complex and multifaceted results across the region⁶⁷.

In its comparison to the Autumn of Nations, it is believed that even if dictators are overthrown, democracy is not guaranteed. Drawing from the post-Soviet experience, the euphoria of opposition movements in view of the initial success of ousting dictators does not ensure the establishment of a stable democracy. Examples from history indeed highlight the ability of former autocrats to reorganize and recapture power by capitalizing on public disillusionment that can be witnessed in the rapid resurgence of authoritarianism following initial euphoria for reform in the early 1990s. As Lucan A. Way (2011) holds, long-term structural factors—economic development and strong links fostered with Western institutions—are more important for the success of democratization than immediate political arrangements or transitional pacts. The perspective emphasizes how challenging it is to attain and retain democratic governance and posits that authentic and enduring democratic transition requires long-lasting changes in deep structures.⁶⁸

However, historically speaking, the emergence of promising democracies and protests against dictators does not guarantee the consolidation of democracy. The promise of democracy can indeed slide back into competitive authoritarianism. A new approach toward democratization in MENA often neglects what is supposed to be the necessary conditions for a successful transition to democracy.

Another facet, which is liberalization, has also been viewed as an implicit driver of authoritarianism, a shield that the elites use to give the bare minimum to the people for the sole purpose of avoiding protests and retaining power. Attachment to liberalization often presents the tendency toward more consolidated governments compared to those experienced earlier, for the simple fact that embracing liberal institutions can be an upgrade in authoritarianism.

For example, political actors in Egypt during the Mubarak era were quite pleased to have competitive parliamentary elections rather than no elections at all. Without elections altogether, for instance, the regime would fail to be both legitimate and durable. This is how

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Way, L. (2011). "The Lessons of 1989".

liberalization, instead of creating a path to democracy, may indeed strengthen and stabilize the authoritarian rule by offering the appearance of democratic processes⁶⁹.

According to other scholars, the Arab Spring is considered a continuation of the authoritarianism pattern. The institutional variation in the regimes, such as constitutional designs, electoral systems, and party systems, should be brought into consideration, as they have a significant impact on democratic transitions, considering that these institutional factors determine whether democratization will be successful or not. For example, the constitution design enables or obstructs democratic government, and the quality of electoral systems and party structures determines the nature of political contestation and representation. Such understanding would allow looking at various democratization dynamics across the MENA region⁷⁰.

Other scholars have adopted a more recent framework known as the “historical turn in democratization studies.” This approach suggests that, instead of focusing on the results of a singular event and its variations in modern times, the moments of democratic opening must be thoroughly studied. This would involve an analysis of corporate actors that compete for institutions, such as political parties, the military, and religious institutions, while bringing in socioeconomic conditions and cultural propensities that change more slowly. This perspective underlines the longer-term determination of political behavior and institutions from socioeconomic and cultural factors by showing that, given enough time, these factors do determine outcomes⁷¹.

In addition, the new institutionalist framework by Ahmed and Capoccia (2014) allows one to critically analyze how structural factors interact with agency in terms of democratic transitions. They argue that the change in institutions is not introduced symmetrically or simultaneously in various spheres of society but rather asymmetrically, which contradicts the linear models of democratization. By focusing on the coexistence of democratic and

⁶⁹ Balydes, L. (2010). “Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak’s Egypt”.

⁷⁰ Brynen, R & Moore, P & Salloukh, B & Zahar, M. (2012). “Beyond the Arab Spring: Authoritarianism and Democratisation in the Arab Spring”.

⁷¹ Capoccia, G. & Ziblatt, D. (2011). “The Historical Turn in Democratization Studies: A New Research Agenda for Europe and Beyond”.

anti-democratic elements within emerging regimes, they illuminate the often-contradictory nature of the democratization process⁷².

From an institutionalist perspective that specifically supplies the necessary insight into tasks and opportunities given by political Islam in transitional democracies, analyzing how Islamist movements interact with and shape institutional development allows the researcher to reach an informed view of processes leading either to democratic consolidation or backwardness. Such factors include, for example, the extent to which Islamist parties will be in a position to shape the institutional architecture of the new democratic order and the extent to which these parties are willing to compromise on democratic norms and principles⁷³.

When analyzing the presence of political Islam in Tunisia and Egypt, some scholars advocate for the inclusion-moderation thesis. They argue that in Egypt, the Muslim Brothers did adopt the values of liberalization and democracy and became a flexible political party. This transformation was influenced by the necessity to cooperate with the opposition, particularly during Egypt's authoritarian regime, and the need to demand democratization⁷⁴.

Other scholars, on the other hand, argue, with reference to the AKP example in Turkey, that the Brotherhood practiced electoral politics without internalizing or accepting democratic norms, suggesting that the Brotherhood used the legitimacy of elections as a means of self-legitimization of its single-handedly decided policy and committed itself to institutions only as a means by which to legitimate/present its rule. The critics of the inclusion-moderation thesis, on the other hand, contend that the Muslim Brotherhood, in practice, employed democratic norms and instruments only to establish an Islamic government, which eventually developed into an illiberal democracy, using democracy as a means to an end.⁷⁵

⁷² Ahmed, A. & Capoccia, G. (2014). "The Study of Democratization and the Arab Spring".

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Cambridge University Press. (2023). "Electoral Islamism and Killing the Dream of a Democratic Muslim Brotherhood".

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

6. Overview of Political Islam in Egypt and Tunisia

6.1 *The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after the Arab Spring:*

Although commonly referred to as the oldest and most prominent political Islam movement in the Muslim world, the Muslim Brotherhood goes beyond merely being an advocate of Islam; rather, it defines itself as a political force for national restoration and salvation. It played an important role during the Arab Spring, a series of uprisings driven by complex socio-political factors.

Inspired by events in Tunisia, Egypt saw a popular uprising characterized by demonstrations in Cairo, Alexandria, and Suez among other cities, on January 25, 2011. Egyptians joined forces to demand the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, who had been in power for thirty years. As a result, this movement led to the downfall of Mubarak's regime on February 11, 2011. The uprising, which began with a group of young activists, was notably supported by the White Knights Ultras, a faction of soccer fans. These activist groups had a clear plan for mobilizing masses through social media and other means that would help spread their message further from its initial audience into wider revolutionary outreach⁷⁶.

After much hesitation regarding their participation in the uprising because of fear of persecution and internal conflicts, on February 11th, the Muslim Brotherhood decided to march to the presidential palace. They joined the masses who demanded that dictator Hosni Mubarak resign. Following Mubarak's resignation, military rule was once again established for what was termed a transitional period by the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF). Once again, political institutions came under military control after there was no obvious political leader in place following Mubarak's departure. SCAF initiated some reforms, which drew mixed reactions from different political parties: some welcomed these changes while others opposed and resisted them⁷⁷.

On November 28, 2011, Egypt held its first free parliamentary elections. The Freedom and Justice Party, a political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, won 46.2% of

⁷⁶ Willi, V. (2021). "Revolution, Rise and Fall".

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

seats. For the first time in Egypt's history, representatives of one Islamist party acquired such a high representation in the parliament⁷⁸.

In June 2012, Mohamed Morsi, who was the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, was elected as the first democratically elected president of Egypt, as such since 1952. However, his presidency faced numerous challenges. Morsi declared himself immune to judicial oversight, alongside the Shura Council and Constituent Assembly, arguing that it was necessary because there were still remnants of Mubarak's regime in these institutions. This decree, however, was eventually canceled. Morsi's government drafted a constitution that established Islamic law as the basis of legislation, which made opponents even more hostile towards them. Growing dissatisfaction culminated in mass protests against his administration, leading to his ousting in July 2013 through a coup led by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Subsequently, the Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed⁷⁹.

6.2 *Ennahdha in Tunisia After the Arab Spring*

Ennahdha, which translates to "Renaissance" in English, is the prominent Islamist party in Tunisia that will be taken as an example of political Islam in Tunisia in this research. Despite being subjected to oppression and exile by previous governments since its establishment in 1981, it has always stood for reintroduction of certain elements of the former Muslim society into contemporary times. Its origins can be traced back to *Zeytouna* University, the preeminent Islamic University of Tunisia, where many political personalities emerged. Beginning as an anti-French imperialism movement from 1881 up to 1956, initially⁸⁰.

In 1956, Tunisia gained its independence and Habib Bourguiba was elected the first President of the Tunisian Republic. The modern president Bourguiba took a heavy Western cultural influence and attempted to modernize the country with an ambitious agenda. His policies, however, were controversial as he established strict secular governance, which were considered oppressive by many from conservative Islamic backgrounds. Under Bourguiba's rule, several decrees aimed at preventing Islamic identity from penetrating into various

⁷⁸ عبادي. ج. (2016). "تجربة الإخوان المسلمين في حكم مصر بعد ثورة 25 يناير واثرها على الحياة السياسية في مصر".
⁷⁹ Laub, Z. (2019). "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood".

⁸⁰ قضايا سياسية/ العدد: 56. حزب النهضة ودوره السياسي في تونس بعد العام 2011. (n,y). أ.م. د. بدرية صالح عبد الله

governmental as well as societal institutions effectively disabling the movement, which later came to be known as Ennahdha. This repressive regime made it difficult for the movement to gain traction and be active. Nevertheless, Ennahdha began organizing public lectures and events to disseminate their message, thereby becoming a powerful voice for political Islam⁸¹.

After years of being suppressed, the movement decided to develop into a legitimate and recognized organization. Their goal was to promote Islamic values and identity, and they looked to the general strike by the UGTT in 1978 and the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 as sources of inspiration. These events gave the movement hope that they could become more politically active⁸². Despite the fact that, whenever the authorities resisted them legally as well as through taking executive measures like arresting leaders such as Rached Ghannouchi in 1981, the movement remained steadfast on its quest for legal recognition⁸³.

Following the removal of Bourguiba from power, Ben Ali came into office and implemented a new approach focused on encouraging democracy and good governance. One of the most significant decisions he made was the formulation of a new constitution that would maintain democratic ideals. Moreover, he provided amnesty to around 600 political detainees from the Islamic movement, leading to the founding of the current political party, Ennahdha. This development allowed for legality in operation and political undertakings directed at embedding Islamic principles in our society. Unfortunately, during the 90s, the party had limited activities due to Ben Ali's transformation of rule into authoritarianism. However, they resorted to cultural and educational activities, promoting anti-westernism sentiments and educating citizens on the innovative and inclusive aspects of Islam in modern society⁸⁴.

After years of struggle, the fall of Ben Ali in January 2011 resulted in a general amnesty that allowed political parties and those in exile to return to Tunisia, including Rashed Ghanouch, a leading figure of Ennahdha who had a presumably inclusive model for Islamism that was supposed to be instrumental in constructing democratic political structures in

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ قضايا سياسية/ العدد: 56. حزب النهضة ودوره السياسي في تونس بعد العام 2011. (n,y). أ.م. د. بدرية صالح عبد الله

Tunisia. This amnesty and new political phase allowed the Ennahdha party to regain its population and participate in elections.

Chapter 2: Political Islam and Transitional Democracy

2.1 The Role of Ennahdha in Tunisia's Democratic Transition

2.1.1 Ennahdha's Ideological Flexibility and Adaptation

2.1.1.1 Transformation from Islamist Movement to Political Actor

In the 1960s, Tunisia saw the emergence of Ennahdha as a socio-religious movement with the intent of bringing back Islam in a more vibrant form than was experienced before in Tunisia. In the beginning, it aimed to restore Islamic values in civic life. Much has changed in its course since the movement started to be influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood during the 1970s. It was initially oriented to establishing an Islamic state based on the *Sharia* and the principle of "*tawhid*"—the unity of God with all that implies in social terms. In the 80s, however, internal disputes within the party leadership made a change in direction inevitable. Under the leadership of Rached Ghannouchi, Ennahdha began promoting the establishment of a civil state (*'dawla madaniyya'*). This new position was a compromise that aimed to settle internal disputes and adjust to changing political dynamics⁸⁵.

The party has seen considerable transformations post-1970. In fact, its support for the civil state led to the adoption of the 1956 Personal Status Code and all subsequent changes in the code during Bourguiba's period in the 1980s. At that time, the law was labeled as progressive about the women's rights, which it intended to elevate. However, though Ennahdha publicly adheres to these reforms, it is important to understand that this acceptance does not imply a realignment in attitude to questions of gender equality or modern family roles, which remain practically unchanged. Alternatively, Ennahdha's compliance with these changes in legislation could also be interpreted as a tactical step in tune with liberalization trends of the 1980s for political gains in an emerging socio-political environment⁸⁶.

⁸⁵ Cavatorta, F & Merone, F. (2013). "Moderation through exclusion? The journey of the Tunisian Ennahdha from fundamentalist to conservative party."

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

In terms of the economy, Ennahdha has always been very hesitant on economic issues. The party has taken a position that oscillates between critiques of capitalism and the market economies of western imperialist or socialist countries. Furthermore, while Ennahdha has pursued an anti-capitalistic course since they came to power, at the same time, it has adopted increasingly market-driven ideas due to the fact that this was considered vital for Tunisia's economic growth according to their understanding⁸⁷.

Anticolonialist in its discourse, the party was one of the most vocal backers of the Palestinian cause in the Islamic Maghreb. This has largely shifted since 2011. Since 2011, Ennahdha has taken on a more pragmatic line, cloaking itself with international speech and values in regard to the Palestinian cause. This shift was partly intended to secure more assistance from the international community⁸⁸.

2.1.1.2 Acceptance of the Personal Status Code

Since its founding, the Islamist movement has seen many challenges; above all, it was deemed difficult for Ennahdha to integrate itself into political and institutional structures. The party suffered two major forms of exclusion: state-driven when Bourguiba's dictatorship and subsequently that of Ben Ali took place, Ennahdha was subjected to state violence, the imprisonment of its prominent leaders, and the long exile of many others. Exclusion also came from within society because, while most people often shared Ennahdha's understanding of Islam, people perceived it as apolitical and thus, on the whole, rejected the party's political programs in society⁸⁹.

It is worth mentioning that the leadership of Ennahdha was absent in Tunisia during significant events that happened before the Arab Spring, such as the 2008 Gafsa mining protests and the protests in late 2010 that ensued. The party never publicly stated its stance concerning the violence that accompanied these uprisings⁹⁰.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Durac, V. and Cavatorta, F. 2009. "Strengthening Authoritarian Rule Through Democracy Promotion? Examining the Paradox of the US and EU Security Strategies. The Case of Tunisia".

⁸⁹ Cavatorta, F & Merone, F. (2013). "Moderation through exclusion? The journey of the Tunisian Ennahdha from fundamentalist to conservative party."

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Ennahdha only made its way back into politics when Ben Ali was overthrown. This marked a period of time when Rached Ghannouchi also returned from exile. This legalization took place on March 1st, 2011. Consequently, during the transitional period, this party played a significant role in fostering political reforms and building transitional democracy. It also engaged actively in parliamentary processes and, along with other eleven parties, signed agreements for adopting a civilian state and restoring the 1959 Constitution.

Ennahdha revealed its political program in September 2011, including liberalized aspects and modernization. It was meant to reassure feminists and progressives about the party ideologically, especially when it came to women's rights protection and promotion of political equality in terms of public participation. The manifesto illustrates Islam's modernization while its traditional morals are left intact. Hence, it is useful in highlighting how flexible and adaptive Islam can be to democratic ideals, thereby affirming that inflected Ennahdha's vision is relevant today.

The manifesto underscored valuing freedoms and liberty with women's empowerment being the center of it; it further promoted a parliamentary order aimed at fostering representation through a multiparty system that guarantees freedom of expression. The manifesto also emphasized the establishment of a government that will ensure religious liberty and freedom of thought, allowing people of various faiths to practice their religion freely without fear of being persecuted or discriminated against. This demonstrates that Ennahdha identified with liberal democratic values such as human rights, free elections, and the concept of a market economy⁹¹.

In the period of election campaigns, Ennahdha utilized its roots' connections to increase its recognition and attract voters towards it. The party used its well-known symbols and ballot papers so that voters would easily recognize the party brand, thus facilitating choice at voting booths. Ennahdha also deployed a wide range of posters throughout the country to maximize visibility and outreach aimed at a larger segment of the population⁹².

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

The strategy for the campaign sought to convince media, political analysts, adversaries, as well as the electorate about Ennahdha's faithfulness in maintaining democratic values alongside being innocent. As a result, they sought to make their manifesto credible without being linked with *Sharia* law implementation motive allegations. Therefore, supporting high visibility through door-to-door engagement in addition to street-level interactions was meant by Ennahdha as a way of differentiating from its competitors while reaffirming democratic intentions⁹³.

The dynamics after the Arab Spring created the most propitious moment to put into effect what was the party's vision concerning the State of Tunisia. On the other hand, nativism, especially the fear of exclusion and marginalization that has been described above, heavily influenced the pragmatist approach of this party. This apprehension became a central focus for Ennahdha, shaping its strategy toward gaining societal trust and acquiring political inclusion rather than simply winning elections⁹⁴.

Ennahdha's governance was consequently characterized by constant search for a way not to be excluded. This obsession with inclusiveness—ensuring broad support within different societal and political actors—would henceforth guide the party through the making of policy decisions and political moves during its time in power⁹⁵.

2.1.2 Ennahdha in Government between 2011 and 2014

2.1.2.1 Ennahdha's Strategy of Inclusivity and Compromise

2.1.2.1.1 Coalition Building and the Troika Government

This new political freedom brought about by the Arab Spring allowed many political parties to emerge with an aim at reaching the Constituent Assembly. This marked the first manifestations of a democratic practice in years. As explained earlier, the Ennahdha party secured a substantial 40% of the vote, translating into 89 seats in the Constituent Assembly.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Abdou, A. (N,A). "The Tunisian Ennahdha Party in transition from "Islamic Democracy" to "Democratic Islam".

⁹⁵ Al Zghal. A & Moussa, A. (2014). "Le Mouvement Ennahdha entre Frères Musulmans et Tunisianité".

The CPR and Ettakatol parties followed, with 29 and 20 seats, respectively. Leading the coalition called the Troika government, Ennahdha formed a new government led by Hamadi Jebali, which included Ettakatol and CPR as coalition partners. While Ennahdha assumed control of the most critical ministries, the other parties were given different ministerial roles within the government⁹⁶.

Ennahdha's presence between 2011 and 2014 can be summarized as the following⁹⁷:

Figure 1: Table illustrating Ennahdha's presence in successive governments from 2011 to January 2014, Trends Research and Advisory (2021).

Head of the Government	The duration	The Ennahdha members	The number of Ennahdha deputies in the parliament
Hamadi Jebali (Ennahdha)	24 December 2011 - 13 March 2013	17 out of 42 in total	89
Ali Larayedh (Ennahdha)	13 March 2013 - 29 January 2014	12 out of 38 in Total	

It was then clear that the party was more interested in entrenching itself than instituting changes, as it placed its members in head offices and different sectors, such as education and media. This tactic was consistent with the party's political demands⁹⁸.

The tensions between the coalition government parties were fairly heavy, which also involved a shift in political orientation of the forces that had previously worked with Ennahdha. The members of the majority of its ministries were Ennahdha members; however, it could not retain the defense ministry. Consequently, Ennahdha was accused of monopolizing national institutions, overshadowing other parties, and minimizing their participation in decision-making. Despite its presence in a coalition government, Ennahdha

⁹⁶ Bradley, G (2019). "A critical Analysis of Political Islam in Tunisia: The Ennahdha Movement 2011-2015".

⁹⁷ Belgacem, F. (2021). "حركة النهضة وتجربة الحكم: الحاصلة والمآلات"

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

was accused of dominating over everything such that it's vision surpassed the roles played by the other parties in the coalition, worsening political tensions⁹⁹.

During this period, Ennahdha was closely scrutinized both through its governmental actions and its role in the National Constituent Assembly (NCA). The Ennahdha-led government presented its action plan to the NCA three months after taking office. The action plan focused mainly on some key social and economic issues, especially unemployment levels. It is important to note that between 2011 and 2014, various changes were implemented in different sectors, such as justice, finance, and tax policies, by Ennahdha¹⁰⁰.

Key achievements included strengthening democratic consolidation through a legal framework designed to prevent torture, enhancing media freedom, ensuring judicial independence, and introducing anti-corruption measures. Additionally, Ennahdha advanced transitional justice initiatives. These reforms aimed to strengthen the rule of law and safeguard rights and freedoms, leading to the creation of several key institutions and measures, including¹⁰¹:

In line with Tunisia's obligations under the 2011 Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Tunisia established the National Authority for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Punishments (INPT) in October 2013. This authority was created by the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) under Organic Law No. 2013-43 of October 21, 2013. Its primary mission is to inspect detention and arrest centers, promote a culture against torture, collect data, and assist victims in providing testimony¹⁰².

Additionally, they adopted a new law to establish the Committee for the Supervision of Judicial Justice (IPSJJ), aimed at strengthening the independence of the judiciary. In the

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Schafer, I. (2015). "The Tunisian Transition: Torn Between Democratic Consolidation and Neo-Conservatism in an Insecure Regional Context".

¹⁰¹ European Commission/High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2014): Neighbourhood at the Crossroads: Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2013, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council of Europe.

¹⁰² Instance Nationale pour la Prévention de la Torture et autres peines cruelles, inhumaines ou dégradantes. (2017). "Contexte général":

fight against corruption, the establishment of the High Council for the Fight Corruption was intended to replace the former National Authority for the Fight Against Corruption¹⁰³.

Additionally, further reforms were carried out in fiscal policy, such as the streamlining of public funds control measures and the updating of accounting techniques¹⁰⁴. Lastly, the classification of Ansar Al-Sharia, a radical Islamist group, as a terrorist organization in 2013 was significant in distinguishing between the moderate Ennahdha party and more radical elements within the Islamist movement¹⁰⁵.

These reforms, in particular, were welcomed as very promising by international donors, especially the European Union, in a joint communication in 2014 that recognized further advances in the democratic transition process of Tunisia. While noting a host of challenges, the EU referred to important progress on building inclusive political dialogue among various political forces, which has indeed been crucial in pushing stability and developing democratic governance¹⁰⁶.

Among the key successes that were singled out by the European Union under the rule of the Ennahdha-led government, smooth preparedness for an electoral process was facilitated by setting up an independent electoral authority—crucial to a free and fair electoral process. Tunisia has taken important steps to enhance its judiciary's legal and institutional independence, which is necessary to maintain the rule of law and provide the right to a fair trial. A legal framework directed to the prevention of corruption was implemented, and measures against corruption were strengthened. Transitional justice mechanisms were established to deal with past violations of human rights¹⁰⁷.

There have also been acknowledgements of economic and social progress, with Tunisia entering into mobility partnerships with the EU as well as signing regional cooperation agreements such as the regional convention on preferential rules of origin

¹⁰³ Schafer, I. (2015). "The Tunisian Transition: Torn Between Democratic Consolidation and Neo-Conservatism in an Insecure Regional Context".

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Zelin, A & Sakthivel, V. (2013). "Tunisia Designates Ansar al-Sharia".

¹⁰⁶ European Commission/High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2014): Neighbourhood at the Crossroads: Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2013, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council of Europe

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Pan-Euro-Mediterranean. Such initiatives demonstrate Tunisia's seriousness about deeply integrating into EU markets. When taken together, these two EU recognitions highlight how Tunisia has advanced and made significant progress from its previous state under Ennahdha's leadership, gaining considerable visibility and solidifying its foreign ties.¹⁰⁸

2.1.2.1.2 An Environment that Favored the Participation of Civil Society

On 18 February 2011, the provisional government passed a new law on civil society organizations, which enhanced legal protections and allowed for an enabling environment for them to work within society. These reforms significantly loosened the restrictions on civil society organizations (CSOs) that formerly hindered them from participating freely in public discourse, testifying, and commenting on government policies and legislation without the application of oppressive laws or state interference. They were also enabled to access information, observe state institutions, and come up with proposals and recommendations about improving the performance of the government. The formation process of associations was also relatively easy, but they operated under the close scrutiny of the government¹⁰⁹.

These reforms made the entry of new CSOs possible, creating a climate for citizen participation and democratic processes to be more actively involved in civil society. The changes were closely tied to amendments and changes with regard to laws on slander and libel, press freedom, public order and decency, and the laws relating to associations. A changing economic environment brought rising unemployment and increased irregular migration, both of which stressed the importance of an active civil society. During this process, CSOs used the legacy of past oppression and authoritarianism to lead the way to balancing state power. It was most pronounced in the period of the National Dialogue, a crisis moment in which it had to face significant challenges, a lot of conflicts—mostly between Ennahdha and other political parties—and political impasse¹¹⁰.

The data by the International Federation of Development Agencies published in 2013 pointed out a relatively quick climb in the number of civil society organizations within

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Deane, S. (2013). "Transforming Tunisia: The Role of Civil Society in Tunisia's Transition".

¹¹⁰ Schafer, I. (2015). "The Tunisian Transition: Torn Between Democratic Consolidation and Neo-Conservatism in an Insecure Regional Context".

Tunisia, which rose from 999 in 2010 to 14,966 by early 2013¹¹¹, though it still remained relatively low in comparison to the total population. During this time, a clear distinction appeared in the causes that the organizations supported through their campaigns. Human rights and religion received the most attention during Ben Ali's administration. While Islamist militants focused their activities in religious associations, human rights advocates such as the Ligue of Human Rights and various trade unions advocated for the same causes related to human rights¹¹².

Following the uprising, new causes, including the consolidation of democratic systems, emerged alongside ongoing efforts to address vital concerns like associative work, human rights, liberties, citizenship, and social and regional equality. The active involvement of both men and women set this manifestation of civil society apart. Notably, widespread public disillusionment proved to be short-lived, and for the first time in Tunisian society, a firm and purpose-driven youth started actively participating in civil society activities¹¹³.

After the Arab Spring, Islamic parties have gained more visibility, prompting a number of Islamic parties to take advantage of the opportunity, including well-funded ones. Pro-Islamist organizations had become powerful contestants through their ability to mobilize vast resources for the support of more than 14,000 political parties and to deliver election victories to Islamist groups. However, once in power, these groups' links to larger societal issues—democracy, individual rights—frayed as they looked toward the protection of their political power¹¹⁴.

By contrast, non-Islamist civil society organizations did not hold the same principles: they realized, for example, the danger of Islamist domination and counter-mobilized against it on issues of basic rights and freedoms, such as the drafting of a new constitution. Such activism also brought about important political results, such as a gradual weakening of Islamist influence, which, under respective circumstances, would end in October 2014 among very prevalent economic discontent and social unrest. That further mobilized civil society after the assassination of leading leftist leaders and forced the country to form a technocratic

¹¹¹ Foundation for the Future. (2013), "Study on Civil Society Organizations in Tunisia".

¹¹² Djebali, T. (2015). "La société civile tunisienne à l'épreuve de la révolution".

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

government, showing the central role civil society has continued to play in Tunisia's struggle for democracy and the protection of individual liberties¹¹⁵.

2.1.2.1.3 The Participation of Ennahdha in the Constitution Drafting:

The Constitution of 2014 was a crucial point in the transition to democracy in Tunisia. The new constitution, adopted on January 27, 2014, by the National Constituent Assembly, combined civic and Islamic dimensions in the way no other constitution had ever done before. It was passed by a vote of 200 out of 216 members—a virtually unchallengeable majority of those NCA members. This constitution has been considered revolutionary and was appreciated as the guarantor of basic rights and freedoms, including freedom of belief, human rights, and gender equality. It further introduced innovative legal provisions entrenching the right to a healthy environment. Remarkably, and despite the related fears from secular actors, the constitution managed to avoid *Sharia* law as a source of legislation, thus avoiding becoming an Islamic legal system and keeping a fine balance between civic and religious principles¹¹⁶.

After a series of heated debates and negotiations on the new political system in Tunisia, the 2014 Constitution was adopted. These debates were characterized by confrontations between the Islamist political party Ennahdha and a section of the secular groups in parliament, predominantly over the state's civil nature, Islam's role in the constitution, and political neutrality. Initially, Ennahdha was advocating for the establishment of a *Sharia-based* state. Given the regional developments, such as the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the party adopted a more pragmatic approach.

Ennahdha turned towards a 'democratic Islam' agenda and relented on many fundamental points to be able to also get into line with the guidelines of a civil state. The best demonstration of this was their position on gender equality. Initially, in the early stages of the negotiations and the constitution-drafting process, Ennahdha first held the opinion that women should be complementary to men. However, it was in its search for national and international legitimacy that the party started to advocate for the integration of women into

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Schafer, I. (2015). "The Tunisian Transition: Torn Between Democratic Consolidation and Neo-Conservatism in an Insecure Regional Context".

the political life of the country, even placing women in top leading positions within Ennahdha. However, the party remained conservative on this issue as it stressed more on the family concept and less on individual freedom and gender equality.¹¹⁷

2.1.2.2 The Challenges of Ennahdha's Governance in Tunisia

2.1.2.2.1 Criticism of Governance and Security Issues

Ennahdha's governance was particularly in question between 2011 and 2014. The party was accused of hindering reforms in the justice and security sectors and appointing ministers who lacked the necessary qualifications for their positions¹¹⁸. Most administrative, educational, and cultural institutions have been given to Ennahdha at the local level. The party also dismissed key staff in the social affairs and interiors departments, including allegedly politically biased governors, without any legal justification. The termination resulted in 82 new judges being appointed. The result was that most of the country's policies tilted in favor of Ennahdha, making its neutrality and objectivity questionable¹¹⁹.

A second social grievance is related to Ennahdha's alleged disregard for security-related matters. In 2013, the country was marked by a wave of terrorist attacks against the armed forces and police and the political assassinations of two leading left-wing political leaders—Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi—which unleashed reactions among civil society and other political parties¹²⁰. A general amnesty led to the release of many Jihadis who had been imprisoned under Ben Ali's regime, which further complicated matters with an increase in Jihadi-related violence within the country. This created a security "vacuum." Due to the situation in Libya, not only did Tunisian borders become susceptible to terrorist attacks from foreign Jihadis, but Tunisian Jihadis affiliated with numerous groups, such as Ansar Al Shariaa, were a threat of a high order.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Jamal Hajar, Y. (2017). "Ennahdha's Democratic Islam: Between Pragmatism AND Neo-Political Islam".

¹¹⁸ Schafer, I (2015). "The Tunisian Transition: Torn Between Democratic Consolidation and Neo-Conservatism in an Insecure Regional Context".

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Saadi, Z (2018). "The Path of Political Reforms in Tunisia after The Public Uprising: A study in Internal and External dimensions".

¹²¹ Lounnas. D (2018). "Jihadist Groups in the North Africa and the Sahel: Between Disintegration, Reconfiguration and Resilience".

Because the Ennahdha-led Troika government was a coalition of different political groups, it was extremely difficult to maintain administrative coherence. This arrangement resulted in political divisions, inconsistent policies, and serious governance issues. Furthermore, the political unrest provided the perfect environment for the emergence of jihadist violence, which was an inevitable outcome of the difficult transitional environment. Since the 2011 revolution, jihadist activities have significantly increased, particularly following the overthrow of Ben Ali's regime and the state's imprisonment of about 2,500 members of jihadist organizations. At this time, a large number of jihadists fled, while others were freed as a result of the general amnesty¹²².

The clashes in both Libya and Syria were a major case study of the recruitment of the country's Jihadist fighters, among them the affiliate of Al-Qaeda called Katibat Uqba Ibn Nafi (KUIN). KUIN conducted a series of terrorist events in the country against the security forces at the borders of the mountain, as well as other attacks on civilians and government officials. Another group is Ansar Al-Sharia Tunisia (Supporters of Sharia Law) (AST), an Al-Qaeda affiliate that led an armed vandalizing protest to the US embassy over a movie claiming it insults the Muslim prophet, Mohammed, leading to four deaths and forty-six injuries. The same terrorist group took responsibility for the 2013 assassinations of the two political leaders, Chokri and Mohammed Brahmi¹²³.

Ansar Al Sharia took advantage of the situation to gain popularity among the marginalized communities and among previous prisoners accused of having associations with jihad movements. The socio-economic situation of Tunisia helped their popularity more, as people from marginalized groups, living in disadvantaged neighborhoods with weak socio-economic backgrounds, found refuge in AST, which provided assistance, economic, and social support to these groups, as seen in Kairouan¹²⁴.

Despite the government's designation of Ansar Al-Sharia as a terrorist organization, the group continued to operate clandestinely. The growing influence of jihadist groups in

¹²² Lounnas. D (2018). "Jihadist Groups in the North Africa and the Sahel: Between Disintegration, Reconfiguration and Resilience".

¹²³ Shah. H. Dalton, M (2020). "The Evolution of Tunisia's Military and the Role of Foreign Security Sector Assistance".

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

Tunisia saw thousands of Tunisians being recruited into jihadist movements: around 3,000 to ISIS in Iraq and Syria and 1,500 going to Libya. The group broke away from Al-Qaeda in 2014 and took over large parts of Iraq and Syria, where it declared a caliphate based on Sharia law. ISIS had claimed several terrorist attacks in Tunisia, including an attack on the Bardo Museum in Tunis on March 18, 2015, that killed 21 people; a shooting on a beach resort on June 26, 2015, that claimed 38 lives; and an attack on the military bus in Tunis on November 24, 2015¹²⁵.

With the rise of Salafi Jihadi groups, manifestations of political violence kept increasing. Many local Salafi groups were active at the time, with some belonging to Ennahdha itself, such as The League for the Protection of the Revolution (*Rabitat Himayat Al Thawra*), characterized by prominent hate speech and political violence promoted to instill fear among its opponents and Tunisian syndicates.¹²⁶

The assassination of Chokri Belaid further fueled the political crisis that defined Tunisia in 2012 and 2013. Amid this turmoil, Prime Minister Hammadi Jebali proposed the creation of a "technocrat government," wherein the formation of ministers was supposed to be due to their expertise and not from party affiliations or political connections. He also proposed the creation of a "Conseil des sages," composed for the most part of representatives of Ennahdha and independent experts, including Yadh Ben Achour, an internationally recognized lawyer specializing in public law. But the reformist project of Jebali was opposed by the leader of Ennahdha, Rached Ghannouchi, who did not want to give up the control of his party over the government and the sovereign ministries. In 2013, Jebali was constrained to resign, and the head of government became Ali Larayedh, the previous Minister of Interior¹²⁷.

The similarities between Mohamed Brahmi's and Belaid's assassinations heightened public outrage and political turmoil. Many suspected Islamist militants were behind the assassinations, while others accused the government of covering up the facts. To date, these cases have not yet been resolved. As a result of this, there has been an increase in opposition against Ennahdha-led government, which was seen not to have provided sufficient security

¹²⁵ Elbaum, R. (2018). "What is ISIS, what you need to know about Islamic State in Iraq and Syria".

¹²⁶ Saadi, Z (2018). "The Path of Political Refors in Tunisia after The Public Uprising: A study in Internal and External dimensions"

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

measures for its people, especially when dealing with assassinations¹²⁸. Public reaction to Brahmi's assassination was quick, with 500 protesters gathering in front of the Ministry of Interior, accusing the government of negligence. The police responded brutally, using tear gas to disperse the crowd. Protesters also called for a general strike, showing hostility toward the government and the ruling party¹²⁹.

Ennahdha gave very little information on the assassination but condemned these assassinations as cowardly moves, as Rached Ghannouchi wrote.¹³⁰ Four days later, another terrorist attack resulted in the deaths of 8 soldiers. In these moments, when terrorism became a new concept for Tunisians, the government did not provide reassurance, growing public outrage¹³¹.

All of these factors posed significant challenges to the Ennahdha-led government, which failed to realize that their policies went against the same uprising which got them into power. These challenges further worsened the country's poor economic situation, compounded by the shortcomings of the Troika government.

The government had failed to deal with the since-the Ben Ali regime-structured corruption that had permeated into society and state institutions while the situation kept worsening¹³². This negligence contributed to a 15% unemployment rate, mainly in rural areas. The government's failure to develop effective public policies aimed at economic growth drew widespread criticism. As a result, many people became dissatisfied with the Troika-led government, believing that Ennahdha's interests dominated democratic governance¹³³.

In addition to this, Ennahdha also failed to lead the National Constituent Assembly towards drafting a constitution within the stipulated time. Furthermore, the government's

¹²⁸ Bradley, G (2019). "A Critical Analysis of Political Islam in Tunisia: The Ennahdha Movement 2011-2015".

¹²⁹ Aljazeera. (2013). "Protests after Tunisia politician shot dead".

¹³⁰ Bradley, G (2019). "A Critical Analysis of Political Islam in Tunisia: The Ennahdha Movement 2011-2015".

¹³¹ Sboui, S. (2013). "Tunisie: La Tension Monte d'un Cran Après la Mort de Huit Soldats".

¹³² Saadi, Z (2018). "The Path of Political Reforms in Tunisia after The Public Uprising: A study in Internal and External dimensions".

¹³³ *Ibid.*

failure to come up with a constitution in less than one year fueled feelings of lack of effectiveness and lack of legitimacy, leading to a further loss of confidence from the public¹³⁴.

The deterioration of security, combined with the onset of a political crisis, weakened the rule of Ennahdha significantly. This led to a lack of trust from the public, as some argued that granting Ennahdha power was morally wrong.

2.1.2.2.2 The 2013 Political Crisis, the National Dialogue, and the Resignation of Ennahdha

Opposition parties and citizens increasingly called into question the legitimacy of rule by Ennahdha during the deepening political crisis. Delays in drafting the constitution, together with a series of assassinations and terrorist attacks, prompted calls for the Ennahdha government to resign¹³⁵. Despite these demands, the Troika government refused to cede power to a technocratic government, and a National Dialogue took place in an effort to sort out constitutional, governmental, and electoral questions related to Tunisia's democratic transition.

The situation in Tunisia was fragile, with people fearing a similar outcome to what happened in Egypt or the chaos that resulted from the Arab Uprising in the Middle East. The National Dialogue was an *ad hoc* process, not expected or well-designed, but rather a response to the crisis at hand¹³⁶. Secularists and Islamists attempted to find a solution to the ongoing crisis by sitting down at the same table during the National Dialogue.

To understand the framework of the National Dialogue, it is necessary to understand how it was put into practice. The National Dialogue was facilitated by the General Union of Labor (UGTT), a key syndicate that acted as a mediator between the opposing parties. UGTT, along with other civil society organizations such as the Tunisian Union for Industry, Commerce, and Crafts (UTICA), the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH), and the Bar Association, collectively known as "the Quartet," played a legitimate role in guiding the discussions¹³⁷.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Haugbolle, R. Ghali, A. Yousfi, H. Limam, M. Mollerup, N (2017). "Tunisia's 2013 National Dialogue: Political Crisis Management".

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

The Quartet faced a significant challenge in bridging the gap between Ennahdha and the coalition of leftist parties, including the most popular, Nidaa Tounes. The opposition insisted that it was necessary for the Troika government to resign on the grounds that the latter had lost its legitimacy following its failure to draft the constitution within one year. Ennahdha insisted that it was democratically elected, hence legitimate. As specific concessions refused each side, tension mounted. Eventually, Ennahdha recognized the gravity of the situation by agreeing to the dialogue to avoid escalation resulting from their position refusal at first¹³⁸.

Meanwhile, a "Quartet National Dialogue Initiative" was born into the crisis to introduce a roadmap for emerging from the political impasse: the technocratic government was to be formed, with the creation of ISIE and restriction of voting powers of the National Constituent Assembly¹³⁹.

The above roadmap was filled with challenges and led to tensions within the National Dialogue. Notwithstanding these obstacles and tensions which arose in the National Dialogue, 27 parties finally came to agree to be part of the process. This agreement marked a crucial step in preserving Tunisia's transitional democracy.¹⁴⁰

However, even after the Quartet's agreement, public discontent with the Ennahdha-led government persisted. Demonstrations were organized on the streets; before the dialogue started; people wanted the Troika to step down. Police often reacted to such demonstrations with violence hence fueling more anger among citizens.¹⁴¹ This led to complexity in following the roadmap set by the National Dialogue as Ennahdha did not wish to surrender power until the new constitution was put in place considering that they feared for the future rights of Islamic parties and other parties in opposition.

Finally, on January 26, 2014, the new constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly and marked a turning point for Tunisia. Nine months later, Ennahdha stepped

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

down from government, however, it took some time to establish new electoral systems and institutions. Although the party remained in both the government and parliament, by 2019, Ennahdha had lost significant ground to have won only 19 percent of the vote, which amounts to 52 seats in parliament¹⁴².

2.1.3 Popular Outrage and the Shift Back to Authoritarianism under Kais Saied

Even though Tunisia has made some progress with regard to freedoms and democratization since its 2011 revolution, there has been a significant social crisis characterized by increased unemployment levels within it, mostly among the young people. This category of the population, which played a crucial role in starting the revolution, is now disillusioned as its hopes for development, employment, and equality have largely gone unmet.¹⁴³

Terrorism and the COVID-19 pandemic further worsened the economic situation, increasing unemployment to 17.4%. In this difficult context, many Tunisians expressed dissatisfaction with the post-revolutionary political scene by incriminating major political parties like Ennahdha and Nidaa Tounes. These parties were accused of obstructing legislation processes and avoiding addressing socio-economic as well as political issues. Demonstrations against the ruling parties continued to increase, as did the demands of the people for system changes and economic stability. The resurgence of the slogan "The people want" during the 2021 protests reflected ongoing discontent and calls for genuine reform¹⁴⁴.

Amid calls for change, a sense of nostalgia for the pre-revolutionary era, particularly under Ben Ali's authoritarian rule, resurfaced. According to a YouGov survey, more than half of the population believed that the life they were having had worsened after the Arab Spring causing longing for autocratic administrations that were there before. The 2019 elections following the death of President Beji Caid Essebsi featured a contest between Nabil Karoui, a controversial populist, and Kais Saied, a presumably honest populist who was seen as being

¹⁴² McCarthy, R. (2024). "Between Authoritarian Crack-Down and Internal Crisis, Can Ennahdha Rise Again?"

¹⁴³ Becheur, M. (2011). "The Jasmin Revolution and the Tourism Industry in Tunisia".

¹⁴⁴ Abdselem, H. (2021). "Protests led by a generation who did not experience Ben Ali era repression are breaking the mold of what protests in Tunisia look like".

committed to the rule of law and constitutionalism. Capitalizing on widespread dissatisfaction, Saied advanced his political agenda and won the election.¹⁴⁵.

A significant change in Kais Saied's Tunisia's path towards democracy from how democracy was being played out during the Arab Spring is evident. His ascension to power on the wave of public dissatisfaction signaled a disconnection from earlier models of democracy used in Tunisian politics. Indeed, the Arab Barometer had reported prior to the coup of 2021 that 80% of those surveyed had no trust in the government. This general disillusionment with government furnished the needed impetus for Saied to introduce his political agenda¹⁴⁶.

Saied's presidency was characterized by behaviors that subverted democratic norms. Underlying this behavior was Saied's discontent with Tunisia's economic and social crises, which he blamed on the parliamentary system. Saied embarked on a path to centralize executive power. His dismissal of Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi through Presidential Decree 69 in July 2019 highlighted his assertion of executive authority. Following this, Saied's course of action included appointing his own cabinet members, suspending the parliament, and forcefully suppressing demonstrations through military intervention, all of which concentrated power over legislation in the hands of the presidency and undermined the separation of powers.¹⁴⁷

The suspension of parliament, based on a wrong interpretation of Article 80, is widely regarded as one of the major events in Tunisia that characterised the democratic decline. This misinterpretation was used by Saied to freeze the parliament and consolidate his power. The varied reactions of the public and civic society notwithstanding, the further dissolution of the Supreme Judicial Council in February of 2022 and the institution of a provisional council with Saied in control eroded judicial independence even further. Manipulation or closure of

¹⁴⁵ Camau, M. (2023). "Le phénomène Kais Saied: Puissance du peuple, pouvoir d'un seul".

¹⁴⁶ McCarthy, R. (2024). "Between Authoritarian Crack-Down and Internal Crisis, Can Ennahdha Rise Again?".

¹⁴⁷ Civicus staff. (2022). "La démocratie annulée: La nouvelle constitution de la Tunisie: Un référendum à faible taux de participation confirme le pouvoir absolu du président".

independent institutions further consolidated Saied's authority and suppressed the opposition¹⁴⁸.

Furthermore, the dissolution of the Supreme Judicial Council and the interference with autonomous institutions in Tunisia were typical of Saied's systemic moves to undermine the judiciary. While solidifying his authority, Saied managed to get rid of any opposition and pave the way for more democratic decline¹⁴⁹.

The very extreme measure on July 25, 2022, was the referendum in which the 2014 constitution was to be replaced with a new version increasing the President's powers while limiting parliamentary oversight and reducing human rights protection. Unclear clauses of the amended constitution indicated ongoing weakness in democratic assurances under the Saied regime¹⁵⁰.

2.2 The Role of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt's Democratic Transition

Soon after the fall of Ben Ali's regime in 2011, uprisings started to take place in other countries also to bring down similar dictatorial rulers. It only took the Tunisians 28 days to overthrow Ben Ali, while Egyptians were able to overthrow their president, Hosni Mubarak, after 29 years of ruling in only 18 days. Mubarak had clung to power for over 29 years and had done so with the use of fear. The Egyptian uprising neither personified a charismatic leader nor carried popular resentment at the fact that one family had been in power for too long; rather, it was an expression of will that went beyond different layers of society¹⁵¹.

While the Muslim Brotherhood was only a minor force in the initial anti-Mubarak protests, polls conducted prior to the election indicated that there was widespread doubt among Egyptians about the Brotherhood's support. But by December 2011, support for the Brotherhood, particularly its political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party, had risen to 50%.

¹⁴⁸ Amnesty. (2022). "Declaration Publique - Amnesty International: Tunisie. L'adoption de la nouvelle constitution ne doit pas entretenir l'érosion des droits humains".

¹⁴⁹ Gasteli, N. (2022). "Que signifie l'annonce de la dissolution du Conseil supérieur de la magistrature". Inkyfada.

¹⁵⁰ Civicus staff. (2022). "La démocratie annulée: La nouvelle constitution de la Tunisie: Un référendum à faible taux de participation confirme le pouvoir absolu du président".

¹⁵¹ Al-Anani, K. (2015). "The Rise and Fall of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood".

At that time, more than four out of ten Egyptians expressed reservations and opposition to the Freedom and Justice Party¹⁵².

The Muslim Brotherhood won the election on the basis of strong grassroots and extensive networks of social welfare, a capacity that other parties lacked. Several factors combined for it—high-level organizational ability, experience in electoral processes, and opposition to the Mubarak regime. They were admired for their capacity to suffer for the cause, for what was seen as integrity, and for refusing to strike any deals with a corrupt system. Their numerous social services won over a great number of people. In January 2012, the Brotherhood registered a massive victory in the parliamentary elections, capturing 47% of the seats, that is, 235 seats out of a total of 498 seats. Mohamed Morsi was elected Egypt's first president by democratic means only in June 2012¹⁵³.

As soon as Mohamed Morsi took the lead, he proceeded with the dismissal of many institutional actors, such as military leaders and police, as well as the leadership of the military council. He appointed Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as minister of defense and assigned other key officials to major institutions such as the intelligence, administrative control, and central bank. Morsi also implemented strict control over the local currency, which caused the rate of currency conversions to reach \$18 billion, making it more challenging to influence the currency's value¹⁵⁴.

2.2.1 Ideological Rigidity and Failure to Adapt

2.2.1.1 Commitment to a strict Islamist Ideology

Unlike Tunisia's Ennahda party, the Muslim Brotherhood's downfall and challenges during its brief rule stemmed from a rigid adherence to Islamist ideology and a failure to adapt its ideals to the practicalities of governance. The Brotherhood's ideological stance, deeply rooted in its historical mission to Islamize the state and society, was frequently contradicted by its governance practices, which aligned more with Western secular modernist

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Al-Anani, K. (2015). "The Rise and Fall of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood".

¹⁵⁴ Mootaz, A. (2019). "الأخطاء الفاتلة لموسي في السياسة الخارجية. لماذا فشل الإخوان؟".

paradigms than with traditional Islamic principles. This ideological gap became especially evident after the Brotherhood reached power following the Arab Spring.

Whereas for years the Brotherhood had supported an Islamic government under *Sharia* law, its actual policies in office largely encouraged the neoliberal economic and pro-Western foreign policies of previous regimes. This disconnection between their expressed ideals and their actions alienated their Islamist base, which had expected a genuine move toward Islamic governance¹⁵⁵.

As the Brotherhood adopted policies favoring traditional power structures and engaged with global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, its ideological credibility began to erode. The shift in popular sentiment was such that many no longer perceived the Brotherhood as an Islamic alternative but rather a political body which did not fulfill their expectations about implementing Islamic laws or regulations. This disillusionment highlighted both issues faced by MB regarding how to reconcile their vision with practical governance needs and a fallout with their main supporters due to alleged double standards¹⁵⁶.

This inability to adapt to the complexities of governance was a manifestation of the Brotherhood's ideological deficiencies. Unlike its counterparts elsewhere in the Middle East, such as Ennahdha, which embraced liberal democratic principles in Tunisia, the Brotherhood kept a very rigid ideological framework. This was partly because its leaders were unwilling to reach out to the changing political realities of Egypt and the differentiated needs of the people, hence preventing the organization from generating a focused political identity with which it could attract a larger following¹⁵⁷.

Furthermore, the Brotherhood's ideological deficiencies were evident in its failure to address critical issues such as state-religion relations, social justice, and individual rights. Despite having received immense backing when the party was yet to take over government operations, Muslim Brotherhood could not come up with strong articulations on policy

¹⁵⁵ El-Sherif, A. (2014). "The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Failure".

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

matters with power vested in it. This inability to present coherent responses to important political challenges left a vacuum, swiftly filled with skepticism and growing opposition¹⁵⁸.

2.2.1.2 Failure to Build Inclusive Governance

The Muslim Brotherhood's rigidity extended to its approach to governance. After winning the presidency in 2012, instead of an inclusive governance strategy in 2012, Mohamed Morsi and the Brotherhood aimed at consolidating their own power. This included trying to appoint Morsi loyalists in key positions within government instead of forming a broad coalition with other political groups or reaching out to them. This exclusionary approach intensified alienation within other political actors like military and youth groups who were vital during this revolution of 2011. Due to its inability to establish a wide-ranging inclusive alliance, the Brotherhood lacked the necessary political legitimacy for ruling, which resulted in public unrest and opposition everywhere¹⁵⁹.

On August 13, 2012, President Morsi asserted his executive and legislative authority under Egyptian law, marking a pivotal moment in the country's political landscape. The declaration was made without being questioned by both the army and judiciary, thus giving Morsi permission to form another Constituent Assembly should the existing one fail. Thereafter, while the army continued to possess considerable economic power and oversaw foreign policy as well as issues about defense, the incoming military leadership, predominantly Minister of Defense al-Sisi, became less visible and stayed mostly out of political matters in Egypt¹⁶⁰.

Morsi's first significant appointment was naming Judge Mahmoud Mekki as Vice President on August 12, 2012. While this was technically fulfilling his campaign promise of not appointing someone from the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), Mekki was seen as supportive of the Brotherhood's political goals. Two weeks later, Morsi announced a presidential cabinet of 21 who were at least 15 Islamists or affiliates of Islamist parties. The

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Esposito, J. (2015). "Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring".

largest part of this team consisted of affiliated persons with the Brotherhood, such as FJP figures and Guidance Office people¹⁶¹.

The September 5 appointments of Morsi to the governorship brought even more attention to the regime's apparent focus. Of the ten newly appointed governors, four were Muslim Brotherhood members and four were retired army or police officers, demonstrating Morsi's preference to align himself with the security apparatus rather than bringing about reforms within it¹⁶².

Despite having the legal authority to do so, Morsi missed several opportunities to honor his campaign promise of inclusive governance. He could have appointed more vice presidents, even non-Islamists, without undermining the Muslim Brotherhood's interests. However, Morsi later rejected the promise of all-encompassing rule and instead gave the Brothers and their supporters the most powerful positions within the regime¹⁶³.

Nonetheless, it was during these appointments that it was paradoxically apparent that the Muslim Brotherhood's focus was on attaining political power instead of developing strong ties with state institutions like the police force or army that had so much authority. A clash and competition emerged between these organs and the Brotherhood as a result of this situation, which led to the absence of common objectives and interests. Instead of working out an integrated plan to solve Egypt's economic and social problems, isolation and lack of recognition for the indispensable role played by these institutions made the Brotherhood open to political manipulation. Consequently, the military and other state institutions maintained their hostility towards the Islamists, viewing them as a threat to their own power and economic interests¹⁶⁴.

Furthermore, the Muslim Brotherhood downplayed the significance of reformists and revolutionary factions. These groups disapproved of their attempts to dominate the creation of a new political order and their political influence. Secularists perceived the Brotherhood's aspirations for an Islamic state and society as a threat to their own safety. This resistance

¹⁶¹ Trager, E. (2016). "Arab Fall: How the Muslim Brotherhood Won and Lost Egypt in 891 Days".

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ El-Sherif, A. (2014). "The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Failure".

came both out of unanticipated success for the Brotherhood and due to ideological divides. The secular elite viewed the Brotherhood's dominance as a potential threat to their fundamental freedoms and economic interests, given the Brotherhood's control over the parliament, the presidency, and the constitution-drafting process. The secular elite feared that the Brotherhood's rise would undermine the revolutionary and reformist aspects of the political landscape, potentially leading to a resurgence of old state hegemony¹⁶⁵.

The Muslim Brotherhood was characterized by tactical inconsistencies and the absence of a coherent long-term policy strategy. Such approaches were often not in harmony with their ultimate objectives but were designed to suit various political-specific actors' immediate interests to gain their support. For instance, the Brotherhood allied in March 2011 with the conservative middle class in a bid to have support for the referendum that wished for stability. In the presidential elections of 2012, the Brotherhood replaced its strategy and shaped their appeal in a bid to attract an Islamist electorate. In the second round of the 2012 elections, they sought support from anti-establishment groups to bolster their revolutionary legitimacy. This pattern of shifting alliances reflected a pragmatic approach to electoral success rather than a consistent strategic vision¹⁶⁶.

Controversially, to counter anti-Islamist movements and sentiments, the Muslim Brotherhood controversially joined hands with Salafists, jihadists, as well as other Islamist groups. The middle class was daunted by this partnership as it could possibly result in a conservative Islamist government takeover that would introduce a completely different political culture, endangering societal identity. From both legislative and executive perspectives, the Brotherhood's strategy aimed at appealing to established state institutions, resulting in a disjointed and incoherent approach¹⁶⁷.

2.2.1.3 The struggle to improve the economic situation of the country

From an economic perspective, while political Islam is known to focus on social justice and the need to show solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, MB has often been conceptualized as a movement with roots in the middle class. It has often allied itself

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Al-Anani, K. (2015). "The Rise and Fall of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood".

with a rich leadership and educated middle class, indebted less to any needs of the poor and vulnerable, which made it all the less legitimate as an advocate of social justice. In 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood, through its Freedom and Justice Party, proposed an economic program that promoted privatization, pro-business policies, market liberalization, and increased competition. This program was presented as a strategy to combat government corruption and inefficiency. The economic model was developed by Khairat el-Shater, a prominent businessman with a successful background in the business sector¹⁶⁸.

Yet, these policies failed in overcoming the ingrained issues of Egypt, especially the embedded forms of capitalism. The Muslim Brotherhood promised an Islamic system of economics that could uphold judicial balance or equilibrium between social and economic goals to infuse new life into Egypt's economy by ensuring greater distribution of income. While these reforms seemed to have promised, what finally came out was not as anticipated. Just like the Washington Consensus policies of the 1990s—expressed free-market and liberalization policies to spur economic growth but all too often resulted in enhanced powers, emerging networks of privilege, and increased inequality and injustice—the results from the economic initiatives taken by the Muslim Brotherhood were not different¹⁶⁹.

Nevertheless, Egypt's economy continued to decline even during his term. Across the period since the 2011 revolution and when Morsi assumed office in July of 2012, it was reported that Egyptian foreign exchange reserves fell from \$35 billion down to just below \$14.4 billion dollars. As speculated, an amount of just about \$9 billion was needed to ward off an impending economic crisis¹⁷⁰.

The lack of coherent economic policy also put pressure on Morsi's administration. Before his inauguration, the Muslim Brotherhood had pledged a "hundred-day plan" to deal with pressing issues such as public safety, traffic congestion, bread prices, sanitation, and fuel distribution. In fact, the administration failed to deliver on any of these under the specified

¹⁶⁸ Habibi, N. (2012). "The Economic Agendas and Expected Economic Policies of Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia".

¹⁶⁹ Néron-Bancel, A. (2013). "Symbolic systems, power and politics: Understanding the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as an Islamic socio-political actor".

¹⁷⁰ Trager, E. (2016). "Arab Fall: How the Muslim Brotherhood Won and Lost Egypt in 891 Days".

timeframe. Instead, fuel shortages worsened, leading to extended electricity blackouts and water disruptions¹⁷¹.

In an effort to stabilize the economy of Egypt, Morsi took various diplomatic trips to Saudi Arabia, China, and Europe to appeal for donors and secure loans. These efforts were however futile. Saudi Arabia, mistrustful of the Muslim Brotherhood, was hesitant to provide additional aid, a reluctance exacerbated by Morsi's outreach to Iran. Similarly, Morsi's visit to China secured only a modest grant of \$71 million to be disbursed over three years¹⁷².

Besides, in late August of 2012, Morsi entered into negotiations with the IMF for a loan amounting to \$4.8 billion. After a few months, these negotiations reached a deadlock due to the politically sensitive requirement of subsidy reforms by the IMF, which were unpopular among the Egyptian public¹⁷³.

In an effort to address public discontent, Morsi increased government employees' wages by 15% and increased social security benefits in his first week in office, adding another \$414 million to the Treasury. This increase in spending took place against the backdrop of an already struggling economy and led to only a minimal improvement in cash reserves, which rose from \$14.4 billion in July to \$15.4 billion by October¹⁷⁴.

To address the rising social resentment that threatened the Brotherhood's legitimacy—stemming from their inability to effectively manage the economic crisis, improve living conditions, or enhance public services, as evidenced by labor strikes, disruptions in informal sectors, and widespread protests—the Brotherhood failed to engage with diverse segments of society. Their ideological rigidity further impeded their efforts to garner broader appreciation and support.

2.2.2 Governance Failures and Confrontational Approach

2.2.2.1 Authoritarian Tendencies and Power Consolidation

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

The Brotherhood's approach to governance was characterized by authoritarian tendencies, specifically seen in Morsi's controversial November 2012 constitutional declaration. On November 26, 2012, Muhammad Morsi issued a new constitutional declaration that gave him far-reaching judicial powers. The declaration gave the possibility for the president to pass and enact decrees without restraint, even if these violated human rights. It also empowered him to take all emergency measures at any time, on broadly preemptively defined pretext grounds, without the need to formally declare a state of emergency¹⁷⁵.

Another law that was enacted by the president allows investigations into individuals involved in violence in protests to be carried out. However, according to Human Rights Watch, this law is too general and gives room for excessive abuse of power in the hands of security agents. It has been used to target innocent individuals, including those accused of insulting the president or the judiciary, a tactic reminiscent of practices during Hosni Mubarak's dictatorship. This law not only undermines the independence of the judiciary but also criminalizes political speech, which is well protected under international law. The new criminal laws have been viewed as an infringement of the right to freedom of expression and are seen as an intensification of persecution against those involved in political speech¹⁷⁶.

Another law issued by Morsi was Law 97 of 2012, known as the "Protection of the Revolution" law, which established a special court to oversee and prosecute crimes committed against protesters and government officials. However, the law is vaguely worded and grants the court authority to prosecute a wide range of offenses, including actions as broad as insulting the authorities or press-related crimes, thereby threatening freedom of speech¹⁷⁷.

Morsi also made it impossible to challenge the laws or decrees he enacted. The president was granted the right to take all "necessary measures" to protect the revolution under broadly defined conditions, with these actions being immune from review or

¹⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch. (2012). "Egypt: Morsy Decree Undermines Rule of Law: New Law May Bring Some Accountability but Invites Abuse of Freedoms".

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

questioning. This consolidation of power posed significant risks to both judicial independence and democratic freedoms¹⁷⁸.

In addition, the provisions that Morsi enacted contained undemocratic elements that contradicted the principles of a moderate democratic transition. Since such provisions mostly discriminated against women, non-Muslims, or non-Islamists, favoring theocratic notions of communal discipline over liberal values like pluralism and individual freedoms. This repressive tendency took a very sharp turn following the fall of President Mubarak, when the ambivalence of the Brotherhood's position on human rights and the status of minorities merged into sharp, clear authoritarian practices¹⁷⁹.

Moreover, the lack of profound intellectual revision from the Brotherhood contributed to a general perception that it indeed posed a threat to the democratic process. The organization did not adequately address the concerns of various societal groups, including secularists and religious minorities, which further entrenched opposition against it. Such concerns were taken advantage of by the former system, which viewed the Islamist group as having an agenda against the state, hence the need for them to maintain despotic power¹⁸⁰.

2.2.2.2 Polarization and the Breakdown of Dialogue

Furthermore, the Brotherhood's failure to undertake meaningful intellectual revision and address the concerns of various societal groups—including secularists and religious minorities—fueled perceptions that it threatened the democratic process. This lack of engagement deepened opposition against the Brotherhood, which the old regime exploited to portray the organization as a destabilizing force. By emphasizing these fears, the regime justified its continued authoritarian rule¹⁸¹.

The Brotherhood's governance also led to increased polarization. Instead of promoting dialogue and compromise, the Brotherhood frequently adopted a confrontational approach toward opposition groups. This was evident in the draft of Egypt's new constitution,

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Al-Anani, K. (2015). "The Rise and Fall of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood".

which was heavily influenced by the Brotherhood's ideological preferences despite substantial opposition from secular and minority groups¹⁸².

This approach not only deepened societal divisions but also eroded trust in the Brotherhood's commitment to democratic governance. The exclusion of key societal groups from the constitutional process and the lack of genuine dialogue hindered the achievement of the broad consensus needed for a stable democratic transition.

2.2.3 Societal Reactions

2.2.3.1 Erosion of Public Support and the Military coup

The judicial reforms that Morsi had adopted, in response to continued judicial interventions, placed him above the judiciary, including control of judicial reviews of his decisions and the executive. These reforms mandated the removal of members of the judiciary who had served under Mubarak, resulting in the dismissal of over 3,000 judges. The decree further caused mass public outrage when more than 200,000 people took to protests against the government of Morsi, considering these decisions as illegal and a step backward against democracy and the achievements of the revolution. This led to a polarized response, with Morsi's opponents condemning the reforms as undemocratic, while his supporters argued that the constitutional decree and reforms were necessary to cleanse the judiciary from the remnants of Mubarak's regime¹⁸³.

By late April 2013, amidst widespread discontent with Morsi's policies and reforms, coupled with the growing economic hardship, a new opposition movement was born under the name of *Tamarod* (Rebellion). This movement launched a major anti-Morsi campaign, amply supported by deep state structures like the military, police, and judiciary. It also garnered support from various other actors, such as bureaucrats, secularists, former Mubarak supporters, the April 6 Youth, and other religious leaders, all heavily financed by elite interests. *Tamarod's* list of demands had gone beyond government reforms to the demand for Morsi's resignation, stating that a military intervention was necessary in order to save the country and usher in a secular democratic future¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸² El-Sherif, A. (2014). "The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Failure"

¹⁸³ Shehata, S. (2013): "In Egypt, Democrats Vs. Liberals".

¹⁸⁴ Al Amin, E. (2013). "In Egypt, the Military is Supreme".

This confrontational approach of the Muslim Brotherhood was also alienating to the Egyptian military, which had been a powerful political force in the country for many years. The dissatisfaction of the military with Morsi's governance and mass public protests resulted in the military coup under the leadership of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in July 2013. The coup not only removed Morsi from power but also marked the end of Egypt's brief experiment with democracy.

On July 3, 2013, al-Sisi announced the suspension of the constitution, appointed Adly Mansour, the head of the constitutional court, as the interim president, and removed Morsi from power. The interim president was granted the authority to issue decrees and assume legislative powers¹⁸⁵.

2.2.4 The Military coup, the collapse of the democratic transition and its long term effects

The military coup in July 2013 effectively ended Egypt's democratic transition and marked the beginning of a new era of authoritarianism under al-Sisi. The Muslim Brotherhood's failure to govern inclusively, its authoritarian tendencies, and its inability to build a broad coalition were key factors in this collapse.

Following the coup, the Muslim Brotherhood members were arrested by the military junta under the pretext of threatening state security. The military and its government bypassed a democratic process of parliamentary and presidential elections to legitimize their authority. Instead, they unilaterally established their own government and imposed it without democratic election. Al-Sisi placed himself above the law, and the military carried out the coup. Protests against these new measures by al-Sisi were met with heavy violence, including against women and children. There were mass arrests and detentions of opponents, including over 300 members of the Muslim Brotherhood¹⁸⁶.

In mid-August 2013, the situation deteriorated as Morsi's supporters organized sit-ins at *Rabaa al-Adawiya Mosque* and *Nahda Square*, demanding the restoration of democracy

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Al Amin, E. (2013). "In Egypt, the Military is Supreme".

and Morsi's reinstatement, as well as the removal of the military from power. The security forces responded vigorously, leaving around 658 protesters dead, though reports said more than 2,600 people were killed and over 4,500 injured¹⁸⁷.

The massacre instilled fear in the hearts of the people who became reluctant to protest or advance their rights claims lest detention, arrest, or even death. The international community was alerted, and it became clear that Egypt had reverted to military-led authoritarianism. By April 2014, 1,200 people were sentenced to death through unlawful trials. In addition, the April 6 Youth Movement was banned, and the presence of all international organizations, civil society organizations, and human rights defenders was considered a threat¹⁸⁸.

In January 2014, a new constitution was drafted and approved by a 98.1% favorable vote. The constitution included a clause in favor of extensive, unchecked powers to be given to the military and security services under the cover of counterterrorism. MB had been declared a terrorist organization, and all Islamist groups were prohibited from political life, thus to be marginalized by their political beliefs¹⁸⁹.

Subsequently, the government implemented measures that condemned any form of peaceful protest, opposition, and freedom of expression. Government approval became mandatory for public gatherings, and civil society organizations faced severe crackdowns. Activists, regardless of their ideological stance, were prosecuted and imprisoned. The universities were brought under government supervision, and academic speeches were policed, students being made responsible for disrupting the educational activities. Independent newspapers folded up, and media visibility and expression became pretty much controlled under the security structure; criticism against state institutes became prohibited¹⁹⁰.

¹⁸⁷ Esposito, J. (2015). "Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring".

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Revkin, M. (2014). "Worse Than Mubarak".

¹⁹⁰ Esposito, J. (2015). "Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring".

Chapter 3: Comparative Analysis and Implications for Political Islam in Transitional Democracies

To perform a comparative analysis of political Islam's influence on transitional democracy, further in-depth discussion of the previously stated theories is required. Furthermore, it is imperative to ascertain the degree to which the policies and conduct of the Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahdha facilitate the establishment of democracy or impede its downfall. In this context, Stepan's (2000) ideas of twin toleration and inclusion-moderation are crucial to take into account when examining the political ideologies, systems of administration, and tactics employed in each nation. The modernization theory can also be used to analyze Huntington's (1991) third wave of democratization, individual rights, economic performance, and the response of the elite and society. Since these theories were already discussed in the first section, they will be further examined in this chapter.

3.1 Ideological Adaptation vs. Rigidity

3.1.1 inclusion-moderation and twin tolerations theory

Stepan's (2000) Inclusion and Moderation Theory primarily argues, counter-intuitive as it may seem, that actors within extremist parties, as election time approaches, might moderate or shift to the center. Once in government, they adapt to become similar mainstream parties with the express purpose of appealing to a broader audience. With Ennahdha, however, the ideological adjustment was instant as it resorted to a more moderate ideology in its move away from an extremist Islamist party toward active involvement of the secular segment of society.

First, Ennahdha followed in the footsteps of the Islamic Brothers in trying to work for an Islamic state. Then, in the face of opposition and concern on the part of a secularist elite the party would impose its Islamist ideology on society, Ennahdha was afraid that this might lead to an escalation of tension between different political forces. In order not to allow conflict, it embraced the civil state and gave up some religious norms. The ideological shift in Ennahdha started even before their coming into power, where the party accepted the Personal

Status Code, which is against many Islamic principles, especially with regard to gender equality and nondiscrimination. Ennahdha was hoping that such a move would gain legitimacy.

This acceptance of political pluralism, as evidenced by Ennahdha's cooperation with secular parties during the Troika government, also aligns with Stepan's theory of the Twin Tolerations (2000). A theory that refers to the mutual respect between religious and political institutions in a democracy. It posits that for democracy to remain stable, religious groups must tolerate the autonomy of political institutions, while political authorities must allow religious freedom and expression, as long as democratic principles are not violated. Ennahdha's leadership worked within the political system, balancing religious beliefs with democratic governance rather than pushing for a religious theocracy. This demonstrates a shift towards tolerating the autonomy of both religious and political institutions.

In contrast, the Muslim Brotherhood remained more committed to its Islamist rigid ideology. After coming to power in 2012, Mohamed Morsi's government was accused of islamizing the state. Firstly, Morsi appointed primarily members of the Muslim Brotherhood to government positions, neglecting to include other key state actors. Secondly, the constitutional proposals focused on the role of *Sharia* in society and undemocratic islamist norms to turn society into an islamist one. This led to public dissatisfaction and strong opposition from important state actors such as the military and police. While the Brotherhood attempted to compromise with these institutions in specific situations, these efforts were considered inconsistent and contradictory.

The Muslim Brotherhood's strategy of simultaneously trying to co-opt various groups with different ideologies resulted in policy confusion. On the one hand, they sought to collaborate with the conservative middle class to secure votes during the referendum and appeal to Islamist voters. On the other hand, they attempted to engage revolutionary groups to legitimize themselves and align with their revolutionary aspirations. This conflicting approach made it difficult for the Brotherhood to present a coherent policy direction. Moreover, their failure to compromise or include significant factions and reformists in their governance efforts, coupled with their focus on creating a society based on Islamist principles, alienated the secular elite.

This inability to adopt an inclusive model of governance ultimately contributed to the Brotherhood's loss of popularity and eventual downfall. By prioritizing the implementation of Islamist values over building a broad political consensus, the Brotherhood diverged from the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, which emphasizes the need for political parties to moderate and expand their appeal to different groups in order to remain in power.

When it comes to Stepan's Twin Tolerations theory (2000), unlike Ennahdha, the Muslim Brotherhood struggled to embrace it. Under Mohamed Morsi's presidency (2012–2013), the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party found it difficult to maintain a clear separation between political governance and religious ideology. Their political agenda was primarily focused on Islamization. This became evident in the 2012 constitution, pushed by Morsi and the Brotherhood, which explicitly mentioned Sharia law as a primary source of law. This caused significant concern among secularists and liberals, especially given Egypt's important Christian minority. By prioritizing an Islamist agenda over democratic inclusivity, the Brotherhood failed to acknowledge the need for toleration of different religious and secular perspectives in governance.

Institutionally, the Brotherhood's governance style blurred the lines between religious authority and political decision-making, as outlined in the previous chapter. In a democracy, religious groups are expected to tolerate the autonomy of political institutions without attempting to dominate them. However, this was not the case with Morsi's government. His 2012 constitutional declaration placed all his decisions above the law and beyond judicial review, further alienating secular and political actors. This demonstrated a lack of religious tolerance for the autonomy of democratic political institutions, as the Brotherhood sought to centralize power.

This failure of the Muslim Brotherhood to adopt the principles of Twin Tolerations led to an increased division within Egyptian society. Secular actors, the judiciary, deep state actors, and even moderate Islamist groups started to see the Brotherhood as acting in ways that were unemocratic and dangerous to the goals of the 2011 uprising and revolution. Their unwillingness to share power and thus embrace political pluralism further deepened the divisions in society. It was this inability to respect political autonomy of diversified

institutions and ideologies that created a volatile political environment that ended in military intervention, resulting in Morsi's ouster in July 2013.

3.2 Governance and Political Strategy

3.2.1 Democratic consolidation

When analyzing the role of political Islam in transitional democracies, particularly in relation to government institutions that safeguard and ensure the implementation of democracy, Stepan and Linz's Democratic Consolidation Theory (2013) comes as an important theory, a theory that builds on Robert A. Dahl's framework (1971). Dahl (1971) enumerates the essential conditions for the establishment of democracy, such as the freedom to form and join organizations, free and fair elections, and freedom of expression. Stepan and Linz (2013) further this by stating that constitutional frameworks have the role of maintaining democratic principles. In this respect, they highlight issues such as protection of minority rights and fundamental liberties, in addition to independent institutions that temper state autonomy with religious freedom as part of consolidating democracy. The rule of law, apart from protecting religious freedoms and civil liberties, is fundamental to democratic governance through autonomous institutions.

In the case of Tunisia, the political party Ennahdha was very instrumental in the democratic consolidation process, particularly in the drafting of the 2014 Constitution. This was important in setting up Tunisia as a civil state and pluralistic democracy respectful of Islamic values but also of civil principles. The constitution provides freedom of expression, religious liberty, and gender equality in the interest of balancing Islamic aspirations and democratic governance. For instance, Article 21 of the 2014 Constitution asserts that¹⁹¹:

"Men and women are equal in rights and duties, and they are equal before the law without discrimination. The state guarantees citizens both individual and collective rights and freedoms and ensures the conditions for a dignified life."

¹⁹¹ Le Centre pour la gouvernance du secteur de la sécurité, Genève. (2014). "Constitution de la République Tunisienne du 27 janvier 2014". Article 21.

Additionally, Article 6 state¹⁹²s:

"The state protects religion, guarantees freedom of belief, conscience, and religious practice, and ensures the neutrality of mosques and places of worship from partisan exploitation."

These constitutional articles provide clear evidence that the 2014 Constitution aspired to guarantee freedom of belief, conscience, and religion while affirming Tunisia's identity as a civil state. The fact that Ennahdha, despite its foundational manifesto and its stance on the application of political Islam, accepted these aspects of individual liberties underscores its commitment to democratic governance. This acceptance, even of values that might be against its ideological positions, reflects the party's willingness to prioritize democratic principles.

Moreover, Ennahdha acknowledged the importance of protecting individual freedoms, including gender equality, freedom of expression, and civil rights. This inclusive approach helped preserve the legitimacy of Tunisia's political system by ensuring that no group, whether religious or secular, was marginalized. This is also consistent with Stepan and Linz's (2013) argument, according to which institutions that secure the freedoms of all citizens irrespective of their religious ideals or politics are necessary for the evolution of democratic consolidation.

A further demonstration of Ennahdha's adaptability is its acceptance of Tunisia's Personal Status Code, which safeguarded women's rights. This acceptance illustrated the party's commitment to defending civil liberties while balancing Islamic values, thereby fostering public trust and enabling diverse groups to coexist peacefully within a pluralistic democratic framework. By accommodating these principles, Ennahdha contributed to consolidating Tunisia's democracy, reinforcing Stepan and Linz's (2013) argument that the institutionalization of rights and freedoms is key to democratic resilience.

On the other hand, when it comes to the Muslim Brotherhood, it can be seen that the Muslim Brotherhood in fact failed when it comes to the consolidation of democracy. This

¹⁹² Le Centre pour la gouvernance du secteur de la sécurité, Genève. (2014). "Constitution de la République Tunisienne du 27 janvier 2014". Article 6.

happened due to its undermining of freedoms and liberties through the failure to uphold democratic freedoms and liberties during Morsi's governance. The November 2012 constitution declaration granted Morsi extreme power and put him above the law, exempting him and his decisions from any judicial review or control.

A move that undermined the independence of the judiciary, restricting civil liberties and violating the principle that democratic institutions must protect individual freedoms, through a centralisation of power that restricted freedoms, such as the right to challenge the government, a decision that sparked widespread protests in the streets against such decisions, this meant the failure to create an inclusive constitution which was essential for the long-term stability, the nature of this controversial constitution that seemed like it wanted to impose the Islamist agenda triggered protests and clashes between Morsi's supporters and opponents and making others see the Morsi's government as illegitimate and unrepresentative.

In contrast to Tunisia's Ennahdha, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt ultimately failed in its efforts to consolidate democracy, primarily due to its undermining of freedoms and liberties during Mohammed Morsi's tenure. The November 2012 constitutional declaration granted Morsi sweeping powers, placing him above the law and exempting his decisions from judicial review or control.

This declaration greatly reduced the independence of the judiciary and put restraints on civil liberties, contravening one of the most basic requisites for democracy-institutions are to guarantee freedom for the individual. Its opponents viewed this concentration of power and circumscription of citizens' rights to question the government as another act of authoritarianism, prompting protests. Marking the beginning of the erosion of democratic legitimacy, the declaration was seen as a direct threat to both the independence of the judges and the general principles of democratic government.

Moreover, the failure to draft an inclusive constitution, which is essential for long-term stability, further deepened the crisis through the rushed and controversial 2012 constitution, which appeared to impose an Islamist agenda, leading to protests and clashes between Morsi's supporters and opponents. A constitution that's viewed by many as illegitimate and unrepresentative failed to provide a broad-based foundation for governance.

This excluded most of the key political and social actors during the constitutional drafting process, alienating them and was therefore even more division-enhancing for Egyptian society.

The Muslim Brotherhood also failed to establish independent institutions that could mediate political conflicts or safeguard democratic freedoms. The government of Morsi was instead preoccupied with the consolidation of power, which alienated key actors: the judiciary, the military, and civil society. This exclusionary policy promoted further polarization in Egyptian politics and geared it toward general discontent. The administration's attempt to impose an Islamist-leaning constitution that lacked broad support from diverse political factions only worsened the situation. The rushed drafting process marginalized many political actors, resulting in a constitution that neither reflected the diversity of Egypt's population nor accounted for the interests of its most important institutions.

This failure to build inclusive and independent institutions, combined with the authoritarian centralization of power, undermined the Brotherhood's ability to maintain democratic legitimacy. The exclusionary nature of Morsi's government and its focus on an Islamist agenda polarized Egyptian society to the point of violent protests, which were instrumental in the eventual downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood and the loss of its political standing.

The Muslim Brotherhood's disregard for checks and balances was a crucial factor in the collapse of Morsi's government. By concentrating power in the presidency and undermining the judiciary's role, the Morsi administration weakened Egypt's democratic institutions. This violated Stepan and Linz's (2013) principle that democracies require independent institutions to act as checks on political power. The judiciary, in particular, could have played a vital role in balancing executive and legislative powers. However, Morsi's November 2012 constitutional declaration undermined and delegitimized the judiciary by placing himself above judicial review. This alienation of the judiciary, along with its marginalization, contributed to the eventual downfall of Morsi's regime, with both the judiciary and the military playing key roles in the events that followed.

The Brotherhood's consolidation of power in the presidency also polarized Egyptian society, increasing tensions between key actors, such as the military and the presidency. By undermining institutional safeguards, the Morsi administration lost the confidence of opposition groups, especially secular and liberal factions, who saw the political system as increasingly authoritarian. The lack of checks and balances created a climate of mistrust, setting the stage for widespread protests and eventually leading to the military coup in 2013.

Another critical determinant of the government's fall was Morsi's inability or unwillingness to build broad-based support among key political and social actors. Instead of forming coalitions and fostering consensus—both critical to the survival of transitional democracies—the Brotherhood alienated secular forces, exacerbating political divisions. The approach thus created very high levels of distrust amongst these groups, causing further fragmentation of Egyptian society and undermining any possibility of a stable democratic base. Thus, the eventual failure to build coalitions or reach out towards various political factions was what led to the erosion of Brotherhood support, weakening its ability to govern and paving the way for its eventual removal from power.

3.3 Societal and Political Actors' Reactions

3.3.1 Modernization theory and individual rights

To understand the impact of political Islam on transitional democracies, it is essential to consider societal changes, particularly through the lens of modernization theory. This theory suggests that as societies experience economic, social, and cultural transformations, there is often a growing demand for individual rights and freedoms, such as gender equality, freedom of expression, and political participation. As part of this modernization process, civil society plays a crucial and indispensable role in holding governments accountable and advocating for democratic norms.

In this context, the success of political actors in transitional democracies depends largely on their ability to respect and integrate these evolving rights while adapting to broader modernization trends. Political actors who fail to respond to the increasing demand for these freedoms risk alienating civil society and weakening the foundations of democracy. Thus,

modernization theory provides a useful framework for understanding how societal changes drive the need for greater inclusivity and accountability in emerging democratic systems.

Ennahdha's role in adapting to modernization can be seen in its promotion of individual rights in response to societal changes. While rooted in Islamic principles, the party demonstrated its ability to adapt to modernization trends by supporting key elements of Tunisia's progressive stance on gender equality and personal freedoms. Recognizing that to remain legitimate in a modernizing society, it needed to align with the increasing demand for individual rights, Ennahdha took significant steps to accommodate these shifts.

During its time in government, Ennahdha engaged directly with civil society organizations, particularly those advocating for women's rights, youth empowerment, and human rights. The party maintained an open dialogue with influential groups, such as the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), and built broad coalitions across various sectors of society.

Notably, Ennahdha collaborated with gender equality organizations during the drafting of the 2014 Constitution, ensuring the inclusion of gender equality provisions. This approach helped the party retain legitimacy within Tunisia's democratization process and underscored its capacity to adapt to the evolving demands of a modernizing society.

In contrast, the Muslim Brotherhood struggled with the issue of individual rights, which led to the alienation of civil society. The Brotherhood's rigid approach to individual rights, particularly its difficulty in reconciling its Islamist ideology with the growing demands for human rights, freedom of expression, and women's rights, especially from secularist groups, undermined its relationship with key societal actors. The 2012 Constitution, which was seen as a threat to individual rights—especially the rights of women and religious minorities—sparked widespread opposition from civil society.

The Brotherhood's approach to civil society was largely adversarial rather than collaborative. Despite civil society playing a pivotal role in Egypt's 2011 revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood failed to engage constructively with civil society organizations, particularly those advocating for human rights, freedom of speech, and gender equality. This

lack of engagement contributed significantly to the erosion of the Brotherhood's legitimacy, as these organizations were key to maintaining accountability and promoting democratic norms.

By not aligning with modernization trends that demanded greater respect for individual rights and by failing to collaborate with civil society, the Muslim Brotherhood isolated itself from liberal groups and progressive factions within society. According to modernization theory, this isolation weakened the regime's stability as it failed to address the increasing societal demand for individual freedoms and inclusivity. Ultimately, this alienation of civil society and liberal groups contributed to the Brotherhood's downfall, highlighting the importance of embracing modernization and engaging with key societal actors during periods of democratic transition.

3.3.2 Modernization Theory and Economic Failures: Implications for Democratic Backsliding in Tunisia and Egypt

In the context of modernization theory, economic development is crucial and an integral actor in the making of democratic transitions. Democratic consolidation calls for certain parameters, including economic development, growth, and justice, in the context of addressing social concerns such as poverty and inequality. When economic reforms fail, political instability can increase, leading to societal dissatisfaction, weakened institutions, and eventually, democratic backsliding.

Modernization theory states that as societies develop economically, they tend to adopt democratic norms, including political participation and individual rights. Economic growth will produce an increasingly educated and economically secure middle class that will also seek political freedoms, greater transparency, and accountability. Yet if economic progress is not realized, particularly during democratization, protest and unrest create instability that can undermine public confidence in democratic institutions and pave the way for authoritarian leaders.

3.3.2.1 The implications of economic failures for democratic backsliding in Tunisia

Despite Ennahdha's efforts to address socio-economic issues and its success in navigating Tunisia's political transition by balancing Islamic values with secular principles and collaborating with various societal actors, the party struggled to improve the economy. Tunisia has been living for several years with a lot of economic problems, partly because of the wave of terrorism which swept the country after the 2011 revolution. High unemployment, especially among the youth, and rising inflation as well as a non-stable economy became prominent issues. These economic hardships have undermined public trust in the democratic process, as most Tunisians had hoped that toppling Ben Ali would instantly improve their living standards.

However, the deep economic repercussions of the Ben Ali regime, the revolution, and the terrorism attacks could not be resolved quickly. By 2013, Tunisia's unemployment rate remained stubbornly high at around 15%¹⁹³, with youth unemployment exceeding 34%¹⁹⁴. This economic stagnation led to growing frustration, particularly among the younger generation that had played a key role in the 2011 revolution and had high expectations for socio-economic reforms. The failure to deliver on these expectations undermined support for democratic institutions, making Tunisia more vulnerable to potential democratic backsliding.

In response to the economic crisis, Ennahdha pursued economic reforms, including working with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to secure loans and implement fiscal reforms. However, these measures proved insufficient to alleviate Tunisia's economic struggles. The IMF's 2013 loan to Tunisia, for instance, came with stringent conditions, such as subsidy reductions and austerity measures. Measures like these, in the meantime, had been highly unpopular among civil society groups, including the Tunisian General Labor Union-UGTT, which organized strikes and protests. This further crippled an already unstable national economy and made people lose confidence in Ennahdha's ability to manage the economic difficulties at this critical moment.

¹⁹³ Macrotrends. "Tunisia Unemployment Rate 1960-2024".

¹⁹⁴ Macrotrends. "Youth Unemployment Rate 1960-2024".

The continued economic stagnation, coupled with Ennahdha's inability to make tangible improvements, further eroded public trust in Tunisia's democratic institutions. As the economic crisis deepened, even after the Ennahdha-led government and particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, public dissatisfaction grew. Both the general population and the political class became increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress, eventually culminating in the election of Kais Saied.

In 2021, Saied suspended the parliament and assumed executive powers with the support of a number of civil society organizations and some political actors. This represented an important moment in democratic backsliding as Saied capitalized on widespread frustration with the economic crisis and political stagnation.

3.3.2.2 The implications of economic failures for democratic backsliding in Egypt

The economic challenges for the Muslim Brotherhood during Mohamed Morsi's rule were very important as well. Similar to Tunisia, Egypt's post-revolution economy was fragile, with high inflation and fuel shortages, besides high unemployment. With their inefficient management of the economy, there was a fast erosion of public support for the Brotherhood, especially among the middle class and the youth who had participated so valuably in the revolution and held similar hopes and aspirations as those of Tunisia. The fuel shortages and rolling blackouts during Morsi's presidency further exacerbated public frustration. Inflation soared, and food prices became unaffordable for many Egyptians.

Unlike Ennahdha, which managed to secure international loans, Morsi's government struggled to attract significant investment or secure international financial support, partly due to its policies and lack of political stability. However, it is worth noting that even when Tunisia secured IMF loans, public discontent persisted due to the strict conditions imposed by the IMF, such as austerity measures. This suggests that, while access to international financial aid is crucial, it does not necessarily resolve the underlying economic grievances, particularly when such assistance comes with unpopular terms.

Similar to Tunisia, deteriorating economic conditions in Egypt led to widespread protests and opposition. Consequently, many Egyptians, including those who had favored the

2011 uprising, grew increasingly frustrated with Morsi's inability to improve the country's economic situation. Such frustration culminated in support for the *Tamarod* movement, which demanded the resignation of Morsi in 2013 and which contributed to Morsi's later military coup. Economic grievances were central to the protests, as Egyptians expressed frustration over the lack of improvement in living standards and the worsening economic situation under the Brotherhood.

The economic mismanagement and inability to meet basic needs contributed to a political crisis that culminated in the 2013 military coup. This coup marked a dramatic backslide, returning Egypt to authoritarian military rule under Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. The failure to achieve economic modernization undermined Egypt's democratic transition. In a country where economic conditions were a major driver of the revolution, the inability to stabilize the economy or improve living standards eroded the legitimacy of the transitional period, leading to a return to authoritarianism through military intervention.

3.4 Patterns of democratic transitions: Partial success and failure in Tunisia and Egypt

Samuel Huntington's (1991) concept of the wave of democratization provides a lens for examining how Tunisia and Egypt took divergent political routes after the Arab Spring upheaval. The third wave of democratization emerged in the 1970s. Swept globally as several countries, in areas like Southern Europe and Latin America, underwent the downfall of rule and the rise of democratic governance. Some scholars view the Arab Spring, which started in 2010, as an extension of this democratizing trend, while others argue that it represents a distinct fourth wave, as discussed in the first chapter.

When framing the Arab Spring as an extension of the third wave, it is important to consider how the consequences of this process of democratization interacted and unfolded between the two case studies of Tunisia and Egypt. The successes and failures viewed within both cases show the complicated nature existing within democratization, where political Islam is linked to the greater political and social environment

3.4.1 Tunisia: A fragile Democratic transition

In the aftermath of the coup in Egypt, Tunisia was widely celebrated as the only success story of the Arab Spring, with its peaceful transition from authoritarian rule to a democratic state. Major political reforms were facilitated in Tunisia after the overthrow of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011 through broad cooperation by the secular and Islamist groups. This, as mentioned before, came through the reforms within the institutions and elite consensus in which political Islam played its due role in moderation, particularly when it comes to the inclusion-moderation thesis.

Despite this promising start and the reforms, including Ennahdha's peaceful stepping down from power and the smooth transition involving other political parties, the suspension of parliament by President Kais Saied in 2021 and his consolidation of executive power signal a troubling reversal.

While this authoritarian shift does not appear to be directly tied to political Islam, it raises important questions about the sustainability of democracy in post-authoritarian contexts. Tunisia's political elite, including Ennahdha, had not fully consolidated democratic norms and institutions, leaving the political system vulnerable to backsliding. This mirrors Samuel Huntington's (1996) observation that democratic transitions are inherently fragile and that institutional weaknesses can create openings for authoritarian resurgence.

3.4.2 Egypt: A case of rapid democratic breakdown:

While Tunisia represents a fragile democratic transition, Egypt is usually portrayed as a case of failed democratization. Compared with Tunisia, Egypt's transition was marked by deep polarization and the rapid demolition of its emerging democracy. The Muslim Brotherhood's failure to navigate the democratic transition reflects a broader issue, identified by Huntington (1991) of political elites' inability to reach consensus. The authoritarian predispositions of the Muslim Brotherhood and their consequent lack of elite consensus were both key factors in Egypt's democratic decline. This breakdown aligns with Huntington's (1991) theory of democratic failure in which institutions cannot establish themselves because of power struggles and intra-conflicts within.

The military coup in 2013, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, underscores the vulnerability of democratization in contexts where political elites fail to cooperate. The military's return to power and Egypt's reversion to authoritarianism highlight a recurring theme in Huntington's (1991) work: without strong institutions and a cooperative elite, democratization is fragile and prone to collapse.

3.4.3 Political Islam and the third wave: a broader pattern of democratic erosion

Within this larger context, the experiences of Tunisia and Egypt are instructive, as political Islam plays a dual role in both promoting and undermining democratization. Political Islam often engages democratic processes for gaining power but usually struggles with the institutional and ideological commitments necessary for democratic consolidation in the long term.

A comparative case is the Justice and Development Party of Turkey, which parallels the Tunisian case. The AKP, an Islamist-originated party, initially embraced democratic reforms and appeared to be tolerant of pluralism, as discussed in the first chapter. However, with the rise to power of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the party started strengthening its control, diminishing democratic institutions, and restricting political opposition. This shift from promoting democracy to establishing authoritarian control within the party mirrors the transformation of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood from advocating for democracy to creating a governing body that placed itself above the legal system.

These cases raise a critical question: Does political Islam, despite its initial embrace of democratic processes, contribute to democratic erosion? The third wave of democratization framework provides the possibility to examine this issue. As observed, political Islamist movements usually tend to moderate their positions on politics just to keep up with political legitimacy, such as in the case of the AKP and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

However, once in power, these movements frequently face challenges in sustaining democratic institutions, either due to authoritarian tendencies or external pressures such as military intervention. This suggests that while political Islam can facilitate democratization,

according to the third wave of democratization theory, it may also lead to authoritarianism, particularly in contexts of institutional fragility and elite fragmentation exacerbated by political instability following the Arab uprisings.

Chapter 4: Findings and conclusions

This chapter discusses the study's significant research advances as well as its theoretical contributions, highlighting its importance for future research. To assess the theoretical orientation's effectiveness, I begin by reviewing the research question and the methodology used to address it in order to assess the effectiveness of the theoretical orientation. Furthermore, I present the major findings and establish connections with the existing literature, as addressed in the preceding chapter. I also describe the extent to which this research contributes to academia and how it can be utilized for future research.

The research's distinctive findings indicate that political Islam, as a whole, is not the primary cause of the impact on democratisation. This implies that the theories referenced in the literature linking secularism to democratisation and Islam, particularly to authoritarianism, do not appear to be valid. Instead, it is the leadership style, organisational structure, implementation of ideology, and party policies that influence the impact on political transition, particularly in the context of a post-uprising country. The affiliation of these parties with Islam does not significantly affect the durability of democracy or the transition itself.

Research Questions and Effectiveness of the Theoretical Orientation

In my study of the impact of political Islam and the presented case studies of Egypt and Tunisia, I underline the fundamental research hypothesis that will guide my formulation of results. The primary research question is: **How did political Islam impact transitional democracy in Tunisia and Egypt after the Arab Spring?** This research aims to investigate the impact of political Islam on the democratic transition process in both countries, evaluating the compatibility of political Islam with democratic principles and how specified ideologies and forms of governance might influence the process of democratic transition. The primary research question, more precisely, also raises two further sub-questions:

The initial sub-question stated: **How did Ennahdha facilitate the success of transitional democracy in Tunisia, and what challenges did it encounter ?** This question

examines the extent to which the contribution of Ennahdha was relevant for transitional democracy in Tunisia and whether it could have been more successful. The question aims to investigate how the Ennahdha party successfully adjusted their political approach and reached compromises to advance democratic principles, despite encountered circumstances and ideological obstacles.

While considering the situation in Egypt, the question arises as to, **in what way did the Muslim Brotherhood contribute to the failure of transitional democracy in Egypt.** This question will therefore be useful in determining what the impact of Islamist group, the Muslim Brotherhood, was on the democratic processes in Egypt and what elements of democratic transition resulted in failure. An analysis of the obstacles encountered by the group, including governance concerns, political resistance, and ideological inflexibility.

These questions, therefore, have reached two propositions. The first hypothesis is that Ennahdha contributed positively to the process of transitional democracy in Tunisia. The second hypothesis suggests that the actions of the Muslim Brotherhood led to the failure of transitional democracy in Egypt.

These hypotheses will be assessed based on the comparative study conducted in the third chapter, focusing on political strategies, governance, sociocultural settings, and institutional frameworks in Egypt and Tunisia.

In order to move forward with answering my question, I decided to use a qualitative research method that was based on desk research. I used primary and secondary sources that I considered to be very important for gaining a more in-depth and historical understanding of political Islam, different perspectives on the relationship between political Islam and transitional democracy, the relationship between secularism and democracy, and the question of whether or not secularism is the only factor that determines democracy, as well as various theories of democratization, particularly in relation to the Arab Spring.

Major findings and theoretical conclusions

This analysis presents a range of perspectives on the main findings. One crucial aspect to note is the contrasting trajectories followed by both countries in their democratic transition. The analysis to address the impact of political Islam on transitional democracy was strengthened by the various theories that came about from the desk research: the Stepan and Linz (2013) inclusion-moderation theory and Stepan's (2000) twin tolerations, which refer to the involvement of conservative parties in electoral politics and their coexistence with other political actors for the purpose of political survival. The democratic consolidation was useful in understanding the significance of specific conditions, such as free elections, the rule of law, and the safeguarding of individual liberties, as primary criteria for the consolidation of democracy. Additionally, the modernization theory helped in understanding the importance of the economic state as a determinant of the viability of democracy.

In the context of Tunisia, Ennahdha has evolved as a moderate Islamist party while positioning itself strategically to be in a good position vis-à-vis dynamics in post-revolutionary situations. While sharing a conservative philosophy closely aligned with that of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was the dominant political Islam organization in the MENA region, Ennahdha opted for a more flexible and adaptable approach to maintain and ensure its legitimacy and position. It pursued a political pluralism policy and one of dialogue—a tactical approach which allowed it to effectively intermix with other political organs and civil society. This was particularly evident in the national discussion and the formulation of the constitution.

The leadership of Ennahdha from 2011 to 2014, in spite of particular difficulties, including economic and security issues, reduced and questioned its credibility. Ennahdha worked to create democratic institutions and supported transition democracy through the drafting of a new constitution, which gave more freedom, rights, and political autonomy to its citizens. A peaceful transition between parties occurred during elections because of the party's readiness to make concessions, build coalitions like the troika alliance, and co-opt various state actors. These actions helped stabilize the political environment and strengthen democratic norms.

Unlike Tunisia, the Muslim brotherhood faced difficulties when it came into power after the 2012 elections. Under Morsi's administration, the brotherhood encountered substantial resistance from various factions, including secular and deep state entities like the military and the police. Society and the political scene were polarized. When Morsi attempted to consolidate power at the level of executive and legislative authorities—especially with the constitutional decree that limited judicial oversight and accountability—much friction and irritation emerged in society.

This policy further estranged the political allies, who could have been highly supportive and content if Morsi's administration had actively engaged with them and included them in the process of governance. The government led by Morsi exhibited inadequate governance and responded to grief and protests with increased violence, so diminishing their legitimacy. Furthermore, the government failed to address the urgent socio-economic problems resulting from the Arab uprising. Consequently, the military coup of 2013 dismantled the Muslim Brotherhood and restored an authoritarian regime that resembled or even surpassed Mubarak's regime.

As previously stated in the third chapter, the political environment and institutional structures had a role in Tunisia's relative achievements and Egypt's challenges. In Tunisia, the Ennahdha party facilitated a comparatively more inclusive political environment, enabling participation from a wide range of political entities, including secular parties, opposition groups, and civil society organizations. The need for inclusivity cannot be overstated in cultivating a climate of debate and compromise, therefore affording Ennahdha the opportunity to effectively negotiate the intricacies of post-arab revolt governance and the disparities among society and political participants.

Egypt, meanwhile, struggled with the significant and powerful authority of the military, resulting in a more oppressive political climate. The deep state institutions, including the military, in addition to the absence of institutional checks and balances and the manipulation and seizure of power by Morsi, have established a climate that hinders the application and establishment of democratic principles.

The interaction between civil society and the present government can significantly influence the trajectory of transitional democracy, therefore underscoring the crucial role played by civil society in its consolidation. The dynamic civil society in Tunisia proved crucial in bolstering democracy and promoting political engagement. Civil society, for instance, promotes the national discourse to guide the resolution of political stagnation and crises, therefore facilitating the peaceful settlement of conflicts and the formation of democratic governance.

By contrast, in Egypt, civil society continued to be suppressed despite the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood. This restricted the Muslim Brotherhood's ability to engage with the people and form a supportive alliance, therefore impeding its efforts to enforce its policies and address public complaints.

The public legitimacy of both parties was also crucial in facilitating the democratic transition. The moderately positioned adaptability of Ennahdha, committed to the democratic principles by enacting certain freedoms and laws that supported the civil objectives of the uprising, even in cases contradicting their ideology, enhanced the legitimacy of this party. The party successfully reconciled its Islamic values and conservative ideology with democratic governance, which resonated with a substantial number of Tunisians. This is why, even after the Ennahdha party resigned, the people continued to elect Ennahdha, and the party maintained a substantial number of seats in parliament, albeit with a decline over time.

However, in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's rule progressively became more totalitarian, resulting in widespread public dissatisfaction and discontent, even among their followers. The inability to fulfill their economic commitments and their discriminatory actions against other state entities and institutions, as well as the critical groups involved in the Egyptian uprising, finally eroded their credibility and resulted in the establishment of another autocratic government under the leadership of Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi.

This thorough analysis aims to answer the study's central research question: **“How did political islam impact transitional democracy in Tunisia and Egypt after the arab spring?”** As explained in chapter 3, the Ennahdha party in Tunisia embraced political pluralism and compromised, which helped consolidate democracy. Their openness to

cooperate with other actors and civil society to consolidate the process of democratization. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's exclusionist and authoritarian approach alienated the main political actors and led to political turmoil that ended up with the military coup that ended transitional democracy. Economic crisis and public grievance also contributed to this.

Regarding the sub-question “**How did Ennahdha facilitate Tunisia’s democratic success and which challenges did it face?**” It is evident that the coalition-building and moderation, along with the emphasis on involving various political actors, were crucial to the peaceful transitions; the difficulties, on the other hand, are apparent in the issues of economic instability and security. But it's also critical to note that Ennahdha handled these problems and the ensuing public outcry in a measured manner, as evidenced by its decision to abdicate after the crisis, which contributed to further stabilizing the political landscape and advancing the democratic transition.

In Egypt, however, to answer the second sub-question, which states; “**How did the muslim brotherhood contribute to the failure of Egypt’s democratic transition?**” It is clear that the consolidation of power caused discontent, large-scale demonstrations, and the eventual coup by alienating key political players like civil society and opposition parties. The democratic collapse in Egypt was primarily caused by tight governance, authoritarian aspirations, a failure to form alliances with political actors, and a worsening economic environment.

Limitations of the Study and Implications for Further Research and Practice

It is acknowledged that, unfortunately, the study went through various limitations. Methodologically, the reliance on desk research only due to the temporal and financial constraints might have led to a lack of firsthand insights, limiting slightly the depth of the understanding when it comes to the nuanced political dynamics and the actual lived experiences of individuals, parties, and political actors in that very specific context, which could have been possible through interviews.

The timeframe of the study also, due to the rapid changes in political landscapes, might not capture the evolving nature of political islam and how it affected democracy, for

example, it was very recently that the current president of Tunisia turned into an authoritarian one, and due to the lack of research on the matter, it is hard to study a correlation between the democratic backsliding in Tunisia and the presence of Ennahdha and how it contributed to this democratic backsliding.

Accessing specific data was challenging because of political limitations. Specifically, in Egypt, there is a strict restriction on research due to the establishment of the authoritarian military-led government in 2013. This restriction greatly restricts access to crucial data and interviews.

Furthermore, the presence of distinct historical, cultural, and social backgrounds in each country lends complexity to the comparison between Tunisia and Egypt. The contrasting trajectories of democratization may not be solely attributed to political Islam but also to a multitude of other elements, actors, and historical conditions.

At last, the financial and logistical limitations significantly restricted the ability to carry out thorough research, particularly interviews, examining the archives in Egypt and Tunisia, and delving deeply into the historical and social background that contributed to the present situation. Had these limitations not been present, the results would likely have been more consistent and reliable.

Although the research has been visibly complicated by certain limitations, the implications of this study are rather significant.

Firstly, conducting a comparative analysis of the Egyptian and Tunisian cases could be pertinent for future research on countries in the MENA region that have shared similar experiences. These findings will deepen our understanding of the importance of political Islam and its role, particularly in transitional democracies and emerging democracies following authoritarian rule. Such an analysis will provide a better understanding of the role and importance of political Islam in different contexts and may even determine common trends among such Islamist movements so as to predict the challenges or the future of their involvement in the political sphere in given environments.

Furthermore, this study can be included in interdisciplinary methodologies, whereby sociology, economics, and history can be coupled to offer a more comprehensive and profound comprehension of the socio-economic variables that would determine certain behaviors and issues the political parties would face in such a situation, particularly after an uprising.

For this reason, it is of the utmost importance to carry out a study that is longitudinal in nature in order to acquire an understanding of the dynamic characteristics of political Islam and the long-term impact that it has on democracy. It is not possible to have a complete understanding of the long-term effects of political Islam within a timeframe of thirteen years.

Moreover, it is essential to recognize that the ever-evolving political environment in these countries, in conjunction with the public's reaction, calls for ongoing research in order to monitor the correct progress and changes brought about in the internal governance of states and international relations.

In addition, the findings of this research ought to significantly and comprehensively guide policy recommendations for the implementation of inclusive governance. Indeed, it is of importance for policymakers to have a thorough understanding of the complexities and problems that are associated with the incorporation of political Islam into democratic structures following an uprising. Such an understanding will make it possible for politicians to comprehend the subsequent repercussions and challenges that would result from such a circumstance.

Finally, this research addresses the gaps of the existing literature, investigating the role that Ennahdha and the Muslim Brotherhood play in political Islam in Tunisia and Egypt in order to fill in some of the gaps that have been identified in the existing body of literature. There is a lack of comparative analysis between the two countries, despite the fact that previous studies have investigated political Islam in both of these countries. The research is innovative and makes a contribution by providing a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which different leadership styles, ideologies, governance policies, and organizational structures within Islamist parties and movements can significantly impact the legitimacy, durability, and role that they play in the implementation of democracy.

Conclusion

This thesis examined the existing complex relationship between political Islam and transitional democracy in the context of the Arab Spring in two major countries: Egypt and Tunisia. Employing a comparative analysis that aims to emphasize the integral role political Islam plays in these emerging democracies, from facilitating democratic transition to presenting obstacles to it.

This analysis of Tunisia and Egypt highlights the contentious role of political Islam, which can both be a barrier and a driver for democratic change. The Ennahdha party was able to contribute to a more stable democratic framework and transition even during the elections, despite significant challenges related to the security and economic sectors alongside significant resistance from secular parties. The case of Tunisia demonstrated political Islam's capacity for ideological flexibility as well as an inclusive type of governance that allowed to co-opt and engage with different political actors and include them effectively. This type of adaptability and flexibility demonstrates that Islamic parties, if they prioritize dialogue and democratic principles like pluralism over ideological belief, may positively encourage democratic transition and maintain their position without losing an important amount of support.

Nevertheless, the example of the Muslim brotherhoods in Egypt demonstrates a different result, caused by their governance style, which was characterized by an inability to effectively navigate and adapt to the complex socioeconomic and political context. This ultimately resulted in public discontent and grievances, as well as the support of the opposition and deep state actors, which ultimately led to a military coup. This result demonstrates how a strict ideology and framework can pose a barrier to the democratic transition, particularly in light of the brotherhood's inability to recognize and take into account the needs and ambitions of the various political actors—who play a significant role in determining a political party's ability to govern—as well as the needs of the general public. The MB's monopolization of power, its authoritarian goals, and its lack of cooperation with the opposition to address sociopolitical and economic concerns highlights the main risks of this kind of leadership.

This research's major findings will be highly valuable for policymakers and scholars interested in the transitional democracy process and its dynamics in the Middle East and North Africa region. Suggesting that whether or not transitional democracies thrive is determined by political actors' ability to adjust to moderation, inclusion, and responsiveness to the concerns of the people and elite. It is also worth noting that this study emphasizes the role of civil society organizations in the moderation of political Islam and the mediation between political Islam, other state actors, and the people in order to implement good democratic governance, given that CSOs can limit any power excess through checks, fostering accountability, and directly opposing any attempt to monopolize power.

This research is also significant as it enhances the knowledge of the impact of political Islam on democratization, as well as the interaction between political Islam and other variables such as historical context and international political influences. Emphasizing the contentious and undefined role of political Islam in democratic transitions, the success or failure of political Islam is not solely dependent upon its governance style and its relationship with political actors and the general public but is also significantly influenced by the wider political context.

While this thesis provides substantial insight into the role of political Islam in transitional democracies, it perhaps overlooks other influences that shape transitional democracy. Setting out a wider framework for future research and extended comparative analysis across diverse contexts within the MENA region would contribute to a better understanding of how those other factors are affecting democratization, contextualizing the role of political Islam within specific historical, economic, and social contexts. In addition, a longitudinal study of how political Islam affects societies can also be advantageous.

In conclusion, this thesis offers significant insights into the interrelationship of political Islam with transitional democracy, highlighting its complexities to enhance understanding of transitional democracy in Muslim-majority countries, especially in the context of the post-Arab Spring dynamics. Exploring the impact of Islam, including its advantages and drawbacks. Can assist academics and decision makers in understanding the obstacles new democracies encounter in maintaining stability, inclusivity, representation, and

commitment to core values. Understanding the dynamics of Islam could potentially help progress towards democratic governance in countries like Egypt and Tunisia in the MENA region.

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