POMEPS
STUDIES
26

ISLAM *in a* CHANGING MIDDLE EAST

Adaptation Strategies of Islamist Movements

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PROJECT ON
MIDDLE EAST POLITICAL SCIENCE

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The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see http://www.pomeps.org.

Long repressed, banned, and exiled, many Islamist movements and parties across the Middle East and North Africa witnessed a moment of electoral success after the 2011 uprisings. Since then, their fates have varied widely. Some have made significant compromises to stay in power, others have ostensibly separated their religious and political efforts, while others have been repressed more brutally than before or have fragmented beyond recognition. What accounts for these actors' different adaptation strategies and divergent outcomes? Earlier this year, the Project on Middle East Political Science brought together a dozen top scholars for our 4th Annual workshop on Islamist politics to address these questions. Their excellent essays are available individually on the POMEPS website and collectively as POMEPS Studies 26, available now as a free PDF.

Many scholars are pushing to move beyond the traditional framing of Islamist movements. Khalil al-Anani challenges the approach that treats Islamist groups as collective entities, and discusses how personal experience of repression can influence individual members in contradicting ways. Likewise, Jillian Schwedler describes how the debate around inclusion (and whether it makes actors more moderate) is now moot as leaders increasingly move toward repression and away from inclusion. Elizabeth R. Nugent, meanwhile, challenges scholars' tendency to focus on the uniqueness of Islamist groups and encourages future research to compare similar organization operating in moments of political opportunity to help normalize the study of Islamist politics.

Eva Wegner uses innovative survey data analysis to rethink the common assumption that voters for Islamist parties are simply registering a protest vote, finding that ideology does, in fact, matter to many voters. Lindsay J. Benstead looks at the effect of the "Islamic mandate effect" on women's representation, where the level of freedom or regime control influences a party's ability to deliver on its promises of symbolic and service representation. In Islamic State controlled areas, Mara Revkin and Ariel I. Ahram look at the tenuous social contract in civil war contexts and how civilians – though they may not actually support that paradigm – sometimes use its institutions to speak up and voice criticism.

Several authors reveal the careful balancing act that Islamists must maintain to stay in power. Steven Brooke delves into the complicated relationship between Islamist movements' socio-religious activism and political engagement and attempts – some more successful than others – to separate the two. Quinn Mecham presents the unique case of Morocco's PJD party, which acts simultaneously a voice of opposition and of the government. Monica Marks examines the Tunisia's Ennahda highly contested compromise and contention.

Nathan J. Brown describes the state's messy involvement with Islam and its, often inelegant, attempts to craft and control religious messages through its bureaucracy. Annelle Sheline, looks at how regimes have wielded the rhetoric of "moderate Islam" to justify repression of Islamist opponents and seek out aid and support from Western governments. In a study of the Islah party in Yemen, Stacey Philbrick Yadav highlights the internal fracturing of the diverse party and questions western governments' continued reliance on it. Marc Lynch recognizes the difference between U.S. policy makers who readily "lump" all Islamists into one category and those who more carefully distinguish and operationalize differences among groups. Is the latter necessarily less dangerous?

Sharing insightful new research and posing key questions for future scholarship, POMEPS Studies 26 provides an excellent primer into the diverse adaptation strategies of Islamist actors in the Middle East and North Africa. Download it today.

Lauren Baker, POMEPS Coordinator
April 2017

Understanding repression-adaptation nexus in Islamist movements

Khalil al-Anani, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, Qatar

Responses of Islamist movements to the fast-changing local, regional, and global environment after the Arab Spring have varied greatly. While some movements adapted and made significant changes in their discourse, organizational structure, and strategy, others struggled to adopt short-sighted plans and change tactics to cope with the new environment. Moreover, while some Islamists maintained internal coherence and unity, others witnessed significant divisions and splits. Some movements fractured, creating ideological and political divisions that affected their role and activism.

This variance in Islamists' responses poses many challenges and questions to scholars of Islamist politics including: Why did Islamists respond differently to the Arab Spring? And what does this divergence tell us about Islamists' ideological commitment, political strategy, and organizational coherence/resilience? Moreover, why did similar ideological movements, such as the offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood, responded differently to regime repression? How one can explain, for example, the Ennahda Party's success at maintaining its defining role in the Tunisian transition with the Muslim Brotherhood's failure in Egypt? More importantly, why does the response of an Islamist movement to regime repression vary over time?

Raising these questions can help us to move away from the linear and mechanical hypotheses of inclusion and moderation – or its inverse version, repression and radicalization – which have dominated the literature on Islamists over the past decade. I also believe that disaggregating the *outcome* of these processes and practices can be more scholarly useful than struggling to prove or disprove them. Therefore, instead of being preoccupied by the outcome of inclusion/exclusion processes, we should deconstruct the underlying factors that affect and lead to them. Namely, why and under which circumstances can a specific type of repression (severe or moderate) lead to a specific type of dissent (small-scale or large-scale) that might result in a specific way/strategy of "adaptation" (accommodative/peaceful or confrontational/violence)?

Literature on repression-dissent nexuses is abundant. Scholars of social movements and contentious politics have extensively studied the relationship between regime/state repression and dissent/mobilization tactics of political and social movements. Usually, these movements tend to adapt when they are faced with regime repression and exclusion. Furthermore, several scholars have examined the inconsistent, if not contradictory, effects of repression on movements' behavior and mobilizing tactics. Mark Lichbach, for example, had adeptly investigated the puzzling effects of repression on dissents' tactics and whether it escalates or de-escalates (deters) dissent activities (Linchbach 1987, McAdam 1983, Davenport, Johnston, and Mueller 2005). This vast literature has attempted to not only disaggregate the repression-dissent nexus and rethink its linear or mechanical relationship but more importantly question and problematize it.

Despite the contribution of this literature, there are several issues that need to be examined, among them, for example, the relationship of structural and ideational factors in shaping Islamists' response to regime repression. The rigid dichotomy that dominates our assumptions and interpretive frameworks – such as political vs. ideological, institutional vs. organizational, etc. – doesn't help us capture the interactivity of these factors and its impact defining the outcomes of inclusion or exclusion processes. Another important area that is often neglected in the literature pertains to the impact of repression on the balance of power within Islamist movements and how it shapes internal politics and dynamics. As I have shown in my book, the impact of Mubarak repression on the Brotherhood's internal politics was remarkable. Not only did it enable the movement to maintain internal coherence and unity by generating solidarity among members and

legitimizing the adversity (*mihna*) narrative, but it also empowered the so-called conservative wing at the expense of the reformists.

One way to understand the repression-adaptation nexus is to contextualize Islamists within their environment and by studying each case separately. As Jillian Schwedler reminds us in her memo, there is a need for "understanding of the relations between exclusion and radicalism, between repression and dissent. The processes at work cannot be reduced to discrete dependent and independent variables, or to singular causes and effects. These are complex processes that can only be understood through detailed case studies, process tracing, and deep knowledge of the actors and practices involved".

In this memo, I propose an interactive approach that can help disaggregate the *adaptability* of Islamists. I define adaptation as the change in an actor's response (either strategic or tactical) to the actions/policies/behaviors of an adversary. This adaptation/change can be a result of either persuasion or coercion meaningfully connected to the actor's long and short-term objectives. The main premise of this approach is that disaggregating the multidimensional relationship between the dependent and independent variables can help us to consider the underlying factors that contribute to or shape Islamists' adaptation. Therefore, it focuses on the interconnectivity and interactivity of these factors.

While most literature on Islamists' response to inclusion or exclusion focuses on the direct/tangible factors (political, institutional, contextual, organizational, etc.), we know little about the indirect/intangible or "*mediating*" factors. These factors include memory, emotions (fear, hate, revenge, despair, resistance, etc.), history, and personal experiences, among others. Given the fact that Islamists operate in highly unusual circumstances, the impact of these *mediating/intangible* factors in interpreting Islamists' adaptation can be significant. More importantly, these "*mediating*" factors can help us avoid focusing on the traditional explanations of Islamists' adaptation, i.e. political and institutional vs. ideological and organizational, for more interactive and dynamic/relational explanations. To use Christian Davenport's words, these factors can help us when "addressing the fact that multiple things occur simultaneously across time and space," (Davenport 2005: vii).

The case of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood since the 2013 coup is striking. It shows how mediating factors can play a role in shaping a movement's strategy, organization, and behavior. The unprecedented repression against the movement has had a devastating impact on its members. This repression has interplayed with internal politics, shaping its dynamics over the past three years. The movement is divided across different ideological, organizational, and political levels. While the old generation defends the movement's traditional strategy of accommodating regime repression and pulling the organization underground, the younger generation tends to adopt a more confrontational strategy. And whereas senior leaders are willing to accept a compromise with the regime (no matter how much political gains they can get from it), youth leaders adopt a non-compromising position and remain defiant. The objectives of both sides are strikingly divergent. The former seeks to keep the old rules of the game, that is, *more space and less repressio*n, the latter wants an entire change of the game, that is, "either us or them." This divergence can be explained by, among other things, emotions, memory, and personal experiences. Reading and listening to the youth leadership, one can easily note the feelings of despair, revenge, and resistance that overshadow their statements. In interviews I am conducting for another project, some interviewees expressed bitter feelings towards not only the regime but also their leadership. They feel betrayed by both sides, albeit for different reasons, and have decided to take their fate into their own hands.

More interestingly, some of these mediating/intangible factors, can have mixed effects on the Brotherhood. Taking memory as an example reveals some of the contradictory outcomes of repression. The recent memory of massacres and killings against the Brotherhood after the coup seems to have a more significant impact on young Brothers than

the leaders. One interviewee who lost his brother at Rabaa massacre on August 14, 2013, recalls how shocking the scene was for him and his family to the extent he "would do anything to get revenge on the police" as he told me. Since then, he still receives counseling to overcome the images and memories of that gloomy day. Many young members in the Brotherhood have lost their lives or the lives of a relative or a family member since July 2013. They build their narrative against Sisi based on these personal experiences. Some, therefore, don't mind joining violent groups for the sake of revenge and to heal their personal wounds. They seek revenge from the regime and its officials. Their operations target officials who might have played a role in their anguish such as police officers, judges, and ministers. Their attacks are usually cheered by young members. Interestingly, the Brotherhood's senior leaders who spent their youth in prison under Nasser during the 1950s and 1960s invoke their own memories and narratives to endure and contain the calls for confrontation. The narrative of patience, endurance, victimhood, and God's revenge deals with feelings and emotions more than structural or ideological factors.

Based on the aforementioned observations, I would like to propose a few points for further investigation:

- There is a need to rethink the *collectivity* of Islamism as a socio-political phenomenon. Scholars tend to deal with Islamists as "collective" actors (we always study movements, groups, networks, etc.), which preclude us from looking at the individual factors (i.e. emotions, memories, personal experiences, etc.) and the role they might play in the movement's overall dynamics/decisions. We also need to pay more attention to the individuality or the *human/personal* aspect of Islamists and test whether it matters or not.

- Unpacking the repression-dissent/adaptation nexus requires more attention to the *mediating/intangible* factors and how they interplay with the structural factors in shaping a movement's response. The effects of repression on actors' behavior is far from consistent. In fact, in some cases, these intangible factors can play a more important role than the structural ones in explaining the mixed/contradictory effects of repression.

- We cannot explain the impact of *mediating* factors without integrating social psychology to the study of Islamism. As I explained in my book, some aspects of Islamists' activism, i.e. indoctrination, socialization, identity-formation, cannot be explained without combining social psychology to Social Movements Theory (SMT) as well as sociology of religion.

- What is the impact of repression, if any, on movements' internal dynamics/politics and how this might shape the balance of power and the relationship among different factions within these movements?

- How violence is framed, internalized, and legitimized inside and outside Islamists circles? What is the impact of violence on Islamists' popularity and constituency?

- What is the role of personal experiences, memories, spontaneity, etc. in shaping individuals' decisions and positions, from their relationships with their movements and leaders to their relationships with regimes, particularly during tough times? And how do members internalize these feelings/factors in everyday life? What effect, if any, do these feelings have on the movement?

- Giving the ongoing repression against Islamists in the Middle East, we need to start thinking about a range of new issues and phenomena related to this extraordinary experience, including: Islamists' migration/diaspora/exile; their ability to adapt with their new "homes/ghettos;" the unintended effects of migration, such as atheism, alienation, or extremism; the connection between internal and external organizations/leadership; and the mutual effects among Islamists from different countries, from Egypt, to Syria, Turkey, or Yemen.

- Islamists' experiences in prison and how they affect their worldviews, ideology, discourse, and personal life, particularly from a comparative perspectives, are also worthy to be studied.

- Finally, what is the impact of the rise of far-right and populist movements in Europe and the United States – particularly in regards to the ignorance and antagonism of the Trump administration towards Islam and Muslims – on the future of Islamists?

Understanding Islamists' divergent responses to today's fast-changing environment, will require tackling these issues and questions in future research and scholarship.

Khalil al-Anani is an associate professor at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He is the author of "Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: Religion, Identity, and Politics" (Oxford University Press, 2016).

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Why Exclusion and Repression of Moderate Islamists Will Be Counterproductive

Jillian Schwedler, Hunter College, CUNY

The inclusion-moderation hypothesis, is, for the moment, pretty irrelevant. A central debate in the field for years, this hypothesis asked whether political inclusion led actors to moderate as a direct consequence of their participation, and if so, precisely how and why. For decades, non-democratic regimes experimented with limited political openings and allowed opposition parties to participate in local and national elections. A burgeoning literature – to which I contributed (Schwedler 2006) – explored the political, ideational, and organizational effects of such political openings on the groups that chose to participate despite the game being controlled by the regime. As scholars produced an increasing number of empirically detailed studies, a number of patterns began to emerge in the literature (see Schwedler 2011, which includes a close examination of the extensive literature at the time). The primary objects of these studies were Islamist groups; a century earlier, they had been Christian and social democrats. Given the lingering precepts of Orientalism in the policy world (if less so in the academy), that focus was not surprising. Yet the glut of debate about "moderate" Islamists had little effect on policymakers already convinced that all Islamists were violent extremists. The debate illustrated a vigorous scholarly engagement with a real-world policy issue, with scholars aiming to bring systematic and careful study to highly charged issues, namely, whether the inclusion of certain groups would threaten democratic processes or democratic transitions. These views were shared by many of those in government with whom we had regular discussions.

We scholars emphasized that autocrats were never normatively committed to pluralist or democratic processes, adopting them instead as survival strategies in a world where local demands for reform were echoed by (some) international development agencies and sources of funding. Instead, we used labels like reluctant democrats, defensive democracy, democracy with adjectives, electoral authoritarianism, even illiberal democracy. We knew they weren't democrats, but we highlighted the democratic potential in those moments and processes – the ways in which even strategic and constrained political openings might advance more pluralistic and participatory politics. At least part of that was our thinking.

But that moment is now in the past. Autocrats today have little interest in, let alone patience for, utilizing carefully controlled quasi-democratic processes to deflate challenges either to their authority or to moderate radical opponents. Instead they are seeking to crush all opposition, moderate or radical, be it coming from a progressive, liberal, or even conservative impulse. With authoritarian populism on the rise in democracies and non-democracies alike, the U.S. election of a narcissist with autocratic tendencies only emboldens the members of what I call the Bromance of Autocrats[1]: the hyper-masculinist leaders who admire each other for their willingness to rule (and save) their nations, to push back against open borders, humanitarianism, compassion for others, tolerance, and (especially) multiculturalism. They see their nations as under threat, and they are willing to use "tough love" to say and do whatever is needed. They promote a new kind of "Daddy State," casting themselves as the iron-fisted fathers and protectors, doling out punishments for petulant children whose crazy ideas are threating the whole nation. The strict father can set things right again.

In this context, inclusion and tolerance has been abandoned for exclusion and repression. The exclusion-radicalism[2] hypothesis is the inverse of the inclusion-

[1] http://www.rooseveltthouse.hunter.cuny.edu/?forum-post=trump-bromance-autocrats

[2] The definition of "radical" is at least as fraught as that of "moderate." Here I just it only to refer to a continuum, from those on one end who are willing to work within the existing system (moderates), to those on the other end, who seek the complete overthrow of the system, using violence if necessary.

moderation hypothesis: it suggests a relations between increased exclusion and repression and increased radicalism, broadly defined as efforts to overthrow a regime (including through violence) rather than seeking to reform from within it. In the scholarly literature, however, there is little consensus on the effects of exclusion.[3] Christian Davenport, a preeminent scholar of state repression, has exhaustively examined the relevant literature and concluded that few consistent patterns emerge as to whether political exclusion and repression lead to an increase, decrease, or another outcome in patterns of radicalization.

Historically, some very strong examples suggest that repression encourages rather than crushes radicalism. One hypothesis is that under repression, radical ideas previously rejected by most people can become more compelling: the idea of overthrowing an entire system becomes more appealing when life under that system is unbearable. A related but not identical hypothesis is that because repression leaves dissenters few legal options or spaces in which to express opposition, underground radicalism becomes the only game in town. Dissenters either choose to do nothing and remain silent, or else join those in the shadows. These two arguments – that repression makes radical ideas more appealing, or that by closing down alternative spaces it leaves radicalism as the only option – can work in tandem or independently. Both suggest that increased repression is seldom a long-term means of eliminating radical opposition; indeed, the opposite may likely be the case.

Another hypothesis is that only extreme repression – zero tolerance – can crush radical opposition, whereas moderate repression creates the desire for groups to radicalize but still leaves them space to operate. A regime must not only eliminate a radical group entirely, but also leave absolutely no space for an alternative to emerge in its place.

In the Middle East, examples of each hypothesis abound. For the former hypothesis – that repression increases radicalism – numerous examples fit this pattern. In Egypt, some members of the Muslim Brotherhood arguably radicalized during the prison years of 1954-1970, when Nasser outlawed the former ally of the Free Officers (to eliminate political competitors). With thousands imprisoned, tortured, and ill from exposure, and their families subject to ongoing harassment, the radical ideas of Sayyid Qutb began to find a much larger audience than before. Qutb advocated not for gradual reform, but for the violent and immediate overthrow of the regime, even though Egypt's president was himself a Muslim. This idea represented a 180 degree pivot from that of Hassan al-Banna, the Brotherhood's founder, who had advocated for incremental reform from within society first, through education, social programs, and a gradual turn toward piety among the population. By the time Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, introduced political and economic liberalization in the 1970s, a significant jihadi movement had already turned away from Banna's more moderate approach in favor of the radicalism of Qutb (who was executed in prison in 1966, becoming a martyr). A key question here (as discussed below) is to what extent the repression of the prison years led some former Banna supporters to turn toward Qutb's radicalism, and to what extent Nasser's overall repression of an Islamist group brought entirely new (non-Brotherhood) actors into the new and growing radical camp.

For the latter hypothesis – that repression can effectively eliminate radicalism, at least for a time – one notable example is Hafez al-Asad's 1982 bombing and bulldozing of the city of Hamah to crush the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters, killing as many as 20,000 in the process. The Muslim Brotherhood did not radicalize as a result; it was effectively eliminated inside of Syria. But as we have seen in the past few years, even that repression did not prevent the Syrian Brotherhood from reemerging when an opportunity arose.

Across much of the Middle East – and indeed, globally with the "Bromance" nations – regimes are increasingly

[3] As I discuss in my 2011 review article, there is also little consensus on the effects of inclusion on moderation, in part due to substantive disagreement over the meaning of "moderation."

intolerant of all opposition deemed a threat to the nation, notably including Islamists of all ilk. As scholars, we have and should continue to locate these practices in historical comparisons to expand our knowledge about the relationship between repression and radicalization. The Bromance states might fruitfully be likened to a protection racket in the late Charles Tilly's sense: they create (or exacerbate) the threat to the nation, while simultaneously offering their citizenry protection from it.

But as scholars, we also need to move beyond these interventions – as necessary as they are – to advance systematic and detailed scholarly understanding of the relations between exclusion and radicalism, between repression and dissent. The processes at work cannot be reduced to discrete dependent and independent variables, or to singular causes and effects. These are complex processes that can only be understood through detailed case studies, process tracing, and deep knowledge of the actors and practices involved. As scholars, we are in a unique position to follow these developments closely as they unfold. Many of us already have contacts within these organizations and among other activists, affording us an inside view.

Below are a number of issues that are worthy of our ongoing attention.

1. Of those joining more radical organizations, who are former members of more mainstream groups and who is not? One hypothesis is that the core commitments of the Muslim Brotherhood groups are unlikely to change, but we are likely to see some members depart for more extremist groups. Similarly, we may see new members drawn into extremist rather than more moderate circles. These issues must be teased apart.

2. Are we seeing any organizational changes within the mainstream groups? Jordan remains one of the few states that has not repressed all Islamists, yet Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood has fractured into four distinct movements that cannot simply be reduced either to hawks and doves, or to Palestinian and Transjordanian camps. How did these divisions evolve, what practices are changing within them, and are the various groups espousing different ideological or normative commitments? Did state policies – inclusion or exclusion – play any role at all in the shifting internal group dynamics?

3. What are more popular perceptions of these various organizations? As Muslim Brotherhood groups are vilified in many nations, is there evidence that public opinion is following the regime's lead, or is the group again perceived as suffering and targeted because it refuses to become corrupt?

4. What is the effect of designating the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization on the various branches of that group? Saudi Arabia and the UAE have strong positions against the Muslim Brotherhood, even though Yemeni Brothers are fighting on the Saudi-backed side in the Yemeni war. If/when the U.S. Congress designates the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, how will that affect the toleration of moderate Islamists in U.S.-allied countries like Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan?

5. How are relations between various Islamist groups and non-Islamist groups changing? Is increased repression leading to cross-ideological alliances, perhaps in similar ways as explored in the inclusion-moderation literature? How can we best describe the lines of alliance and contention?

6. I repeat my intervention from previous years that one of the best ways to study Islamist politics from a new angle is to *not* study Islamist groups themselves, but to study other domains of activities and see where and how Islamists emerge into that picture. So instead of examining the effects of inclusion or exclusion on a specific group or movement, look at those effects across society, in a particular arena, and so on. We cannot de-fetishize Islamist politics by continuing to treat "Islamist politics" as a separate animal.

7. The literature on Islamists over the past 25 years has largely failed, I believe, in carefully considering the relations of these various groups to the larger political economies. We know that these regimes are differently engaged with and committed to various state-led or state-facilitated neoliberal projects, but we have paid less attention to how Islamists fit into such trends.[4] Most studies of the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, note that the group is committed to free trade (within Islamist constraints, although those seem to be easy to overcome), but focus on intra-group dynamics, group-regime dynamics, or relations with other social actors. There is little systematic exploration of connections with neoliberalism.[5] Given that much of the global politics of the late 20th and early 21st century is deeply connected to economic practices and priorities, it behooves us as scholars to think more systematically about how those processes, practices, and ideas have played a role in the shape of various Islamist politics.

Jillian Schwedler is Professor of political science at the City University of New York, Hunter College and the Graduate Center. She is author of "Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen" (Cambridge 2006).

[4] One exception has been the AKP and predecessors in Turkey, where the rise of these Islamists to power was examined in light of their commitments to neoliberal reforms.

[5] Deeb and Harb's *Leisurely Islam* is an important exception.

Islamists After the "Arab Spring":
What's the Right Research Question and Comparison Group, and Why Does It Matter?

Elizabeth R. Nugent, Princeton University

Since the 2011 "Arab Spring" uprisings that destabilized political regimes across the Middle East, scholars of Islamist parties[1] have been watching closely, documenting significant variation in these groups' experiences across different country contexts. In the six years since the uprisings, Islamist parties have faced a wide variety of challenges in transforming previously underground opposition organizations into fully functioning political parties. In some countries, Islamists have been charged with governing for the first time after winning majorities in elections. Islamists won electoral victories in the first post-authoritarian elections held in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, and fared well in electoral authoritarian systems like Morocco and Kuwait. Tunisia's Ennahda and Morocco's Justice and Development Party have been largely successful in navigating political power, both leading governments and acting as parliamentary opposition over the past six years. Both have moved towards separating their political parties from their religious movements in order to increase the professionalization of their political activity and to protect their *da'wa* (preaching or proselytizing) activities. In Jordan and Egypt, Islamists have increasingly faced repression by state entities since 2011. This was not in and of itself a new experience for these groups, but the repression has reached historic levels in scope and magnitude and has reshaped each organization beyond recognition.

To understand and explain the multiplicity of Islamist experiences, scholars must first answer two related questions with significant methodological implications – how can we best understand the scope and framing of our research on Islamists post-Arab Spring? And more specifically, what are the most relevant and fruitful comparison groups for analysis?

Studies of Islamists often analyze these groups in isolation. Islamist groups are sometimes analyzed as single case studies, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood (Wickham 2005). Far more research makes comparisons between Islamist political organizations (Al-Anani 2012; Bayat 2007; Brown 2012; Clark 2004; Schwedler 2006; Tezcür 2010; Wickham 2015), while other work compares Islamist political groups with other types of Islamist groups which similarly draw legitimacy from religious tenets but who differently balance the relative importance of reformist versus revolutionary behavior, hold different levels of respect for the central state, and employ different tactics in achieving their goals (for example, extrapolitical *jihadi* groups or apolitical *Salafi* groups; Ashour 2009; Wiktorowicz 2001, 2006). Sometimes, Islamist organizations are compared to other types of organizations mobilizing political ideologies drawing from religious tenets (Keddie 1998).

These comparisons are chosen for several reasons, all of which assume that a fundamental difference is created by the nature of religion, the nature of Islam, or the nature of authoritarianism in the Middle East, rendering these cases unique and these comparisons the most relevant and accurate. Though many scholars of Islamists do pose their inquiry as a general social science question of relevance to non-area experts, they then only present evidence from Islamist cases without drawing in relevant comparisons to make the case for generalizability. A more compelling analysis of Islamists would pose a more general question and answer it with comparative evidence, moving beyond the idea that religion, Islam, and the Middle East are

[1] A standard word of definitional clarification: As Schwedler (2013) notes, the term "Islamist" can encompass a range of political actors united only in their commitment to the application of Islamic teachings, in some form, to achieve social, political, and economic reform and which may not be similar in the form of political engagement through which they advocate this approach. Here, I use this term to refer to actors who are committed to the application of Islamic teachings and whose engagement takes the form of non-violent political contestation, including elections if/when available. I am explicitly not speaking about extrapolitical jihadi groups, or apolitical quietest movements.

politically unique. For example, Blaydes (2013) analyzes how women fare under Islamist rule by comparing female health outcomes in two Cairo neighborhoods matched on all attributes but Islamist governance. Masoud (2014) compares the electoral success of the Muslim Brotherhood and other secular opposition groups, arguing for a causal relationship through density of mobilization networks as the result of state-led economic development in Egypt. In two recent articles, Jamal, Masoud, and I compare the effects of priming Islamist versus secular justifications on support for women's political empowerment and compare support for secular nationalist responses versus Islamist nationalist responses in response to primes of western hegemony. These comparisons suggest these types of discourses and responses are often in competition, and are comparable on certain important dimensions.

In understanding the current moment more generally and Islamist behavior in it more specifically, scholars would benefit from extending the range of movements and parties with which Islamists groups are compared and considered comparable. By creating broader research questions that move up the ladder of abstraction, this research can turn away from exceptionalism in favor of normalizing Islamism in the comparative politics literature.

Scholars would also benefit from comparing the "Arab Spring" to situations where similarly sudden transitions occurred, the former opposition was swiftly empowered, and these new/old leaders either failed or succeeded in moving countries towards democratic consolidation, then carefully analyzing what factors contributed to this variation. In my own dissertation, I expand a comparison of Egypt and Tunisia with a chapter on Soviet bloc cases and find more similarities than differences. Although the axis of competition differs, the same factors appear to matter for explaining polarization among elites during transition periods – namely, experiences of repression and the extent to which groups suffered together. Scholars might also analyze evolution in Islamist ideologies and behaviors in places such as Tunisia and Morocco in comparison with the evolution of other oppositional and revolutionary groups, such as those in Latin America. There are similarities with cases where former revolutionary and opposition movements had to contend with updating objectives and remobilizing constituents following the accomplishment of some of their goals including their main one – regime change. Similarly, framing questions about developments related to Islamists in the post-Arab Spring period as research about electoral volatility, internal party discipline, and the establishment of partisanship and representative political systems asks bigger questions that harken back to studies of transitions in post-war Europe. Obviously, the conditions are vastly different across these waves of transitions, but analyzing these moments in conversation with each other can expand our theories and findings to consider the effect of different social, economic, and temporal conditions on political processes.

Scholars would also benefit from posing questions about Islamists in more general language, drawn from political science concepts rather than religious ones, and phrasing them as questions about authoritarian regimes, their inner functioning, and their lasting political legacies. For cases like the region's monarchies and other Arab countries that did not witness meaningful regime change following the 2011 uprisings, scholars might frame the study of Islamist behavior as a question of how opposition, regardless of ideology, takes advantage of moments of liberalization, or responds to the constriction of political liberties. Alternatively, scholars might analyze how the structure of opposition in certain types of non-democracies – such as monarchies – allows regimes to remain in power during moments of destabilization and prevents the opposition from effectively mobilizing or producing change. In analyzing recent developments related to and within the Muslim Brotherhood, scholars might ask how opposition groups in authoritarian regimes behave and adapt under instances of severe state repression, and with the passage of time think start to theorize and analyze the long-term impact of these experiences on ideology, behavior, and strategy.

Making different comparisons and asking broader questions is an important way in which political scientists

of the region can have the biggest intellectual impact, and allows area experts to contribute their in-depth knowledge of the specific of cases in service of expanding or challenging broader theories and assumptions. But more than that, getting the comparison and the question "right" is central to an empiricist epistemology.

Scientifically, how we conceptualize and compare Islamist groups matters for what conclusions we draw. For example, say scholars were to follow some alarmist regional and international media characterizations of recent developments as the "failure of Islamism," either the ideology or the types of structures it produces. This is a fundamentally different conclusion – with different lessons and different solutions – than if the research puzzle were investigated as a comparative question on the effects of dismantling authoritarian political and economic structures that have existed for at least a half century, or an investigation of the evolving behavior of opposition groups during democratic transitions, taking into account previous political experience.

Relatedly, the way in which political scientists working on the Middle East study Islamist organizations matters for the ways in which we can advance findings and theories of comparative politics. The study of Middle East politics still has much to contribute to broader literatures in comparative politics, not least the transitology literature. The transitology literature's development has historically advanced when a new wave of transitions, liberalizations, or destabilizations occurs, and political scientists with area expertise introduce new cases and conditions that we must collectively consider. This is a moment in which Middle East political scientists can do just that. By continuing to speak about Islamist behavior post-2011 specifically and Islamism more generally in a broader comparative framework, scholars can expand canonical political science literatures while challenging Middle East empirical exceptionalism.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, comparing Islamist movements to secular and other types of parties and movements intellectually normalizes Islamist politics in a broader sense. Too often when I present my work to my peers, I receive variation on the question, "Aren't politics based on notions of Islam different, because Islam itself is different?" The questions come from some of the smartest people in the discipline and reflect a widely-held assumption that Islamist politics are not only different from secular movements and preferences, but somehow different from movements and preferences based on other religious traditions. If there is a difference, we need to determine that empirically, and to investigate the nature and extent of that difference. And we can only do that by comparing Islamism with other types of secular and different religious political groups and preferences. If these comparisons can contribute to a normalization of Islamist politics, it will be a major contribution not only to comparative political research but also to broader public discourse around religion and politics, as we disseminate our work beyond academic circles.

Elizabeth R. Nugent is a PhD Candidate in the politics department of Princeton University.

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The Islamist voter base during the Arab Spring:
More ideology than protest?

Eva Wegner, University College Dublin

From the perspective of an Islamist party supporter in the Arab world, much has changed over the past ten years. In the mid-2000s there was barely any Islamist party with a formalized influence on policy in the region, the only exceptions being Hamas in the Gaza Strip, short-lived stints of Jordanian Muslim Brothers as government ministers and a handful of PJD-led local governments in Morocco since 2003. Voting for an Islamist party was essentially casting a ballot for an opposition movement, untainted by government involvement, without much influence on policies but significant credentials in grassroots activities and charity work.

Islamists have led governments in several countries, such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco but the fate of these governments has been vastly different. In Egypt, the Freedom and Justice party was ousted by a military coup in 2013 after just a year in power and has been violently suppressed since; in Tunisia, the Ennahda party led the first post-transition government but had to make substantial compromises in terms of power and agenda to make the transition work; in Morocco, the Justice and Development Party (PJD) has been "leading" the government since 2011 in what is still an authoritarian monarchy and was able to increase its vote share in both parliamentary and local elections held since; in Algeria and Jordan, it has been business as usual for Islamists, receiving small vote shares in inconsequential elections. In addition – and strongly related to post-Arab Spring developments – many Islamist movements and organizations have adapted their discourses and practices, while new, more radical groups inspired by some version of political Islam have sprung up to challenge mainstream organizations from the fringes.

In the context of such manifold changes, this short memo discusses voter profiles for Islamist parties in the Arab Spring environment. The main questions I seek to explore are whether Islamist parties represent distinctive sets of voters in the Arab World that display ideological attachment with party values or whether the success of Islamist parties in Arab Spring elections was mainly the outcome of clientelism or protest voting.

What do Islamist voters care about? What do we know?

Understanding drivers of support for Islamist parties has motivated several studies over the past decade. At least implicitly, much work is framed in terms of whether support for Islamist parties follows a clientelistic logic or whether these parties represent certain beliefs and values. This is not simply an academic question. If Islamist voters are motivated by clientelistic inducements, Islamist parties could pursue whatever policies they like with a certain level of detachment from and be unaccountable to their electorate. If voter values mirror Islamist ideological positions, these parties may represent relevant socio-political preferences, implying Islamist ideology is appealing beyond the elite/ activist level and ought to be taken seriously.

The *clientelistic narrative* originates in observations of the general importance of clientelistic inducements in Arab elections, i.e. the promise and handing out of particularistic benefits to voters such as gifts, jobs, money, or other favors (Blaydes 2010; Corstange 2016; Lust 2009). Islamists, with their myriad welfare/ charity organizations that often deliver jobs, emergency relief, medical care, help with education, and so on (see Clark 2003) should be particularly well positioned to deliver such goods and capitalize on this in elections.[1] As a high level of social desirability bias makes clientelistic voting behavior notoriously difficult to assess through surveys, clientelistic voting for Islamist parties has only been assessed indirectly,

[1] The most well-positioned actors for clientelistic electoral strategies are probably regime parties or well-connected individuals.

that is, via studies of voter demographics in actual elections (e.g Elsayyad and Hanafy, 2014; Gana, Hamme, and Rebah 2012; Pellicer and Wegner 2014). The assumption underlying these studies is that a voter base of mostly poor voters would be an indication of clientelistic party-voter linkages.[2] These studies have not found evidence of a clear-cut clientelistic profile of the Islamist electorate.

In the *representation model*, hypotheses are being developed about what Islamists are standing for, e.g. anti-democratic values, anti-globalization/ authenticity, piety, regime opposition, and so forth and assessed via public opinion surveys such as the World Value Survey or the Arab Barometer (e.g. Garcia-Rivero and Kotze 2007; Gidengil and Karakoç 2016; Robbins 2010). Most of these studies use different methods, data and analytical frameworks and focus on different sets of countries at different moments in time. Findings on the features of the Islamist electorate have thus not been robust and remained inconclusive.

In addition, many scholars argue that a *protest voter rationale* drives Islamist electoral support, at least in "founding elections" (e.g. Mecham and Chernov Hwang 2014). This argument posits that, after decades of repression and limited political inclusion by Arab regimes, Islamist parties were well positioned to attract voters dissatisfied with the status quo and looking for credible alternatives. While intuitively compelling, this argument has not, to best of my knowledge, been investigated thoroughly. An important implication of that argument would certainly be that whatever support Islamists might have attracted during elections in the Arab Spring context is shaky and not likely to stay unless Islamists were either able to address some of the citizens' core grievances or somehow manage to maintain a credible anti-elite discourse.

Islamist ideology resonates with Islamist voters

My current research on voting in the MENA (joint with Francesco Cavatorta) combines three surveys (the Word Values Survey, the Arab Barometer and the Afrobarometer) all implemented between 2011-2013 to examine values of Islamist and secular/left supporters in seven Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Palestine).[3] The results can speak to a rather simple question – that interestingly has not been addressed in studies of Islamist voter motives – namely, whether Islamist voters share some of the core values propagated by Islamist parties.

Values and policies promoted by Islamists may of course differ across (and within) countries – it is particularly difficult to pinpoint if there are Islamist-specific economic policies (probably not).[4] However, there are two sets of values that are core to any Islamist group. The first, and most important, is a preference for a greater role of religion in political and social life. The second is social conservatism, in particular when it comes to gender roles.5 Essentially, if voter values and party ideology were aligned on these matters, some form of programmatic party identification is likely even if it might co-exist with other support motives. In turn, if voter values and party ideology do not match, the rationale for casting a ballot for that party is unrelated to core ideology, for example it could follow a clientelistic logic or signal more trust in that party compared to others.

Figure 1 displays the values of respondents indicating that they would vote for an Islamist party "if there were elections tomorrow" compared to any other respondent in

[2] That poorer voters are more prone to respond to clientelistic offers is shown theoretically and empirically by a considerable body of literature (see Stokes et al. 2013 among many others).

[3] Not all countries are included in all three surveys but we have at least two surveys – around 3,000 observations – per country. Combining these three surveys enables us to check the robustness of findings across surveys.

[4] Several scholars argue that Islamists have generally liberal economic agendas with a strong private charity component, akin to "compassionate conservatism." Others highlight rather distributive policies. Above all, this underscores the fact that there is no distinctive "Islamic" economic model (Gerges 2012).

[5] This is perhaps more controversial. In several countries, Islamist parties were found to have more female candidates for office than other parties before such countries introduced gender quotas in parliaments. At the same time, there is a) evidence that these women were put on electoral lists for image reasons, such as in the PJD's case in the 2000s, (see Wegner 2011) and b) evidence that a lot of Islamist parties/ movements oppose pro gender equality political reforms regarding divorce or inheritance and favor a "special role for women".

the surveys.[6] As can be seen clearly in the figure, Islamist voters do indeed display values in tune with Islamist core messages, most strongly when it comes to the greater role of religion in politics. In contrast, there are no discernible differences between Islamist voters and others regarding economic issues such as preferences for redistribution or economic competition.[7] Figure 2 shows a few demographic features of Islamist voters during the Arab Spring period. To some extent, Islamist parties attracted a slightly better off group compared to the average citizen, with less poverty and more education. At the same time, Islamist voters in the seven countries were, on average, not more likely to have fulltime employment. They were slightly younger but had no gender defined profile. All in all, this does not look like to typical profile of clientelistic voters nor like a pronounced economic grievance profile – at least no more than the average MENA citizen at that time.

In addition, these data contain some items that speak to the protest voter argument, at least partly. It is a sensible assumption that protest voters would be those especially concerned with corruption, given its pervasiveness and the involvement of the old political elites in it. A protest vote can be viewed partly a vote against the corrupted status quo. Figure 3 shows the results of different survey items that address these questions. Contrary to expectations, Islamist voters are not more likely than others to mention corruption as their most important problem. In fact, on all other items relating to corruption, they are *less likely* than other respondents to believe that corruption is pervasive, that it has increased in recent years or that the government handles it badly. As these items come from three surveys, the general finding that Islamist supporters do not match the protest voter profile when it comes to corruption appears quite robust.

Figure 1

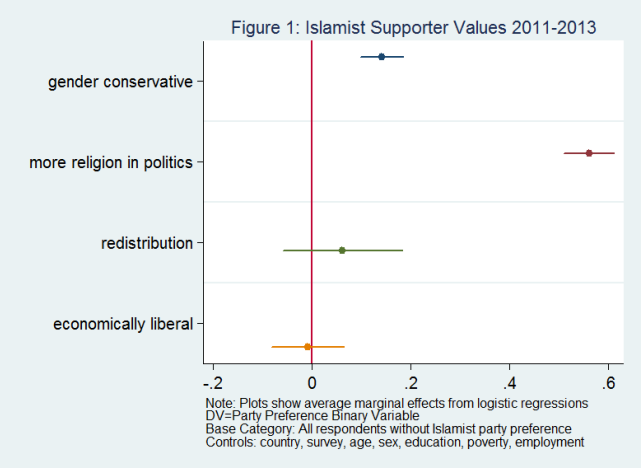


Figure 2

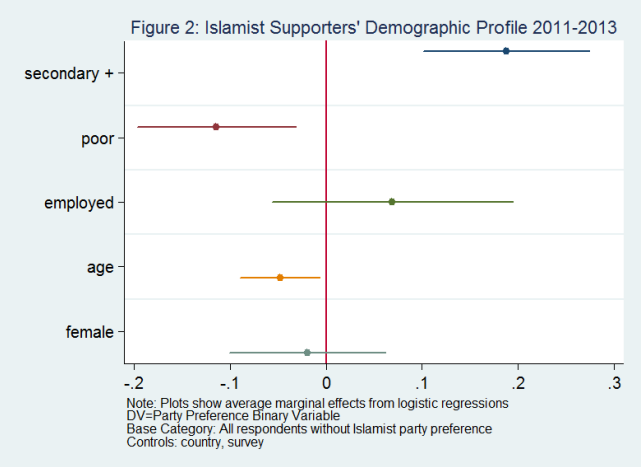
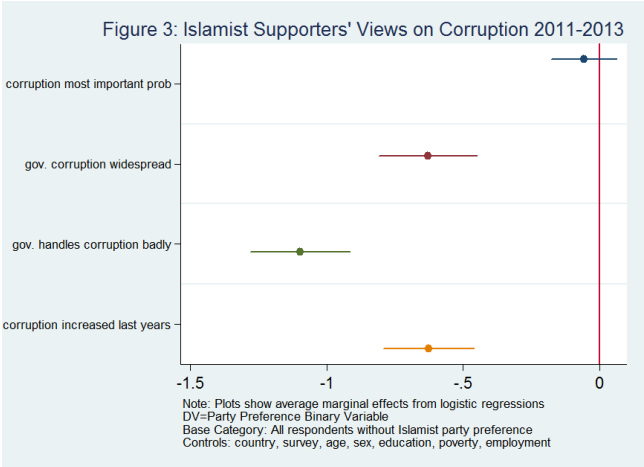


Figure 3



[6] Please see Wegner and Cavatorta 2016 for information on measurement and coding.

[7] Notice that these results are robust to using other empirical strategies. Most importantly, results are robust to using OLS regression of each individual value index on an Islamist voter dummy (plus controls).

The implication of these findings is relatively straightforward. To some extent an important motive for Islamist support is a very simple one, namely that Islamist ideology resonates with voters. This is particularly interesting if one considers that these surveys were taken during the Arab Spring at a moment when Islamist parties attracted particularly high voter shares. Moreover, the share of respondents indicating a preference for Islamist parties in the surveys exceeds the share these parties won in the Arab Spring (or other nearby elections), showing that these are not simply the values of a number of very committed sympathizers. The finding seems intriguing given that scholars (including myself) often explain Islamist support in terms of things *other than Islamist ideology*, such as their stance against corruption, the fact that they have not been tested in office or their grassroots activities. These factors might of course matter but should not lead us to overlook the attractiveness of the "Islamist part" of Islamist parties for a substantial group.[8] In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the ideological congruence result is fully robust across survey, country, and also holds for earlier surveys by the Arab Barometer and World Values Survey.

How salient the "Islamist" part of Islamist parties is for voters is another question. Economic problems such as unemployment, poverty, or general management of the economy consistently feature as "the most important problem of the country" for three quarters of respondents in surveys. Islamist voters are no different from the average citizen in this regard and could possibly be shifting if parties with clear economic visions emerged.

Outlook

To date, it is not clear how Islamist voter profiles will evolve, and one could imagine vastly different paths that mirror national experiences. For example, when Islamist parties participate in government, more spoils can be distributed which could attract new voter groups. Or, more optimistically, voters could be satisfied with the performance of Islamist national and local governments and shift their support to them.[9] The outcome in both cases would be a further broadening of the voter group with the party attracting people that are substantially different from the original group. Alternatively, Islamist parties could have adapted their positions on certain aspects, which could either lead to an adaptation of voter positions (if voters follow the party's lead) or to a changing voter base. In yet another scenario, being held at least partial responsibility for economic problems could reduce supporters to a core group of staunch ideologues.

The latest electoral results in Morocco show that the latter scenario has not (yet?) materialized there; to the contrary, support has been increasing strongly. [10] In Tunisia, it is too soon to tell but if surveys are any indication, support hoovers around 20 to 25 percent, something similar to the latest election. In Egypt, it is hard to say anything about who would today be supporting a party emerging from the Muslim Brotherhood – an unlikely event for years to come at any rate.

Eva Wegner is an assistant professor at the School of Politics and International Relations (SPIRe) at University College Dublin.

[8] How this ideology translates into policies and what level of radicalism of such policies would resonate with Islamist voters is another, mainly empirical, question that cannot be answered at this point given that no Arab Islamist party has remained in office long enough (or with enough power) to implement much of an Islamist agenda (and in a degree of variation that would allow exploring which type of policy voters endorse, on average).

[9] The Afro Barometer survey gives some suggestive evidence that in Morocco (and to a lesser extent Tunisia) stated support for Islamists goes together with positive evaluations of Islamist government participation. In these countries, Islamist supporters were more likely to state that corruption has been decreasing since the Arab Spring. Similarly, Islamist supporters in Morocco and Tunisia are more likely to state that the government does a good job handling "my most important" problem. This was not the case in Algeria, were Islamists had remained in the same - powerless - situation as before the Arab Spring. Relatedly, in research conducted joint with Miquel Pellicer on PJD-led local governments in Morocco we find that support in parliamentary elections increased dramatically in those places where the PJD led the local government and had a small governing coalition (see Pellicer and Wegner 2015).

[10] The PJD doubled the number of votes it received between 2007 and 2011 and again by another 50% in 2016. The PJD is the largest party in parliament but has only about 30% of seats and votes. Since the election last year, the party has been unable to form a government – reminiscent of what happened to the USFP in the 2002 election where, ultimately, the King "stepped in" and appointed Driss Jettou as Prime Minister

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When Islamist Parties (and Women) Govern:
Strategy, Authenticity and Women's Representation

Lindsay J. Benstead, Portland State University

How do Islamist parties under varying degrees of repression or freedom govern, and in what ways does this impact the quality or equality of governance? In a recent article written with Mounah Abdel-Samad, we examined this question in Tunisia, where Ennahda operates in a minimalist democracy and is, thus, free to implement electoral strategies and represent constituents in accordance with Islamist values and ideology.[1]

Ennahda emerged as an electorally successful party in the country's first free elections, winning the largest proportion of seats (37 percent) in the Constituent Assembly in 2011 and achieving second place (32 percent) in 2014. We find that Ennahda governs differently from non-Islamist parties, resulting in an Islamist mandate effect and better symbolic and service representation of women. By examining evidence from two other cases – Morocco and Algeria – we also clarify the conditions under which the Islamist mandate effect operates and shed light on how Islamist parties adapt to freer electoral environments, where they are better able to govern according to their values, and why it improves governance for women.

Islamist Parties and Women's Representation: The Case of Tunisia

Substantial literature shows that women are marginalized from political networks in clientelistic settings (Beck 2003; Goetz 2002, 2007; Tripp 2001) and, as a result, face barriers to elected office (Bjarnegård 2013) and services. Surveys of Moroccan and Algerian parliamentarians and Libyan citizens find that females have significantly less access to clientelistic services, but that electing women, particularly through quotas, reduces the gender gap (Benstead 2015, 2016a, b). Apart from a few studies (Arat 2005; Blaydes 2014), however, little is known about how Islamists – or Islamist women – impact women's access to services or ability to interact with elected officials.

Indeed, despite the growing role of Islamist parties in MENA politics, most literature and public attention focuses on how these movements impact substantive representation of women's rights.[2] Many pundits see the Arab spring's Islamist victories as a winter for women (Barchrach 2011). Yet while the media and scholarly literature debate Islamist parties' impact on women's rights (Marks 2012; Unal 2016), little research has examined their impact on women's symbolic and service representation. Briefly, symbolic responsiveness is interactions with constituents (Eulau and Karps 1977), which build trust and engagement and create conditions for service and substantive representation, in the form of club goods and legislation. Service responsiveness is providing services, such as healthcare, electricity, or jobs (Benstead 2016a). In authoritarian regimes, service responsiveness reinforces clientelistic norms, but provides critical services for marginalized groups.

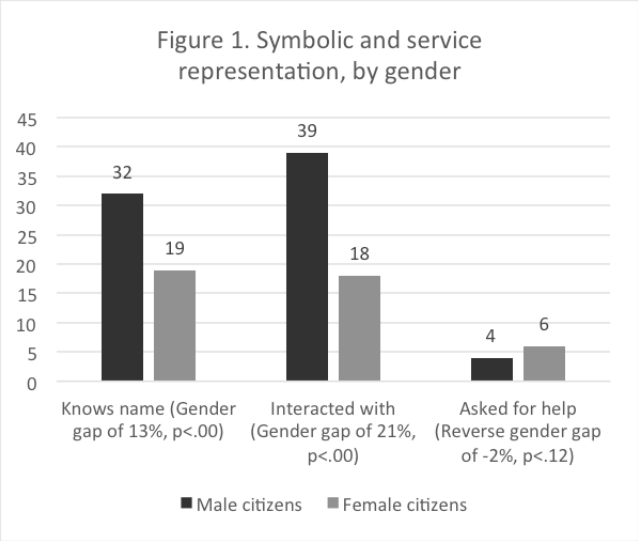
Conventional wisdom assumes that Islamist successes negatively affect women, whether in terms of family laws, service provision, or other governance outcomes. Yet literature on Islamist parties and governance suggests the picture is more nuanced; some studies suggest that Islamist parties benefit women by improving governance outcomes like healthcare (Blaydes 2014). Others suggest that the chief obstacle to gender inequality in government services may not be Islamism, but clientelism, which is

[1] This article draws on the Tunisian Post-Election Survey (TPES), conducted by Lindsay Benstead and Ellen Lust with funding from the National Science Foundation and is part of the Transitional Governance Project (TGP), and the Constituent Assembly Survey, conducted by Mounah Abdel-Samad with funding from San Diego State University. For a current version of the working paper, see Abdel-Samad and Benstead (2016).

[2] Substantive representation is, "advancing women's interests through . . . policy making" (Bauer and Burnet 2013, 104; Franceschet, Lena Krook, and Piscopo 2012).

deeply embedded in the Arab world's authoritarian and transitional political contexts and advantages men due to their structural and numerical dominance in positons of power (Sung 2003; Bjarnegård 2013).[3] Because Islamist parties are more internally democratic than some non-Islamist parties, serve marginalized communities, and institutionalize constituency service to avoid corruption and patronage, electing Islamists may diminish males' advantages accessing clientelistic networks and improve women's access to services. This would be particularly true if Islamist parties use women to mobilize female supporters in sex segregated, female environments such as homes, mosques, and social events, which increases women's access to clientelistic networks, while diminishing access for men, thus, creating greater gender equality.

In our paper, we take advantage of increased Islamist and female representation in transitional Tunisia, where Ennahda won 37 percent of seats and women gained 31 percent of seats due to a legislated quota in the 2011 Constituent Assembly elections, to test the impact of female and Islamist deputies on women's symbolic and service representation. To do so, we create three binary dependent variables, whether the individual: (1) knows the name of at least one parliamentarian from the district (symbolic representation), (2) has interacted with a member in at least one way, such as in a meeting, public place, deputy's home or office, party office, hearing about second hand, or is friend (symbolic representation), and (3) has asked for help with a personal or community problem (service representation, assuming that the requests are equally successful for men and women).[4] Figure 1 shows that, especially when it comes to symbolic representation, female citizens in Tunisia are significantly less likely to enjoy interactions and connections with parliamentarians than are men. We also use a survey of 80 members of the Tunisian Constituent Assembly, conducted by Mounah Abdel-Samad, to show that Islamist women deputies indeed use more social events than do non-Islamist women, while Islamist members use party offices more than non-Islamist members.



Source: 2012 Tunisian Post-Election Survey (TPES). For question wording, see Appendix.

Yet, consistent with other research, our analysis shows that electing women has a positive impact on women's symbolic and service representation. Controlling for relevant factors, women are more likely to know a deputy's name and have asked for a service in districts where a higher proportion of female parliamentarians are elected.[5] The results for Islamist parties are more striking. Islamist parties in general and Islamist female deputies in particular increase the probability women know a deputy's name and have asked for services (that is, symbolic and service representation). Islamist female deputies also increase the likelihood that women will interact with parliamentarians, while decreasing men's ability to do so (that is, symbolic representation).

[3] Clientelism is, an "informal relationship between two actors of asymmetrical socioeconomic power where the patron…controls… resources…clients pursue but often cannot receive otherwise" (Manzetti and Wilson 2007, 953).

[4] The indicator used for service representation is contacting a parliamentarian for help. Due to the small number of cases, we were not able to distinguish between successful and unsuccessful requests for help in the regressions. However, descriptive statistics show that men are slightly more able to get services – 26% of men and 21% of women who asked for a service were satisfied – even though the difference is not statistically insignificant (p<627).

[5] Although we found an effect on women asking for services, the number of observations was not large enough to test the impact on successfully receiving services.

Islamic Mandate Effect: Party and Gendered Components

We argue that Islamist and Islamist female deputies better represent women due to an Islamic mandate effect – Islamist parties' efforts to govern cleanly, provide services to the marginalized, and respect norms of piety and sex segregation by using female parliamentarians to reach women in private and public spaces, such as homes (Blaydes and Tartouty 2009). We adapt this term from Franceschet and Piscopo (2008), who argued that quota-elected women's perceived a mandate, or "obligation to act on behalf of women," due to their underrepresentation (394-395).

Our concept has two components, one stemming the parties' institutionalization of service provision (the party component), and the other from its use of female leaders to reach women (the gendered-component). We measure these two components using the proportion of Islamist, Islamist female, and female deputies in the district. First, in the party component, Islamist parties lower women's barriers to interaction with and services from parliamentarians as a result of four features of the party strategy to institutionalize and reduce their reliance on patronage in their constituency service practices. These include: (1) organizational capacity and direct contact with citizens, (2) effective social service provision, (3) use of ideological values (fairness and social responsibility), and (4) party reputation.[6] As a result, women are better able to bypass existing patronage networks and access services.

Second, in the gendered component, Islamist parties' use female members to mobilize and serve women citizens (Arat 2005; Ayata 1996) and, while not the only party to do so, have made use of quotas to increase the number of women in their organization (Clark and Schweder 2003). More than women from other parties, Islamist female deputies mobilize voters and reshape social networks by meeting other women in private spaces such as homes for weddings and teas and establishing linkages with women who were previously excluded from patronage networks (Arat 2005; Blaydes and Tartouty 2009; Clark 2004; Philbrick Yadav 2010). By emphasizing piety, Islamist parties create "sacred" spaces, which ensure that women can safely enter political offices and participate in meetings free from harassment and negative impacts on their reputation.

We also hypothesize and find evidence that female parliamentarians from across the party spectrum will improve representation of women, consistently with existing research (Benstead 2016a).

Comparative Evidence: How Islamist Parties Adapt

We find that electing women, as well as Islamist parties, improves symbolic and service responsiveness to female citizens in Tunisia. To support our argument with comparative evidence and elucidate the conditions under which we expect an Islamic mandate effect, we also draw on surveys of 200 Moroccan and Algerian parliamentarians, which show that members of the Islamist PJD in Algeria, independently of gender and quota status, receive more service requests from women than do non-Islamist parties, while Islamist identification has no impact in Algeria.[7] Accordingly, we argue that, in order for the Islamic mandate to take effect, Islamist party organizations must be able to act autonomously from the state (party component) and elect more than a few women (gendered component). These conditions help explain the presence of the mandate effect in Tunisia and Morocco, where Islamist parties had greater latitude vis-à-vis the regime and elected a number of women, but not Algeria, where these conditions were not present during the 2002-2007 parliamentary mandate. Islamist parties in Algeria's weaker and more controlled parliament had limited freedom to implement activities independently of the regime (Benstead 2016b). Islah in particular experienced regime interference, such as changes to electoral lists and had

[6] Islamist parties try to avoid traditional patron-client relations, but do not do so completely, sometimes expecting citizens receiving services to vote for them.

[7] Surveys of parliamentarians conducted by Lindsay Benstead. See Benstead (2016a) for more details on the methodology.

few resources to implement programs (Benstead 2008). Moreover, Algeria's two Islamist parties (2002-2007), MSP (formerly HAMAS) elected no women, while Islah had only one female deputy.

Some Islamist movements face persecution, which has only increased in certain contexts since the Arab spring. This has placed severe limitations on their ability to operate and forced them to make organizational, ideological, and strategic changes. In other contexts, the Arab spring has brought more freedom for Islamist parties and they have adapted in ways that shape governance outcomes for minorities. The impact of Islamist parties' success reaching out to a wider range of constituents, including women, is likely to remain pertinent as Islamist parties continue to evolve with changing contexts.

Lindsay J. Benstead is an associate professor of political science at the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government, Portland State University.

Appendix: Question Wording

Knows name: "Please name for me deputies currently elected to the Constituent Assembly from (electoral constituency)?" Interacted with: Has done at least one of the following: "Have you ever: (1) Attended a meeting where a Deputy from this district spoke or appeared?" (2) "Seen any Deputy from this district in a public place such as in the street, a cafe, or a mosque?" (3) "Visited or seen the local office or home of a deputy from this district?" (4) "Visited any Deputy from this district in their party office?" (5) "Heard about any Deputies from this district secondhand?" (6) "Is a Deputy from this district simply a friend or family member and that is how you recognize their name?" Asked for help: "How many times have you or any member of your household living here tried to contact a current member of the Constituent Assembly – that is someone elected October 23, 2011 – to seek help with a personal problem, a social or economic problem your community is facing, or to express an opinion?"

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Exit, Voice, and Loyalty Under the Islamic State

Mara Revkin, Yale University and Ariel I. Ahram, Virginia Tech

The social contract is a conceptual cornerstone of contemporary political theory. States that violate this contract lose legitimacy and face popular resistance. In the Arab world, there has long been discussion about states' inability to uphold their end of the social bargain and failure to maintain socio-economic protections and benefits for their citizens.[1] Opposition factions offer alternative visions of the social contract, often drawing on Islamist discourse.[2] The 2011 uprisings have made the question of renewing the social contract especially salient, as armed rebel factions have seized the opportunity to assume control over significant territories and populations. In doing so, they are attempting – with varying degrees of success – to construct new social contracts and de facto states.[3]

Studies of civil war and state failure increasingly posit the existence of a distinctive rebel social contract. Some scholars see this contract as primarily a material exchange. Rebel rulers provide security to civilians in exchange for taxes, military service, or other types of labor.[4] Other scholars focus on the symbolic, ideological, and moral dimensions of the contract, arguing that rebel groups use the social contract to communicate their normative priorities and values to civilians and capitalize on grievances against the nominal state.[5]

This memo examines the idea of the social contract as articulated by the Islamic State (IS). Since seizing control over eastern Syria and western Iraq in 2014, IS has claimed to be building a caliphate according to the model laid out by the Prophet Mohamed in the seventh century. Unlike other violent jihadist groups that seek to take control over existing states, IS sees itself as creating a wholly new state and social contract of its own, albeit one that benefits from the capture and cooptation of existing institutions and infrastructure. Since 2014, IS has taken on many state-like function including taxation, policing, dispute resolution, and service provision.[6] While these governance activities are to some degree observable, the social contract upon which they are based is a more challenging object of empirical inquiry. Using Albert Hirschmann's exit/voice/loyalty schema,[7] we propose a qualitative methodology for studying the IS social contract – and the social contracts of other rebel groups – by examining the different ways in which civilians respond to IS's invitation to become citizens (or subjects) of its caliphate..

The Ambivalence of Rebel Social Contract

While social contract theory has a long lineage in political philosophy, empirical and historical researchers have been

[1] World Bank, MENA Economic Monitor: Towards a New Social Contract, April 2015, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/202171468299130698/pdf/956500PUB0REVI020150391416B00OUO090.pdf.

[2] Akhavi, Shahrough. "Sunni modernist theories of social contract in contemporary Egypt." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35.01 (2003): 23-49; Jones, Toby. "Seeking a 'Social Contract' for Saudi Arabia." *Middle East Report* 33.3 (2003): 42-47; Wiktorowicz, Quintan. *The management of Islamic activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and state power in Jordan* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001); March, Andrew F. "Reading Tariq Ramadan: Political Liberalism, Islam, and 'Overlapping Consensus.'" *Ethics & International Affairs* 21.4 (2007): 399-413; Harrigan, Jane. "Economic Liberalisation, Social Welfare and Islam in the Middle East." *Development Viewpoint* 25 (2009).

[3] Lynch, Marc. "Failed States and Ungoverned Spaces." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668.1 (2016): 24-35; Ahram, Ariel I., and Ellen Lust. "The Decline and Fall of the Arab State." *Survival* 58.2 (2016): 7-34.

[4] Arjona, Ana. "Wartime Institutions: A Research Agenda." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58.8 (2014): 1360-81; Weinstein, Jeremy M. *Inside rebellion: The politics of insurgent violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101.

[5] Mampilly, Zachariah Cherian. *Rebel rulers: Insurgent governance and civilian life during war* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Hoffmann, Kasper, "Myths Set in Motion: The Moral Economy of Mai Mai Governance," in Arjona, Ana, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Mampilly, eds. *Rebel Governance in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[6] Mecham, Quinn. "How Much of a State is the Islamic State?," Washington Post Monkey Cage, February 5, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/02/05/how-much-of-a-state-is-the-islamic-state/?utm_term=.f72e27cd4df7

[7] Hirschmann, Albert O. *Exit, voice and loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970).

skeptical of its validity.[8] At its most basic level, a social contract requires evidence that a would-be ruler **offers** a set of protections and benefits and that a population voluntarily **accepts** that offer, granting their loyalty and obedience. Finding evidence of popular acceptance is a daunting challenging. It is difficult to distinguish between genuine expressions of loyalty that legitimate a regime and disingenuous shows of support induced by coercion or the desire to avoid punishment.[9]

Periods of civil war and state breakdown naturally invite the renegotiation and reconstruction of existing systems of social and political order. Civil wars therefore present a unique opportunity to observe the breaking of existing social contracts and the emergence of new ones. However, data collection in or near conflict areas is uniquely challenging, requiring that both researchers and their subjects navigate complex security risks and ethical considerations.[10]

From an empirical standpoint, the rebels' offer of a new social contract can be ascertained from official communications and policies by the rebel government concerning services and public goods provision, as well as unofficial statements made by rebel group members on social media or in interviews. Ascertaining acceptance of the rebel social contract, however, can prove more difficult. Adapting Hirschmann's formula to the context of civil wars[11], we identity three potential responses:

- **Loyalty** is a response in which civilians either explicitly or silently accept the terms of the social contract. Expressions of loyalty are a kind of "straw in the wind"[12] evidence, since these expressions can be motivated either by genuine acceptance of the terms of the offer, or by fear of the consequences of refusal.

- **Voice** is a response in which civilians implicitly accept the social contract by criticizing the rebel government or seeking to hold it accountable through institutional processes rather than resorting to violence or rebellion. Voicing criticism through institutional channels is, paradoxically, a stronger indication of acceptance of the basic legitimacy of the system.

- **Exit** is a response in which civilians signal their rejection of the terms of the social contract by leaving rebel-controlled areas ("voting with their feet"). Another form of exit is participation in armed resistance against the rebel group –a kind of rebellion within a rebellion. Exit is generally a strong indication of rejection of the terms of the social contract.

In the sections below, we apply this strategy to identify the key components of the social contract that IS claims to be offering to civilians in Iraq and Syria, and to describe the spectrum of civilian responses to it.

Exit, Voice, and Loyalty in the Islamic State

Our empirical research is based on multiple qualitative sources: first is a review of official IS publications and statements, especially the constitution-like "documents of the city" (*watha'iq al-madina*) that were issued in various IS provinces and online beginning in 2014. Second is social media data generated by users in IS-controlled areas of Iraq and Syria. Finally, Mara Revkin conducted interviews with 88 individuals who have lived in or travelled through IS territory. Many of these individuals have paid taxes to IS, used IS courts, been arrested or imprisoned by IS, or have

[8] On skepticism toward the social contract as concept, see Durkheim, Emile. *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 159.

[9] Kuran, Timur. *Private truths, public lies: The social consequences of preference falsification* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Scott, James C. *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[10] Malejacq, Romain, and Dipali Mukhopadhyay. "The 'Tribal Politics' of Field Research: A Reflection on Power and Partiality in 21st-Century Warzones." *Perspectives on Politics* 14.4 (2016): 1011-1028; Cohen, Nissim, and Tamar Arieli. "Field research in conflict environments: Methodological challenges and snowball sampling." *Journal of Peace Research* 48.4 (2011): 423-435; Wood, Elisabeth Jean. "The ethical challenges of field research in conflict zones." *Qualitative Sociology* 29.3 (2006): 373-386;

[11] These elements borrow from Barter, Shane. *Civilian strategy in civil war: Insights from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2016).

[12] Van Evera, Stephen. Guide to methods for students of political science. Cornell University Press, 1997.

relatives who have joined IS. Twelve are former IS fighters who had deserted or defected to a rival group. In addition, Revkin conducted Skype or text message interviews with six self-identified IS supporters and combatants living in Syria and Iraq.

There is very strong evidence that IS leaders consider themselves to be offering the population a social contract. The "documents of the city" appear to be inspired by a constitution-like text allegedly drafted by the Prophet himself to govern the city of Medina in the year 622. These documents explicitly refer to the idea of a contract (*'aqd*) between ruler and ruled and purport to "define the shari'a principles and Islamic regulations by which the shepherd and the flock are bound."[13] (see Table 1)

In these documents, IS describes three main categories of entitlements for civilians: (1) justice, (2) protection, and (3) services. In exchange for these benefits, civilians are obligated to fulfill two primary duties: (1) exclusive allegiance to IS and (2) support for its state-building project, either through military service or tax payments. IS purports to be creating a system of accountable governance, based on reciprocal obligations between the people and the government led by the caliph. In theory, the caliph can be removed for failing to uphold his duties. In practice, however, the IS social contract is a highly authoritarian. Opposition is easily construed as blasphemy or apostasy – offenses punishable by death according to IS interpretation of Islamic criminal law.

We identify a spectrum of different responses to IS's offer of a social contract: (1) loyalty, (2) criticism, and (3) exit. Loyalty is most obviously expressed in the swearing of an oath of allegiance to the IS caliph known as "*bay'a*." In Islamic political philosophy, the bay'a oath is understood as a contractual commitment to remain loyal to a leader in return for political protection and the upholding of justice.[14] Many modern rulers (including Saddam Hussein and Hafez al-Assad) have used this ritual as part of their efforts to enhance their legitimacy. IS media has published announcements both of individuals offering the oath, as well collective pledges of allegiance by whole tribes or large groups of people gathered in public squares. Civilians living under IS rule overwhelmingly comply with IS's strict rules regulating clothing, behavior, and gender relations. They attend IS-run schools, use IS-run hospitals, and pay taxes to the IS treasury. It is difficult to discern the meaning of cooperation in such an authoritarian context. Compliance motivated by fear and coercion is observationally equivalent to compliance motivated by genuine belief in the legitimacy of IS rule.

A more useful test of public acceptance of IS social contract comes from the voicing of criticism. We have found numerous examples of civilians using IS's own institutions (including courts and official "complaints" departments) to express grievances and file complaints against the IS government as a whole or against particular fighters or officials. For example, in Deir Ezzor eastern Syria, an IS court was pressured into reconsidering its decision to sentence an epileptic man to death on charges of blasphemy after 100 members of the community, including doctors, testified that the alleged statements were involuntary result of his medical condition.[15] IS formed a fact-finding commission to investigate the court decision that included judges from other districts. Although the decision was upheld, the case nonetheless suggests that civilians sometimes avail themselves of IS's official complaints procedures and that IS does respond to public opinion. Another example comes from the Syrian city of al-Bab. According to our interviewee, a traffic police officer was caught intimidating, harassing, and extorting bribes. IS officials investigated the officer and sentenced him to death. They crucified the body and displaced it in the public square with a sign that stated, "This was one of our officers. Because of his corruption, he has been punished according to sharia."[16] Public complaints against IS suggest not only dissatisfaction but also acceptance of the basic validity and procedural fairness of IS institutions. If civilians had no confidence in the ability

[13] Islamic State, Maktab al-Himma. "Document of the City, Second Edition." (January 2016). Available for download at https://archive.org/details/wth_mm.

[14] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqadimmah: An Introduction to History*, tr. Franz Rosenthal, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) Vol. 1, 428. See also Khel, Muhammad Nazeer Ka Ka, and Mohammad Nazeer Ka Ka Khel. "Bay'a and its Political Role in the Early Islamic State." *Islamic Studies* 20.3 (1981): 227-238.

[15] Interview with Haitham, Şanlıurfa, September 2016.

[16] Interview with Saad, November 2016.

Table 1. Excerpts from the Islamic State's "Document of the City" [17]

Document of the City (*Wathīqat al-Madīnah*)	
Art. 1	"We [the Islamic State] have taken responsibility for restoring the glories of the caliphate and ending the oppression and injustice suffered by … our Muslim brothers."
Art. 2	"We do not make accusations without clear evidence and proof. … We show mercy to Muslims as long as they do not give aid to aggressors and criminals."
Art. 3	"The people in the shadow of our rule are secure and safe. … Islamic governance guarantees the rights of the people and seeks justice … when their rights are violated."
Art. 4	"The funds that were under the control of the apostate government (public funds) must be returned to the public treasury under the authority of the Caliph of the Muslims, who bears responsibility for spending these funds in the *maslaha* [interest] of the Muslims. No one is permitted to reach out his hand to loot or steal … or he will be brought before the *shari'a* judiciary. … Whoever steals private property in the form of money, furniture, and [other] possessions from a private place without doubt will have his hand cut off. … Whoever terrorizes the Muslims with brigandage or extortion will be subject to the most severe deterrent punishments."
Art. 5	"Producing and dealing alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, or other forbidden items are prohibited."
Art. 6	"Mosques are the houses of God. … We urge all Muslims to build them and pray."
Art. 7	"Beware of dealing with the apostate governments and tyrants … He who repents of sin is not guilty of sin. To the apostates of the army and police and the rest of the unbelieving apparatus, we say that the door of repentance is open to anyone who wants it. We have designated specific places to receive those wishing to repent subject to conditions. For those who insist on remaining apostate, there is no alternative but death."
Art. 8	"Parties, councils, associations, and banners [bearing the names of other groups] are unacceptable."
Art. 9	"God commands that you come together, unite, and renounce factions and strife … Division is one of the traps of Satan."
Art. 10	"Our opinion regarding … polytheistic and pagan shrines is that of the Prophet [who prohibited them]."
Art. 11	"To the virtuous and noble women … God urges modesty, covering, loose garments, and veiling the head and face. Embrace prudence and do not leave the house except when necessary."
Art. 12	"Enjoy Islamic governance, which is just and benevolent … [The Islamic State will] spread the authority of the shari'a and release the people from the shackles of rotten positive laws."
Art. 13	"We listen to the counsel of the young and the old and the free and the slave. In our eyes, there is no difference between red and black. We judge ourselves the same as we judge others just as God said, 'Be firm in justice … even if against yourselves, parents or relatives' [Quran 4:135]."

[17] Excerpts translated by Mara Revkin. Islamic State, Maktab al-Himma. "Document of the City, Second Edition." (January 2016). Available for download at https://archive.org/details/wth_mm.

of IS institutions to adjudicate complaints, they would not bother submitting them.

In addition to formal complaints, civilians have occasionally organized public protests and demonstrations, especially in the early stages of IS control. While these are anecdotal, they illustrate some of the ways in which civilians attempt to hold IS accountable to its own social contract. In the Syrian city of al-Bukamal, for example, one Twitter user reported, "A group of locals went to the center of the hisba [religious] police to complain to them about their conditions without electricity and the rising prices of water and food."[18] In another example, a Facebook user reported that approximately fifty women protested outside of the IS court in Raqqa to demand the release of their imprisoned sons in April 2014.[19] However, as IS consolidated its control, civilians became increasingly reluctant to criticize the regime for fear of reprisals. Public displays of opposition are now rare or non-existent in IS-controlled areas of Iraq and Syria.

Finally, a third potential response to IS's offer of the social contract is that of exit or "voting with one's feet." We interpret the decision to leave IS-controlled areas as a clear rejection of the terms of its social contract. When IS first began capturing territory in Iraq and Syria, the group initially allowed civilians to leave freely, so it was possible to observe massive out-migrations of civilians from cities like Mosul. As IS faced more military pressure and began retreating from previously held territories in 2016, however, it became more restrictive toward emigration and eventually banned travel outside of the caliphate except for medical emergencies or other extenuating circumstances. As a result, refugee outflows are no longer an accurate measure of the extent to which civilians reject IS rule. Instead, those who reject the IS social contract but are unable to leave its territory peacefully will be more likely to resort to armed rebellion or other extra-legal efforts to overthrow the IS government. Evidence of rejection can be seen in assassination attempts targeting IS officials and other armed attacks on IS property and infrastructure.

Conclusion

Many analyses posit that re-negotiating the social contract is the key to stability and prosperity in the Arab world. From political parties that seek to participate peacefully in electoral institutions to violent Salafi-jihadist groups like IS, Islamist factions play a major role in the struggle. IS capitalized on the failures of the Syrian and Iraqi regimes to provide good governance and accountability. IS uses the symbols and historical references to medieval Islamic history though notions of 'aqd and bay'a, but it articulates a social contract that invokes themes of justice, accountability, and economic equality that parallel the unfulfilled promises of modern, secular Arab states.

Evaluating civilians' choices to use exit, voice, or loyalty under IS highlights the ambiguity and ambivalence surrounding the idea of the social contract. The social contract is important to IS's image of itself as a state. Yet there is considerable variation in civilian attitudes and behaviors toward the social contract that IS purports to be offering them. Some civiliasn may not view it as a social contract at all but instead as an authoritarian regime that was imposed on them unilaterally, without any consent or negotiation. As IS consolidated control and then saw its expansion falter, the state relied more and more on coercion and intimidation to secure the compliance of its population. This indicates the limits of social contract theory in conditions of civil war. Political order might arise, but it is often based on domination rather than legitimacy.

Mara Revkin is a fellow with the Abdallah S. Kamel Center for the Study of Islamic Law and Civilization at Yale Law School, where she earned her J.D. and is pursuing a PhD in political science at Yale University.

Ariel I. Ahram is an associate professor of government and international affairs (GIA) at Virginia Tech's School of International and Public Affairs.

[18] @aymanprince2020, Tweet, August 27, 2015. https://web.archive.org/web/20161127121333/https:/twitter.com/aymanprince2020/status/636837957140369409.

[19] A group of approximately fifty women protested outside of the Islamic Court to demand the return of their imprisoned sons in April 2014. Facebook post by Manhal Abdulrazak, April 27, 2014. https://www.facebook.com/zed.Alfares/posts/10203705422626194.

The Muslim Brotherhood Between Party and Movement

Steven Brooke, The University of Louisville

Perhaps no actor touched by the uprisings in the Arab World saw their fortunes change as dramatically as did Islamist groups. In Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, the Muslim Brotherhood plunged into electoral activism and were rewarded with significant political authority, including the head of state. But these promising initial gains have since yielded to a series of setbacks, as resurgent autocracy, jihadist violence, and state failure have forced the region's Islamists to accommodate to uncomfortable and often unexpected realties. In the aftermath, these organizations have adopted a variety of strategies designed to both cope with past failures and open possibilities for future success. One key development – that cuts across issues of organization and ideology – is Islamist groups' growing recognition of the need to establish some type of separation between partisan and socio-religious activism.

The question of where and how to draw the line between politics and other types of activism has been a fault line in Islamist groups for decades. But the Arab uprisings and their aftermath have brought these fissures – and their consequences – to the fore. After Egyptians witnessed an unprecedented crossover of the Brotherhood's social and political activities in early 2013, certain members of the group in exile have noted the damage this did to the Brotherhood's overall mission. Reflecting on that time (and potentially angling for reconciliation with Egypt's new regime), one minister in Morsi's government claimed that allowing the movement and the party to overlap was "the largest mistake that took place." A prominent Freedom and Justice Party parliamentarian concurred, noting in May 2016 how "the whole group is (now) determined to keep the competitive partisan side away from the educational and reform side and activities." A few days later, the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia, the Ennahda party, attempted to preempt such concerns by formally adopting a split between partisan activism and social outreach at their party congress. Other Brotherhood branches in Jordan and Morocco currently attempt to maintain a similar divide, albeit under more restrictive political conditions than their compatriots in Tunisia.

Such a separation may be a rigorous organizational firewall, as in Tunisia or Jordan (the latter more in theory than practice), or it may emerge as a less-formal effort to dissuade members from straddling the divide. Yet as these questions play out inside Islamist movements, it is worth considering how they will engage questions of Islamists' relationships with society, their ability to enforce the separation amidst the rough and tumble of politics, and the very identity of Islamist groups vis-à-vis other types of religious activism.

It is not clear if such proposed (or enacted) efforts truly reflect the careful considerations leaders with the assent of membership or are more the result of *ad-hoc* adaptation to facts on the ground. Leaders in the Muslim Brotherhood have long considered that the group's efforts are indivisible (i.e. Islam is a comprehensive system and matters of religion, society, and state are inseparable). Mohammed Badie, for instance, the Brotherhood's General Guide, told Brotherhood members in a weekly message that "We worship Allah by politics and *da'wa* together and don't separate between them." And even though Ennahda's May 2016 decision to separate the wings of the organization was reported to have won the support of "strong majorities" from the membership, the same report notes how "many Ennahda leaders and supporters were initially skeptical of formalizing changes to the *hizb-haraka* (party-religious movement) relationship."

If the separation is purely a response to immediate contextual factors rather than fundamentally reconsidering the precise relationship between politics and socio-religious activism, then it is an open question as to how durable the separation will be. For example, partisan activism and social reform may be aimed at the same endpoint, but they proceed along divergent paths at

different speeds. Social reform takes place quietly, gradually, and usually in harmony with underlying principles. Politics, in contrast, requires an ability to cut deals with ideological opponents (and the flexibility to rationalize them), and a willingness to accept defeats, all performed in the public eye. To the extent that these can be separate it may be a boon to an organization, allowing people with different interests to engage in the types of activism that most interest them. But any organization engaging in both will likely – if not definitely – be forced to cope with the possibility that the inevitable failures of politics will color citizens' views of the non-political as well. Reflecting on the 2011 to 2013 period, Amr Darrag, a former minister in Morsi's government, argues that, "[t]he Brotherhood bore the mistakes in [the party's] political tactics, despite the fact that the party benefited from the Brotherhood's support." Proactively and publicly separating the party from the movement – as Ennahda has done – may prove enough to prevent a similar fate from befalling that organization, but this remains an open question.

Darrag's observations about the Morsi era hints at a second consideration – the extent to which these organizational changes can even be maintained in practice. In the case of the Tunisian Ennahda, a history of extensive repression meant that the linkages between politics and social activism were much less developed than in other countries. Indeed, there is much less of a social sector for Ennahda to even separate from, which assumedly made the bifurcation easier than it might be elsewhere. Critically, however, the new setup has not yet been subject to any electoral pressure, which will presumably come during the municipal elections tentatively scheduled for 2017.

And these contests will show the difficulty of maintaining the separation under the heat of electoral competition. While it is one thing to write a formal separation into an organization's bylaws, it is a different thing altogether to maintain that posture amidst the tumult of a democratic transition. If one of Ennahda's candidates is in a neck-and-neck race, will they resist the temptation to tap into social networks built around social service provision or religious activism to get out the vote? Will national leaders be willing to monitor for movement preachers stumping for political candidates in mosques and censure the guilty parties? Will the group's own constituents and supporters suspect Ennahda is essentially conceding an electoral advantage to the benefit of their ideological opponents? Or will the movement activists be frustrated with what they see as extensive concessions by the political party (a relationship that occasionally surfaces in the Indonesian Prosperous Justice Party)? Even if the separation survives a single campaign, how well will it endure if, over time, it comes to be seen as a key handicap preventing Ennahda from making substantial political gains? And how will Ennahda effectively counter opponents' claims – spurious or not – that they are leveraging their social networks for electoral gain? Indeed, given the suspicion with which many across the region now view the relationship between Islamists' social and political activities, we might consider Ennahda's formal organizational split – done publicly with the attendant coverage of the national and international press – as a type of public hand-tying meant to counter such inevitable accusations.

It is much simpler to separate electoral from other forms of activism if, as Nathan Brown puts it, "victory is not an option." When electoral outcomes might be subject to the whim of an autocrat and those political offices open to an opposition are relatively toothless, it is an easy case to be made that an organization should keep politics at arm's length from other facets of their activism. And, as Marie Vannetzel astutely remarks, Mubarak Egypt's legal environment effectively forced the Brotherhood to promote the idea – at least in the popular imagination – that there existed a sturdy divide between their social activism and their political ambitions. In these conditions, she argues, "the impossibility of exhibiting the Brotherhood trademark [on their social endeavors] was transformed into an ostentatious refusal to derive self-interested benefits from virtuous actions." But when this artificial restraint on the Brotherhood's conduct effectively collapsed in 2011, the group struggled to keep the realms separated. And not only did the party's political failures back-flush into other realms of activity (which was Darrag's concern), the overlap caused Egyptians to doubt the

motivations behind the group's supposedly apolitical work in social or religious reform.

The lesson is that so long as the sweep of politics – winning elections, passing laws, governing effectively – serves as the measuring stick by which Islamists assess themselves, it will be quite difficult to seriously undertake the types of organizational reforms discussed here. This is particularly true in "founding elections," when opportunities to establish critical institutions that shape the future trajectory of the country proliferate. Preventing activists from leveraging their considerable "non-political" resources effectively requires a party to act irrationally, to abnegate their self-interest and behave benevolently in realm of politics. As Marc Lynch argues in a recent report, "Self-limiting strategies, such as those pursued by Ennahda under the guidance of Rached Ghannouchi, typically require far greater concessions than might be dictated by the objective balance of power." Not only does it remain to be seen how durable this restraint is, but it is also an open question if other Islamist movements, those without a powerful figure such as Ghannouchi at the helm, can exercise similar self-control.

That is why this divide – particularly in more democratic contexts – touches on foundational issues such as the place of politics and electoral activism inside Islamist groups. And here, the group's extensive investment in politics raises a series of hurdles to change. Marc Lynch points out that "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood has been so deeply engaged in politics over the past fifteen years that the overlap between its activities has become central to the organization's identity, structure, and practice." And scholar of the Brotherhood Khalil al-Anani, for example, argues that "to envision a Brotherhood without political activity is a delusion." Simply put, politics has been the movement's measuring stick for decades. Changing such embedded norms and identities, including, assumedly, extensive changes in how the Brotherhood's internal curriculum cultivates new members, is no easy matter.

Regional dynamics, and particularly the steadily fracturing cast of Islamic activist organizations, further problematize the idea of an easy separation. On the one hand, de-emphasizing the role of politics and elections to help maintain any separation between electoral and socio-religious activism might be an attractive step for Islamist groups. The region's split between rigid autocracy and brutal violence has clearly sapped both the effectiveness and allure of electoral politics, and reassessing the importance of politics and elections may possibly just acknowledge what many already understand to be true already. On the other hand, this course of action threatens to undermine the very identity of Islamists. The center pole holding up the Islamists' wide tent is their explicit focus on political engagement – it differentiates them from Salafi-jihadists on the right and various socially and religiously-minded reformist Salafis on the left. Explicitly divesting from political activism may end up diluting the very thing that renders the Muslim Brotherhood such a powerful sociopolitical actor and distinguishes it from a crowded field of opponents.

Sorting out the proper relationship between Islamists' partisan and socio-religious activism involves complicated and intertwined issues, and there is no reason to expect a workable arrangement to occur immediately. This is doubly true in the Middle East's current environment, where many of these organizations are struggling to survive – some quite literally – rather than delve into complex debates about foundational organizational and ideational matters. Yet despite these developments, the difficulties and ramifications of Islamists groups' interest in more formally distinguishing between electoral and non-electoral forms of activism raise a series of intriguing questions for both researchers and Islamist groups themselves. Egypt's Islamists clearly failed at keeping the realms separate during the country's brief democratic interlude. But given the ways these discussions cut across how Islamists interact with society, the way they perceive their own identities, and their relationships with other forms of Islamic activism, continuing to examine the separation between social movement and political party will be important to consider as Islamist groups attempt to adjust to the post-Arab Spring realities.

Steven Brooke is an assistant professor of political science at The University of Louisville.

A Government of the Opposition:
How Moroccan Islamists' Dual Role Contributes to their Electoral Success

Quinn Mecham, Brigham Young University

Participatory Islamist movements have been under enormous pressure throughout the Arab world since 2013. This pressure has come both from resurgent authoritarianism in the Arab world, including the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt, and from an increasing radicalization of Islamist discourse, epitomized by the growth and success of the Islamic State movement in Iraq and Syria.

In this challenging environment, it is unusual for an Islamist party to improve upon the initial electoral successes scored in the wake of the Arab uprisings. However, that is just what the Justice and Development Party of Morocco (PJD) managed to do in the Moroccan elections of October 2016. The party's remarkable repeated electoral success is largely due to its ability to act in the strange role of a *governing opposition movement*, perceived by voters as being both in and out of power simultaneously. It was able to increase its vote share in 2016, because it captured both voters who supported its political record *and* protest voters frustrated with the monarchy. The reasons for Moroccan Islamists' recent electoral success reveal a number of important lessons for Islamist parties in other parts of the Arab world, including their potential to play a role in both governance and opposition at the same time.

The PJD's success in 2011 elections, organized in the wake of Morocco's vigorous anti-regime protest movement, saw its electoral returns jump from the 11 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in November 2011. The PJD was able to more than double its vote percentage in 2011 largely because of the domestic and regional political climate of protest in which the PJD emerged as the most plausible, electable opposition to the palace. Because of changes to the Moroccan constitution that had been approved prior to the 2011 election, Moroccan King Mohammed VI was constitutionally required to appoint the head of the PJD (as the largest party in parliament) prime minister and to invite him to form a governing coalition.

Abdelilah Benkirane of the PJD thus became the Moroccan Prime Minister in 2012 and presided over a coalition government, in multiple incarnations, for five years of comparative political stability within a turbulent region. Despite aggressive campaigning and organized protests against the PJD, the party further increased its electoral returns in October 2016, taking 28 percent of the vote and adding 18 seats to its parliamentary roster. Prime Minister Benkirane was again asked by the king to form a government for the next five years. Although the king dismissed Benkirane for failing to form a governing coalition, he did replace him with another leader of the PJD. Saad Eddine El Othmani successfully negotiated a coalition government in March 2017, allowing the party to remain at the head of government for the foreseeable future.

The consolidation and expansion of the PJD's electoral constituency is unusual for Islamist parties in the Arab world in the current political environment. Although the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) has been banned and the group actively repressed, public opinion evidence from its period in power suggested that it lost a considerable amount of support during its time in office.[1] In a closer comparison, Tunisia's Islamist Ennahda party, which won Tunisia's first free elections in October 2011 elections with 37 percent of the vote, subsequently lost political ground in 2014, taking 28 percent of the vote and losing control of the government. These outcomes are in line with hypotheses that suggest Islamists are likely to lose support after they enter government because they are unable to maintain the protest vote that often helps to propel their electoral success.[2]

Why then did the PJD do unusually well in recent elections given trends elsewhere in the Arab world? There are several possibilities. While it is plausible to believe that the PJD's success in government or the fractured political opposition it faced positively impacted its renewed electoral success, I believe that its remarkable ability to

retain protest voters despite its position at the head of government has had the largest impact on the PJD's recent electoral success.

Argument 1: The PJD government was comparatively successful

First, one potential reason for the PJD's success is that during the party's five years as the head of government it demonstrated a track-record of good governance that voters observed and rewarded at the ballot box. There is some plausibility to this claim if one considers Morocco in a comparative regional context, where good governance and political stability have been scarce. Morocco's political challenges over the past five years have been relatively tame compared to the upheavals elsewhere in the Arab world. Additionally, the government did succeed in accomplishing some necessary economic reforms, including phasing out subsidies on basic goods and working towards the solvency of the pension system by raising the retirement age. Under the PJD, Morocco likewise saw an increase in international investment, with the GDP growth rate averaging about 4 percent and hitting 5 percent just prior to the election in 2015. During the 2016 campaign, each PJD minister made a video of the achievements of their ministry and disseminated it on social media, making the case that this was a high-performing government worth re-electing.

However, the government's successes comes with caveats. First, its economic reforms, such as removing basic subsidies, are not the kind of accomplishments normally popular with the electorate. It is widely acknowledged that the PJD has been unable to make much progress on a key 2011 campaign pledge to take on Morocco's pervasive corruption. Economic reform efforts triggered a mass trade union rally against the government in May 2012, and subsequently led to the defection of a key coalition partner – the conservative monarchist Istiqlal party – from the government. Likewise, the government's opponents have been critical of its perceived conservative social positions. During much of the government's tenure, political wrangling and divisive threats from other legislative parties contributed to a perception of gridlock and inefficacy in the legislature.[3] Low turnout in the October 2016 election may also suggest that voters were not overly enthusiastic about weighing in on the government's accomplishments.[4]

Argument 2: There was no other unified opposition

A second plausible reason that the PJD dominated the 2016 elections is that it faced a weak and divided opposition unable to mount an effective challenge. Morocco's party system is highly fragmented and its low electoral threshold makes it easy for small parties to win seats (14 parties won seats in 2011, and 12 won seats in 2016). Compared with many of its opponents, the PJD also has more extensive ground support in getting out the vote.[5] Furthermore, Moroccan parties, like many Middle Eastern parties, are often highly personalized and politicians use their positions to acquire government resources to distribute locally in the form of patronage towards their constituents. Because most government resources are acquired through relationships with the *makhzen* (royal court and well-connected associates of the palace), it is unsurprising that the many small parties are more interested in currying favor with the monarchy than with the articulation of a compelling policy platform.

However, the PJD still had some important and well-resourced competitors. Founded in 2008 by close friend of the king Fouad Ali El-Himma, the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), is widely seen as a vehicle for the monarchy's interests in the legislature and mounted a major campaign challenge against the Islamists. Despite the King's insistence on his political neutrality, the PAM had substantial if informal royal support and was considered a plausible winner of the 2016 election. In the end, PAM received 21 percent of the vote, doubling its 2008 returns with a campaign designed to negatively brand and discredit the PJD, trying to mirror the successes of the old regime secularists during the Tunisian election of 2014.

Other parties also maintained royalist interests and benefitted from substantial political resources, including Istiqlal, the Popular Movement (MP) and the National Rally of Independents (RNI), although they each lost seats compared with their 2011 performance. The PJD had a particularly difficult time breaking into constituencies

dominated by established patronage networks in rural Morocco, which disproportionately vote for these royalist-oriented parties. After the October 2016 election, the party also faced renewed opposition from several parties unwilling to form a coalition government without significant political compromises.

Argument 3: The PJD still represents a protest vote

A more compelling, if counterintuitive, argument for why the PJD increased its vote share is its ability to act as a credible opposition, even while in government. Because of the perceived structural dominance of the monarchy over the legislature, the PJD is still seen as an outsider despite its role as the dominant governing party. As in quantum mechanics, in which objects can simultaneously manifest characteristics of both particles and waves, the PJD acts simultaneously as the head of government and as the perceived head of the opposition. It can do so because the legislature is both credibly chosen through free elections and politically weak. Therefore, the PJD can avoid being held accountable for the government's failures (such as its inability to tackle corruption) because it doesn't have full control, while simultaneously being seen as a potential check on the monarchy's abuses.

Most of the PJD's less successful parliamentary competitors have significant ties to the monarchy. These royalist parties, as well as the King, often see the PJD as acting against their interests, particularly in the party's continued focus on stemming the corruption surrounding patronage politics and in strengthening the rule of law.[6] Therefore, the presence of an Islamist prime minister, who has sometimes demonstrated his unwillingness to act at the behest of the *makhzen*, is perceived as an important check on authoritarianism. Other, more strident opposition movements, including the popular Justice and Charity movement, may be seen as having stronger opposition credentials, but they have much more limited potential to influence the day-to-day affairs of the state and therefore act as less of a check on the regime.

Despite oft-cited criticisms that the PJD has sold out to the state and has no meaningful power, its presence at the forefront of the legislature remains appealing to many voters. Because the Moroccan system requires the leading party to form a coalition government, the governing coalition is seen as more representative of Moroccan society's interests than is the monarchy alone. Through the compromises that the PJD makes to remain in government (acceptance of the monarchy, building broad coalitions, etc.), its interests are also not particularly removed from mainstream politics. This ensures it remains close enough to the political center to capture a significant percentage of mainstream voters. This carries a risk that the party will lose its core supporters, but unless these supporters have other electoral options closer to their ideological preferences (which is not yet the case), the PJD also remains the most plausible party for Islamist voters to support.

PJD voters are predominantly urban, upwardly mobile, and frustrated with their inability to break into networks of the social and economic elite. They have been described as "part of a rising social class…suffocated by the traditional elites' grip on politics and the economy."[7] In this respect, the party's liminal status (both in and out of power) reflects its voters' own liminal status, situated tantalizingly close, yet still removed, from social and economic power. It is plausible, therefore, that many PJD voters continue to vote for the party because they see it as a way to protest against elite dominance, hoping that the PJD can act as an agent of change.

The PJD's ability to be both within and without the political system simultaneously is due in large part to the peculiarities of the Moroccan political system, including a power imbalance between the monarchy and the legislature, coupled with a political culture that supports reasonably free elections. Morocco has a freer political climate than most countries of the Arab world, with a substantial percentage of citizens who believe that they are free to criticize the government (68 percent),[8] but also a legislature with limited efficacy. If the legislature had more power, the PJD could easily be perceived as a threat to the regime and face a difficult road into government. If elections were less free, whatever representation in parliament it could muster would be considered less credible and less capable of representing its constituents'

interests. The PJD has been deft at walking the fine line between being both a challenge to and a collaborator with the monarchy, but it has been aided by a political structure that allows for that path.

How does Morocco's PJD compare to other Islamist parties in the region?

The peculiarities of the Moroccan system, however, are not as removed from the contexts of other Arab Islamist parties as might initially be believed. Similar types of institutional arrangements have echoes in a number of Arab countries, making the PJD's electoral success relevant throughout much of the Arab world. In monarchies with weak legislatures and reasonably free elections, such as Jordan and Kuwait, the Islamic Action Front and the Islamic Constitutional Movement, respectively, have opportunities to walk a similarly fine line between government and opposition. In both cases, the important role of political independents makes the party systems weaker than in Morocco, but Islamist parties or blocs remain the most influential single grouping in parliament.

Even in non-monarchies comparable institutional arrangements can exist. The military in Algeria or in Egypt provide another version of an unelected governing establishment, in which free elections for constrained legislatures could develop. This was the case after Algerian local elections in 1990 and after Egyptian national elections of 2011-12 (prior to military coups d'état in both countries). In both cases, Islamists played a similar role in both participating in and simultaneously acting as a check on government. Hezbollah in Lebanon has also managed to serve both simultaneously in government and opposition, not only participating in the parliament and cabinet but also mobilizing its constituents in opposition to the state, which it cannot constitutionally lead.

In less comparable, parliament-dominated political systems, such as Tunisia or Iraq, Islamist parties may still find ways to participate in a governing coalition while serving as a focal point for political opposition. Ennahda's politically difficult decision to join a unity government in Tunisia in 2015, holding the unenviable Ministry of Employment, gave it a voice in government, while still allowing it to bear the mantle of the Tunisian political opposition. Its decision to participate in a government over which it had little influence signaled to the electorate that it would compromise in order work within the political system. As in the Moroccan case, it is unlikely that the electorate will hold Ennahda accountable for the government's inevitable failures, but its coalition participation maintains the party's visibility as potential future check on the controversial policies of a government perceived as tied to the old regime.

This dual role could potentially be played by centrist Iraqi Sunni Islamists, or even Bahraini Shi'i Islamists, under conditions in which the government or monarchy of these countries felt politically secure enough to allow these groups free political participation. Additionally, in political systems, unlike the Moroccan case, where power is not shared across national political institutions, Islamist parties may be able to play both in-and-out roles by holding office at regional or municipal levels.

The contemporary political climate in the Arab world has been difficult for Islamist political parties to navigate, but the PJD's experience in Morocco shows a potential pathway to iterated electoral success. This pathway is defined by the party's delicate navigation of a constrained (or hybrid) political regime that also possesses a measure of institutional complexity. That institutional complexity allows Islamist parties to obtain a measure of power in one or more political institutions, without threatening the nature of the political system as a whole. While this pathway will have its detractors among committed activists and ideologues, it maintains the advantage of being both politically relevant to the electorate and allowing the party to retain political options. In a world of semi-democratic regimes, the future of Islamist parties may therefore become one in which they must learn to play the role of both *opposition* and *government*, benefitting from both roles simultaneously.

Quinn Mecham is an assistant professor of political science at Brigham Young University. He is the author of "Institutional Origins of Islamist Political Mobilization" (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

(Endnotes)

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The Cost of Inclusion:
Ennahda and Tunisia's Political Transition

Monica Marks, University of Oxford

Observers of Tunisian politics were stunned by Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali's snap resignation four years ago at the apogee of his party's power in the post-revolutionary transition. Jebali, a leader of the center-right Ennahda party, resigned to defuse tensions after jihadist extremists gunned down Chokri Belaid, a leftist MP and sharp critic of Ennahda, outside his Tunis home.

The murder in broad daylight threw the transition into turmoil barely one year after Tunisia's first democratically elected government had taken office. Despite the country's history of brutal dictatorship – where regime opponents on the left and right were tortured, raped, exiled, and sometimes murdered – most Tunisians were unaccustomed to witnessing acts of political violence. Shock at the brittle young government's inability or refusal to ensure security enraged Tunisians. Hundreds of thousands attended Belaid's funeral, one of the largest outpourings of grief in Tunisian history.

The Islamic State later claimed responsibility for the assassination. Yet many Tunisians, including prominent politicians and media moguls, accused Ennahda – a party with roots in the Muslim Brotherhood-inspired school of political Islamism. This accusation made intuitive sense: not only was Belaid a prominent critic of Ennahda, but for more than twenty years ex-dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali had banned the party – the country's largest political formation – and portrayed it as a terrorist movement in state-controlled media.

Reasoning that Ennahda's leadership in government had become a source of conflict in the country, Jebali resigned as prime minister on February 19, 2013 soon after Belaid's assassination. His statesmanlike act of self-sacrifice temporarily cooled tensions but was initially criticized within Ennahda. Ceding such a critical post struck many leaders as unwise, given that the party had, just fourteen months earlier, overcome decades of repression to win victory in Tunisia's first post-revolutionary elections. Handing over its rightfully won reins, they feared, could enable old regime forces intent on Ennahda's destruction to rush in and reverse Tunisia's democratic experiment.

Understanding this background is critical to grasping just how much the tables have turned in Tunisia since 2013. Today, Ennahda's core leadership – comprised of party president Rached Ghannouchi, his advisors, and members of Ennahda's executive and political bureaus – pursues a policy of what we might term unrestrained accommodationism or radical pragmatism. In the current governing coalition, party leadership consciously underplays Ennahda's hand, taking a backseat to its partners, most notably the old-regime derived Nidaa Tunis, elements of which are adamantly anti-Islamist. And, interestingly, today it is Jebali who – more openly than any current or former Ennadha leader – criticizes this consensual approach.

During an interview at his Sousse home this January, Jebali – who said he completely left Ennahda on December 11, 2014 – spoke in no uncertain terms. "Ennahda isn't ruling," he said, "It's being ruled." Jebali's critique echoed sentiments expressed by scores of base-level *nahdaouis* (Ennahda members) I have interviewed since Ennahda first joined coalition government with Nidaa Tunis in early 2015. Like them, Jebali believes Ennahda is behaving as a sort of self-emasculating giant: vastly underplaying a strong political hand, and thus enabling resurgent old regime forces to cement their grip on power.

Ennahda came in second place to Nidaa Tunis in Tunisia's 2014 elections, but was older and far better organized. Nidaa – a disjointed quilt of political tendencies, knit together by anti-Islamism and fuelled by old regime money and manpower – formed in 2012 with the prime

objective of defeating Ennahda in the 2014 elections. It succeeded, but has imploded spectacularly since. This is mainly because Tunisia's president and the founder of Nidaa Tunis, Beji Caid Essebsi, has failed to restrain his son Hafedh – widely described, even within his party, as power-hungry with little of his father's keen political instincts – from seizing power within the party.

Long-simmering tensions around succession in Nidaa boiled over in November 2015 when armed thugs hired by Hafedh physically prevented members of Nidaa's executive committee from meeting at a hotel in Hammamet to discuss the party's future. Soon thereafter, Mohsen Marzouk, who also sought to replace Beji Caid Essebsi as leader of Nidaa, created a new party, Hizb Machroua Tunis (The Tunisia Project Party), taking with him over thirty Nidaa MPs.

Nidaa has since managed to lure back some of its lost MPs, but still holds fewer seats in parliament than Ennahda: 64 seats to Ennahda's 69. Yet, though Ennahda holds more parliamentary seats than any other party, Tunisia's Nidaa-led coalition government granted it just three of twenty-six ministerial posts in a summer 2016 reshuffle. Token representation, Jebali says, for a party that boasts what is likely the largest, most loyal, and best-organized base in Tunisian politics.

Jebali blames Ennahda for under-utilizing its power, speculating that intense awareness of the transition's reversibility – paired with fear of political marginalization – have made party leaders overly eager to embrace a naive consensus with old regime forces. He believes Egypt's summer 2013 coup against democratically elected president Mohamed Morsi, a Muslim Brotherhood member made accommodationism more attractive to party leaders. Cooperating more seriously with President Essebsi and other old regime elements under the supposedly neutral banner of consensus became, Jebali says, a kind of life preserver to Ennahda, shielding it from counter-revolutionary waves sweeping the region.

Jebali's critique reflects the concerns of numerous base-level Ennadha members and pro-revolutionary Tunisians outside the party. Such individuals often struggle to understand why Ghannouchi and other Ennahda leaders have not opposed problematic pieces of Nidaa-supported legislation, such as a proposed economic reconciliation law that would give amnesty to corrupt businessmen. Why, they wonder, would a party so victimized by the cronyism of Ben Ali's police state – a party whose base so strongly craves accountability for old regime abusers – appear to acquiesce and even support policies that entrench impunity?

Ghannouchi, his core circle of advisers, and other prominent voices in Ennahda's leadership bodies are generally aware that perceived kowtowing to the ancien régime incenses the party's base. Indeed, as party leaders will readily acknowledge, concessions on matters of revolutionary principle have created far more tumult within Ennahda than concessions on matters of religious principle.

By far the most controversial issue within Ennahda since the revolution, for instance, was Ghannouchi's insistence that Ennahda MPs reject a lustration law that would have prohibited powerful officials in Ben Ali's old party, the RCD, from contesting Tunisia's 2014 elections. Beji Caid Essebsi owes his very presidency in part to Ghannouchi's rare and dramatic trip to the parliamentary floor, where he urged Ennahda MPs to abstain from the lustration vote. Ultimately it failed by just one vote: that of a nahdaoui MP who, at the last minute, switched his vote in support of the law to a vote of abstention. The law – strongly supported by Ennahda's base, the bulk of its Shura Council members, and many secular pro-revolutionary Tunisians across diverse political parties – generated decidedly more disaffection within Ennahda than nearly any other policy, including its Shura Council's extraordinary decision not to include references to sharia in the new constitution.

Despite this awareness, appeasing their base is not Ennahda leaders' main concern. The stakes for Tunisia's transition as a whole, they claim, are simply far too high, and the country's current transitional phase far too fragile, to prioritize short-term populism over savvy long-termism. Ennadha's core leadership tends to describe the party's self-preservational tactics in sacrificial terms.

Whatever normalizes Ennahda, ensures its survival, and integrates it into the fabric of Tunisian political life, they argue, simultaneously helps preserve the continuation of Tunisia's democratic transition itself – a transition that would, they say, evaporate without Ennahda's presence as a stabilizing, responsible anchor. Moreover, Ennahda leaders believe the importance of Tunisia's transition extends well beyond the country's borders. By demonstrating to young people considering violent extremism that a place exists for democratic Islamism in regional politics, they argue, the transition offers huge potential dividends for security across the Middle East and North Africa.

However, Ennahda has paid a huge price for defending "statist logics" rather than "springing for populism," stresses Said Ferjani, a member of Ennahda's political bureau. Ferjani suggests that, like a watchful parent, Ennadha has selflessly guarded Tunisia's fledgling democracy, aware of how vulnerable it truly is. "We've sacrificed a lot," he says. "And we're prepared to sacrifice more." Nourredine Bhiri, an influential top-tier leader in Ennahda, echoes this view. "Maybe we have to sacrifice some votes. This may be the cost of pragmatism. But we'll be prisoners of the past if we don't move forward."

Many leaders of Ennahda, including those well outside Ghannouchi's circle, seem to have made radical pragmatism an article of political faith. Ennahda MP Naoufel El-Jemali, an independent who headed Ennahda's Sidi Bouzid list in the 2014 elections, captured this sentiment: "We [in Ennahda] have learned that you must do politics with your head, not your heart. Do the opposite of what your heart tells you to do." The contrast with cousin-like Islamist movements across the region, especially with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, is stark. Whereas many in the Egyptian Brotherhood attribute its catastrophic failure to allying too closely with the military, thereby not sufficiently embracing revolutionary populism, Ennahda's leadership sees cautious alliance building and suppression of revolutionary populism as keys to the long-term survival of both the party and Tunisia's transition as a whole.

Yet, as Jebali's critique highlights, Ennahda's commitment to radical pragmatism brings serious political risks. Inside and outside Ennahda, Tunisians critique the "marriage of the two sheikhs," i.e. the functional alliance between Rached Ghannouchi and President Beji Caid Essebsi, whom Ennahda persuaded to be the keynote speaker at its historic May 2016 congress. Tunisians increasingly view Ennahda and the RCD-ist core of Nidaa Tunis as linked in a cynical relationship of mutual self-preservation.

Outside Ennahda, many guess greed has motivated the party to hitch its wagon to Nidaa, which they suppose may be enriching Ennahda leaders with lucrative payoffs. Inside Ennahda, many members of the party's base – especially individuals passionate about transitional justice – express disgust at party leadership for entering what they regard as a series of self-denigrating deals with the devil. Some struggle to identify the principles Ennahda now stands for. Although party leaders cast pragmatic accommodation in terms of magnanimous sacrifice, some supporters suspect their leaders' perceived peace with old regime impunity is, at its heart, motivated by fear. "I feel like we're cowering behind Beji," confided Fatma, a 26 year-old Ennahda member. "Politics is tricky, I know that," she said. "But I want my leaders to lead on what's right." Otherwise, she continued, "what's the point of all those years in prison?"

Even those who accept accommodationism and alliance-building as politically necessary often express confusion and dismay that Ennahda leaders have gone so far in their support for Nidaa Tunis and certain Nidaa-led policies. Prominent Ennahda leader Rafik Abdessalem, for example, unapologetically stated on national radio that his father-in-law, Ennahda president Rached Ghannouchi, voted for Beji Caid Essebsi in the 2014 presidential election, striking many nahdaouis as unimaginably distasteful. Likewise, even some nahdaouis who accept the argument that Essebsi's proposed economic reconciliation law would ultimately speed Tunisia's economic recovery are perplexed that party leaders, including Ghannouchi and Bhiri, have publicly voiced their support rather than quietly negotiating behind closed doors.

At its tenth Congress in May 2016, Ennahda leaders compared the party's evolution from Islamism to a "Muslim Democratic party" as natural. They framed Islamism as a situation-contingent liberation theology: a "language of opposition," or political vocabulary that made sense under Ben Ali's dictatorship. Now that Ennadha can compete freely and fairly in Tunisia's nascent democracy, they said, the party must shift from a language of opposition to a language of governance, shaped more by responsible, long-term pragmatism than knee-jerk principle-driven pushback.

Ennahda surmised, probably correctly, that the old regime, grouped temporarily under the organizing shell of Nidaa Tunis, will represent the most powerful political interest group in Tunisia moving forward, with whom it must cooperate to block a potential alliance between the staunchly anti-Islamist UGTT labor union and old regime forces. Ennahda fears such an alliance could leave it dangerously isolated. Regardless of the logic behind it, the gusto with which Ghannouchi and his circle have embraced this cooperation risks leaving portions of the party's base, and potential voters outside the party, disillusioned with the party's perceived cynicism. Instead of using its seat at the political table to fight bravely for democratic reforms, critics imply, Ennahda is warming its seat – prioritizing selfish survival over the battle against old regime impunity.

In clinging to the life preserver of "consensus," which critics see as a euphemistic byword for a relationship of symbiotic opportunism with Tunisia's old regime, the party has – at least in the near future – tied its success to that of Nidaa Tunis and the current prime minister Youssef Chahed's coalition government. Despite Ennahda's tokenistic representation in this government, it is widely perceived as being close to Essebsi and will therefore share ample responsibility for the government's successes or failures in the court of Tunisian public opinion.

Last January's protests in Kasserine and this month's protests in Kef and Tataouine – both driven by the socio-economic marginalization of Tunisia's long-suffering interior – underscore that no post-revolutionary government has managed to substantially mitigate the grievances that provoked Tunisia's 2011 revolution. Tunisia's first local elections, scheduled for this December, will help gauge the real cost of Ennahda's perceived partnership with Essebsi, the Chahed government, and elements of Tunisia's old regime. The stakes are high and the socio-economic conditions are worsening. The ability of Tunisia's government to deliver on revolutionary promises at the national – and, even more importantly, at the local – levels carries with it the fate of the Arab world's best democratic experiment.

Monica Marks is a PhD candidate at the University of Oxford and research fellow with the WAFAW program in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Regime Islam, State Islam, and Political Islam:
The Past and Future Contest

Nathan J. Brown, George Washington University

When Islamist social and political movements arose in the middle of the twentieth century, they seemed at first to pose a strong challenge to the official religious establishment. Their leaders were often autodidacts in religious matters, some denouncing religious scholars as obscurantist and the religious establishment as coopted by the regime. Religious leaders often returned the favor by denouncing the learning and the agenda of Islamist leaders and sometimes intellectuals associated with them.

Such at least is the story for Egypt (where the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Azhar leadership often showed signs of tension) and sometimes in Iran (where individuals like Ali Shariati or groups like the Mujahidin e-Khalq in the 1970s criticized the Shi`i hierarchy for its involvement with the regime of the Shah). This dichotomy is part of the standard way scholars think about Islamist movements – as lay-led groups operating potentially in political opposition to and outside of the state and its sprawling religious apparatus.

The story still contains some truth up to today. It is not unusual to find religious officials (or even more often independent scholars) who look upon Islamist movements as politically driven, interested in posturing more than real learning.

And it is not hard to find figures in the religious establishments who seem very close to existing regimes. Indeed, it is hard to miss the way that religion is woven into states in the Middle East. Ministries of education write religious textbooks; ministries of religious affairs administer mosques; state muftis offer interpretations of religious law; courts of personal status guide husband and wife, parent and child in Islamic conduct. Regimes regularly deploy religious symbols and language to serve their own policy and policing purposes.

It is thus easy to think of a contest for religious authority between regimes commanding a state sector and Islamists operating in opposition. But in this essay, I wish to suggest that this picture is a bit too clear; we need much more fuzziness around the edges. The state religious sector is large but not completely controlled by the regime. Indeed, Islamists are sometimes well ensconced within parts of the state religious establishment. Not only must we be alert to the various places Islamists operate; we must also sometimes distinguish between state Islam and regime Islam.

This does not mean that we need to discard our aging portrait of state establishments and rulers on one side and Islamist movements in opposition on the other. This model has been useful for certain times and places and in this post-2013 environment, it is perhaps even more relevant now than ever in some countries. But it should not blind us to the fuzziness and subtleties of the religion-state complex.

Points of Entry

The ubiquity of the state in the religious realm means that those who have religious interests, pursue religious activities, and show religious inclinations often do so on state terrain. This can create points of entry for more independent movements within the ranks of the official religious establishment. Kuwait's Ministry of Religious Affairs has traditionally been seen as friendly to the country's Muslim Brotherhood; Jordan's teachers (especially but not exclusively those specializing in Arabic or religion) have been similarly seen as Islamist dominated. In Saudi Arabia, many of the most strident voices have found perches within the country's universities and religious establishment, protected to a limited extent by the loyalty of those institutions' leaders to the ruling family. In conversations with many in Egypt's al-Ahzar I have been struck by how politically divided the institution seems since 2013. One Azhari told me that when he was offered

an official position it set off a debate among his friends about whether he would be dishonoring "martyrs" (those killed in the ruthless suppression of demonstrations in August 2013) by accepting. While he himself seemed loyal to the regime, the social pressure was sufficient to make him reluctant to accept the post.

Indeed, when I reflect on the Islamist movements I studied in Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and Kuwait, I am struck by how often they seemed to straddle the state-society divide, with Islamists often frequenting state controlled spaces – like mosques, universities, and courts. To be sure, many in state religious bureaucracies oppose Islamists – decrying them as more political than religious in motivation – and many more uninterested in the activities of Islamist groups altogether. State sponsored religious institutions are not tools of Islamists, but neither are they wholly hostile terrain.

Regime Islam and Opposition Islamism

But Islamist movements generally stand in opposition to existing regimes. The few that have gone into government but remain the exception rather than the rule. When the roots of that opposition are examined, however, it sometimes seems to be less about doctrine than about politics. And whether the existing regime is fundamentally sound, in need of deep reform, or fundamentally illegitimate is the most important question.

The Saudi approach to Islam has been very supportive of the ruling family and the religious establishment a pillar of the regime. But it also shares some unmistakable doctrinal overlap with some of the more radical Sunni groups in the region, and the charge that it has incubated radicalism within its own ranks has a strong foundation.

One could listen to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a populist pro-Muslim Brotherhood firebrand in Qatar, and mistake him for a religious leader associated with the post-coup order in Egypt when both talk the exact same way about *wasatiyya* (centrism). Both similarly hold forth about *fiqh al-awwaliyyat* (the jurisprudence of priorities, suggesting that the extreme literalism of Salafi approaches gets tied up in minutiae and misses the underlying ethical sensibilities of Islamic law). But when Qaradawi and the same Egyptian official enter the political realm, their insulting language is more appropriate for expressing road rage than ideological support. Qaradawi has also been supportive of some suicide bombings and has supported the Muslim Brotherhood – the first position getting him barred from certain countries and the latter making the the Egyptian ambassador to the United States lump him in the same category as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State by. A product of – and doctrinally close to – al-Azhar, Qaradawi's status as a lightning rod comes largely from his politics and his sometimes fiery off-the-cuff remarks during media appearances much less than his voluminous scholarly writings.

Even differences among Islamists often boil down to political inclinations – ones that can be expressed in doctrinal terms, to be sure, but essentially rest on differing evaluations of existing regimes. In October 2014, I spoke with Muhammad Abu Faris, identified as a firebrand in the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and indeed one who spent some time in prison after visiting the funeral tent for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Abu Faris could be extremely strident in his denunciations of the regime but when I queried him, he offered nothing but prayer, patience, and political work as a solution. Salafi jihadism and far more quietist versions of salafism have nearly opposite political goals but are doctrinally not all that far apart, differing primarily in their views of one's duties toward a legitimate ruler.

Regimes and the Unwieldiness of State Religion

So why do regimes allow Islamist opposition within the state? This is a reasonable question, but posing it this way reveals the functionalism underlying much political analysis of authoritarianism that leads us to search for a regime motive or purpose explaining all political arrangements and outcomes. We seem to fall very quickly into the assumption that the ruler must have arranged things the way they are for strategic, regime-maintenance purposes.

But while the state is widely present in the religious sphere,

that very fact makes its presence unwieldy and difficult for the regime to control with precision. Rulers and top policy makers around them wield tremendous power, but state's reach in the religious realm is so wide and deep that it is not always easy for them to completely control. To what extent do existing regimes attempt to use the official religious structure to accomplish their security or policy objectives? Can rulers bend the religious parts of the state apparatus to suit their purposes? Regional regimes significantly influence official structures, but they are mixed at best in their effects. By attempting to use the state's religious presence to pursue these goals, regimes have a series of not only imposing but also quite clumsy tools.[1]

First, regimes have administrative oversight of state religious structures along with fiscal and personnel control. Top religious officials (such as minsters of religious affairs, senior religious court judges, state muftis, and top educational officials) are often directly appointed by a country's chief executive (president or king) or senior structure (cabinet). Budgeting and hiring run through high officials, enabling political and security vetting of religious personnel. But these levers of control are difficult to use with precision. By folding so many religious institutions within the state apparatus, they are subject to control but they also become constituencies and power centers in their own right. And they are not always coordinated, as different parts of the religious establishment find themselves making rival claims.

A second tool available to regimes is to police lower-level officials, using the religious bureaucracy and the security apparatus to dictate the content of sermons or regulate what is said in the classroom. To carry out such surveillance comprehensively, however, is both difficult and highly intrusive. Control is incomplete and reactive, as can be seen in recent struggles in Egypt. The constant proclamations of Egyptian ministers of new monitoring initiatives suggest that they have never been able to exercise the control they promise. Preachers and religious officials in Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and Kuwait report that they experience state guidance as crude and less than fully effective. High officials shape the content of what is said, to be sure, but not in a way that generally requires preachers to be mechanical mouthpieces and when central control is more detailed it can generate resentment. A religious official sympathetic with the post-2013 regime in Egypt complained to me, "We definitely have to root out radical preachers. But we do not need an intelligence officer in every mosque." Generally, imams report that official concern tends to be episodic. It can be very bureaucratic – Egyptian imams reported to me that the sternest and most specific language they receive about sermons is the time limit, and indeed, some have been disciplined for verbosity. In 2016, an Egyptian imam confided that there was virtually no training or continuing education given to preachers once they were placed in a position.

Finally, regimes can use state control of the religious apparatus to propagate ideological messages. School curricula, dictated by Ministries of Education, are generally written in ways that are likely to be politically pleasing to rulers. But while religious curricula in the Arab world have drawn international criticism, the efficiency of their messages is rarely probed. Saudi Arabian textbooks hew close to a Wahhabi interpretation in a manner that marks sharp divisions not merely between Muslims and non-Muslims but even takes a strict and demanding line on what is held to be correct Muslim practice and belief. But most other states curricula teach a far more generic view of religion, one that teaches basics of beliefs, history, and practice while blending religion, nationalism, and good manners. In conversations with graduates of various school systems in the Arab world, I have heard as many comments about how students do not take the subject of religion seriously as I have about the content of instruction.

A return to the past?

In the post 2013 period, some of these distinctions might be losing their fuzziness. The cruelty of the current political environment in many countries involves not only the specter or reality of violence but also the brutal security

[1] This section is a summary of my forthcoming paper from the Carnegie Endowment on religious establishments in the Arab world.

mindedness of certain regimes and the decline in apparent viability of a reformist political option in many societies. I have Egypt most in mind, of course (in some ways the current dynamics are moving the country in the direction of Syria and Iraq in the 1980s, so it is hardly fully new) but in other countries (such as Jordan) there are less dramatic moves in a similar direction. Clumsy as their tools may be, some regimes seem even more determined than ever to purge state ranks of Islamists and sympathizers. Those within the religious establishments are often torn in this onslaught, with the upper ranks supportive of the regime but lower ranks more divided. Islamists have been knocked off the electoral paths in some countries; in others they have clung to it despite clear regime attempts to marginalize them (Kuwait and Jordan), swinging into deeper opposition. In this sense, the bitterness, violence, and division of Syria is an extreme version of what many countries in the region have been experiencing in less severe form.

Nathan J. Brown is a professor of political science and international affairs and director of the Institute for Middle East Studies at George Washington University. He is a nonresident senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Middle East regimes are using 'moderate' Islam to stay in power

Annelle Sheline, George Washington University

Muslim clerics from around the world gathered in Morocco in January 2016 to draft the Marrakesh Declaration on religious tolerance. A reaction to the Islamic State's highly public brutalization of religious minorities, the document harked back to the prophet Muhammad's constitution of Medina, which enshrined the rights of non-Muslims in the first Muslim community in 622 CE.

While sponsors presented the declaration as an official form of moderate Islam to counter extremism, other domestic and international political goals also drove it. My interviews with government officials and religious leaders in the Middle East shed light on the murky politics surrounding regimes' strategic use of "moderate" Islam.

There is no real agreement on the meaning of moderate Islam, of course. Muslim-majority governments that wish to be labeled moderate generally need to comply with the agenda of the United States. Therefore, the definition changes with U.S. policy goals. Willingness to negotiate peace treaties with Israel earned Egypt the unofficial designation of moderate in 1979, followed by Jordan in 1994. According to the "inclusion-moderation hypothesis," Islamist groups that participate in the democratic process typically merit the label of moderate. However, since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and particularly since the rise of the Islamic State, moderation has more specifically corresponded to the rejection of violence.

This definition has drawn criticism from non-Muslims and Muslims alike. Some argue that religion offers no solution to violent extremism, which is actually rooted in youthful desires for excitement and significance rather than religious belief. On the other end of the spectrum, Islamophobes assert that moderate Islam is futile because the religion cannot be moderated. Many Muslims criticize the concept for implying that the faith is in need of moderation at all and for implicitly linking Islam with violence.

Its ambiguity has made "moderate Islam" a useful banner for conservative Arab regimes to pursue their agendas at home and abroad. By buying into assumptions that moderate Islam offers solutions to violence, governments can avoid responsibility for the repercussions of their own policies. By buying into the notion that religion is to blame for extremism, political elites can justify increased crackdowns on Islamist groups, which often represent one of the few outlets for political opposition.

The United Arab Emirates illustrates this moderation rhetoric. In addition to co-sponsoring the Marrakesh Declaration, the UAE established the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies in 2014 and appointed a minister of tolerance in 2016. Simultaneously, the UAE has vigorously decried the Muslim Brotherhood, labeling it a terrorist organization in 2014, a move the United States may soon emulate. When a regime like the UAE claims to represent moderate Islam and paints any alternative expression of Islam as extremist, the United States is more likely to ignore human rights violations against "terrorists" and continue offering military and financial partnership.

While many countries in the Middle East have appropriated moderate Islam, Morocco has perhaps the most developed strategy. In 2015, King Mohammed VI of Morocco opened an international Imam Training Center to educate religious leaders from around the globe in Moroccan Islam. The king has also launched an initiative to train female religious leaders, or *mourchidates*, and established the League of Moroccan Religious Scholars. Moroccan religious and educational institutions emphasize religious moderation as part of the Moroccan way of life, engendered by its heritage of religious toleration and its role as a geographic conduit between Europe and Africa. Other countries appear to agree: Mali, the Ivory Coast, France and others have sent students to study Moroccan Islam.

This discourse on moderation expanded in the wake of terrorist attacks that shook Morocco in 2003 and in 2011. Yet efforts to counter violent extremism have failed to address underlying sources of religious manipulation or economic and political frustration. More than 1,000 Moroccans have been identified as fighting for the Islamic State.

While it attracts substantial attention, violent extremism remains a path chosen by a tiny fraction of the population. Individual acts of violence pose a less significant threat to the regime than did the Arab Spring protests of 2011, to which the king responded with largely meaningless constitutional reforms. Morocco has sought to publicize its promotion of moderate Islam abroad in part to distract from the lack of political reform at home. For an international audience more concerned with security than democracy, a PR campaign dedicated to promoting moderate Islam is an effective way to enhance the Moroccan government's soft power.

Jordan has similarly sought to portray itself as a champion of moderate Islam and religious toleration. It sponsored the Common Word initiative to emphasize similarities between Christianity and Islam and lobbied for World Interfaith Harmony Week. Jordanian textbooks, sermons and statements by the Ministry of Religious Affairs assert that Islam is a moderate religion, citing verse 2:143 of the Koran, "Thus We have made you a middle [centrist] nation," a passage often noted by proponents of moderate Islam. The religious narrative in Jordan emphasizes that Islam is itself moderate, so any use of religious discourse for violence is inherently un-Islamic.

Jordan has also experienced violent extremism, with a major bombing in 2005. An estimated 2,500 Jordanians have joined the Islamic State, and the December 2016 attack on tourists highlighted the kingdom's vulnerability to the group. When I asked him to explain acts of violence allegedly committed in the name of Islam, Jordan's former minister of religious affairs, Hayel Dawud, replied, "Those who kill, or burn, or bring war to the world, this is not Islam."

Yet when I interviewed less senior members of Jordan's religious and educational establishments, many expressed frustration with the government's promotion of moderate Islam. From their perspective, Islam is already a religion of centrism, making efforts to encourage moderation unnecessary. Many see the focus on moderate Islam as simply an attempt to appease powerful allies like the United States.

From the Jordanian regime's perspective, appeasing powerful allies has long been the most effective strategy to ensure the kingdom's survival. Facing war just over its border in both Syria and Iraq, and burdened with millions of refugees, the Jordanian regime relies on continued goodwill from Western governments who see it as moderate.

Promoting a vague moderate Islam — through international declarations, religious training centers or interfaith initiatives — has not proven an effective antidote to violent extremism. And as long as moderate Islam remains a state-led project, it is unlikely to be seen as credible by citizens. Yet for many governments, focusing on moderation offers real benefits for regime survival: the opportunity to target political opposition, enhance international standing and ensure foreign support. Statements made during Rex Tillerson's confirmation hearings indicate U.S. sponsorship of "moderate Muslim partners" is likely to continue.

Annelle Sheline is a PhD candidate in political science at the George Washington University.

Reckoning with a Fractured Islamist Landscape in Yemen

Stacey Philbrick Yadav, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Much of the academic literature on Islamist movements before and during the upheavals of 2011 focused on the dynamics that led Islamists to participate (or not) in partisan politics and build political party organizations. In some cases, Islamists went all-in and built robust institutions, some opted for loose ties between movements and parties, and others rejected partisanship outright. Much, though by no means all, of this seemed responsive to the nature of incumbent regimes or transitional institutions. However, in no country in the Middle East has a single Islamist party eclipsed all other forms of Islamist activism, nor are Islamist parties – as such – politically ascendant today.

Instead, scholars and policymakers must now confront the rather different question of whether and how Islamists who once engaged in partisan politics navigate shrinking electoral opportunities, increasingly fractured Islamist landscapes, and outright suppression. What do Islamist parties do when the benefits of – and, in some cases, opportunities for – participation shift so considerably? While this question should interest us intellectually, it also has clear policy significance. Just as international policymakers were somewhat slow to recognize the dynamics driving Islamist electoral participation, they now risk clinging to those Islamist parties that are "known entities" even as these groups struggle to maintain their own political relevance.

The recent trajectory of Yemen's Islamist Islah party is an instructive example in this regard. In 2017, Yemen's Islamist political landscape is characterized by several distinct political parties, militias aligned with rival Islamist groups, transnational militant organizations with and without local governance objectives, and at least one capable splinter organization claiming allegiance to none of the above.[1] And while this fracturing of the Islamist landscape is partially a function of the current (internationalized) civil war, now in its second year, it was arguably precipitated by the outsized empowerment of the Islah party during the 2012-14 transitional period. International efforts at a brokered peace continue to inflate Islah's importance even as events on the ground continue to underscore its shrinking share of the political landscape. If this preference for known entities is concretized (again) in a new postwar settlement – as seems likely – it will continue to undermine the possibilities of sustainable peace in Yemen.

The Perils of Overstating Islah

Despite its history as the largest Islamist party in Yemen for more than two decades, Islah's ties to its constituents were already more presumed than real in the run-up to the current civil war. As a part of a challenging cross-ideological opposition alliance since the mid-2000s, Islah was forced to focus much of its energy and an increasing share of its material resources on politics in the capital of Sana'a, at the expense of broader outreach.2 This proved a serious miscalculation in a country where

[1] Political parties with distinct Islamist agendas include the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah), the Rashad Union, and Ansar Allah, the Houthis' political wing; numerous militias in different parts of the county claim fealty to Islah or the Houthis; both Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic State are operative in different parts of the country; most recently, at least one *salafi* organization has splintered off from President Hadi's "Popular Resistance" and taken control of several ministries and much of Yemen's largest and most politically divided city, in opposition to both the Hadi coalition (including Islah) and the Houthis. For a review of the role of ISIS and AQAP, see: International Crisis Group, "Exploiting Disorder: Al Qaeda and the Islamic State," 14 March 2016. https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/exploiting-disorder-al-qaeda-and-islamic-state Accessed 11 January 2017. For more recent coverage of events in Taiz and the role of the Hasm faction, see: "Yemen Government Kicked Out of Taiz By Popular Resistance," Middle East Eye, 17 December 2016. http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/yemen-taiz-rival-governments-888607796 Accessed 11 January 2017.

[2] Sarah Phillips. *Yemen and the Politics of Permanent Crisis*. London: Routledge (2011).

the majority still lives outside major urban centers. Its focus on campus politics was similarly elite-focused. The leadership cohort within the party that was most active in these urban centers and university campuses was tied to Muslim Brotherhood faction within the party, whereas salafi and tribal figures held more sway among peripheral populations but were neither ideologically tied nor practically committed to the party as an institution.[3] The 2011 uprising that led to President 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh's ouster shook up these dynamics somewhat, with the formation of loosely Islah-aligned militias (often referred to as "Islahi militias," though this overstates the formality of their relationship to the party), and the party leadership's struggle to articulate a meaningful relationship to a young and politically frustrated protest movement.

The temptations of elite-centric politics of the capital increased during the transitional period (2012-2014), when Islah became the largest beneficiary of the GCC-brokered unity structure. While Islah was formally one among equals in a six-member opposition coalition, it was widely considered the most significant member of that coalition. As protests against the opposition's participation in the new unity government accelerated, the party leadership guarded itself against change from below by suspending its internal electoral processes, "locking in" figures who came to power under the old regime and preventing any reinvigoration of party leadership.[4]

The 2012 transitional framework that ushered former President Ali Abudullah Saleh from power included a sizable share of governing power for the Islah party, as part of a national unity government. Islah gained control over several ministries, which it consequently staffed with loyalists at the expense of the anti-corruption reforms that were promised. The transitional framework also guaranteed Islah substantial representation in the National Dialogue Conference.[5] To be fair, Islah was by no means alone in its scramble for the spoils of transition, but it was distinguishable from its allies in that (a) much of its prior legitimacy stemmed from a critique of corruption, and (b) its primary ideological adversary, the Houthi movement, was blocked from participation in transitional governance. This set the stage for the Houthis' adoption of anti-corruption language as an effective mobilizational trope, putting Islah on the defensive. This, in turn, drove Islah toward an even more dependent relationship on its Gulf patrons, who have continued to ensure the party's relevance in the eyes of international audiences.[6]

Early in the transitional process, fighting broke out between "Islah militias" and Houthi-backed forces in several Northern governorates, most notably around the city of Dammaj, home to a symbolically polarizing *salafi* school, Dar al-Ulum. Perhaps this armed conflict simply reflected the Houthis' response to the disproportionate empowerment of Islah by transitional planners. However, the unrest also spoke to the well-established internal fissures within the party, whereby the political center (characterized by Muslim Brothers) exercised little power over its periphery and could not shape or contain action taken in its name. Laurent Bonneyfoy described "a disconnect…between the strategy of Islah's Sana'a-based leaders and local Islahi actors."[7] Less charitably, it is possible to imagine that centrist Islahis approached extralegal violence as they had in the 2000s – something that might both strain their alliances by also strengthen their hand in the medium term by intimidating opponents.[8] Under the increasingly fluid conditions of

[3] Jillian Schwedler. *Faith in Moderation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2006); Stacey Philbrick Yadav. *Islamists and the State.* London: IB Tauris (2013).

[4] Ala Qassem. "Five Barriers to Youth Inclusion, Decision-Making, and Leadership in Yemen's Political Parties." London: SaferWorld, December 2013. http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/785-five-barriers-to-youth-engagement-decision-making-and-leadership-in-yemens-political-parties Accessed 4 April 2017.

[5] Erica Gaston. "Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue." Special Report 342. Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace, February 2014. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR342_Process-Lessons-Learned-in-Yemens-National-Dialogue.pdf Accessed 4 April 2017.

[6] Stacey Philbrick Yadav and Sheila Carapico. 2014. "The Breakdown of the GCC Initiative." *Middle East Report* 273 http://www.merip.org/mer/mer273/breakdown-gcc-initiative Accessed 4 April 2017.

[7] Laurent Bonnefoy. "The Islah Party in Yemen: Game Over?" *Muftah*, 27 February 2015. http://muftah.org/islah-party-yemen-game/#.WHl-77YrI0o Accessed 12 January 2017.

[8] Stacey Philbrick Yadav. *Islamists and the State.* London: IB Tauris

the transitional period, however, events did not follow the same course. Islah's primary adversaries, the Houthis – unlike the Yemeni Socialist Party a decade earlier – were emboldened, not cowed, by such extrajudicial violence. The Houthis could fit this violence squarely within a narrative of antagonism and cultural dispossession, stemming from decades of Islah-sponsored and protected *salafi* evangelism in the Zaydi heartland.[9] It is no surprise, then, that when Houthi militias marched on Sana'a in September 2014, their first actions were not widespread sectarian violence, but rather the targeted suppression of Islahis and the demand for a share of the transitional pie.

By the time the transitional government eventually sought refuge in Riyadh and the Saudi-backed coalition launched full-scale war against the Houthi rebels in 2015, Islah had already largely lost the plot. Senior Islahis – including its most capable centrist, Muhammed Qahtan and dozens of others – were disappeared by the Houthis. Others joined President Hadi in Riyadh or issued their support for the war from elsewhere in the region (including Nobel Peace laureate Tawakkol Karman, financial mogul Hamid al-Ahmar, and General 'Ali Muhsin). While some of these individuals continue to play a critical role in the current war and might be expected to be participate in post-war governance in some way, the Islah party's political functions have been gradually disabled and are now eclipsed by the growing role of loosely-aligned militias, both within and outside the context of President Hadi's "Popular Resistance" brigades.

Reconsidering Islah

Given the fracturing of the Islamist landscape on the ground and Islah's loss of institutional capacity and message, there is no clear reason for the party – as such – to to play a substantial role in any future national unity government. But all indications suggest that Islahis are involved in negotiations, that negotiators regard the party's role as self-evident, and that Islah will secure a place in any transitional government as the price of its loyalty to the Hadi coalition.

Unlike the last transitional framework, however, any negotiated settlement will by definition include some power for the Houthis and their allies, which will mean two things for Islah. First, Islah (like its Houthi adversaries) will find itself tainted by a war that has contributed to unprecedented sectarian polarization. Whereas Islah used to be able to attract at least some Zaydi conservatives on the basis of its Northern social foundations, and the Houthis could attract some support from Shafi'is Sunnis on the basis of its populist and anti-corruption rhetoric, this is unlikely to be the case moving forward. Additionaly, since Islah has historically struggled in the South, it will not likely exit the war as a "national party," though to be fair, it is not clear that any faction will.

Second, Islah will enjoy a more contested position in government, with no clear monopoly over the kinds of ministries and policies typically of greatest interest to party-oriented Islamists. It will have to compete with Houthis and perhaps with a more coherent *salafi* faction (whether under the Rashad Union or some other organization, like the Hasm faction in Taiz, that emerges out of the war). In theory, competition could be good for the party, compelling it to rediscover its ideological core and advance and defend policy arguments. But in the absence of any reinvigorated leadership or internal party functions, it seems more likely to lead to jockeying for position among established (and unpopular) Islahi elites, in which case Islah should expect to enjoy less support and wield less power than in government than it did before the war.

Financial Empowerment, or Reconstruction Arms-Racing

One way that Islahis (if not Islah as an institution) may seek to recoup some of this loss of standing could come through the reconstruction process. There is already a concerted effort to ensure that whatever mediated

(2013). See especially the discussion in Chapter 5 of the role of *takfir* in managing intra-opposition power dynamics.

[9] Many people have written about this, but for a concise overview of the effects in the far north, see: Shelagh Weir. *A Tribal Order.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press (2007), 296-306.

agreement is put in place will "look to the private sector as an engine of growth and a guarantor of political transition," capable of convincing "all segments of Yemeni society that they are stakeholders in a common endeavor."[10] Islahis deep connections in Yemen's private sector, and earlier conflicts' history of politicized reconstruction could help planners anticipate some hazards of this approach.

More than a decade ago, when the Saleh regime fought a violent Houthi insurgency in the province of Saada that led to tremendous civilian displacement and destruction of infrastructure, the Islah Charitable Society was the primary organization granted government permits to enter the province and was the primary local partner of humanitarian organizations doing reconstruction work. This, in turn, fueled Houthi allegations of regime favoritism for (Sunni) Islamist organizations and contributed to the sectarianization of conflict in the far north at least a decade before the ultimate eruption of armed conflict between so-called "Islah militias" and Houthi militants.[11]

Today, postwar planners working to negotiate a settlement to the conflict are placing great faith in the private sector to generate widespread buy-in for another externally-brokered agreement. While those directly involved in the negotiations may prefer approaches to reconstruction that would focus on building a capable public sector, these options are considered unrealistic given "the reluctance of the United States and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries – most of whom would likely play a final role in assisting Yemen's post-conflict recovery – to participate in a pooled fund mechanism because of the loss of control over their aid and how it is disbursed."[12] Instead, private sector-led approaches to reconstruction will likely enrich those private charities and businessmen tied to Islah who have close ties to the GCC states, and promote investment partnerships with the many infrastructure firms from the *khaleeji* capital that underwrite the Gulf regimes themselves.[13]

From Islah to Islahis

At this stage, a new transitional agreement and post-war reconstruction still feel perilously far-off. At Rex Tillerson's confirmation hearing, the war in Yemen warranted barely a mention, with Tillerson's only stated commitment to "providing [Saudi Arabia] better targeting intelligence." However, the first 100 days of the Trump administration have shown a clear preference to approach Yemen through a military, not diplomatic, lens.[14] Indeed, in the month of March alone, the United States carried out more than twice the number of airstrikes as in the year of 2016, and has committed an increasing number of Special Forces to ground operations.[15] To the extent that diplomacy is still on the agenda, Tillerson's history as president of Exxon Yemen Inc. and the clear signals of continuing partnership the U.S. is sending Saudi Arabia suggest that the market-led, Gulf-friendly approach already in place will continue or deepen.

What this means in relation to Islah is that its privileged status is unlikely to be reevaluated. While Islah needs to play a role in the coming settlement in order to avoid positioning it as a transitional spoiler, its polarizing effects might be contained by a more realistic assessment of who the party – as a party – can actually claim to represent, and how the party is likely to function in the coming months. At the outset of the war, analysts cautioned

[10] "Yemen After the War," Association of Arab Gulf States in Washington. 19 December 2016, 1-2. http://www.agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Yemen-After-the-War-Report_Online.pdf Accessed 12 January 2017.

[11] I first learned of the importance of the Islah Charitable Society to reconstruction work in Saada from UNICEF staff in 2005; see *Islamists and the State*, p. 53, 2013.

[12] AGSIW 2016, 4.

[13] Adam Hanieh has described the way in which GCC regimes effectively "subcontract" essential state-building functions to powerful business families, building a transnational class of *khaleeji* capital that cements the political foundations of the Gulf as an asymmetric but integrated whole. Adam Hanieh. *Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States*. London: Palgrave, 2011.

[14] Zaid Jilani and Alex Emons. "Rex Tillerson Wants to Provide Saudi Arabia with More Help to Bomb Yemen." *The Intercept*, 12 January 2017. https://theintercept.com/2017/01/12/rex-tillerson-wants-to-provide-saudi-arabia-with-more-help-to-bomb-yemen/ Accessed 12 January 2017.

[15] Andrew Bruncombe. "Donald Trump Administration Orders 70 Airstrikes in Yemen – Twice As Many As 2016 Total." *The Independent*, 4 April 2017. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/donald-trump-yemen-airstrikes-monthly-double-2016-obama-a7666676.html Accessed 6 April 2017.

that AQAP and ISIS would emerge, "as the Houthis' sole competitor, if alternative Islamist movements, such as Islah are marginalized," and argued that international actors would need to work "to prevent this dark scenario from happening."[16] But today it is not clear that the movement has the coherence to play this kind of moderating role. While individual Islahis will be engaged in – and will undoubtedly profit from – whatever settlement may come, scholars and policymakers alike will need to reconsider the relevance of Islah as an organizational entity and begin to reckon with the genuinely fractured landscape of Islamism in this country in crisis.

Stacey Philbrick Yadav is an associate professor of political science at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. She is the author of "Islamists and the State: Legitimacy and Institutions in Yemen and Lebanon," (IB Tauris, 2013).

[16] Bonnefoy 2015.

The Lumpers and the Splitters:
Two very different policy approaches on dealing with Islamism

Marc Lynch, George Washington University

For more than a decade, the analysis of Islamist movements among scholars and policymakers has been divided between what might be called "lumpers" and "splitters."

Lumpers typically view "radical Islam" as a broad, coherent movement rooted in religion rather than conventional politics. Splitters view the field of Islamist politics as divided among a wide range of competing ideological and political strands. The replacement of Michael Flynn last February by H. R. McMaster as President Donald Trump's national security adviser represented a dramatic shift from one extreme to the other. Flynn was one of the lumpiest of the lumpers, while McMaster earned his stripes in Iraq through splitting.

Lumpers typically view "radical Islam" as a coherent whole, with groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood playing different roles, but ultimately ones more similar than different. While these groups may deviate over tactics, lumpers believe, ultimately they share the same religious and civilizational goals, and pursue the same ultimate strategic objective of establishing an Islamic Caliphate. Clear-headed strategy requires seeing the full spectrum of the Islamist challenge—from the manifestly apparent armed groups and terrorists to the underlying ideological and material support networks and broadly-held public attitudes that create an amenable environment. Too much attention to distinctions among groups distracts from what lumpers regard as a civilizational challenge. There is little point in seeking to avoid a clash of civilizations in their view, since it is already here.

Flynn, Trump's first national security adviser, came to the White House as the ultimate lumper. His book *The Field of Flight* (co-authored with Michael Ledeen) is a model of undifferentiated, naïve conflation of different Islamist and populist movements into a single, unified grand enemy. Flynn writes that "we're in a world war against a messianic mass movement of evil people, most of them inspired by a totalitarian ideology: Radical Islam." What binds together Sunni jihadists, Shia revolutionaries, and Islamist political parties is a common embrace of an ideology effectively reduced to totalitarianism. Flynn's target list thus includes "the state and nonstate supporters and enablers of violent Islamism … fanatical killers acting on behalf of a failed civilization."

This lumping philosophy is why Flynn, like Trump's current adviser Sebastian Gorka, has considered it a fundamental strategic imperative to say the words "Radical Islam." Naming the enemy in this way is necessary to "defeat jihad" because it identifies the full scale of the movement. This, then, would presumably inform a broad strategic approach, identify a full set of adversaries, and suggest specific policies. The goal of lumpers is to target all levels of Islamist radicalization, attacking not only violent extremists but all elements of their potential ideological and material support networks as well.

The lumping approach is agreeable to Arab regimes who seek to delegitimize their nonviolent political rivals. It is easily communicated to a public conditioned since 9/11 to view Islam with suspicion. It is also robust, in that the very broad analytical categories can be easily adapted to fit virtually any changes on the ground. The problem for the lumpers is that they are wrong. The ideas and practices of Islamists do change over time in response to political conditions, and cannot be reduced to the reading of classical texts or ideological tracts. Islamists do not speak for all Muslims, jihadists are not the same as Muslim Brotherhood-style Islamists, and treating them all as part of the same movement produces both poor analysis and counterproductive results.

Splitters, whose approach was exemplified in *Fault Lines in Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological*

Fissures, a book published in 2013 and edited by Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman (to which I contributed a chapter), focus instead on the internal divisions among Islamist groups. Analytically, the goal is to produce finely-grained, accurate assessments of the ideological, organizational, and tactical differences among groups which share broadly-defined ideological orientations.

Splitters seek to leverage those differences in order to identify opportunities for cooperation with potential partners against more radical common adversaries. Their goal is to marginalize violent extremists, denying them the claim to speak on behalf of Islam by highlighting their distance from the overwhelming majority of Muslims. It is this approach which sees the Muslim Brotherhood as part of the solution to violent extremism, for as long as it adheres to non-violence and can compete for the loyalties of potential violent extremists.

McMaster is a splitter. As soon as he was appointed national security adviser, he broke with Flynn by declaring that using the term "Radical Islamic Terrorism" was not helpful. McMaster's view is rooted in his experience fighting the insurgency in Iraq. Like General David Petraeus, he came to understand that the U.S. was not facing a monolithic "Al-Qaeda" there, but rather a complex tapestry of local militias, tribes, ex-Baathists, and nationalist Iraqi jihadi insurgents who could be split from the globalist insurgents of Al-Qaeda, who by that point had already adopted the name "Islamic State." The Sons of Iraq program supported those nationalist jihadist insurgents of the "Awakening" against the Islamic State of Iraq, and it worked, for a time. Small wonder that Petraeus in 2015 suggested again to try splitting "reconciliables" from Al-Qaeda in Syria against both the Islamic State and the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

The advantage of the splitters is that they are empirically right about the internal arguments, distinctions, and battles among groups sharing a broad Islamist orientation. Their problem is that it can be politically difficult to communicate and sustain support for a policy that involves supporting groups with avowedly illiberal values and often deeply objectionable political views.

Moreover, splitters must constantly revise their analysis in response to events on the ground in ways that lumpers do not. Lumpers have the dubious advantage of rarely needing to adjust their views, since they view Islamic radicalism as a largely static and unchanging beast. Splitters don't have that luxury. Many of the finely-grained insights from the pre-2011 period no longer apply in the same way today—not because the analysis was wrong, but because conditions on the ground have changed.

For example, it makes little sense today to view Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood as a firewall against extremism. That organization has been shattered by fierce state repression following the July 3, 2013, military coup. With most of its leadership and thousands of its members dead, in prison, or in exile, the Brotherhood has lost both its public presence and its famously rigid organizational structure. It can no longer offer democratic political participation as an alternative to armed confrontation, has lost its clarity in rejecting violence, and has a much-reduced ability to exercise control over its membership. Offshoot movements and angry youth members have joined an escalating insurgency, while traditional Brotherhood messaging now mixes freely with revolutionary Salafi ideology. This proves not that the earlier analysis of the Brotherhood was wrong, but that misguided policies can produce dangerous self-fulfilling prophecies. Preventing Islamist political participation and brutally repressing nonviolent Islamists may leave only violent paths for those determined to seek change—or revenge.

Something similar can be seen in the analysis of jihadist movements. In 2011, many "splitters" argued that Al-Qaeda was in decline due to the democratizing impact of the Arab uprisings and the killing of Osama bin Laden. Today, it is resurgent. The group rebounded by taking advantage of the failed Arab transitions, the region's proxy wars, and the international focus on the Islamic State. Its branches have a firm foothold in Yemeni areas ostensibly under Saudi and Emirati control, and have taken an ever more decisive place among the remnants of the Syrian insurgency. As Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaeda's leader, demonstrated this week, Al-Qaeda will be well positioned

to exploit the failure of the "state building" model by reasserting its own version of jihadi practice.

Lumpers might approach such changes with a one-size-fits-all mentality. But splitters will only have useful analytical advice about this radically transformed environment with highly detailed, current research—which might well produce different conclusions than in the recent past. Public scholarship on Islamist movements, such as the essays collected in a newly released Project on Middle East Political Science collection, demonstrates that such analytical updating continues to produce valuable results.

McMaster's preference for splitting is a profound improvement over Flynn's lumping, but it may not necessarily lead in the expected directions. Successful counterinsurgents tend to be splitters, but not all splitters are primarily focused on counterinsurgency. McMaster and other veterans of the "surge" in Iraq appreciate the value of identifying and operationalizing divisions within Islamist movements. But this does not necessarily translate into supporting their inclusion in democratic politics or advocacy against their repression by autocratic allies. The analytical insights which McMaster brings to the White House should capture the full range of Islamist politics and not be overwhelmed by counterterrorism imperatives.

Marc Lynch is a professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University, where he is the director of the Project on Middle East Political Science, and is a non-resident senior fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Program.

The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see http://www.pomeps.org.

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