

POPULAR PROTEST IN THE NEW MIDDLE EAST

Islamism and Post-Islamist Politics

EDITED BY
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Bergen and Ramallah
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FOREWORD: ARAB REVOLTS IN POST-ISLAMIST TIMES

Asef Bayat

How can we characterise the Arab revolts of 2011? It may be 'too early to tell', as events continue to unfold, but views on the disposition of these spectacular political upheavals already abound. Most commentators described them as 'youth revolutions'; after all, the young played a key role in organising the initial street protests through the social media in Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia. Some view them in terms of 'revolutions of the multitude' – a kind of post-modern revolt, diffused and leaderless with no fixed ideologies. While some characterise them as liberal revolutions, others contend that they represent revolts against neoliberal economies that have adversely affected Arab societies since the 1990s. Finally, the Arab revolts are also seen as secular democratic upheavals, a position that challenges those (including the supporters of the troubled Arab regimes, the Iranian Islamist leaders and al-Qaeda, as well as some in the US Republican and pro-Israeli groups) who claim them to be inspired by Islam or Islamist politics.

In truth, most of these political uprisings have diffuse leaderships; enjoyed the widespread participation of young people

in addition to other subaltern groups, including mostly pious Muslims; and followed more or less democratic pursuits. But their ideological make-up and the trajectory of political change remain more complex. The key question is how have these largely democratic revolts spread like a wildfire in a region that had until recently been in the grip of nationalist-nativist and 'fundamentalist' Islamist politics?

In a 2008 essay on the future of Islamic revolutions (published in *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, 2010), I suggested that the Iranian experience 'may well remain the first and the last Islamic revolution of our time'. For the 'growth of democratic sensibilities and movements [in the Middle East] is likely to push Islamism into the "post-Islamist" course, paving the way for a democratic change in which an inclusive Islam may play a significant role. The outcome may be termed "post-Islamist refo-lutions" [a mix of reforms and revolutions]'.¹

This is not to claim that I foresaw the Arab revolutions. Admittedly, I could not imagine the intensity, speed and spread of these popular revolts, which may well seal the destiny of the region for good. Yet, the indications thus far are that they are 'post-Islamist' in orientation and 'refo-lutionary' (barring Libya and Syria that involved foreign forces in a revolutionary war) in political trajectory.

But what is meant by 'post-Islamism'? Post-Islamism is at once a critique of 'Islamism' from within and an alternative project to transcend it. By Islamism, I mean those ideologies and movements that want (either peacefully or through armed struggle) to establish some of kind of Islamic order – a religious state, *sharia* law and moral codes. Association with state power is a chief feature of Islamist politics. This is so not only because Islamists' seizure of the state would ensure their hold on power, but also because they consider the state to be the most powerful institution that is able, through *dawah* (preaching) or duress, to spread 'good' and eradicate 'evil' in Muslim communities. Thus, the Islamists' primary

concern has been to forge an ideological community from which secular concerns such as establishing social justice or improving the lives of the poor may (or may not) follow. Consequently, in the Islamist ideological universe people's obligations are strongly emphasised, while their rights get little attention; people then are perceived more as dutiful subjects (who are to follow the path of salvation defined by Islamist rulers) than rightful citizens (who may determine their own ways to happiness).

Post-Islamism stands opposed to this kind of religious politics. Neither anti-Islamic nor secular, post-Islamism strongly upholds religion but also highlights people's rights. It envisions a society in which religiosity is merged with rights, faith with freedom (to varying degrees), Islam with democracy. It aspires to a pious society within a civil (secular) democratic state. Early examples include Iran's reform movement of the late 1990s, as well as the current Green movement, the Prosperous Justice Party in Indonesia, the Justice and Development Party in Morocco and its ruling namesake in Turkey. The extent to which post-Islamists envision and commit in practice to democratic values varies.

The Arab revolutions seemed to espouse a largely post-Islamist orientation. In fact religious language was remarkably absent from these revolts, even though participants remained overwhelmingly people of faith; as they already enjoyed their faith, they strived to gain freedom. In Tunisia, the key objective of the revolution was to dismantle Zin al-Abidin Bin Ali's dictatorship and to establish a democratic government in which smouldering problems of social exclusion were to be addressed. While the outlawed Islamic movement, al-Nahda, did exist in Tunisia, almost no religious slogan was raised in the revolution. Rashid al-Ghannoushi's Islamic al-Nahda party publicly rejected a Khomeini-type revolution and state, and Ghannoushi refrained from running for president in future elections. He sees a civil democratic state as compatible with the spirit of Islam. The al-Nahda party has formally committed to maintaining Tunisia's personal status provisions – arguably

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the most progressive in the Arab world – in an agreement with the secular parties. In Egypt, the revolution was broadly popular and civil, with religious language, nationalism and anti-Western sentiments taking a back seat. In fact the major religious groups – *Salafists*, al-Azhar and the Coptic Church – initially opposed the revolution. And the Muslim Brothers' old guard joined in reluctantly only after being pushed by the group's youth, who defied their leaders to cooperate closely with the liberals and leftists in the Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution 25 January. In Egypt, the principal demand was 'change, freedom and social justice'.

The leadership of the Libyan 'rebel group' in Benghazi, the National Transitional Council (NTC), was composed not of Islamists or al-Qaeda but of doctors, lawyers, teachers and human rights activists, who found themselves leading a revolution. They were then joined by defectors from Ghaddafi's regime. According to a spokesperson for the 'rebels', Abdel-Hadidh Ghoga, Islamist extremists remained minimal, as most had been crushed by Ghaddafi. 'Libyans as a whole want a civilian democracy', he confirmed, 'not dictatorship, not tribalism, and not one based on violence or terrorism'. In Yemen, similarly, the major opposition groups wished to end the dictatorship of Ali Abdullah Saleh and to establish a civil, accountable government. Beyond the religiously oriented Islah party, there was no evidence of Islamists' presence in the uprising, nor any religious chanting. The same could be said about Syria, where the key religious group, the Muslim Brotherhood, had been crushed by Hafez al-Assad a long time ago, and where the major conservative *ulama* seemed to side with the regime. In the later stages, *Salafists* and other extremists became visible in the opposition. Bahrain's political rift (the Sunni minority ruling a Shia majority) overlaps and might thus take the form of religious strife. However, there too the mainstream opposition wanted to turn the country into a constitutional monarchy. They also wanted an elected government, a free press, free civil society organisations

and an end to discriminatory practices (such as in employment and the distribution of wealth) against the Shia majority. In a sign of their independence, the revolutionaries rejected Iran's attempt to manipulate the Shia opposition.

Of course one still needs to wait and see what forms of polity and state emerge from these revolts once the old regimes collapse and the new governments are consolidated. Some revolutionary leaders are likely to invoke the idea of *sharia* as the main source of legislation. But we need to know exactly what *sharia* means for such leaders and what it entails. Others may favour laws with 'Islamic references'. But it is crucial to realise that these overwhelmingly civil and non-religious revolts represent a sharp departure from the Arab politics of the mid-1980s and 1990s, when the political class was consumed by nationalist, anti-Zionist and moral politics framed overwhelmingly in an Islamist paradigm. It was to take a decade or so for a turnaround to occur. Early signs in Egypt of a turnaround (a new political discourse and new ways of doing politics) seemed to appear in the early 2000s. They manifested themselves in the activities around the Popular Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian and Iraqi People, but later and more notably in the episode of the Kifaya movement, which heralded the coming of a post-national (focusing more on democracy and human rights at home than on external domination), post-ideological (overriding ideological lines, especially religious and secular divisions, leftists and nationalists) and post-Islamist politics that culminated in the revolution of 25 January.

Why and how did this happen? This new political vision emerged from a constellation of new actors, a new political environment, and novel means and manners of mobilisation – all of which came to fruition in turn through a series of structural changes that Arab societies have undertaken in the past two decades or so. In a sense the authoritarian Arab states, affected by the forces of globalisation, unintentionally created environments and actors that came to challenge the very essence of these states.

To begin with, in the past two decades Middle Eastern societies have become more urban and globalised, with over 65 per cent currently living in cities. In the meantime, certain urban features (institutions, means of communication, and literacy) have permeated the countryside. Urban life, in turn, has generated desires, demands and rights, chiefly the 'right to the city' (such as paid jobs, decent shelter, optimum amenities, and respect) that the regimes in power had failed to fulfil for a large proportion of urban inhabitants. Cities, then, inculcate in urban dwellers a sense of entitlement and citizenship. Secondly, a dramatic demographic shift has made these societies predominantly young, with an estimated 70 per cent of the population under the age of 35. Here, in these overcrowded habitats, the young encounter tremendous constraints (economic deprivation, social control and moral pressure) in fulfilling their youthful claims. And yet these very cities also offer them great opportunities to forge collective identities and to demand social inclusion – in street corner gatherings, tea shops, schools and colleges, and recently in the virtual world and the social media. It is in these cities that individual young persons become *youth*, and thus collective agents.

In the meantime, these urbanising and youthful societies have become increasingly literate (over 90 per cent of 14–24 year olds). With the explosion of higher education institutions in recent years (there are currently over 280 universities), thousands of graduates pour each year into the highly segmented labour markets, which have been aggressively liberalised by the policy of structural adjustment pushed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) since the early 1990s. In this new economic restructuring, smart and well-connected groups in such globalised sectors as the high-tech, entertainment, real estate development, communications and the import-export trade have thrived, while disproportionate numbers have been pushed away from the developmental outcomes that they expect to enjoy. It is no surprise that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

region has for some time been suffering from the highest rate of unemployment in the world, in particular among youth (over 25 per cent). The diminishing subsidies, job insecurity and deteriorating social provision had caused massive urban riots in the Arab major cities in the 1980s and early 1990s. To offset the destabilising effects of social exclusion, most Arab states have assigned since the 1990s a good portion of development and welfare assistance to the rapidly growing NGOs, religious charities and microcredit projects. But these arrangements, often framed in neoliberal logic, failed to address welfare needs, not to mention a deep inequality that the termination of the social contract and the diminishing role of the state had caused. Thus, the subaltern groups resorted either to the subsistence economy, self-help and 'quiet encroachment' or instead waited for an opportunity to explode. When food prices increased in the late 2000s, a new series of urban riots broke out, while labour strikes overtook industries subject to 'rationalisation' and restructuring.

One outcome of such uneven development has been the growth of 'middle class poor', a class that has played a key role in the Arab revolts of 2011. This paradoxical class enjoys college degrees, knows about the world, uses new media and expects a middle-class lifestyle. But it is pushed by economic deprivation to live the life of the traditional urban dispossessed in the shanty towns and slums, and to undertake jobs in the largely precarious and low-status parallel economy – as taxi drivers, fruit sellers, street vendors or busboys. The middle-class poor constitute a segment of the 36 per cent of Arabs who currently live in slums and of the 40–50 per cent who subsist in the insecure informal economy.

The 'middle class poor' are not a new formation. It has lingered since the 1980s but seems to have expanded as the Arab economies were excessively liberalised from the 1990s onwards. No wonder it is estimated that unemployment among Middle Eastern youth, in particular among the highly educated, remains roughly twice the world average. In Egypt, college graduates are

ten times more likely to remain without jobs than those with primary education. In Tunisia just before the revolution, some 40 per cent of college graduates remained jobless. In the 1980s and 1990s, much of this stratum had merged into a political class absorbed by nationalist and Islamist sentiments, even though in their quotidian existence, many members of the middle class poor, just like the other discontented clusters, were involved in everyday struggles to advance their claims in an often individualised and quiet fashion. The urban poor made sure to secure a shelter, consolidate their communities and earn a living by devising work in the vast subsistence and street economy. Muslim women strove to assert their presence in public, go to college and ensure justice in courts. And youths took every opportunity to affirm their autonomy, challenge social control and plan for their future, even though many remained atomised and dreamed of migrating to the West. These quiet struggles, non-movements immersed often in the ordinary practices of everyday life, carved off pieces of power and opportunity in favour of ordinary people who under repressive regimes were prevented from forging open and organised mobilisation. When the political opportunity arrived at the end of the 2000s, these subaltern groups merged into political struggles that assumed a new life by transcending nationalist and Islamist politics.

Three things had happened since the early 2000s to generate a new post-national, post-ideological and post-Islamist vision and a new public receptive to such a vision. First, the political class realised that their nationalist, anti-imperialist, and pro-Palestinian stands would not deliver so long as they were fused with the demagogic rhetoric of their authoritarian regimes. It was time to centre the liberation struggles on the key internal issue – democracy. Secondly, Islamist politics had begun to lose its hegemony in the post-9/11 Middle East. The Iranian model had already faced a deep crisis for its repression, misogyny, exclusionary attitudes and unfulfilled promises, and al-Qaeda's

severe violence and extremism had caused a widespread islamophobia from which largely ordinary Muslims suffered. Islamism encountered serious challenges from without and within – from secularists and the faithful alike, who felt the deep scars left on the body politic and religious life by the Islamists' disregards for human rights, tolerance and pluralism. The faithful could no longer accept Islamists' exploitation of Islam as a tool for procuring power and privilege. It was time to rescue Islam and the state by abandoning the idea of an Islamic state.

Such ways of thinking permeated into the inner circles of Islamism, compelling many activists and ideologues to rethink their exclusivist, nativist and non-democratic political project. Some Islamists, for instance in Iran and Indonesia, came out explicitly denouncing their exclusivist and harmful vision, while others, such as the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, took piecemeal, pragmatic, and often contradictory steps each time they were pushed by events. Post-Islamism reflected a frame within which Muslim citizens could imagine an alternative inclusive vision of religious politics. Muslims could now confidently remain Muslim while imagining a democratic state. Turkey at the time appeared as a workable model.

Finally, in the Arab world the expanding electronic media since the mid-2000s (satellite dishes, Aljazeera, internet, websites, weblogs, and then Facebook and Twitter) supplied an unprecedented public arena for communicating and debating ideas. With the discontented actors, new political thinking, and novel channels of communication and exchange, Arab countries produced a new public – one marked by a post-national, post-ideological, and post-Islamist orientation. Arab revolutions seemed to embody this new thinking.

Can the post-Islamist vision be sustained when the revolutionary fervour subsides and the post-revolutionary regimes take shape? Is there a danger of a renewed repressive 'fundamentalism' riding on the back of a democratic environment? Things are not going

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to be easy. Already, indications are, in Egypt for instance, that the *Salafists* who opposed the revolution are now regrouping to influence the political course through their presence in mosques, the media and streets; the message of some groups includes 'democracy is haram'. On the other hand, the Muslim Brothers, are yet to come out of old-fashioned religious politics and the authoritarian polity that they seem to espouse. In Libya, the leader of the National Transitional Council (NTC) spoke of the *sharia* as the main source of law in the future Libyan state. We have yet to see what precisely *sharia* means for the NTC and how the future elected government will approach the matter. The truth is that in democratic environments all sorts of ideas and organisations may appear, including those that disparage democracy. So far, the new political horizon largely favours a post-Islamist trajectory – as reflected in the views of the Islamic-oriented al-Nahda party, which scored the most votes in the constituent assembly elections in Tunisia in October 2011. After all, Islamists in Libya and Algeria lost the general elections to the coalitions of liberal and secular parties. In Egypt, where the Muslim Brothers' candidate, Muhammad Morsi, barely won the presidential elections, the Brotherhood has experienced a dramatic decline in popularity just in the course of the one year following their ascendance to power because of their exclusionary and authoritarian policies. In fact there seems to be a shift in popular views on the role of Islam in politics. An opinion poll conducted in Egypt in November 2011 showed that 75 per cent of Egyptians favoured a 'civil state' as opposed to a 'religious state'. Yet we still need to wait and see the extent of pluralism, individual rights and tolerance in the practices of those who advocate a civil and democratic state. But one thing is clear – democratic values cannot flourish if they remain merely in rulebooks and institutional arrangements. The future of the democratic trajectory in Arab societies will depend on the efforts and strengths of those who, through laborious work, can bring inclusive values into popular sensibilities.

INTRODUCTION

Are Knudsen

The Arab Spring represents a tectonic shift in the Middle East from austere authoritarianism to opening the space for long repressed Islamist movements to seek elected office and legitimate political power. Examining this shift, the topic of this book, is a key to understanding the new Middle East and assessing where the region is heading. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to provide a bird's eye perspective, seeking among other aspects to pose definitional questions concerning Islamic movements and political participation and to give an overview of the diversity of relevant experiences in this regard. To this end, this introductory chapter examines the trajectory of Middle Eastern Islamism, which in its various forms has emerged as the primary ideology of opposition in the Arab world, displacing nationalist and leftist movements in authoritarian republics and conservative monarchies alike. The question of political participation, and by implication integration into existing political systems, has been a significant issue for Islamist movements. Some, opting for the role of a revolutionary vanguard, have rejected the concept of participation outright. Others, particularly those that have developed a broad popular base and operate in states where local or national elections are conducted, have invested heavily in participation, either as a method of achieving political power and integrating into the existing system, or as a means of influencing

public policy. The examples of Hizballah in Lebanon and more recently Hamas in Palestine furthermore demonstrate that the dichotomy between the ballot and bullet is not always clear-cut. This book examines Islamist approaches to political participation and integration in the Arab world and asks whether regional trends can be discerned with respect to either the strategy of disparate movements or the challenges they confront in the various states in which they operate. By focusing on experiences in Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and Yemen, it also examines the effect that various experiences of participation and integration have had on the individual movements concerned and the broader Islamist trend in the Arab world.

From the early 1980s, Islamist movements emerged as the main opposition force in much of the Muslim world and particularly in the Arab world. Various strategies have been employed by such movements to capture political power. These include mass insurrection; coups d'état; local and/or transnational insurgency (sometimes against the state, sometimes directed against foreign powers and sometimes in collusion with them); championing regional, local and/or ethnic/tribal grievances; parliamentary participation; socio-economic mobilisation; and alliances with the dominant regime. This multiplicity reflects the broad diversity of Islamist movements as well as the peculiarities of the local conditions.

This book examines a particular form of Islamist movement, a particular approach to political power and at a particular time, the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring has caused political upheaval in the Middle East that has brought about regime change in countries such as Tunis, Egypt, Libya and Yemen and could end minority rule in Bahrain and Syria. Although not all Middle East countries have been equally affected by the Arab Spring, all are, or will be, influenced by it in diverse ways. It is too early to tell how the mass protest will impact on the countries in the region, and especially, for the future role of Islamist movements,

which have in many cases been the only form of organised protest or political opposition. This will be important in particular to Islamist movements that comprise a popular and institutional base and either participate in electoral politics or promote democratisation in order to do so. While such movements only rarely grab international headlines and until recently mostly did so on account of their participation in other activities, they have emerged as the most influential in terms of setting the Islamist agenda within the region as well as in influencing the character and policies of the state.

The Arab Spring has predominantly been a popular uprising against repressive authoritarianism (Filiu 2011). Will this serve to sideline Islamist parties or movements? Or will they instead join hands with other civil society actors? Could this, in turn, strengthen the drive towards a democratic 'post-Islamism'? Or could pro-democracy, civil society activism overtake Islamism as the main political force? Collecting the observations and analysis of a number of specialists in the field, this book explores these questions, ranging from countries where Islamists are either in control of the state as in an Islamic theocracy (Iran), the ruling party (Turkey), part of a ruling coalition (Lebanon), key opposition movements assuming power following parliamentary and presidential elections (Egypt, Tunisia), to those where they thus far have been parliamentary minorities (Yemen), banned (Syria) or subject to an international boycott (Palestine). Taken together, this regional variation represents the full range of political institutionalisation of Islamism in a Middle East region now at a crossroads, both politically and ideologically. This book is a novel attempt at mapping out the regional implications and political options for post-revolution Islamist parties, ranging from full institutionalisation as a political party (the 'Turkish model') to partial inclusion as party and resistance movement (the 'Lebanese model'). As such, the book builds on recent scholarly work on Islamic political parties and partisans (Salih 2009;

Hale and Ozbudun 2011; Zollner 2011; Tamimi 2010), electoral politics and political participation (Lust-Okar and Zerhoun 2008; Schwedler 2006) and democracy and revivalism in the Middle East (Brown and Shahin 2010; Volpi and Cavatorta 2007; Khatib 2011).

Democracy in the Arab world?

Since 1990, there has been a rapid growth of democracies in all regions of the world except one: the Arab world (Diamond 2010). The Arab region also has the world's lowest female parliamentary representation, a dismal ten per cent (Dahlerup 2009). By 1995, three in five countries in the world were democratic but the Arab world continued to defy Lipset's correlation between prosperity and democracy; the higher a country's income levels, the greater the likelihood that it will be democratic and stay democratic (Diamond 2010: 97). The exceptions to this rule are the wealthy, resource-rich, mostly oil-producing countries, such as the Gulf monarchies, where the state uses vast oil revenues to buy popular support rather than earn it ('rentier states'). In a dramatic reversal of Lipset's finding, the 'first law of petro-politics' states that 'the higher the oil revenues in a given country, the more authoritarian the government' (Friedman, in Perthes 2008: 154). Poorer countries, by comparison, cannot afford to buy off the electorate; hence, the regimes must use other and cruder strategies for holding on to power. These involve harsher but no less effective means such as the use of state intelligence agencies (*mukhabarat*), which are an integral feature of all the authoritarian states in the Middle East and are used to coerce, control and co-opt the citizenry. Indeed, Syria is believed to have at least 20 different intelligence agencies. However, this can also be a feature of democratic states such as Israel, which has invested massively in its intelligence agencies in order to bolster national security, keep

watch on its Palestinian Arab citizens and deter attacks from its Arab neighbours (Pappé 2008).

However, non-oil-rich states such as Egypt, Jordan and Morocco can bank on their strategic importance to attract massive foreign aid, principally from the USA (Diamond 2010: 101). Overall, authoritarian states have relied on other forms of statecraft such as co-optation, sham economic and political reforms, and rigged elections, only to embrace more coercive measures (arrests, clamp-downs and detentions) when the opposition forces grow too powerful. This strategy of co-optation is found in a number of long-standing autocratic states and has been labelled 'authoritarian upgrading' (Heydeman 2007). It involves appropriating civil society, its organisations and its watchdog functions, controlling political opposition by closely managing elections, selective economic reform and liberalisation benefiting the regime's supporters and business elites, controlling access to and revenues from new telecommunication services and finally, diversifying international trade and developing linkages with non-Western countries such as China and India. Taken together, 'authoritarian upgrading' has stifled political opposition, silenced regime critics and placated Western countries preferring regional stability over democracy, so that the regimes come to appear quasi-modern, democratic and liberal. Yet, authoritarian upgrading is not a guarantee for regime survival and incurs considerable costs. Syria is a case in point, which despite completing economic and social liberalisation was unable to undertake political reforms, making the country vulnerable to a popular revolt (Hinnebusch 2012).

Not all Middle East countries need to engage in this type of autocratic statecraft. Gulf monarchies such as Saudi Arabia weathered the Arab Spring, in part by purchasing support. In early 2011, the Saudi rulers pledged USD 130 billion in increased government spending on public housing and other social

programmes. This was widely seen as a precautionary measure to buy loyalty and diffuse dissent (Gause 2011). Less well-endowed countries such as Tunisia, Bahrain and Yemen imposed emergency laws to clamp down on the protestors, while countries such as Syria and Egypt repealed their decades-old emergency laws in order to appease protestors, only to find that the promised reforms emboldened protestors and energised revolts. Suddenly, modernising or upgrading authoritarianism was no longer enough, as the fall of the Mubarak regime and the bloody Syrian crisis demonstrate. Nationwide protests forced the Syrian regime to appease the protestors and initiate reforms, grant privileges and repeal emergency laws. When this failed, the regime fell back on massive repression, human rights abuses and bombing of civilian targets, aiming to silence the protestors' call for the president to step down – '*Yalla erhal ya Bashar*' – 'Come on Bashar, leave!'. The only thing standing between the 'sultanistic' Syrian regime and a military defeat is the armed forces, especially the elite Republican Guard, which, despite between 10,000–20,000 defectors from the regular army (as of mid-2013), has not yet split ranks (Hinnebusch 2012: 110).

The army is *the* crucial variable for uprisings to succeed. In order to emerge victorious, the protestors must, at the least, be supported by a majority of the army (Barany 2011: 24ff). In two Arab Spring countries the army sided with the people (Tunisia and Egypt), in another two it was divided (Libya and Yemen) and in the final two stuck with the regime (Bahrain and Syria). Only in the latter two cases have the regimes managed to survive through massive military repression and violence, stripping both regimes of credibility and with slim chances of long-term survival. This could also mark the end to the minority rule of the Alawite elite in Syria and the Sunni monarchy in Bahrain, a situation bearing some semblance to the Lebanese civil war (1975–90) which ended the Christian minority's political hegemony (Baroudi and Tabar 2009).

The New Arab Street

Larry Diamond's (2010: 102) prediction ahead of the Arab Spring now sounds almost prophetic:

Is the Arab world simply condemned to an indefinite future of authoritarian rule? I do not think so. ... Opinion surveys suggest that they clearly want more, and new social-media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, the blogosphere, and the mobile-phone revolution are giving Arabs new opportunities to express themselves and to mobilise.

Still, most political scientists missed the Arab Spring and predicted a continuation of authoritarian regimes (Gause 2011). To varying degrees, all of the Middle East authoritarian states seemed impervious to change even though the internal contradictions were glaring, their longevity gave the impression of regime stability (Selvik and Stenslie 2011). This is one reason why even seasoned analysts missed the Arab Spring and the power of concerted civic protests. The power of political dissent in the Arab world, pejoratively referred to as the 'Arab Street', has often been equated with irrational rage rather than as legitimate protests (Regier and Khalidi 2009). The Arab Spring elevated street protests above this conjectural stereotype to become a legitimate tool of contention for people whose other forms of dissent are blocked by the coercive mechanisms described above. Indeed, street protests, which have a long history in the Middle East, were now propelled by changing demographics (the youth bulge), new social media (twitter, facebook), rapid urbanisation and a new stratum of middle-class poor hungry for change (Bayat 2011). Many of these educated young men worked as self-employed street vendors, like the late Muhammad Bouazizi, subsisting on the margins of the neoliberal economy where they suffered daily humiliation, frustration and despair, leading them to rebel (Gurr

1970). The new generation of Arab youth that flooded the boulevards, squares and *kasbahs* are the core of what Asef Bayat has termed the 'New Arab Street' (Bayat 2011).

Still, it might be expected that popular protests would be doomed when faced with authoritarian regimes supported by powerful armies (Gause 2011). Yet, recent research suggests otherwise. Non-violent campaigns are twice as likely to succeed as violent ones (Stephan and Chenoweth 2008: 8). The success of massive popular revolts seem to hinge on their 'modular effect', which leads to spontaneous collective action spreading across international borders, as demonstrated by the wave of democratic 'colour revolutions' that shook the former Soviet states – Georgia's Rose revolution (2003), Ukraine's Orange revolution (2004–05) and Kyrgyzstan's Tulip revolution (2005) – and gained strength from cumulative successes (Beissinger 2007). The Arab Spring revolutions followed a similar trajectory as the revolt spread across the Middle East from Tunisia to Bahrain. The Arab Spring revolts, like the post-Soviet ones, took analysts by surprise because the countries in which it occurred were believed to lack the preconditions necessary for revolutions to take place (Pace and Cavatorta 2012).

Behavioural dynamics played a key role too. Typically, severe state repression makes citizens hide their opposition to the regime, a trait known as 'preference falsification' (Beissinger 2007: 273). Once political change seems to be within reach, however, a large number of seemingly apolitical actors mobilise against the regime, a dynamic referred to as a 'behavioural cascade'. Adding to this, there is evidence that Middle East opposition groups, often considered small, weak and divided, have been able to cooperate and that 'opposition cooperation' is a major reason for the forceful protests that have toppled a number of Arab regimes (Lust 2011: 425). This is neither to say that the Arab Spring dynamics were the same in all countries, nor that they will all have similar, democratic outcomes (Anderson 2011).

Indeed, the modular change research indicates that popular protest can spread by diffusion to countries lacking the structural requirements for democracy to take hold, hence regime change is brought about by the power of 'example' (Beissinger 2007: 273). Overall, this means that the prospects for modular transitions leading to stable democracies are small and susceptible to being 'rolled back' by counter-revolutions (Teti and Gervasio 2011: 325). In fact, over the twenty-five year period 1974–99, only one in three democratic transitions led to stable democracies (Beissinger 2007: 274). The post-Cold War 'colour revolutions' were hastened by the prior dissolution of the USSR, but the Arab Spring took place without any such structural change to its regional hegemon, the USA (Way 2011: 18). This means that the latter took place in an environment where the US and others remain wary that Islamist takeovers could jeopardise their strategic interests. Another regional actor, the Arab League, does not even mention the term democracy in its founding charter (Diamond 2010: 102). The EU, on the other hand, has been a major guarantor of democracy in the new post-Cold War states (e.g. Serbia, Romania) as well as investing in the promotion of democracy in the southern Mediterranean through its European Neighbourhood Policy (Seeberg 2007). Nonetheless, the EU has strayed from its normative goal of promoting democracy to a realist stance when dealing with countries such as Lebanon, with its 'dual power' situation involving the state and Hizballah (Seeberg 2009), and Algeria, where the state and the Islamists have been locked in a bloody battle (Çelenk 2009).

What about Islamists and democracy?

The Islamists were neither the most vocal nor the most prominent in the Arab Spring revolts but being better organised than the new civil society groups, stand to benefit from democratic transition and free elections. Yet recent research questions the

many popular assumptions about Islamists in politics as well as the politics of Islamists. A frequent charge against Islamist parties is that if they win power by the ballot, they will never risk being voted out of power at a later date – what has been termed ‘one person, one vote, one time’ (Langohr 2001). Islamist parties are miscast as inherently undemocratic and unwilling to cede power once in charge of the executive. Recent research literature questions these assumptions, indeed presents us with a series of surprising and even counterintuitive findings about their strategies and electoral goals.

In most parts of the Middle Eastern world, Islamic politics is oppositional. It is generally believed that state repression and political exclusion leads to radicalisation. But the evidence is not conclusive. Some studies suggest that, in Turkey at least, exclusion has led to moderation (Schwedler 2011: 369). In any case, Turkey is an exception, because this country, unlike the Arab states, developed an inclusive ‘polyarchy’ that defies the neat authoritarian-democratic dichotomy (Hinnebush 2010). Still, the question remains as to whether the political inclusion of Islamist groups leads to moderation, known as the ‘inclusion–moderation hypothesis’.

According to this hypothesis, moderation follows a complex trajectory along three dimensions: behavioural, making formerly excluded parties play by the rules; ideological, making political actors moderate their stances; and beliefs, making groups and individuals moderate their views (Schwedler 2011). Moderation is not a linear process, but follows a complex ‘sequencing’ trajectory that either simultaneously or consecutively engages these dimensions. Yet, there is neither agreement on their primacy nor whether the behavioural-ideology dichotomy holds. Moderation can also be illusory, as some of the Islamist groups taking part in the elections were never truly radical, while other groups, such as those in Yemen and Jordan, have been allied with the ruling regime (Schwedler 2007: 60). While inclusion spurs moderation,

it does not guarantee moderation. A further moderation paradox is that if Islamist groups do moderate, they could inadvertently bolster the adversary (authoritarian) state (Schwedler 2011: 364, 372).

Not only is the route to democratisation complex, so is the behaviour of Islamist voters and parties alike. A pertinent question, and one that is typically overlooked, concerns whether Islamist parties do, in fact, seek electoral victory. Do they really want to maximise their electoral success under authoritarian rule? Recent research suggests that Islamist movements-cum-parties do not seek an outright win, indeed take steps to ensure that they do not sweep elections. But why? The main reason is that they seek protection from regime reprisals. Not winning, hence, is an act of self-preservation. Disciplined and well-organised Islamist parties are capable of winning elections, in fact often the only groups with such capability, but they do not pursue electoral strategies that would maximise the popular vote, even losing elections on purpose. Islamist parties can win, indeed do win, but often they do not want to, opting to stay below a regime-defined threshold (Hamid 2011: 69).

Islamist movements

Islamist movements can, somewhat simplified, be divided into three: the 'militant', the 'nationalist' and the 'quietist', which eschew violence (Wirtes 2009: 8–9). Of the three, only the latter two take part in elections. Islamist parties taking part in parliamentary elections for the first time typically win 20–40 per cent of the seats in the assemblies, but do worse in subsequent elections (Schwedler 2007: 57). What could be the reasons and under what conditions do 'Muslims vote Islamic'? When voters can cast their ballots in free and fair elections, they tend not to vote for Islamists (Kurzman and Naqvi 2010). Under authoritarian rule, however, where regimes seek to prevent Islamist groups from

assuming power or to limit their influence, regime repression increases their popularity. Under these conditions, voting for the Islamists is the ultimate 'protest vote' (Wittes 2008: 11). Along similar lines, support for implementing *sharia* is highest in countries with the least political freedom. At the same time, panel data from four Middle Eastern countries show that there is also general support for democracy among those who take a positive view of Islam in their personal and political life (Tessler 2002).

A surprising finding of recent research on election behaviour under authoritarian rule deals with the virtual absence of an opposition in parliament. One would expect voters to cast their ballot for candidates that either challenge the regimes or seek to reform the system from within. Recent research on 'competitive clientelism' in Jordan, however, suggests otherwise (Lust 2009). Voters typically cast their ballots for candidates approved by members of the regime, elite or ruling party, because they are the ones who can deliver the 'goods', 'work the system' and ensure sectarian and/or clientelist benefits. This partially explains the longevity of authoritarian regimes. Ballots are cast for candidates working within the system, not those seeking to challenge or overthrow it. The latter will be isolated in parliament and unable to extract resources that can benefit their clients (tribal members, co-religionists, locals etc). The clientelist voting structure has been one reason for regime stability and the inability to sustain an opposition through elections.

Not only are voter preferences an issue, but also the electoral systems in place in Middle East countries. The Arab Spring has caused several countries to review their election systems: Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan and Yemen, as well as the Palestinian Authority, are planning changes to their electoral systems (Carey and Reynolds 2011). Yemen's last parliamentary election was in 2003 and the election system (single member districts) strongly favoured the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) party of

the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The old electoral system could be changed prior to the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections slated for 2014. In multi-confessional countries such as Lebanon, the electoral system is devised so as to constrain any party from sweeping the elections. Lebanon's consociational power-sharing system divides the parliament into two equally large blocs (Muslim and non-Muslim) and within each bloc awards recognised sects a fixed number of seats in the assembly, reflecting outdated population figures. This limits the seats that can be won by any sect or party, including Hizballah, which since 1992 has contested municipal and parliamentary elections (Hamzeh 2000; El-Khazen 2003). There is agreement that Lebanon's electoral system suffers from widespread vote buying and gerrymandering and badly needs revision, but there has not yet been agreement on what system should replace it.

As shown, electoral systems strongly influence election outcomes. In the first elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in 1996, the block-vote system strongly favoured Fatah, which scored a major victory. In the 2006 elections to the PLC, the revised electoral system divided the assembly seats between block votes (66 seats) and proportional votes (66 seats). The block votes favoured parties who fielded a limited number of candidates, thereby avoiding splitting the vote. This was the main reason Hamas' candidates trumped Fatah's candidates, who split the block vote between them. Retrospectively, it is clear that Hamas neither expected to win the PLC elections nor had planned to take home an electoral victory and that assuming executive power was a tactical mistake leading to an international boycott (Knudsen and Ezbidid 2007). What system to use in future legislative elections is disputed between Hamas and Fatah (Carey and Reynolds 2011: 43).

In Jordan the electoral laws are tailored to prevent Islamists from winning seats. This is done by instituting a single, non-transferable vote to be cast in gerrymandered electoral districts,

whose boundaries are defined by the government so that they disadvantage Islamist parties but benefit pro-government ones (Hamid 2011: 76). Despite such limitations, on a few occasions Islamists have won an outright election victory. In the first round of the Algerian elections to the national assembly in 1991, the Front Islamique de Salut (FIS) took a stunning lead, almost wiping out the more than 49 other parties contesting the election. Under growing pressure to suspend the second round of elections, the government imposed a state of emergency in February 1992 and arrested the FIS leadership. In the following years this gave rise to an Islamist insurgency, which escalated into a civil war (1992–98) that claimed more than 100,000 lives.

Post-Arab Spring elections

During 2011–12, several of the Arab Spring countries moved towards holding (mostly) free and fair elections to new parliaments and civilian governments. They are instructive of the challenges ahead for post-revolutionary countries and suggestive of the many pitfalls of a transition to democracy (Pace and Cavatorta 2012). They are also instructive correctives to the goals and strategies of Islamist parties under authoritarian rule.

Tunisia's near bloodless revolution, Sunni-majority population and strong opposition parties gave the country a unique starting point for completing a peaceful democratic transition. In late October 2011, Tunisia held its first free parliamentary elections since 1965, which brought the Islamist al-Nahda movement to power, winning 89 of 217 seats and later forming a coalition government. Two months later the former dissident Munsif al-Marzouki was elected interim president. Al-Nahda's founder and leader, Rashid al-Ghannouchi did not run in the elections and has continued to espouse a liberal version of Islam. He has defended civil liberties for Muslims and non-Muslims alike and condemned the attack on the American embassy in Tunis following

region-wide protests over an amateur film denigrating the Prophet Mohammad.

In neighbouring Libya, the late president Muammar Ghaddafi and his Revolutionary Guard were defeated in October 2011 after a lengthy battle with opposition groups supported by NATO air strikes. Since Ghaddafi's demise, clans and tribes have held sway amidst the power vacuum following the regime's collapse. The Libyan National Council (LNC) chaired by Mustafa Abdel Jalil, functioned as an interim government until July 2012, when elections were held to the new parliament assembly, the General National Congress. The elections gave the majority votes to the liberal National Forces Alliance (39 of 200 seats), followed by the Justice and Development Party (17 seats), an offshoot of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood. In mid-September, the new parliament elected the independent candidate Mustafa Abushagur as Prime Minister but unable to form a government, he was later dismissed by the Congress and replaced by Ali Zeidan. The deadly attack on the US consulate in Benghazi in September, underlines the country's volatile political situation.

The Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak was deposed on 11 February 2011, following massive public protests centred on Cairo's Tahrir Square. In the first period after Mubarak's departure the country was run by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). The Army council has yet to repeal the contested 'emergency laws' instituted under Mubarak, but as promised, did oversee the country's first free and fair elections. The two-stage presidential elections confirmed Muhammad Morsi as the new president with 51.7 per cent of the votes. Morsi, who is chairman of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), a political wing of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, narrowly beat the incumbent, Ahmad Muhammad Shafik Zaki, who was considered a member of the *ancien regime*. In the elections to the lower house of Egypt's bicameral parliament (People's Assembly of Egypt), the Democratic Alliance for Egypt, an Islamist bloc lead by the FJP,

won a total of 58 per cent of the votes, securing 105 of the 180 seats. The Islamist Bloc, an electoral alliance of *Salafist* parties headed by the al-Nour party, came second, securing 25 per cent of the votes. The liberal secular parties only got seven per cent of the votes, making this a huge victory for Islamist parties. In mid-2012, SCAF handed over power to President Morsi but the president was accused of usurping power, leading to new public protests across the country. The new constitution also stirred widespread controversy, but was approved by the elected Constituent Assembly and signed into law following a referendum in late 2012. In mid-2013, Morsi was deposed by the Army following the massive grassroots rebellion ('Tamarod'). The military takeover has divided the country between those who see it as safeguarding the democracy ('democratic coup') and those believing it endangers it ('military coup'). The country now runs the risk of prolonged military rule amidst a looming sectarian conflict.

Despite Bashar al-Assad's assurances that Syria would weather the Arab Spring, popular protests erupted from March 2011, followed by defections from the army and brutal government crackdowns on border towns and cities. Unable to quell peaceful demonstrations and a growing armed opposition (the Free Syrian Army), the regime pounded rebel areas, and tortured and massacred civilians. In February 2012, the ailing Assad regime held a referendum on a new constitution, followed by parliamentary elections to the 250 seats in the Syrian People's Council in early May 2012. The election for the first time included a small number of opposition parties but not the outlawed Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. The sham elections and hollow reforms did nothing to dent the popular revolt against the regime and the conflict has since escalated into a bloody sectarian civil war with jihadist overtones.

In Syria's neighbour Lebanon, the Syrian revolt raised internal tensions, but did not unseat the Hizballah-controlled multi-party government headed by Prime Minister Najib Mikati. In

2005 the Beirut Spring, a precursor to the Arab Spring, ousted the remaining Syrian troops but entrenched political divisions between pro-Syrian and pro-Western blocs. The country has since strained under these divisions, leading to cabinet deadlocks, governance crises, public protests and repeated security breaches. The parliamentary elections have been postponed, but are expected neither to solve the country's internal divisions nor to be preceded by an agreement among the parties on a new electoral law ahead of the elections.

In February 2012, Yemen's long-serving president Ali Abdullah Saleh was deposed after a year-long uprising in which women such as Nobel Laureate and human rights activist Tawwakul Karman played a key role. The presidential elections to elect Saleh's successor gave voters only one choice: to cast their ballot for Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, a former general, vice-president and close aide to Saleh. This was one reason for the low voter turnout (less than 65 per cent), especially in the north of the country, considering that Hadi hails from the south. Factional conflict and a divided parliament (elected in 2003) do not bode well for the future of a united and democratic Yemen, until 1990 divided into a communist South Yemen and a republican North Yemen, and with new legislative elections delayed until 2014.

The post-Arab Spring elections present a complex picture and illustrate the problem of 'leaderless revolutions' steering former autocratic regimes towards multi-party democracy. Nonetheless, the elections held so far show that unlike elections under authoritarian rule, Islamist parties are contesting parliamentary elections with a view to winning them and to forming a government. They are ushered into office by their strong organisational skills, a groundswell of public support and a political programme of accountability, justice and social welfare. But the stakes are high as underlined by the return to military rule (Egypt), authoritarian rule (Yemen), political chaos (Libya) and prolonged civil war (Syria). In any case, it can be expected that it will take time

before the unstable political situation has settled and established a new political order (Khashan 2012). Nonetheless, a preliminary outcome of the post-Arab Spring elections is the very strong electoral showing of the Islamists and, in Egypt especially, austere *Salafist* parties. Does this indicate sweeping support for Islamist parties across the region or is it a new trend towards what has been termed 'post-Islamism'?

An end to ideologies? Post-Islamism and beyond

The Arab Spring revolts were energised by the slogans 'dignity, justice and freedom', followed by the poignant battle cry of the revolution, 'The people want the downfall of the regime', which reverberated throughout the region (Teti and Gervasio 2011: 324). In this sense, the uprisings defied the secular-Islamist divide so common in the Middle East. In Egypt, especially, it signalled a new public sphere that was neither Islamic nor secular, which was exactly what the Mubarak-regime feared and hence sought to prevent. Yet it was this 'post-secular' moment that in the end brought the regime down (Hirschkind 2012). Do the Egyptian uprisings indicate an end to the ideologies that have shaped the trajectory of the modern Middle East: socialism, nationalism and Islamism? Have the 'old' ideologies been replaced by a new breed of 'post-ideologies' that supersedes the old ideological divide between 1970s secularism followed by the Islamic revival that grew to become the region's dominant, even hegemonic political and public discourse? (Haugbolle 2012). As Haugbolle notes, it is too early to write off the old ideologies; indeed, they may still exist but in a fuzzier 'cultural' and hybrid 'seculareligious' form (Bayat 2007: 192). Still, there is no doubt that the Arab Spring has highlighted the power of everyday discourses and practices, whose intellectual home is not the seminary but the street.

The first scholar to identify this new post-Islamist discourse was Asef Bayat whose books *Making Islam Democratic* (2007)

and *Life as Politics* (2010) highlighted the transformative power of street politics in forging change 'once the opportunity arises' (2010: 9). The protestors are bound by a common purpose, yet they are not social movements but what Bayat has termed 'social non-movements' (ibid.: 14ff), which captures this new phenomenon of spontaneous cascades of people not only 'taking to the streets' but, in large part, living their life on the street as an enlarged public sphere. This is an example of the 'post-Islamist turn', which, as *Asef Bayat's* foreword (this book) indicates, can be traced to Iran in the early 1990s. It was followed by the 'reformist project' of the late 1990s and early 2000s and the subsequent 'Green Movement', which emerged in the 2009 election and post-election episodes. Iran's hard-line agenda under president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spurred a counter-revolution that in the 2009 presidential elections rocked the country. Currently, several key opposition figures, dissidents and protesters are awaiting trial, being detained or prevented from travelling abroad. The new discourses reflect the political facet of broader societal trends towards 'post-Islamism', a movement and project that aims to fuse religiosity with rights and faith with personal freedoms. Post-Islamism is not, however, an exclusively Iranian phenomenon but has led to an ideological, pluralist shift among a number of Islamist movements. Views on the character of these spectacular political upheavals abound. The events are described variably as 'youth revolutions', 'revolutions of the Multitude', 'facebook revolutions' and even a prelude to a new wave of Islamic revolutions. Bayat's foreword suggests that in their ideological make-up, the Arab revolts may best be characterised as 'post-Islamist revolutions' which spread like wildfire in a region that had until recently been in the grip of nationalist-nativist and fundamentalist Islamist politics.

The popular uprisings that swept across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in late 2010 and early 2011, took both scholars and policy-makers by surprise. Even more surprising is

it that the so-called 'Arab Spring' began in Tunisia, long held to be the most stable and modern country in the Arab world, with a growing economy and significant tourist industry. Contrary to popular views in the West and to the Bin Ali regime's assumption, Islamism did not play a significant role in the uprising. In their chapter, *Rikke Haugbølle* and *Francesco Cavatorta* argue that the Tunisian demonstrations were not driven by formal political parties or civil society organisations. Instead it was individuals interconnected by loose horizontal networks who were the main protagonists. This does not mean that Islamism does not and will not play an important role in Tunisia, in particular the al-Nahda (Renaissance) party led by Rashid al-Ghannoushi. However, as their chapter illustrates, attention should not be paid exclusively to al-Nahda. The dramatic economic, social and demographic transformations that Tunisia experienced, coupled with international events of enormous significance for the Arab world, have given rise to expressions of 'Islamism' that cannot be easily reconciled with the practices of an Islamist party such as al-Nahda. Social groups and individuals have to a large extent appropriated Islam as a core part of their identity and as a basis for their values, despite the Bin Ali regime's repression. In line with Asef Bayat's recent work, this 'new' Islam(ism) is better understood in terms of 'social movement' or 'social network' and is in many ways opposed to al-Nahda, which represents political, institutionalised Islam.

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, effectively the parent organisation of similar movements in Palestine, Jordan, Syria and elsewhere, constitutes a shadow government of sorts despite being a proscribed organisation and, until recently, banned from participating in the formal politics of the country. How has it managed to exert such influence domestically and regionally? What do the outcomes of its attempts to shape state and society tell us about Islamist movements and political participation more generally, bearing in mind the vanguard role often played

by Egypt for the rest of the region? *Issandr El Amrani's* chapter argues that with the fall of Hosni Mubarak on 11 February 2011, Egypt is undergoing a radical transformation of its political landscape. The security services and their micro-management of domestic politics have been discredited. New political parties are sprouting and old ones that amounted to a loyal opposition are disappearing or reinventing themselves. The outcome of the transformation taking place in Egypt is still uncertain, but there already appears to be one immediate winner: the Society of Muslim Brothers, which for the first time since being banned in 1949 can have a legitimate existence both as a social movement and as a political party representing Egypt's Islamist mainstream. At first appearance, this would seem to be a moment of triumph for the Brotherhood. Yet, much as Egypt is undergoing a political and social transformation after years of stasis and stagnation under the Mubarak regime, the Muslim Brotherhood is confronted with serious challenges. A passing of the torch is now being carried out between the ageing leadership, which rebuilt the Brotherhood after the Nasser-era crackdown that almost destroyed it, and a new leadership that must contend with plurality within the Islamist 'current', and with the old debate about how to separate political activism and the core mission of *dawah* (preaching) still unresolved. That a major transformation is coming to the Arab world's oldest Islamist movement is therefore certain. Its ability to adapt will be an important indicator of Egypt's direction post-Mubarak, as well as the viability of its own future.

In November 2011, Ali Abdullah Saleh signed a deal, sponsored by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which effectively brought his dominance of Yemeni political life to an end. Under the terms of the deal, Saleh, who has been president of the country since it came into existence in its modern form in 1990, handed over power to his vice-president as a prelude to the formation of a government of national unity and the holding of

presidential elections in February 2012. As *Vincent Durac* shows in his chapter, this paved the way for a coalition of opposition parties, the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), to enter government in tandem with the ruling General People's Congress (GPC). Amongst these opposition parties, the most influential is the Islamist Islah party, which had previously served in government in coalition with Saleh's GPC during 1994–97. Indeed, throughout its history, the party has occupied an ambiguous space in Yemeni political life, maintaining close links with the regime while serving as the major opposition force. The apparent transition to a post-Saleh order was the culmination of almost a year of popular protests in the main cities of Yemen. As has been the case elsewhere in the Arab world, the Yemeni protest movement emerged from outside of the established political actors and institutions. However, very early on the Islah party threw in its lot with the protesters to the point that many in Yemen's youth movement have expressed concern that their movement was being hijacked. When the GCC deal was negotiated and signed without reference to the demands of the young protesters, such fears seemed to have been substantiated. The chapter explores the background to Yemen's political system – a multiparty system unique in the Arabian Peninsula – and examines the origins of the Islah party and its relationship with other political actors in the country, including the opposition JMP alliance and the GPC. Finally, the chapter explores the relationship between the party and the youth movement in order to establish whether the GCC deal does indeed represent the triumph of Yemen's protest movement or its marginalisation by established political actors.

Syria is currently reeling under a bloody civil war that, at the time of writing, has killed an estimated 150,000 people, mainly civilians. The Assad regime's brutal crackdown on protesters is reminiscent of the 1982 Hama massacre that all but wiped out the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. In their chapter *Line Khatib* and *Robert Stewart* argue that while the forces behind the Syrian

uprising are overwhelmingly secular, the forces that might grab the reins of power once the authoritarian regime is ousted may very well be Islamic. This is due to an extensive strategy of authoritarian upgrading undertaken by the Syrian regime, as well as its accommodating of the powerful religious class at the expense of the country's once-powerful secular movement. But what sort of Islamic power might emerge on the political scene? If Islamism means the Islamisation of the state and post-Islamism refers to the compatibility of Islam and pluralism, then one might label Syria's political environment and more particularly its Islamic movement as 'post-Islamic'. This is because the movement's actors advance a socio-political position that highlights pluralism and co-habitation in the public sphere, predicated on a separation between the political and the religious. Islam is thus said to be compatible with democracy and Syrian Islamists have expressed their readiness to work with, and are indeed already working with and under the auspices of, secular parties.

In post-civil war Lebanon, Hizballah managed to become a leading national (and indeed regional) player by combining resistance to foreign occupation with electoral politics within Lebanon's confessional political system. A minority opposition movement with effective veto power over the state, it has managed to rise to the apex of national politics while eluding crippling international isolation. Indeed, Hizballah's embrace of parliamentary politics can be interpreted as an act of self-preservation. The movement's political wing, Loyalty to the Resistance, represents an important foothold in the state and is crucial for protecting the movement's interest within Lebanon's confessional political system and, in particular, the arms of the Resistance. Hizballah's latest political communiqué, unveiled by General Secretary Hassan Nasrallah in late 2009, is seen by many as a step towards moderation and further 'Lebanonisation' of the movement. Yet, Hizballah encompasses parliamentary politics, social work and armed resistance to form a state of its own. *Karim Knio's* chapter analyses the role and

nature of Hizballah's involvement in Lebanese politics, which has been an omnipresent topic in Middle Eastern studies. The Arab Spring revolts highlighted the party's contradictions: supporting all the popular resistance movements in the Arab World with the exception of those in Syria, its major political ally in the region. This contradiction highlights whether Hizballah should be perceived as a proxy client of Iran and Syria or as an intrinsic and genuine domestic resistance movement. Knio argues that the scholarly treatment of Hizballah's nature, which has oscillated between dualistic 'structure-led' and 'agency-led' analyses, is problematic. The chapter proposes a historically situated dialectical analysis of the party's structure and agency that can better explain how a legitimate domestic actor can be understood within the premises of proxy client politics.

The case of Hamas is both unique and representative of many of the trends observed in other states in the Middle East region. Hamas emerged from relative obscurity in the late 1980s to electoral victory in 2006 on the basis of an extensive charitable network and by assuming the mantle of resistance to Israeli occupation in the period after the 1993 Oslo Agreement. At present, Hamas is the only Arab Islamist party to have won parliamentary elections and formed a government, although it was subsequently brought down by a combination of domestic opposition, regional isolation and international boycott. *Basem Ezbidi's* chapter argues that democracy approximation is not a useful tool for assessing the standing and performance of Hamas. The Israeli occupation makes national liberation the main political goal for most Palestinians, an issue that carries considerably more urgency than democratic transformation, unless democracy is to be understood as a means for the realisation of national independence. Given the complex internal and international conditions of the Palestinian case, true democracy cannot be instituted under Israeli occupation (although internationally largely condoned, even supported). The occupation has rendered Palestinians unable to govern their

land and resources, making it impossible to develop effective institutions, sound laws and a viable economy. The key issue for Palestinians is ending the occupation and not how to manage an occupation-generated condition. Consequently, two opposing liberation agendas were formed: negotiation (Fatah) and resistance (Hamas). The profound political differences and the ruinous split between the West Bank and Gaza were in fact by-products of the disagreement over which strategy is more effective for ending the Israeli occupation. Even the outcome of the rapprochement between Fatah and Hamas brokered in Cairo and the celebrated Arab Spring will be appraised according to their contribution towards national independence and *not* their contribution to democracy in Palestine. These developments are therefore perceived by Israel as serious threats, because they challenge the *status quo* of fruitless negotiations and crippled democracy over actual settlement of the conflict. Hence, for a movement such as Hamas, which gained its nationalist credentials from the ideology of resistance, democracy becomes a secondary issue in the narrative of ending the occupation.

The Turkish case is of signal importance for two reasons: Turkey has often been a regional trend-setter in matters concerning the role of the state and it is the only Middle East country where an Islamist party has participated in the electoral process, won democratic elections and subsequently been permitted to govern. Pertinent questions therefore arise: does the Turkish example constitute a model for the region? Can the Justice and Development Party (AKP) be considered an Islamist model for Turkish society at large? In order to answer these questions, *Yıldız Atasoy's* chapter examines whether there can be a 'melding' of secularism and Islam. She examines this question by considering the concept of *laiklik*, which can broadly be defined as 'secularism' and refers to state regulation of religious beliefs and practices. *Laiklik* has long been a key conceptual component of the state's management of a social-change trajectory. Although

laiklik continues to cultivate a general ethos of attachment to the primacy of the state in social relations, Turkey is currently experiencing a shift in its social-change model from one centred on state primacy to another centred on a citizenship ethics based on individual rights and freedoms. In reorienting a social-change model, Islamic groups' response to the headscarf ban in particular plays a significant and constructive role. It is within the context of this process of change that there is a rethinking of a relationship between secularism and Islam beyond the symbolic boundaries of *laiklik*.

In his postscript to this book, *Basem Ezbidi* highlights the challenges before Islamist movements now about to assume executive political power. He cautions us to the great variety of movements, doctrines and national trajectories and the fact that many of them were created by repressive Arab regimes to the degree that they can be considered by-products of authoritarianism and their adherents the regimes' most wronged victims. The Arab Spring revolts have challenged the Orientalist stereotypes of Arabs as powerless and Islamists as undemocratic, as well as dispelled the radical secularism of the Mubarak and Bin Ali regimes that portrayed Islamism as a threat to democracy. Employing Habermas' notion of 'communities of interpretation', Ezbidi argues that the Middle East region has entered a post-religious stage, where secular and religious discourses can co-exist. Drawing on Asef Bayat's notion of post-Islamism, Ezbidi highlights Islam's liberal and pluralist potential that encompasses issues such as gender equality and human rights. In order to champion such rights, he argues that Islamists can no longer remain on the margins of politics, as parliamentary opposition parties, but must aspire to political power. Yet, governance remains a formidable challenge to Islamist parties as the recent ousting of Egypt's president Morsi shows. Although the Islamists are better organised and ideologically more coherent than the new civil society groups, they have neither a clear

political platform nor experience in governing. In closing, Ezbidi highlights the need for the incumbent Islamist parties to hammer out an independent political agenda that finds support with the region's youth, the true instigators of the Arab Spring.

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ISLAMISM IN TUNISIA BEFORE AND AFTER THE ARAB SPRING

Rikke Hostrup Haugbølle and Francesco Cavatorta

Introduction

The Arab Spring caught the vast majority of analysts and policy-makers by surprise (Gause 2011; Murphy 2011) as for over a decade the literature on political developments in the Arab world evolved around the concepts of 'authoritarian persistence' (Ghalioun 2004) and 'upgraded authoritarianism' (Heydemann 2007). By these terms scholars identified the way in which Arab ruling elites were able to introduce a number of seemingly liberalising political and economic reforms while strengthening their grip on power through informal channels and networks that largely bypassed formal institutions such as parliaments or independent authorities. While there is certainly more than a degree of validity in the analyses of authoritarian resilience in the region, there has also been a tendency to obscure important socio-economic changes and activities taking place 'below the radar' of high politics. As Hibou (2006: 186) emphasises, 'repressive systems function well beyond the mechanics of the political apparatus, working through economic, political and social

mechanisms'. In some respects, while authoritarian rule was being upgraded it also created new responses from society that kept challenging the nature of political power in the Arab world. In Tunisia, for instance, protest movements emerged in response to the regime's economic policy and the corrupt clientelist networks that informed employment policy (Allal 2010).

With hindsight, it is easy to discern that the way in which Arab countries were governed could not be sustained, but very few scholars dared to imagine the scale of the changes that have taken place since early 2011. A further surprise is that the wave of change across the region began in Tunisia, which, together with Syria and possibly Saudi Arabia, was considered the most authoritarian country in the Middle East and North Africa and one in which the strategy of authoritarian upgrading seemed to have triumphed (Schlumberger 2007). As Schraeder and Redissi (2011: 5) observe, 'to say that Bin Ali's sudden fall caught specialists by surprise would be an understatement. The *mukhabarat* police-state had turned back an outbreak of popular unrest as recently as 2008, and, at age seventy-four he remained, if not youthful, at least aware and seemingly in charge.' As it turned out it took less than a month of popular protests and demonstrations for the regime to collapse and for Bin Ali to flee the country.

The third surprise of the onset of the Arab Spring was the very noticeable absence of Islamist parties and movements at the helm of the anti-regime protests at the least with their organisational and formal structures. In fact, the early mobilisation, the slogans and the organising of demonstrations were the product of emerging social actors that had gone unnoticed by both academics and policy-makers. The traditional opposition actors, including Islamists, were caught off guard as much as the regimes by the extent of popular mobilisation, although some scholars had begun to point out that the regime's strategy of upgrading authoritarian rule was creating unintended consequences in

the form of new loci of protest and new means of expressing dissent (Allal 2010; Haugbølle and Cavatorta 2011a; Chomiak and Entelis 2011). The slogans chanted in Tunisia and Egypt did not have any religious resonance, indicating that the uprisings had no partisan connotation. Describing the uprising in Tunisia, Béchir Ben Yahmed (2011: 4) convincingly writes that 'no party, no union, no politician gave the impetus for this popular uprising nor were they in any way involved'. Following from this, some argued that the transition to a different political regime would no longer see Islamism at its centre, contrary to what had been expected in the past when it was believed that only Islamists would be able to drive political change in the region. Post-Bin Ali Tunisia, however, demonstrates that political actors who find inspiration in Islam are still crucial both at the political and the social level and include not only the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood-inspired al-Nahda, but also the different components of a very active Salafist movement.

This chapter examines the paradox of Tunisian Islamism benefiting from an uprising where Islamism, with its actors and slogans, was absent. The study focuses primarily on al-Nahda and explains the reasons for its success in the elections for the constitutional assembly in October 2011. It is argued that, paradoxically, such success owes much to the fact that its stances and political programmes do not seem very 'Islamist', as they do not prioritise religion as the central element of policy-making and are rooted in an Islamic associational life that existed before the uprising. By focusing on this particular topic we move away from the debate on the authoritarianism of the regime and the reasons for its fall, opting to examine instead how Islam, which had been absent from public life in Tunisia for a long time, went through considerable changes as a means of promoting social mobilisation precisely through its individualisation and, almost, privatisation. The chapter explores the connections and linkages between al-Nahda the political party and Islamic associational

life and personal piety to explain the party's success in adopting what might be termed 'post-Islamism'. The chapter is based on interviews carried out in Tunis in 2010 and 2012 and in the governorates of Jerba and Medenine in the south of the country in May, October and November 2011.

From Islamism to personal piety

The phenomenon of Islamism 'refers to the rise of movements and ideologies drawing on Islamic referents – terms, symbols and events taken from the Islamic tradition – in order to articulate a distinctly political agenda' (Denoeux 2002: 61). However, the family of Islamism is a broad one, with movements and associations across the region displaying significant differences in terms of ideological references, methods of action and goals. At the general level some scholars (Cavatorta 2007a; Wittes 2008) have delineated three distinct types of Islamist group: a) groups that combine elements of political participation, national liberation struggle and social activism; b) groups of a violent *Salafi* orientation that operate nationally and internationally; and c) Muslim Brotherhood-inspired groups that on the whole reject violence to achieve political ends and subscribe instead to a mix of political participation – whenever permitted – and social activism. At a more specific level, other scholars have outlined the ideological, organisational and policy changes of individual Islamist movements (Mishal and Sela 2000; Palmer Harik 2004; El-Ghobashy 2005; Cavatorta 2007b). Following from these studies, numerous works have analysed the political strategies of these movements, with a particular focus on those that attempted to play an institutional role in their respective countries. From Yemen (Schwedler 2006) to Jordan (Clark 2010) and from Syria (Lawson 2010) to Algeria (Boubekeur 2007) and Egypt, they were all preoccupied with the ways in which Islamist parties participated in politics and interacted with the ruling

regimes and other opposition movements. All of these studies are useful in so far as they point to the complexity of Islamism and to the changing nature of their engagement over time. However, given their very narrow focus they fail to capture the significance of a much broader shift in Islamism that has occurred over the last two decades and that Asef Bayat has aptly identified as 'post-Islamism'.

Until the mid-1990s, the main focus of Islamist movements and parties was on the state – how to seize power in order to rebuild it, create an Islamic state and run it according to *sharia* law (Bayat 2007: 9). Whatever differences existed among Islamist movements regarding the institutions of the Islamic state, the interpretation of *sharia* law and how to attain power, there was a shared objective of radically transforming the state inherited at independence and placing religious precepts at the very centre of both state-making and policy-making, with little regard for minority views. In his 1994 book *The Failure of Political Islam*, Roy suggested that this state-centric Islamism and its ideology had failed because they proved unable to attain state power anywhere in the Arab world. In other words, the ideological force of Islamism had run out of steam. However, this has not meant the end of Islamism *per se*. Rather it has led to a profound transformation. This has occurred first and foremost at the popular and, crucially, individual level.

In many ways, Islamism in the 1980s and 1990s was a reaction to the ideological and practical failures of the post-independence Arab state and its authoritarian nature, which marginalised large sectors of the educated middle-class, who took refuge in a state-centric Islamist project. From the mid-1990s, Islamism began its transformation away from the obsession with state power and towards operating increasingly in the social sphere, but not necessarily with a view to take immediate political power (Clark 2004). The shift towards the social sphere and social activism was a response to the failure of the state-centric ideology promoted in

earlier decades, but – more importantly – was also the result of wider socio-economic and generational changes in Arab societies.

The progressive inclusion of the Arab world in the global economy changed patterns of social interaction, created new social classes and brought new ideas and modes of behaviour to the region. The authoritarian Arab state, through its upgrading strategies (Heydemann 2007), managed these changes by isolating itself from the wider population and withdrawing from many socio-economic activities it had performed in the past, such as providing universal health care or subsidising primary commodities and, crucially, hiring graduates in the public sector. Islamism, while remaining opposed to the state, found new expression outside formal political movements and parties. In fact, as Bayat's recent work (2007; 2009) explains, countless social movements and ordinary citizens have progressively become agents of change through their daily life. They do not require religious sanctioning or legitimisation to carry out specific practices of religious behaviour, thus making social processes extremely complex and detached from authoritarian control, as well as from institutionalised organisations such as political parties, including Islamists. It is in this 'daily practice' that forms of religiosity as personal piety and moral behaviour have been recast away from a politicised meaning. This does not mean that they are detached from political processes and institutions, at least when they become open and 'democratic', as in the case of Tunisia since January 2011. It means, however, that when one attempts to explain the success of al-Nahda in the October 2011 elections, the focus should not only be on the party's structure, programme, candidates and campaign. Rather, it is necessary to take into account the groups and individuals whose daily practice of Islam were meant to counter the distance felt towards authoritarian regimes and the corrupt values of mindless consumerism they displayed and encouraged, going as far as radically modifying the urban landscape with enormous US-style shopping centres (Bayat 2007: 56).

The individual adoption of those practices before the uprising influenced the way in which al-Nahda was re-established, acted and, to an extent, changed, as its come-back in Tunisia after January 2011 highlights. The contention here is that al-Nahda, despite its attachment to a political project that remains anchored in the central role religion should have in public life and politics, was able to incorporate these attitudinal shifts into its discourse and practices, bringing a conservative but anti-authoritarian middle class to power. Part of the reason for this is to be found in the inclusion of 'post-Islamists' among its cadres, candidates and supporters.

**From state-centric Islamism to personal piety:
al-Nahda's pathway**

Al-Nahda was established in 1981 under the name of *Harakat al-Ittijah al-Islami* (the Islamic Tendency Movement) by Rashid al-Ghannouchi and Abdulfattah Mourou, changing its name to al-Nahda (Renaissance) in 1991. Its creation followed the same logic that had inspired other Islamist movements linked to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to become active in politics. The history of the party has been examined in detail elsewhere (Tamimi 2001; Allani 2009), with a particular focus on the party's periodic confrontation with the regime. The arrival of al-Nahda on the Tunisian political scene coincides with many of the issues that had led to the emergence of Islamist parties across the region, namely the desire to challenge the authoritarianism of the ruling elites; give a voice and power to a generation of educated middle-class professionals that the system was unable and unwilling to accommodate; and, crucially, a widespread resentment against the import of foreign values and morals perceived to be detrimental to the cohesion of society and indigenous values. This last factor was particularly significant in the Tunisian case in so far as the very essence of the state since independence

was its forced commitment to the concept of *laïcité* (French-style secularism).

The Tunisian independence movement, Neo-Destour, was split internally between the Bourguiba faction that aspired to replicate the French governance model in Tunisia and the Salah Bin Youssef faction that wanted Arab-Muslim values to be much more central. Ultimately, Bourguiba emerged as the winner of this internal power struggle. In order to secure his position within the Neo-Destour ruling party, he sentenced Salah Bin Youssef to death. Bin Youssef fled to Tripoli and then to Zürich, where he was assassinated in 1961 (Khlifi 2005). The elimination of Youssef was part of Bourguiba's strategy of delimiting Islam's role in Tunisia. To Bourguiba, Islam was the main reason for the country's backwardness; if the country were to modernise and develop like France, it would have to become secular. In order to make the *laïcité* of the country a reality, Bourguiba pushed through a number of far-reaching reforms aimed at undermining the role and status of Islam and that of the *ulama* (clergy). For instance, Islamic education at the Zeitouna Mosque in Tunis, one of the most traditional and prestigious institutions for Islamic studies in the Arab world, was moved to the department of theology in a new state university. The closure of this centre of learning was indicative of the attitude of the new ruling elites towards religion and its place in society. Also, *sharia* courts were abolished and the judicial system became based on secular legislation, with the consequence that the *ulama* lost much of their importance and prestige. Even the festivity of Ramadan itself came under attack from Bourguiba because, he argued, it lowered productivity and therefore working hours in the public administration remained unchanged through Ramadan (Salem 1984). Finally, and equally importantly, Bourguiba utilised the Tunisian woman in his attempt to transform Tunisia into a secular country and unified nation. In particular, women's traditional dress code, which crucially included the veil, was used by

Bourguiba as a symbol of the struggle against Islamic backwardness and in favour of modernisation. In his speeches, Bourguiba called the veil an 'odious rag' (Moore 1965: 55) which had nothing to do with Tunisian culture, tradition or history. The modern woman should wear neither the Islamic veil nor the traditional Bedouin veil. Rather, Tunisian women were an important part of the workforce and should participate in the *jihad* for development on an equal footing with Tunisian men (Pratt 2007). Thus, a number of changes to the Code of Personal Status concerning women's status in the society were carried through in the first year of independence. In 1981, Bourguiba further announced a decree which prohibited the use of the veil in public buildings. This meant that modern, educated women employed in the public administration and in schools as teachers could no longer wear the veil at work, and girls in schools and at universities had to take off the veil before entering the premises. As a consequence, the veil, as well as other public markers of Islam, slowly disappeared from Tunisian public life from 1956 onwards (Charrad 2001). At the time, similar comprehensive reforms took place in other Arab countries and did not meet with strong opposition from their citizens, who were preoccupied with social and economic development. Still, the far-reaching reforms to enforce the concept and practice of *laïcité* in the mid-1970s triggered a reaction from educated middle-class professionals, who began to argue that aping the West was not going to deliver the development that Bourguiba aspired to. The economic difficulties of the late 1970s and early 1980s seemed to confirm their views.

Rashid al-Ghannouchi, al-Nahda's leader, became a popular opposition figure in the late 1970s when he travelled throughout the country to speak in mosques about the necessity to return to the Islamic way. More specifically, he condemned the manner in which Tunisia was assimilating an identity that was not truly Muslim and Arab. 'I remember we used to feel like strangers in our own country. We had been educated as Muslims and Arabs,

while we could see that the country had been totally moulded in the French cultural identity' (quoted in Esposito 1995: 155). In 1978, when a general strike was called to protest the worsening economic and political situation, al-Ghannoushi declared that al-Nahda believed that Islam was in danger and that leftist forces would seize power and do away with Islam all together. Thus, in the 1970s Tunisia saw the emergence of Islamism as an opposition movement to both the regime and left-wing forces. Throughout the 1980s, al-Nahda grew in popularity as it spearheaded the widespread dissatisfaction with the regime's failed socio-economic policies, but, at the same time, it began to engage theoretically with issues related to compatibility between democracy and Islam.

When Zin al-Abidin Bin Ali seized power in 1987, it seemed that al-Nahda might be finally allowed to enter the political game, but the party was never legalised and by 1991 its leaders were either imprisoned or exiled. Bin Ali then embarked on a 'zero tolerance' policy *vis-à-vis* the Islamists, legitimised by the need for national stability and security. The 'war on terror' allowed the regime to stamp out all activities that were deemed to be 'Islamist' and the crackdown soon extended to all opposition groups (Durac and Cavatorta 2009). Thus, Islam in Tunisia became synonymous with Islamic militancy, something that continued to hold true well into the early 2000s. The repression of al-Nahda had an important consequence for the movement's development. Al-Nahda abandoned its former strategy of confronting the regime on its own and, from the mid-2000s, the party collaborated with other opposition movements challenging the regime (Haugbølle and Cavatorta 2011b). This change of strategy towards cross-ideological cooperation reaffirmed the movement's commitment to democratic politics, respect for individual rights and support for women's rights as established under Bourguiba and Bin Ali. While the party had already subscribed to all of that in the late 1980s, the commitment, taken in conjunction

with other opposition movements after years of negotiation, was a genuinely significant step in terms of political credibility.

The regime's repression of all Islamist movements, including al-Nahda, forced many supporters to abandon political activism in favour of the private and individual sphere. Following Bayat's lead, it can be claimed that the gradual disappearance of al-Nahda from both the public and institutional scene for over two decades created the conditions for a change of Tunisian Islamism, which began to move away from a state-centric approach and became more involved in daily practices of religiosity, which individuals chose to improve their lives rather than see as an openly political project. During the years when al-Nahda was silenced, Tunisia underwent profound economic and social change and while development was indeed very uneven, the country did progress economically and was integrated into the global economy. Increasing exposure to foreign cultural and social values and models of behaviour, such as tolerance for diversity, social and political pluralism and multi-layered identities had at least two effects in Tunisia. First, they undermined the idea that Tunisia was a unified 'nation state', when in fact the country was a plural mix of identities that at times overlapped and at other times were at odds with each other. Yet, the Bin Ali regime negated such difference and propagated an image of the nation as united behind the regime's quest for modernity (Sadiki 2002). This was a self-serving exercise to stave off democratic reforms that recognised the pluralism of Tunisian society. One of the identities that re-emerged in the public sphere was the Arab-Muslim one. This most commonly took the form of the desire to reaffirm it personally through prayer, dress and more ethical behaviour in order to deal with the practical challenges that socio-economic change had brought to Tunisia, which was experiencing a rapid process of economic globalisation (Sfeir 2006).

The values of Islamic morality represented by public 'religious behaviour' contrasted sharply with the flaunting and

amoral behaviour of the ruling elites, as described by Beau and Graciet (2009). There is therefore a two-fold confrontation: frugality versus consumerism and religion versus secularism. The possibility of adhering to 'Islam' through private expressions of faith, and renewed social engagement based on them, profoundly challenged the regime because it provided ordinary citizens with a potential alternative model of governance and behaviour that contrasted with the corrupt authoritarianism of Bin Ali and his clan (Beau and Graciet 2009). The Bin Ali regime's response alternated between repression and tolerance of this rise in religiosity, with attempts to accommodate it through, for instance, the opening of Radio Zeitouna, a religious radio station owned by the son-in-law of Bin Ali and led by people close to the regime.

Second, the US 'war on terror' after September 2001 made Islam to a large extent a scapegoat and Islamism both nationally and internationally was branded as 'evil' and a security threat that had to be dealt with through harsh repression. In Tunisia, the repressive turn against what was perceived as 'organised Islamism' led a number of Tunisians to reaffirm their Muslim identity through personal piety and engagement in the social sphere with a small sector of the religious youth instead turning to international jihadism. The reaffirmation of Arab-Muslim identity for those who had remained in the country was done apolitically. Wearing the veil became the most visible outlet for this newfound personal piety, but the new appropriation of Islam in Tunisia also contained other important aspects, including charitable work and, crucially, behaving as a good Muslim in everyday life.

In this respect, Quranic associations which began to appear in the mid-2000s and grew during the second part of the decade are a powerful example of how personal piety and social engagement had transformed the perception and practice of Islamism by those who were actually engaged in it. This Islamic activism, disconnected from the state-centric ideology that had characterised

Islamist parties and movements in the past, then informed the way in which al-Nahda, once revived after the overthrow of the Bin Ali regime in 2011, was restructured, how it campaigned and what kind of political discourse it promoted. Associations with overtly religious undertones emerged in Tunisia from the mid-2000s and despite being closely monitored by Bin Ali's repressive apparatus, their apolitical activities allowed them to operate somewhat freely. One specific instance is worth describing in more detail. In Cité al-Nasr, a new middle-class suburb north of Tunis, the Quranic association Riadh al-Nasr has existed since 2007. It was founded originally by a group of six pious middle-class men aged under 40 who lived in the suburb but were alienated by the hollow, consumerist atmosphere of the area and were looking to instil more profound Islamic values in their community. One of the six founders of the association explained that the initial spur to create it came from the realisation that the neighbourhood 'lacked values and warmth in the new area' (interview with authors, 2010). These pious men also felt that 'Tunisians in general lacked an identity of their own which could combine the best from the West, which they saw as a crucial part of their identity, and the best from Islam, which was, for them, the guide to private ethical behaviour that should inform how they related to the wider community in order to improve it.

On the one hand, the integration into the global market, as mentioned earlier, created economic opportunities for a range of middle-class and upper middle-class Tunisians who benefited from exposure to some Western values and ways of doing business, possibly because many of them were employed by multinational firms or conducted business in the West. In doing so, they began to appreciate how a degree of liberalism and social pluralism could benefit Tunisian society, where both were absent due to the authoritarianism and corrupt practices of the Bin Ali regime. On the other hand, the integration into the global marketplace very quickly created a hyper-consumerist culture

and the perception of a deterioration in moral values, which was also exposed in the morally suspect behaviour of members of the ruling elites. It is difficult to distinguish neatly between authoritarian repression and hyper-consumerism as explanations for the return to Islamic values, particularly in Tunisia where the two phenomena are inextricably linked given that hyper-consumerism was a trait of those who also had the political power to repress (Hibou 2006). In any case, this dual influence led to an understanding that society needed pluralism and openness but, at the same time, new moral codes that Islam, as a truly indigenous guide to morality, could provide. Thus, the founders of the Riadh al-Nasr association developed the idea that a Quranic association could help elevate the 'morality' of society and provide 'stability for the soul' (interview with authors, 2010). It was with this in mind that they created Riadh al-Nasr: the main aim was to teach the proper recitation of the Quran in private classes and over time the number of 'students' increased exponentially. By April 2010, 1,800 individuals had signed up for classes and 1,200 of these were women (interview with authors, 2010).

Initially the association established contacts with the religious Radio Zeitouna, or rather with its main preacher-anchor, Shaykh Muhammad Mashfar. He was invited to give classes in the recitation of the Quran at the association and over time, as it grew in popularity, other *shaykhs* and female Islamic theologians, who were also hosting programmes on Radio Zeitouna, were employed as teachers at the association. The classes for women in particular have experienced a remarkable level of attendance. The women explain that reciting the Quran properly gives them satisfaction and a sense of peace (interview with authors, 2010). At the association in Cité al-Nasr, a majority of the women are aged between 30 and 45 years. Many of them are well-educated and work as university professors, lawyers and business managers. The majority of them indicate that sometime during the years 2003–05 they began to look for a meaning in their

existence and role in society. This period coincides with the harsh repression of any form of Islamism and religiosity in Tunisia due to the war on terror and due to the increasingly predatory economic measures adopted by the ruling circles. Having become aware of Islam, these women chose to wear the veil for the first time in their life. Their choices were not politically motivated, but reveal a personal development and a quest for life's meaning and balance. Their activism within the association, together with the activism of the founders, has meant a constant expansion of social activities. These now include a nursery and the creation of official cooperative links to a private full-time school, where the children can continue their Quranic education as an extra-curricular activity and where other children who do not attend the association's nursery are exposed to the teaching methods that the association's sponsors can provide. The combination of personal commitment to improving society according to the tenets of Islam with the realisation that individual behaviour cannot be legislated for led members to conclude that social engagement is the best way to bear witness to the validity of leading a religious life. In the words of one of the founders of the association:

Our commitment to Islam does not mean that we want to impose what we do on others. In that sense you could say that we are anti-*Salafist* because we do not approve of imposing behaviour. If you want to wear a mini-skirt it is not my problem, if you do not want to wear the veil it is also not my problem. Choices have to be left to individuals; the state cannot impose behaviour either. From the state authorities we only ask that they let us do our work in peace. (interview with authors, 2011)

During the dictatorship, this kind of comment might have signalled a wish to appease the regime and stave off any accusations of extremism. Since the uprising in 2010–11, such restraint has

no longer been needed, indicating a genuine belief that one can lead a spiritual religious and modern life without falling into the trap of forcing values and behaviours on other Muslims who might be making different choices.

The January 2011 uprising liberated this new religious energy further and the Jerba Association for Solidarity and Development is a case in point. It was established after the revolution by a group of people in their forties with no experience of associational life, but who were moved to set up an organisation that would promote solidarity with the less fortunate and economic development of the area. A number of professionals were involved in its creation and with an initial budget of only 24,000 Tunisian Dinars (EUR 13,000), they decided that one third would be used to aid Libyans suffering in the war of liberation against the Ghaddafi regime in 2011; one third would target the poor during Ramadan; and the final one third would be used to support entrepreneurial projects in Jerba. The founders explain that they had always talked about the idea of helping others as a duty. This duty is for them a core part of their faith: it is the proper moral and religious thing to do, but it was only after the regime change in January 2011 that they felt ready and had the legal cover needed to create an association that targeted social engagement (interview with authors, 2011).

This type of activism has been on the rise for a decade in Tunisia and while the number of active associations has increased since the revolution, it is important to emphasise that it did exist before the fall of the regime. The existence of these associations indicates the transformation of Islamism from a state-centric political project to a practice of Islam that is deeply personal, centred on social activism rather than politics and dependent on local social networks for support and expansion. The glue holding these networks together is a specific understanding and practice of Islam where the religious precepts apply to those who choose them rather than being imposed on the whole of the community.

The question is how this individualistic and at the same time social Islamic activism translates into political activism once the authoritarian constraints are no longer in place. The contention here is that explanations of the electoral victory of al-Nahda in Tunisia tend to concentrate too strongly on the party leadership and its abilities and credibility. Much is made of how the party leaders, many of whom had been imprisoned or in exile in Europe and Africa, quickly reorganised party structures and offered a new political discourse based on pluralism and multi-party democracy. These explanations are partially valid, but when one looks at the transformation and the rediscovery of Islam that has occurred in Tunisia, it can be argued that al-Nahda is successful because a significant part of its activities and discourse are the product of religious individuals who brought their beliefs, practices and networks to the party through a bottom-up approach to politics.

Al-Nahda and the Arab Spring: the October 2011 elections

The October 2011 elections for the constitutional assembly marked the beginning of the setting up of a new political system. The first free and fair elections in the country's history were a success and 'domestic and international election observers were unanimous in commending the transparent, peaceable and generally well-organized conduct of the election' (El-Amrani and Lindsey 2011: 2). Opinion polls held before the election had already indicated that al-Nahda was poised to do well and the election results confirmed the opinion polls with the party winning 89 seats out of 217, and 37 per cent of the popular vote.¹ The magnitude of al-Nahda's victory is particularly impressive if one takes into account the fact that the party had virtually disappeared from the country for over two decades and was only licensed on 1 March 2011. How was such a success possible in such a short period of time? A number of answers have been given.

First, some scholars argued that al-Nahda cadres and leaders were very quick and skilled in reorganising the structures of the movement across the country. Lynch (2011: 1) points out that 'the core leadership immediately reached out to tens of thousands of former activists now out of prison. They established offices in every Tunisian province, quickly setting up sections for youth, women, social services, and politics and holding internal elections to select a new leadership.' As Abdulhamid Jelassi, a member of the al-Nahda executive committee, also put it:

Given that we are an old party we have been able to revive our structures immediately after the revolution in January 2011. Some militants who have been in prison for a long time started working again for the party together with those who operated underground. (interview with authors, 2011.

The importance of this organisational effort should not be underestimated in so far as presence on the ground in all areas of the country demonstrated to voters that the party intended to be active everywhere and to represent the interests of all Tunisian regions. This is a major change in Tunisian politics because during the Bin Ali dictatorship, numerous regions were 'abandoned' and left behind by the regime. An efficient organisation active on the ground across the country was certainly an important factor in leading the party to success.

Second, the ability to attract numerous new members and appeal so strongly to voters is the product of the party's credibility as an unwavering opposition movement during the Bin Ali era. While some parties played the role of 'loyal opposition' during the dictatorship and derived benefits from it, al-Nahda was a more genuine opposition, or at least it was considered so because it refused to play within the rules set by the Bin Ali regime, and instead sought a complete overhaul of the political system

(Haugbølle and Cavatorta 2011b). For this reason, its leaders and cadres paid the price of prison and exile. When the regime fell and al-Nahda began to reorganise, its members enjoyed great credibility among the general public because of their uncompromising stance and their personal suffering. It is not a coincidence that many of the al-Nahda candidates had spent years behind bars; they were the living proof that the party had suffered for its political positions, letting voters know that they were genuine opponents of the regime from the very start. The credibility of the party was further enhanced when its leader's name was not on the ballot paper, as he had promised upon his return to Tunisia. Rashid al-Ghannouchi returned to Tunisia from a two-decade-long exile and immediately declared that he would not seek an elected position (Usher 2011). Some doubted that this was going to be the case, but unlike leaders of parties of his generation he stuck to his promise not to be a candidate. This decision has not gone unnoticed among voters who distrust politicians.

A third element that some see as having contributed to al-Nahda's appeal and success is the lack of unity among the other parties, even when they share a similar ideological platform, and their inability to reach out to constituencies outside Tunis and the other main urban centres. For instance, Churchill (2011) argues that 'the large secular parties' reliance on advertising and reluctance to meet voters outside of the major cities made it difficult for undecided, rural voters to put their confidence in them. The majority of Tunisians showed that [al-Nahda] not only understood their preferences, but also that Tunisian voters cannot be taken for granted and should be reached out to directly.' In this view, the secular parties' campaign mistakes are an important reason for al-Nahda's success.

Finally, part of the appeal of al-Nahda is the quest for national 'consensus' over the most important institutional matters (Lynch 2011). The party's democratic principles and credentials reassured large swathes of the population of their commitment to

democracy. From an insider point of view Ali Laaridh (interview with author, 2011), member of the al-Nahda executive committee and currently prime minister, states:

In terms of organisation, the party's philosophy is about democratic principles, which are enshrined in our statute and the way in which the party is structured. A party congress takes place every four years and the delegates at this congress elect both a national assembly and a party president. The national assembly appoints an executive bureau and a secretary general. At the regional level the same thing takes place. The whole structure of the party is very much the product of the wishes of the fee-paying members.

The emphasis on internal democracy has demonstrated the party's commitment to democratic principles in institutional life and a key message of the party during the campaign was one of 'reassurance' (El-Amrani and Lindsey 2011) to the other political parties in the electoral competition and to voters in general. Allani (2009) argued that the party had condemned the use of violence to take political power since the 1980s, had already committed to maintaining the progressive family code and had declared its support for political pluralism. After its legalisation, the party re-emphasised its commitment to building a democratic Tunisia in cooperation with other political forces. Hajej Bin Aoun Hajjem, member of al-Nahda's *bureau culturel*, argued before the elections:

I think ordinary Tunisians want a degree of consensus and *apaisement* in this transitional moment and we have to be clear, and I think we are, that 23 October will not be the end of the world [if al-Nahda wins] and after the elections all of our doors have to remain open because we believe in consensus. (interview with authors, 2011)

All these explanations carry a degree of validity. The organisational skills and the capacity to mobilise put on display by al-Nahda since its legalisation are very obvious and were even more so during the electoral campaign. The credibility of its candidates and activists is also in little doubt, as ordinary Tunisians know all too well the sufferings that party members endured in jail and/or exile for decades. The weakness of secular parties is also quite obvious in the sense that they are divided and seemingly unable to mount a challenge outside the main cities. Finally, the al-Nahda discourse based on political pluralism and recognition of the necessity for the new Tunisia to protect individual freedoms has been crucial to attracting voters who might otherwise have been suspicious of the party. In particular, the references made to the Turkish model seemed to play well with the electorate, given that such a model is based on sustained economic growth and development. As Ali Laaridh, declared, 'we certainly have similarities with the Turkish AKP in what we would like to do and achieve' (interview with authors, 2011).

That said, these explanations also have shortcomings in explaining the wide-ranging popularity of al-Nahda. In terms of organisational skills, there is no doubt that reviving old networks and structures has been important, but it does not take into account the fact that a significant number of younger people, with no previous affiliation with al-Nahda, joined the party and helped create new structures across the entire country. Tassinari and Boserup (2011) focus their attention on three sociological groups that constitute al-Nahda: the returnees from exile, the former political prisoners and those who remained silent during the repressive era. However, they fail to take into account a whole new generation of Tunisians under the age of 35, who have swelled the ranks of the party since legalisation and helped it succeed. As outlined in the previous section, it is precisely this generation that sought out a life based on personal piety and social engagement within a religious framework. The credibility

factor in terms of the personalities involved in the party is also not a sufficient explanation, because all genuine opposition parties and politicians can make the same claim of having stood up against the regime. It is, for instance, no coincidence that the parties doing well in the elections were the Congress for the Republic and al-Takattul parties, both harshly repressed by the Bin Ali regime. In addition, the years of imprisonment and exile that al-Nahda members suffered find a parallel among some of the leftist parties. Al-Nahda members themselves recognise, for instance, the credibility of figures such as Hama Hammami, leader of the Tunisian Workers Communist Party. As Abdulhamid Jelassi put it, 'I have a lot of respect for instance for Hama Hammami' (interview with authors, 2011). The weakness of secular parties and their unwillingness or inability to run a better campaign does not necessarily stand up to closer scrutiny. After all, when one considers the overall results, secular parties did just as well as al-Nahda in seats and percentage points when counted together. The problem, if anything, might be their inability to create coalitions rather than running a successful campaign, and even this is doubtful in the sense that all the main political parties needed to measure their individual support at a time when electoral volatility was at its peak due to the uncertain nature of the transition. Finally, al-Nahda's message, as outlined, was not that different from the one they had been promoting for at least two decades, and their collaborative efforts with other parties in exile from 2005 indicate that they had already fully subscribed to political pluralism and individual freedoms. In short, the reassuring message they had was neither innovative nor surprising. The most significant evidence that today's al-Nahda differs from the old one, despite the presence in the party of many original members, is the paradox that the political programme does not sound very Islamic.

When one analyses the political programme of al-Nahda, there is very little that is Islamic about it. There are no calls to

create an Islamic state in any shape or form. In fact, al-Nahda's point of departure on the matter is that article 1 of the Tunisian constitution should remain as it is with the simple mention that Tunisia is a Muslim country. In this respect, 'Muslim' does not necessarily have to be equated with practising believer and gives no indication that the institutions of the state should be Islamic. The focus is instead on the creation of a civil state. As Riadh Shaibi, member of the al-Nahda national assembly, argued:

We are not a dogmatic party, we are a pragmatic party. We realise that Tunisia is a plural country and Europe is very close to us not only geographically. Tunisian society is similar in many ways to European societies and this is a given and we do not want to change that (interview with authors, 2011).

There are no calls either to implement *sharia* law in so far as the term is indicative of very specific and strict legal dispositions. Abdulhamid Jelassi stated that 'on the issue of *sharia* law, one can put anything he wants in there. I think we have to stay away from words and terminology that are divisive.' (interview with authors, 2011) By this he suggested that legislation to be adopted with respect to certain policy areas would be the product of negotiation with other political and social actors rather than of rigorously sticking to controversial religious precepts. In terms of women's rights there is the recognition that 'it is not Islam that placed women in the home at a certain point in time, but historical circumstances', as Jelassi explained, and that therefore the legislation in place will not be changed. There are no calls to reject or adopt policies and legislation that have to do with individual choices and behaviour: al-Nahda 'cannot impose the will of one party over others. We are not the spokespeople of Islam' (Hajez Bin Aoun Hajjem, interview with authors, 2011). While these certainly stem in part from a political elaboration

at the level of the leadership and are also meant to assuage the fears of other parties about al-Nahda, they are also a response to the behaviour and beliefs of those who have joined the party in recent times and who have had no previous experience of al-Nahda or any connection with it. Once again, the crucial role of a new generation of middle-class Islamic activists who only joined al-Nahda after its legalisation should be underscored.

In the 2011 election campaign it is very difficult to find 'Islamism' in al-Nahda if one is looking for the inescapable and non-negotiable central role that religion should play as exclusive guide to policy-making in all realms. This is because the coherent state-centric ideology that it had is now in the past. The Islamism one should be looking for, and one that al-Nahda does indeed espouse, is a social and deeply personal one that equates largely with morality and moral behaviour in managing public affairs, which is an attitude that the previous ruling elite did not demonstrate. It is not an Islamism that has a preconceived set of policies from which no deviation is allowed. In Jelassi's words, 'what is Islamic about us is that we use the points of reference of the religion to arrive at certain preferred policies that however should not be imposed'. It is almost word for word what members of the Quranic associations have to say about how they envisage their role in wider society, as demonstrated above. Thus, al-Nahda's pronouncements are very much in line with the way in which religious associations active in the social sphere have operated and see themselves. It is these young middle-class religious activists across the country who have swelled the ranks of al-Nahda and have contributed to its success by activating the same networks and proposing the same beliefs that they had previously employed solely in the social sphere through their associations. Their rallying to al-Nahda is not necessarily based on policies, past record or previous connections with the party, but on the assumption that it is the political actor closest to their personal beliefs and one that they can influence by joining because they perceive that

there is a coming together of ideas on the role of Islam in society and politics. One al-Nahda activist in Jerba said:

Our slogan in the elections is our three principles: freedom, justice and development. These three are closely related. If there is not liberty, the country cannot develop. Liberty is also economic liberty, because if there is not economic liberty then there cannot be development with an element of social justice. ... [Thus, al-Nahda] is not a religious party which is preoccupied with the practice of Islam... [it is] a political party which is engaged in economic and social issues, but whose values come from Islam (interview with authors, 2011).

This statement is echoed in the way in which activists, as demonstrated above, believe Islam can play a role in building a modern Muslim society in which the state refrains from imposing itself on the citizens and simply safeguards individual rights to live as either a practising or a non-practising Muslim.

What is also interesting to note is that post-Islamism has not only been beneficial to al-Nahda but has found an institutional and political linkage with other candidates and formations that have a supposedly Islamic character. These expressions of post-Islamism range from backing former Bin Ali supporters who have some sort of religious legitimacy and have maintained ties with local communities through their social networks, to supporting more militant and openly anti-democratic parties, such as Hizb al-Tahrir, which did not obtain a license to run in the constitutional elections in 2011, and the Salafist Front of Reform legalised in early 2012. This indicates the complexity of the way in which Islam is individually practised and in what sense it gives direction and meaning to individual lives. All of this then has repercussions for the choices individuals make when it comes to electoral and political support.

Conclusion

Challenges and opportunities that have increased integration into the world economy and world culture, however loosely interpreted they might be, have radically changed the Arab world over the last two decades and have led to a rethinking of the meaning of social engagement and personal piety. On the one hand, there has been a significant rise in popular appreciation of the political liberties and social pluralism that liberal democracies have to offer (Fattah 2006). On the other hand there has been deep scepticism about the consumerism, individualism and perceived moral corruption that interaction and progressive integration with a Western-dominated world entailed.

As a reaction to this, Islam has come to the rescue, particularly as a platform for social activism motivated by individual piety and the desire to be a good Muslim. The combination of both effects has brought about new ways of thinking about Islamism. Once the authoritarian constraints disappeared, this new Islamism found its political expression in al-Nahda, which could be influenced by and was receptive to this innovative manner of talking about and practising Islamism. In many ways, al-Nahda attracted a lot of new recruits because the leaders had already moved on, through their personal experiences, from the way in which they thought about the state and political power in the 1980s, but also because the new generation of activists found in the party a vehicle for the type of social values and order they wished to see in the future Tunisia. Supporting, joining and/or voting for al-Nahda in today's Tunisia does not simply mean blindly following a set of political and religious precepts on how to gain and exercise state power. It is also linked to the contemporary values and understandings of Islam that individuals developed privately and that they now wish to see placed centre-stage in a new Tunisia. The popular support for al-Nahda demonstrates that, for many Tunisians, trust in Islamists to run

state affairs is first and foremost based on sharing the practice of a non-intrusive Islam and on the idea of morality. Thus, the removal of the authoritarian constraints has permitted previously apolitical actors to join and vote for a political party and influence its stances, not by proposing again a state-centric ideology but by bringing to the political level the practices and values that were successful in social activism. However, it should be kept in mind that al-Nahda does not represent the entire spectrum of Tunisian Islamism, nor other forms of political and social engagement through religious references.

Note

1. For a detailed breakdown of the elections results, see the website of the Tunisian Electoral Commission at www.isie.tn.

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THE EGYPTIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD: READY FOR REVOLUTION?

Issandr El Amrani

Introduction*

On the eve of the uprising that began on 25 January 2011, the Egyptian Society of Muslim Brothers was in retreat. Its status as leader of the opposition with control of a fifth of parliament had been eliminated, in part by fraud but also by the aggressive campaigning of the ruling party to reverse its 2005 electoral success. Important leaders, including some of its most generous financial backers, remained incarcerated after three years of imprisonment, effectively neutralising some of its strategic leadership. The General Guide heading the group since January 2009, Muhammad Badie, was nonetheless making conciliatory moves towards the regime and officially stated that the Brotherhood would not take part in the protests that mostly secular youth groups were planning on the 25th, on the occasion of Police Day.

The Muslim Brothers, like most Egyptians, had not expected these protests, which had been planned for at least a month, to morph into a popular uprising as they did. Even so, the example of Tunisia and the overthrow of Zin al-Abidin Bin Ali was on the

minds of many and the air was pregnant with possibilities. That the Brotherhood chose not to show leadership then was indicative of its cautious approach to political change. For Badie and many of the other senior leaders of the Brotherhood, contestation could not, for now, be on the agenda: much as his generation of Brotherhood leaders had focused on rebuilding the society after it was nearly eliminated by the Gamal Abdel Nasser regime in the mid-1960s, he now focused on protecting its assets and securing the release of its imprisoned leaders.

Of course, many questions loomed about Egypt's future – most notably whether President Hosni Mubarak would contest a presidential election scheduled for September for a sixth term and if not, whether his son Gamal Mubarak would seek the ruling National Democratic Party's endorsement. The potential for unrest, particularly during any transfer of power, was real and had been envisioned by many Egyptian politicians, include some Brothers. The Brotherhood had also begun to prepare domestic and international public opinion for the eventuality of its formal integration into politics, as had happened with similar movements in many Arab countries in the previous two decades.¹ Still, in January 2011 the Brotherhood did not seem to be in a combative mood and preferred to see where the unstable house of cards of the Mubarak regime in its dying days might fall. For many, as it had many times in its past, the Brotherhood preferred to await developments and negotiate a better position for itself with the regime, whether under Mubarak or his successor.

The surprising momentum of the 25 January uprising, the remarkably quick exhaustion of the police state at the hands of protestors during the mass unrest of 28 January and the subsequent deployment of the military changed these calculations. From being officially absent from the protests – although of course many Muslim Brothers, particularly young ones, participated in an individual capacity – the Brotherhood was thrust in the middle of the battle for the survival of the Mubarak regime. Within

days, it became an essential interlocutor of the regime, which reached out to its old opponent to find a political solution to the uprising, apparently convinced that nothing of its kind could be taking place without significant backing from the Brotherhood. As Mubarak's long-time chief of intelligence, Omar Suleiman – who by 29 January had been appointed vice-president and was thus his heir apparent as well as the regime's chief political fixer – told CNN journalist Christiane Amanpour, there was no doubt the Muslim Brothers were behind the unrest.²

This may have been hyperbole to scare the West into thinking, as Mubarak had argued so many times over the years, that the only alternative to his rule was that of Islamists who would be hostile to their interests. But the fact that, in the few days between 25 January and 28 January, several key Brotherhood leaders in Cairo and the provinces had been rounded up and jailed by a panicking State Security apparatus showed that the regime was convinced they must be behind the unrest.³ Yet, over a year after the fall of the Mubarak regime, it is still difficult to gauge how much of a part the Brotherhood took in the uprising.⁴ It was almost certainly not involved in its planning, but like Egyptians of most political persuasions, Muslim Brothers took part in the protests. Some Muslim Brotherhood youth even appeared to have done so at times against the leadership's orders and activists of all stripes recognise that the Islamists – Muslim Brotherhood or Salafi – often brought crucial brawn to the fight to retain control of Tahrir Square when it was attacked by pro-Mubarak thugs in early February. But there is no evidence of a strategic, concerted effort by the Brotherhood to support the uprising, much less plan for it, before it began.

What is certain, however, is that the Muslim Brotherhood was one of the key beneficiaries of the Egyptian uprising, leveraging it to become a privileged interlocutor of the military junta that took over from Mubarak. This was most probably in large part because the generals felt they needed the support

of the Brotherhood to calm the situation and because the junta felt that the uprisings must have received substantial backing from the movement. The effort by the regime to reach out to the Brotherhood and seek its help in dampening the street's revolutionary fervour was almost immediate: when Mubarak appointed Omar Suleiman as his vice-president and tasked him with conducting negotiations with political forces, Brotherhood leaders (in some cases the very same who had been imprisoned days earlier) were invited. This *de facto* recognition was the strongest possible signal that the regime could send to the Brothers that they were ready to normalise their status in the country's political life. After Suleiman and Mubarak were removed by the military, the Brotherhood continued to be a privileged interlocutor for the military, with the road cleared to remove any obstacles to formalising its role as a political party. This, in turn, allowed it not only to become the leading party in parliament, but also gave it the option to contest the presidential elections for the first time in Egypt's history.

Of course – however unprepared it had been for the 2011 uprising – the Muslim Brotherhood had been preparing for a change of political regime of some sort. It had done so since the 1970s, with its strategy alternating between acting as an influence on the regime (accompanying the growing conservatism of both state and society in Egypt under Anwar al-Sadat and Mubarak) and challenging it. While Sadat, who had styled himself as the 'Believer President', particularly reached out to Islamist movements (at least until the year before his assassination, when he jailed many political leaders, including the General Guide of the Brotherhood at the time, Omar al-Tilmissani), Mubarak initially signalled that he would largely tolerate the group even if he denied it legal recognition. The electoral success of Brotherhood candidates in elections throughout the 1980s testified to this, as did their success in making advances in professional syndicate elections. While Mubarak reversed this liberalisation in the

1990s and his regime would conduct periodic crackdowns against the emerging political leadership of the group from then on, the Brotherhood continued to make steady progress and settled into a predictable pattern of behaviour towards the regime.⁵

From the 1980s onwards, when it first began to compete for parliamentary elections, the Brotherhood sought to balance its interests in competing in elections with ensuring its protection. The Mubarak regime had successfully managed tensions within the Brotherhood by persuading leaders to back down after crackdowns, effectively limiting the willingness of the Brothers to challenge the regime directly in the political field. In exchange, the Brotherhood was allowed considerable leeway in operating both as a religious society and as a charitable organisation. In politics, even if political activity in some professional syndicates and during national elections was curtailed, in others the group was allowed to become a competitive and at times dominant force. The journalistic shorthand 'banned but tolerated' hit only at the surface of the reality of Brotherhood-regime relations: they amounted to a largely tacitly negotiated *rapprochement*. With certain Brotherhood leaders, the repressive apparatus that managed day-to-day politics in Egypt, most notably State Security, kept open channels: Brotherhood leaders would, for instance, agree on red lines they should not cross when staging large rallies (for example, during the funeral of one of its leaders or in protests for the Palestinian cause).⁶ For some Egyptian activists – particularly among secularist, leftist critics of both regime and Brotherhood – the relationship was almost symbiotic. The reality was more nuanced and asymmetric: neither the regime nor the Brotherhood approached one another with a coherent, single effort; each seized opportunities to advance its agenda on some occasions and collaborated more closely on others.

By the mid-2000s, this strategy, focused on making incremental gains while ensuring the survival and strengthening of the group, had set into a predictable pattern. The shifts in

Egypt's political landscape – most notably the looming question of who would succeed Mubarak – would change that, bringing to the fore the diversity of the Muslim Brothers and challenging the cautious political conservatism of the group's leadership.

2004–05: cracks in the wall

The death of General Guide Maamoun Hodeibi in 2004 and the subsequent election of a new general guide late that year took the Brotherhood in a new direction. It was not simply a question of the beginning of a generational change in the Brotherhood's Guidance Council (effectively its politburo), but also how the Brotherhood would react to changes in Egyptian and regional politics and the particular dynamics of the late Mubarak era.

Muhammad Mahdi Akef took up the position of general guide with a different profile than his predecessors. The former coordinator of the international Muslim Brotherhood based in Munich in the 1970s,⁷ Akef balanced his generation of leaders' concern with the survival of the group with a more proactive outlook. His personality was also different from that of the other old men who had run the Brotherhood in the last 20 years: short-tempered, easily goaded into gaffes by the media, he was paradoxically more communicative and accessible than some of his predecessors. By temperament, he was also more daring and willing to break with tradition – as his 2008 decision to retire from what had been, since the Brotherhood's founding in 1928, a post for life would eventually show.

Those predecessors, austere and revered men like Hodeibi and before him Mustafa Mashhour, had played a fundamental role in reviving the Brotherhood in the aftermath of the Nasser-era crackdown that nearly finished the movement. Their concern from the early 1970s onwards was twofold: on the one hand, to rebuild the movement Hassan al-Banna had created, and on the other, to resolve the ideological crisis caused by the rise of

Sayyid Qutb as the Brotherhood's main new ideologue after al-Banna and distance themselves from Qutb's more radical 1960s ideas, notably the concept of *takfir*, used by radical Islamists to declare society, not just government, apostate. That reassertion of core Brotherhood values, as defined by the work of al-Banna and the seminal book the Brotherhood leaders who survived Nasser's crackdown wrote in 1970, *Preachers Not Judges*, was the central concern of the generation of Brotherhood leaders born in the 1920s and 1930s. It was their guiding line through the negotiations and the alternating periods of acceptance and crackdown they would experience under Anwar al-Sadat and Hosni Mubarak (Zollner 2008).

Akef was also close to a small group of reform-minded individuals within the Brotherhood – some conservative-leaning, others more liberal, but all dedicated to the idea that the Brotherhood should play a political role. Some in the organisation, weary of the cost incurred from the crackdowns and mass arrests that would periodically hit the group – particularly at election time – advocated that the Brotherhood should focus on its core *dawah*, or preaching, role, according to the strategy of *tamkin*, or gradual empowerment, that al-Banna had advocated for the group to achieve its goal of Islamising state and society. This perennial debate inside the Brotherhood tends to resurface mostly when it is under siege – as it would come to be between 2007 and 2010, a period that saw a marked shift towards political caution.

The emergence of the Kifaya movement in late 2004 – its first protest took place on the steps of the Cairo High Court on 12 December 2004 – had an important impact on the internal discussions within the Brotherhood on how to tackle the regime and promote their vision of change for Egypt. That a group of largely politically irrelevant leftists and nationalists, including only a few figures of national prominence (mostly journalists), dared to tread where the Brotherhood did not particularly shocked younger Brotherhood activists. How, they asked, could

they remain silent as other political forces had the courage to express the increasing dismay at Mubarak's policies and the prospect that his son might replace him? Although some Muslim Brothers, in their individual capacity, took part in the demonstrations organised over the course of 2005, the Brotherhood never endorsed the core message of Kifaya: no to renewal (i.e. the re-election of Mubarak for another term) and no to inheritance (of power by Gamal Mubarak). Indeed, in early 2005 – only weeks after the launch of Kifaya – Akef had given an interview to the independent daily *al-Masri al-Youm* in which he practically endorsed the re-election of Mubarak, invoking the Islamic principle of *wilayat al-amr* and arguing in effect that Muslims have a duty to obey their temporal rulers.

As the Kifaya movement and various related groups drove much of the opposition political agenda for 2005, the Brothers remained largely on the sidelines of political activity, cautiously engaging with other opposition forces but refraining from lending their full weight to demonstrations and making their reservations about Kifaya's strategy clear early on. Secular opposition activists, for their part, exercised similar caution about embracing the Brothers' tentative overtures and complained of the ambiguity of their attitude towards the Egyptian regime, at times appearing to be negotiating with it and at others taking a more confrontational stance. A widespread interpretation is that the Muslim Brothers' leadership was torn between its customary caution about engaging in street politics (most of its demonstrations in the previous five years had dealt with foreign affairs issues, such as the second Palestinian *intifada* and the invasion of Iraq, rather than domestic issues) and the frustration, particularly among its younger members, that the anti-Mubarak leftist-dominated movement Kifaya had upstaged it on the streets as well as in the national debate.

Some of the Brotherhood's caution was natural. While the few thousand protestors, at most, usually present at Kifaya demonstrations generally were not brutally repressed in 2005 – the regime was at the time under the scrutiny of international public

opinion and the Bush administration, which was pushing Egypt to reform under its 'Forward Agenda for Freedom' – Muslim Brothers faced greater risk. When the Brotherhood decided to participate in protests against Mubarak's proposed amendments to Article 76 of the constitution to create the first multi-candidate presidential elections in Egypt's history, it faced an immediate crackdown and decided, out of caution, to remain off the streets for the rest of the year. Perhaps it also read the country's political situation better than secularists, knowing that the regime was only giving the Kifaya movement space to protest because of the interest the Bush administration was showing in promoting democracy in Egypt.

Nonetheless, for many young Muslim Brothers the protests of 2005 would be a foundational moment. For some, it was the occasion to form links with the activist left that many Islamists preferred to shun.⁸ For others, the sheer courage of Kifaya protestors in speaking truth to power provoked shame that the Brotherhood, which claimed to be the largest opposition force in Egypt, could not do the same. Their unhappiness with the strict hierarchy and authoritarianism of the movement would be important in not only articulating a critique of the lack of internal democracy within the movement, but also in openly airing the secretive Brotherhood's internal rifts and ideological debates. Like other parts of the Egyptian polity, it would be subject to the same anti-authoritarian movement that targeted the Mubarak regime and would arguably culminate in the protest movements and insurrections of the Arab Spring.

In many respects, the Brotherhood was influenced much like other political forces by changes in the political operating environment of Egypt. These included the rising demand for greater democratic accountability, the rise of a human rights culture since the 1980s, the diversification of media discourse with the 2004 liberalisation of the print media and the advent of blogs and other internet outlets, as well as the impact of a decade of diversification of audio-visual media through satellite television stations.

Particularly influential was the relatively Brotherhood-friendly Aljazeera, whose own staff included Muslim Brothers and which featured Egyptian Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawy, a former Muslim Brother who has retained an important moral influence over the group. These changes – notably the advent of Islamist blogs and websites and the diversification of Egypt's newspapers with the launch of *al-Masri al-Youm* and *al-Destour* newspaper in 2004 – not only provided unprecedented visibility to younger voices inside the Brotherhood, such as (now former Muslim Brother) journalist Abdel Moneim Mahmoud of the blog *Ana Ikhwan* (I am a Muslim Brother) and editorialist and activist Ibrahim al-Houdaiby (grandson of the late General Guide Maamoun al-Hodeiby), but also exposed the breadth of intra-Islamist debate through forums and websites like IslamOnline.com, a project backed by al-Qaradawy and financed by Qatar. The Brotherhood itself became much more open about its activities, launching its major online presence through Ikhwanonline.com and its sister English-language website Ikhwanweb.com, which provided quality information about the activities and positions of the movement and a forum for discussion of its positions. This is in addition to the proliferation, from the early 2000s onwards, of specialised or provincial sites linked to the Brotherhood, which exposed the diversity of its members' thinking. Most importantly, the internet allowed a movement that had been banned from publishing its own newspaper in the 1970s the opportunity to have a window-front – a place where the Brotherhood could campaign, publicise its stances, condemn government policy and attract new adherents but also be subject to unprecedented scrutiny.

2005–07: the Brothers go on the offensive

The Muslim Brothers emerged as the clear strategic winners out of the late 2005 elections for the lower house of parliament, the People's Assembly, taking nearly 20 per cent of the seats (88 out

of 444) – over five times the number they had won in the 2000 elections. This they achieved despite considerable security interference and fraud in the second and third rounds of the polls, when the state reverted to the practice (seen in previous elections) of mass arrests of campaign staff and other measures aimed at constraining the ability of the Brotherhood to run effective electoral campaigns. These tactics, combined with the use of the security forces to prevent voters from casting a vote in certain constituencies, earned the condemnation of the independent election observers as well as many of the judges and judicial officials tasked under the law with ensuring the fairness of the election. They also had the effect of generating some public sympathy for the Muslim Brothers, who appeared to the general public as the main victims of electoral fraud and violence even as the government was trumpeting the election as part of its reform process. Their achievement was also underlined by the fact that it made substantial gains compared to the 2000 elections, whereas the ruling party's results remained nearly stagnant with its official candidates winning only 39 per cent of seats compared to 38 per cent in 2000,⁹ and the legal opposition had its presence reduced from about 4 per cent to less than 3 per cent of seats.

The reasons for their success lie chiefly in the effective preparation they had made for the elections and their years of gradual investment in the political and organisational skills of their members. But they also took advantage of the pressure placed on the regime by the Bush administration and indeed it is quite plausible that the regime desired a strong showing by Islamists to buttress its perennial argument that the only alternative to the *status quo* was an Islamist takeover, with all its anti-Western and anti-Israel components. The Bush administration's abandonment of its 'Forward Agenda for Freedom' in early 2006, after the Muslim Brothers' strong showing had been quickly followed by an electoral victory for Hamas in the Palestinian parliamentary elections, certainly suggests that if this was the regime's

calculation, it was not far off the mark. The most convincing evidence for the theory that to a limited extent the regime wanted Islamists to perform well was the pronouncements of ruling party officials, who expected the Brothers to double their seats in the People's Assembly, and most of all the fact that, in the words of veteran Brotherhood politician Essam al-Erian, 'for the first time, on the eve of elections, not a single Muslim Brother is in jail'.¹⁰

The Brothers' electoral success changed their attitude towards the regime, pushing them towards a more confrontational stance. It also enabled them to regain the leadership of the opposition many of its members felt they had conceded to the Kifaya movement and new liberal opposition parties such as al-Ghad, particularly on political reform issues. At a conference presenting its newly-elected parliamentary bloc, the Brotherhood stressed the need for political reform and the competence of its 88 MPs, who stood together and chanted '*islah*' (reform) rather than the usual Islamist slogans. It also boasted that the new MPs would undergo training to make the best use of their new position, under the leadership of Akef himself. For much of 2006 and 2007, their priorities appeared to be to exploit their presence in parliament as a platform to raise the issues of political reform that dominated street protests throughout 2005.

Just as significantly, in early 2006 Akef announced that the Brotherhood would henceforth contest every possible election – those for the Shura Council, the upper house of parliament, local municipalities, and, at least implicitly, the presidency. This was a radical departure from 25 years of limited participation in the sense that the Brothers had always fielded a limited number of candidates to People's Assembly elections in the past and never to any other national election. Extrapolating from its success in the 2005 elections, the Brotherhood was essentially promising to make considerable advances in these institutions, laying the groundwork for a

major expansion of its presence in elected offices at all levels of state. Crucially, this would also begin the process of obtaining sufficient support across both houses of parliament and the municipal councils to be able eventually to nominate an independent candidate in future presidential elections, as per the new rules introduced by the amendment of Article 76 of the constitution in May 2005. The Brotherhood also expanded its political activity in professional associations and in 2006 also contested elections to the state-run Egyptian Federation of Trade Unions for the first time.

In parallel, the Brotherhood launched a charm offensive to give reassurance that the rise in its political fortunes should not worry the West. Brotherhood spokesmen appeared for the first time on Egyptian state television, as well as on pan-Arab satellite channels, and published editorials in the Arab and international press, seeking to reassure the world – or, as a *Guardian* op-ed by Deputy General Guide Khairat el-Shatir put it, that there is 'no need to be afraid of us' (El-Shatir, 2005). In these interviews and articles, senior Brothers repeated again and again that they were committed to the democratic process and wanted to focus on political reform rather than the Islamisation of Egypt. Their arguments were relayed by sympathetic Western analysts and academics, who recognised that an important transformation was underway in the Brothers' rhetoric – one that had gestated since the 1990s at least, but was now on the verge of becoming the movement's new doctrine. A movement founded on the idea that political parties should be banned and that Muslims should aim to recreate the caliphate as their ultimate political structure was now advocating democratic electoral politics in the context of the nation state. Such a change was in many respects a logical consequence of the past two decades' embrace of electoral politics, even if in a restricted political space. But the ability of politically-minded Brothers to make this the stated goal of the Brotherhood should also be

seen as a victory of its activist wing over its proselytising wing after a long period of debate.

The Brothers' parliamentary weight and activity over the course of 2006, their newfound status as the undisputed leader of the opposition and longstanding internal debates within the movement led to another breakthrough announcement that might not have happened but for the daring leadership of Akef. In January 2007, just as the Brotherhood suffered a new crack-down with the arrest of prominent members, Akef announced that the group intended to create a political party to separate its political activism from its *dawah* and charitable activities. This marked a decisive break with previous ambiguity over whether the group was seriously interested in creating a legal political formation after years of having operated illegally and clandestinely, as well as the culmination of at least two decades of debate about whether this was desirable. The experience of Islamist parties elsewhere – notably in Turkey but also in Morocco and Palestine – had already provided a model where Brotherhood-like movements had created distinct, if related, political organisations that operated largely according to secular principles organisationally. For an organisation that once saw political parties as foreign imports and a source of *fitna* (discord, a word loaded with negative connotations of the Sunni-Shia split after Prophet Muhammad's death), it was the first public acknowledgement of the desirability of political pluralism and a recognition that the earlier approach to politics was no longer either internationally acceptable or conjecturally viable.

The immediate context of the Brotherhood's new resolve to launch a political party was two events that threatened the Brotherhood's political future. The 'al-Azhar militia' affair of December 2006¹¹ – a 'martial arts demonstration' by Brotherhood students at Cairo's Ayn Shams University that emulated the military parades of Hamas – had generated a deluge of negative press coverage, led to the arrest of key Brotherhood financiers

and raised new questions about whether the group genuinely embraced non-violence. At the same time, the regime had begun unveiling a set of new constitutional amendments, including the amendment to Article 5 of the constitution, which would formalise the long-standing *de facto* ban on religious political parties. As a package, many in the opposition saw the amendments as an effort to constrain the political scene ahead of the coming presidential succession, in order to ease the 'inheritance of power' scenario for Gamal Mubarak. The amendment to Article 5, in this line of thinking, sought to curtail Egypt's most powerful opposition bloc – the Islamists – from being able to form a political party, which would have automatically had the right, among other things, to field a presidential candidate.

The decision to launch a political party was, of course, largely a rhetorical one. The regime, which controlled the Political Parties Committee tasked with issuing party licenses (and which had serially refused not only to license moderate Islamist parties such as al-Wasat, a platform founded by Brotherhood dissidents in the mid-1990s, but also many secular parties), was not about to allow any formal role for the Brotherhood in politics. Only the day before Akef made the announcement, Mubarak had lambasted the movement as 'a danger for the national security of the country'. In his initial announcement, Akef emphasised that the party would be nominally secular but have an 'Islamic reference' (*mar-jaiya islamiya*), consciously following the model adopted by other groups, particularly Jordan's Islamic Action Front and Yemen's Islamic Reform Grouping; that the party would be separate from the Brotherhood itself, much as Turkey's or Morocco's Justice and Development Parties (AKP and PJD, respectively) are distinct from the wider religious movements from which they stem; and that its platform would be deliberated by the Brotherhood's Shura Council before being presented to the public later on.

When a draft programme was released in August 2007, it caused consternation in the political class and much anger in

the Brotherhood itself. Not only was the programme a rambling document of some 120 pages, and often vague and not particularly innovative, but it contained three controversial provisions. First, it advocated the creation of a *majlis al-ulema* (council of religious scholars), whose task would be to ensure that legislation issued by parliament and approved by the president was consistent with Article 2 of the constitution, which stipulated that *sharia* is the main source of legislation. Secondly, it argued that the presidency should only be open to Muslims, on the grounds that since the president has the power to appoint officials at Islamic institutions such as al-Azhar, it would be unfair to give the position to a non-Muslim. Thirdly, it also argued that women should be barred from the presidency, in accordance with 'well-established principles of *sharia*'. As the announcement that the Brotherhood would issue a party programme had generated high hopes for an evolution in the positions of the movement (or at least its political wing), its conservative bent gave fodder to its external critics, who pointed to these provisions as proof that the Brotherhood was intent on creating an Iranian-style rule of theologians and, despite espousing the principle of equality of all citizens in its programme, remained attached to discriminatory measures when it came to certain positions (Brown and Hamzawy 2008).

If the publication of the programme was a public relations fiasco, the internal debate that surfaced after it exposed the widening rift inside the group. Some members accused the leadership of having monopolised the drafting process and of failing adequately to consult members. They also lamented the regression contained in the programme and the missed opportunity to break with some of its undemocratic heritage. The debate over the programme brought to the fore the chasm between the conservative and cautious leadership of the group, which controlled its key administrative institutions (notably its general secretariat, the administrative backbone of the Brotherhood) and the more

politically engaged, activism-oriented wing of the Brotherhood, which wanted to use Mubarak era Egypt's political crisis over the looming presidential succession to present the Brothers as a viable and modern alternative. Tellingly, even Muslim Brothers from other countries were critical of the draft programme, pointing out that the restrictions on the presidency were an unnecessary courting of controversy as the country was hardly likely to elect a woman or a Christian, and showed how the original Egyptian chapter of the Brotherhood had evolved so much less than its offshoots elsewhere in the region.

2007–10: crackdown

The debate over the programme, and the largely negative reaction from the Egyptian political class, prompted the Brotherhood leadership to shelve the programme until further notice and effectively abandon the idea of a party. The political context, after all, was not conducive as the Mubarak regime began one of the most extensive crackdowns on the group since the 1960s. This was largely in reaction to the Brotherhood's more confrontational stance towards the regime, as well as in response to the rising political ferment across the political spectrum in reaction to the continued rise of Gamal Mubarak and his cronies in national politics and the lingering uncertainty over who would succeed Mubarak. Already in 2006, the Brotherhood had showed more willingness to take to the streets, notably joining the Kifaya movement and others in support of the 'Judges' Intifafa', a protest movement led by the Judges' Club, a professional association, in Spring 2006 in protest at the politically motivated punishment of two senior judges. Their participation brought them hundreds of arrests, as did participation in student union elections in October 2006. Towards the end of that year, the crackdown intensified after the 'al-Azhar militia affair', which allowed the regime to accuse the Brotherhood of nurturing a paramilitary

militia and the state media to warn that the Brotherhood risked turning into another Hizballah or Hamas. The regional context, with the Hamas takeover of Gaza and the Lebanon-Israel war having just taken place, was hardly conducive. The regime and its media organs had conducted a campaign against these groups with some success and could now point to the Brotherhood as a similar threat to the stability of the country.

The scandal gave the regime the opportunity to strike its biggest blow to date against the Brotherhood. In mid-December 2006, only two weeks after the 'al-Azhar militia' affair erupted, it arrested some 140 senior Brothers, including some of its key financiers, who were believed to account for at least a third of its funding. Notably, it included Deputy General Guide Khairat al-Shater, a millionaire businessman widely believed to be the single most influential member of the group, with greater power than the General Guide himself. He and his business partner Hassan Malek, another key donor to the Brotherhood, received unusually harsh sentences of seven years' imprisonment in the military trial that followed over a year later, in April 2008. Likewise, when the Brotherhood persisted with its pledge to contest elections for municipal councils and for the upper house of parliament, they found their supporters across the country rounded up in their hundreds, many of their candidates unable to register, and none able to secure a single seat. Pushing back against the Brotherhood's more confrontational politics, the regime had opted for an unforgiving crackdown (Shehata and Stacher 2007).

This policy hardened as the Brotherhood continued to lambast the regime from parliament, which provided a useful platform even if Islamist lawmakers were prevented from having any impact on legislation, and became more pronounced as regional factors began to gain greater importance. None was more prominent than Egypt's collaboration with the US and the international community in enforcing an embargo on Gaza after the takeover by Hamas, an issue that took on a new urgency after Israel laid

waste to the Palestinian territory during its Operation Cast Lead in late December 2008 and early January 2009, during the inter-regnum between the Bush and Obama presidencies. Already in January 2008 the Brotherhood had taken the lead in an Egyptian initiative calling for the opening of the Rafah border crossing with Gaza to humanitarian aid, commercial goods and passenger traffic. The Brotherhood was particularly scathing (as were other pro-Palestinian Gaza activists) of Egypt's close collaboration with the US in enforcing the siege of Gaza and of the US-backed Egyptian monopoly on the Palestinian reconciliation talks. Led by the fiercely anti-Hamas Director of Intelligence Omar Suleiman, the talks were clearly intended to delay reconciliation and weaken Hamas more than anything else. Here, the Brotherhood navigated a narrow course: while support for the Palestinian cause, and Hamas in particular, was a central issue for its members, it risked inviting criticism that it valued Palestinian interests above Egypt's own, as the regime's propaganda machine frequently asserted.

The breach of the Gaza-Egypt border at Rafah of 23 January 2008, when Hamas militants destroyed part of the border barrier, allowing thousands of Gazans to pour into Sinai to buy supplies, took place the day after the Brotherhood called for the opening of the border. While highlighting the humanitarian plight of Gazans, it exposed the Brotherhood to a further crackdown: in the days that followed, over 3,000 members were arrested. The incident set a new zero-tolerance approach towards any pro-Gaza activism, whether Islamist or secular – a policy that only intensified after Cast Lead. While the Brotherhood continued to be one of the lead organisers of humanitarian aid to Gaza, particularly through institutions such as the Arab Doctors' Syndicate, whose board it dominated, protests and other forms of activism over Gaza were severely curtailed. By early 2009, when Cast Lead took place, the Brothers could not dare to stage large-scale protests, particularly as the regime and its press had nurtured anti-Hamas sentiment with some success.

It was in this context of retreat that the debate inside the Brotherhood changed. Some members, particularly those not involved in politics, began to question the wisdom of the confrontational approach Akef had championed. Picking a fight with the regime over what was seen by the entire political class as part of the presidential succession issue was futile, some argued, compared to allowing the Brotherhood to continue its *dawah* and charity work, which had been successful in 'Islamising society from below' without the risks associated with politics. The debate reflected in part an old concern within the Brotherhood about the risks involved in political work and direct confrontation with the regime, but also the growing challenge within the Islamist spectrum from the Salafi movement, which had already far overtaken the Brotherhood in its charitable activities and was increasingly ideologically dominant (including among the Brotherhood itself). The Salafis' political quietism, clearly, had served them well – notably allowing them to control a vast network of mosques with the understanding that their sermons could be as radical as they liked as long as they eschewed domestic politics. Indeed, in parts of the country where the Salafis were most organised, such as in Alexandria where the *Dawah Salafiya* movement holds much sway (it would become the birthplace of the Nour Party after the 2011 uprising), Salafis often organised to vote for regime candidates, not run against them.

The internal elections that took place in late 2008 and early 2009 for the 16 seats in the *Maktab al-Irshad* (Guidance Council) reflected this internal debate. A few months beforehand, Akef, in his last and most unconventional move, announced that he would step down as general guide, breaking with a tradition that the post was a lifelong position. Akef's decision, of course, was a last challenge to the regime: in effect he was saying that the Brotherhood, unlike the regime, did not have a leader-for-life at a time when there was mounting demand for imposing term limits on the presidency. But it also reflected the weakening of his

position inside the Brotherhood, the embarrassment caused by the debacle over the draft party programme and the rise of more conservative and politically quietist voices. That last trend would become more visible in the gains made by conservatives in the elections to the Guidance Council, notably the surprising elimination of one of the few senior Brothers associated with reformist thinking, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, who had been pressing the Brotherhood to be more transparent about the way members' dues (Muslim Brothers of level three or above must donate 7 per cent of their income to the group) were being invested in businesses mostly controlled by Khairat al-Shater. The rivalry between al-Shater – often judged to be the most powerful member of the Brotherhood through his control of its finances and through alliances, sometimes by marriage, with other senior Brothers – and Aboul Fotouh would, after the uprising, become one of the most prominent examples of divisions in the group.¹²

There was also unprecedented condemnation of these elections (which, in light of the security crackdown, could not take place in the open since the Majlis al-Shura, or Consultative Council, of the Brotherhood could not hold a session) as fraudulent – the first time such an accusation had been made in the history of the group. The debate over these elections led to the resignation of Deputy Guide Muhammad Habib, a figure often associated with the reformist trend and who had been expecting to be named general guide, from his position. Habib and Aboul Fotouh's fate in the 2008–09 right turn taken by the Brotherhood would, post-uprising, lead to both of them resigning from the Brotherhood, with the former launching the moderate Islamist party al-Nahda and the latter contesting the presidency against the explicit orders of his brethren. In the meantime, the Brotherhood elections also signalled an end to the confrontation with the regime, with Badie soon making overtures, including expressing openness to the idea that Gamal Mubarak might become president. Habib and other dissidents would later claim

that the selection of Badie as general guide had been part of a deal with the pro-Gamal elements of the regime to secure, if not the Brothers' support, their acquiescence towards the 'inheritance of power' scenario.

2011–12: moment of triumph or squandered opportunity?

It was thus a rather cowed Muslim Brotherhood, concerned about the fate of its key imprisoned leaders and making conciliatory overtures towards the regime, that officially refused to take part in the protests planned for 25 January. This was a cautious move, and in light of the mounting sentiment in Egypt that the country was nearing a moment of crisis – fuelled by the outrage caused by the fraud in the recent parliamentary elections, an increase in sectarian tensions and the lingering uncertainty over the upcoming presidential elections – it may be that the Brothers were bunkering down for the fight that might take place within the regime over the succession issue. What is certain is that after 28 January, they wasted no time in asserting themselves as a key political actor and embraced their new recognition as a legitimate interlocutor with the regime.

The clearest sign of this change in the first few months after Mubarak stepped down was their alignment with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which seized power over the country. SCAF, reaching out to the Brothers for help in securing their own legitimacy and ending the protests and strikes that risked paralysing the country, clearly privileged the Brotherhood. The Constitutional Amendments Committee formed to review the 1971 constitution, for instance, was not only chaired by the Islamist thinker Tariq al-Bishri, a well-known Brotherhood sympathiser, but also included former Brotherhood MP in Alexandria Sobhi Saleh, a professor of law and the only politician included on the committee. Eminent constitutional scholars known for

their preference for a secular constitution that would not refer to *sharia* as 'the source of legislation', as the 1971 document did, were excluded. When the committee presented its amendments, most members of the revolutionary groups that occupied Tahrir Square, as well as leading politicians such as Muhammad al-Baradei and Amr Moussa, opposed their content and, especially, the transition sequence they imposed, most notably the notion that parliamentary elections should take place first, with parliament then nominating a constituent assembly and finally a presidential election taking place. The Muslim Brotherhood, along with other Islamists, campaigned in favour of the 'yes' vote, with reports of Islamist activists warning voters in poor neighbourhoods that a 'no' vote would leave the country in the hands of atheists. Although this may have been only one reason that the 'yes' vote passed with overwhelming approval at 78 per cent, in many secularist and revolutionary minds it laid the seeds of fear of a *de facto* alliance between the Brotherhood and the generals of SCAF.

Such an alliance, whether tacit or negotiated, seemed evident for much of 2011, with the Brotherhood notably refraining from participation in most protests that took place during the year, and supporting SCAF when the protest movement condemned its human rights abuses and, towards the end of the year, its increasing propensity to deploy deadly violence against protestors. Even the violent clashes of October (against a mostly Christian protest), mid-November (against SCAF's attempt to insert provisions protecting the military from civilian oversight, which the Brotherhood also condemned) and December (against the nomination of Kamal al-Gazoury as prime minister) – which altogether claimed over 120 lives and wounded hundreds more, ending the military's record of not firing at protestors – did not elicit much criticism from the Brotherhood. Some of its leaders preferred to cast aspersions on the motivations of the protest movement, although others, notably Muhammed al-Beltagy, a

rare Brotherhood figure known for his anti-military positions, showed signs of dissent.

This approach by the Brotherhood, and the strict discipline it tried to enforce on its members to toe the party line, took its toll. Within a few weeks of the uprising, several offshoots of the Brotherhood had been formed, rejecting the leadership's dictate that a single party – the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) – should represent the movement. Although these movements were fairly marginal, as their inability to garner many seats in the parliamentary elections of late 2011 and early 2012 would show, they nevertheless symbolically put an end to the idea of a monolithic Brotherhood, taking with them some formerly senior leadership. The departure of Aboul Fotouh and his subsequent emergence as a credible presidential candidate were particularly revealing of ongoing divisions in the group and resentment at the growing evidence that a few senior leaders, and particularly al-Shater, monopolised power. Brotherhood officials tended to respond to such criticism by saying that those former members were for the most part not really members at all – particularly among the young, non-due-paying level one or two former members or, in the case of more prominent persons, isolated cases. It certainly appears to be the case that despite these defections, most of the Brotherhood's financial and organisational clout remains in the hands of the Guidance Council and the few leaders around al-Shater who appear to have the most clout, most notably spokesman Mahmoud Ghozlan, Secretary-General Mahmoud Ezzat and political bureau head and FJP chairman Muhammad Morsi, who would eventually emerge as the Brotherhood's backup presidential candidate after al-Shater's disqualification from the race and secure the presidency with 51 per cent of the vote. But this could change, particularly as Egypt's Islamist firmament, ranging from conservatives who model themselves on Turkey's AKP to hard-line fundamentalists inspired by the Saudi model, remains very much in flux.

For now, the Brotherhood remains the best organised, and possibly best financed, political force in Egypt. It performed well in the parliamentary elections, obtaining just short of half the seats in the People's Assembly, the lower house of parliament. But this offers no guarantee of a similar level of performance in the future. For one, the Brotherhood was met with an unexpected challenge by the Salafi movement, whose coalition competed most fiercely with the FJP and secured a quarter of the seats after an impressive campaign. But furthermore, secular parties tended to be divided and, with the transition model chosen, were both less prepared and more ambivalent about the need for elections – especially in the context of the brutal crackdowns by the military that were taking place as voters went to the polls. Finally, while the FJP was the most serious and best-prepared of the political parties, including former MPs with legislative experience, its political platform was vague and at times desultory (as were those of other parties) and it had made little preparation for the task of actually governing. Moreover, parliament's ambiguous status under the temporary Constitutional Declaration that the Brothers had helped bring about in the March 2012 referendum (which maintained a strongly presidential system), hamstringed the FJP's incoming MPs with the appearance of responsibility but little actual ability to influence government decisions. This – articulated by the Brothers as a demand to form a government of their own, even though they had no constitutional basis for doing so – would eventually be the official ground for the increasingly acrimonious relationship between the Brotherhood and SCAF as the transition period neared its end with the election of a president. Even when President Morsi asserted his power in August 2012, dismissing senior SCAF members in collusion with younger military generals, the balance of power between the military and the presidency remained uncertain.

Confusion also continues to reign in the relationship between the Brotherhood and the party that emerged from it, the FJP.

In 2007–08, Brotherhood MPs and other members interested in political work would argue that there was a need for the strict separation of politics and *dawah* work, with some even pledging to quit the movement should they be allowed to form a political party (a similar distancing observed, for instance, in Morocco by the Justice and Development Party and the Movement for Unity and Reform from which it stems). Yet, in 2012 there is little doubt that political decisions are taken at the Brotherhood level, with the FJP little more than a legal shell for its interests. The question of whether the movement's MPs answer to the party or the Guidance Council is constantly asked, with no clear resolution. Political negotiations with other forces and with SCAF usually involve al-Shater, who is also the privileged interlocutor of diplomats, investors and other foreigners curious about interacting with the Brotherhood. His (abortive, as he was barred due to previous condemnations) candidacy for the presidency – announced in May 2012 despite previous assurances that the group would not field a presidential candidate, the ostensible reason for the expulsion of Aboul Fotouh – further confirmed that the society prevails over the party, even if, as was endorsed by a very narrow majority (two votes) of the Brotherhood's Shura Council, it also speaks of lingering internal dissent.

Today, the tension between a Muslim Brotherhood largely controlled by al-Shater and his loyalists and the politicians that it backs manifests itself chiefly in the evolving relationship between the group and the office of the presidency that, while held by one of its own, is imposing its own political logic. President Morsi must rely on the Brotherhood, but also wants to appear as a 'president of all Egyptians'. The risk for the Brothers is that the Morsi presidency gradually evolves into an independent centre of power, resting on control of institutions and direct access to other centres of power within the state (such as the military), with the Brotherhood becoming simply a privileged lobby among other lobbies. Morsi's apparent reluctance to nominate

too many Brothers to cabinet and other state positions is one example of this tension.

Perhaps the biggest mistake made by the Brotherhood during the transitional period was, however, over the constitution. The transition plan had given parliament the right to nominate the 100-member constitutional assembly tasked with drafting the new constitution. In alliance with Salafi MPs, FJP MPs monopolised the session of the People's Assembly in which possible nominees (from a shortlist of 2,700 proposed by civil society and political parties) were to be discussed and moved quickly to a vote, using their supermajority to move quickly through what was supposed to be a more deliberative process. The manner in which this was done, as well as the domination of the constituent assembly by Islamists, profoundly alienated not only the secular parties but also more important actors, most notably the Coptic Orthodox Church and al-Azhar University, the traditional authority of Sunni Islam in Egypt. Virtually all non-Islamist members of the assembly resigned their posts, while a court injunction was secured to declare the nomination of MPs to the assembly as unconstitutional. This was not only a political failure for the Brothers, who hoped quickly to adopt a new constitution that would shift power away from the presidency and to the parliament. It was a missed opportunity to build consensus with secular political forces over not just the future constitution, but also the need for the military's future involvement in politics to be restricted. Even as it triumphs politically, gaining control of the presidency (and, when parliamentary elections are repeated, a probably strong role if not a majority in the parliament), the Brotherhood's rise has been managed in a fashion that has been deeply divisive for Egypt's non-Islamists.

The crisis of late 2012 – sparked by Morsi's decree of 22 November that sought (among other things) to prevent a second court judgement that would lead to the dissolution of a Constituent Assembly that was, once again, boycotted by most

secular forces – repeated and compounded that early mistake. The rush to pass a constitution despite the absence of the secularists, and, most glaringly, any Christian in the assembly sparked weeks of protests, culminating in a hastily organized referendum in which the constitution passed with only 64 per cent in favour and a low turnout of 30 per cent. This relatively narrow majority (in comparison with the March 2011 referendum) and the animosity it created against the Brotherhood has further widened the divide between Islamists and non-Islamists. Although this works to some of the Brotherhood's advantage, it also makes it more dependent on hard-line Salafi groups and moves it away from the centrist position it had advocated in 2011. And it has handed the secular opposition a more effective line of attack against the organization: not just that it is Islamist, but that it is power-hungry and bent on dominating political institutions at the expense of all others.

The Brotherhood is set to remain a potent force in Egyptian politics. But its apparent triumph after the parliamentary elections was, within a few months, in some respects in doubt. So is its ability to manage the tensions between its political and religious wings, while its place as the hegemonic representative of Egyptian political Islam has been very much diminished by the rise of the Salafis and the popularity of Islamist leaders – some former Brothers – who espouse a more consensual approach to politics. The fear among some Egyptians that it could still settle with the military backbone of the Mubarak regime remains very much alive. And the debates that shed light on the inner workings of the society between 2005 and 2010 remain, for now, unresolved.

Notes

* This chapter does not consider developments after December 2012.

1. On efforts by the Muslim Brothers to separate their political activity from their religious work, see for instance ICG (2008).
2. The video of Amanpour's interview is available at <http://www.blinkx.com/watch-video/abc-amanpour-interviews-mubarak-suleiman/26C5XMmnKgLVjueflp3eQ>.

3. Although during that time, the Brotherhood's statements became increasingly supportive of the protest movement.
4. The Muslim Brotherhood did back the decisive 28 January protests, on the day itself.
5. The Brotherhood's electoral performance and the de-liberalisation of the Mubarak regime during this period is explored in depth in Kienle (2001).
6. This was experienced first-hand numerous times by this writer, whether on occasions when the Brotherhood carried out an 'authorised' march with strict discipline or when it participated in larger protests but eschewed the explicitly anti-Mubarak slogans of the left.
7. Akef's trajectory in the international branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, which he headed from Munich in the 1970s, is described in Johnson (2010).
8. One young Muslim Brother at the time, Ibrahim Houdaiby, explained that the solidarity between leftists and Islamists over the course of 2005 was decisive in creating the group of young Brothers who subsequently rebelled against the Brotherhood's ageing leadership and left the movement. Houdaiby, now a researcher and columnist, has become a major voice for a more open-minded Islamism in the Egyptian media – a voice bolstered by the fact that his grandfather had been a General Guide of the Brotherhood. Interviews with the author, 2005–2011.
9. The ruling party's majority was made of nominally independent candidates who 're-joined' the party after their election, ensuring the National Democratic Party always had at least around three-quarters of seats in parliament.
10. Interview with author, September 2005.
11. See this report on the Muslim Brotherhood's own website, available at <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=2820>.
12. Interviews with Muslim Brothers and supporters of Aboul Forouh in 2011 and 2012.

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YEMEN'S ISLAMISTS: BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION IN THE POST-SALEH ORDER

Vincent Durac

Introduction¹

In November 2011, Ali Abdullah Saleh signed a deal, sponsored by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which effectively brought his decades-long dominance of Yemeni political life to an end.² Under the terms of the deal, Saleh, who had been president of the country since it came into existence in its modern form in 1990, handed over power to his vice-president, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, as a prelude to the formation of a government of national unity and the holding of presidential elections in February 2012. The elections paved the way for a coalition of opposition parties, the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), to enter a power-sharing government in tandem with the ruling General People's Congress (GPC). Among these opposition parties, the most influential is the Islamist Yemeni Congregation for Reform or Islah party, which had previously served in government in coalition with Saleh's GPC from 1994 to 1997. Throughout its history, the party has occupied an ambiguous space in Yemeni

political life, maintaining close links with the regime while serving as the major opposition force.

The apparent transition to a post-Saleh political order was the culmination of almost a year of popular protest in the main cities of Yemen. As has been the case elsewhere in the Arab world, the Yemeni protest movement emerged from non-traditional established political actors and institutions. However, very early on the Islah party threw in its lot with the protesters to the point that many in Yemen's youth movement expressed concern that their movement was being hijacked. When the GCC deal was negotiated and signed in November 2011 without reference to the demands of the young protesters, such fears seemed to have been substantiated. This chapter explores the background to Yemen's political system – a multiparty system unique in the Arabian Peninsula. Next, it examines the origins of the Islah party and its relationship with other political actors in the country, including the opposition JMP alliance and the GPC, as well as informal political actors. This is followed by an account of the emergence of the youth-led protest movement of 2011 and its relationship with the Islah-dominated opposition. Finally, the implications of the GCC deal for both the protest movement and Islah are analysed.

Political development in post-unification Yemen

The Republic of Yemen came into existence in 1990 as a result of the unification of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in the north of the country and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in the south. The impact of the end of the Cold War was critical to the unification initiative. The PDRY, the only self-styled Marxist state in the Arab world, lost its most important supporter with the demise of the Soviet Union. However, the north was also dependent on outside aid and both states struggled to assert control over their populations and territory.

Although talk of unification had been a persistent feature of political life in both north and south, it finally came about in dramatic fashion following a visit by then president of the YAR, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to the south in November 1989. In the course of that visit and under severe pressure from Saleh, the leadership of the southern ruling party, the Yemeni Socialist Party, consented to the unification of the two countries (Clark 2010: 133–34). Almost certainly, the leadership of both parties expected that they could expand their own power in a unified Yemen (Phillips 2008: 48).

For the YSP this proved to be a serious miscalculation, as the aftermath of unification witnessed the increased penetration of the south by the GPC and the emergence of a further challenge to the socialists in the form of the newly established Islamist Islah party. Nonetheless, the post-unification period saw Yemen enter a phase of political liberalisation without precedent in the Gulf. In Carapico's words, unity 'ushered in Yemen's most liberal, most political civic opening' (1998: 135–36). The new constitution guaranteed voting and candidacy rights for all adult Yemeni citizens, men and women; equality before the law; a multiparty political system; and an independent judiciary, as well as stipulating fundamental rights and freedoms. A presidential republic was established with a unicameral parliament and regular elections to both institutions. The initial power-sharing agreement divided posts in the presidential council, the council of ministers and parliament more or less equally between the GPC and the YSP, leaving 'unusual scope' by the standards of the Arabian Peninsula for other parties to become politically involved (Carapico 1998: 136).

Dozens of new political parties were formed. There was a proliferation of civil society organisations and a lively press emerged. Longley Alley suggests that Yemen's democratic experiment, the first in the Arabian Peninsula, was 'arguably the most substantive in the Arab world' (Longley Alley 2010a: 73–4). The first

elections were held in 1993 and proved disappointing for the YSP, which failed to secure significant support in the north where the great majority of the Yemeni population lives. The two most successful parties were the old ruling party of the YAR, the GPC, which won 123 of the 301 seats in parliament, and a newcomer on the political scene, Islah, which took 62 seats. The electoral base of both the GPC and Islah is in the north of the country. The YSP, by contrast, finished in third place, securing a mere 56 parliamentary seats.

Although there was widespread support for the unification project, the period from 1991 to 1994 was characterised by violence, instability and tension between the GPC and the YSP. Relations between them, which had deteriorated in the lead-up to the elections, became increasingly fraught as the YSP sought greater decentralisation of power, reform of the rule of law, and the maintenance of some autonomy for the south in the face of increasing northern dominance.³ Attempts at dialogue between the two sides failed and a short civil war broke out in April 1994. The aftermath of the war saw the northern leadership triumph over the south. It also saw an end to the pluralism of the early post-unification years, as Saleh consolidated his control by enacting a series of constitutional amendments which increased his political power. After the civil war period there was an attempt at reconciliation with some of the leadership of the YSP. However, the war cost the party its place in government. Meanwhile, the strength of Islah grew. After the 1993 elections, Islah entered into a coalition government with the GPC, which lasted until the 1997 parliamentary elections.

Since the mid-1990s, the Yemeni political system has been characterised by relative political liberalisation combined with the dominance of the incumbent GPC regime. There is a fairly open press with dozens of opposition newspapers, but the government employs a range of tactics from 'administrative repression' to outright violence in order to restrict freedom of expression

(Committee to Protect Journalists 2010). There is a significant civil society sector, labour unions and professional syndicates, although the capacity of these to contribute to processes of political reform is the subject of debate (Durac 2012). However, the relative openness has taken place amidst the consolidation of power around the president's close family. In 1999, his son, Ahmad Ali Abdullah Saleh, was appointed head of the Special Republican Guard Forces with responsibility for protecting the president. One nephew of the president is chief of staff of the Central Security Forces, while another is deputy director of the National Security Bureau. In addition, the president's family is 'involved in everything from gun smuggling, fishing, shrimping and construction, to oil and natural gas', as well as having a large share in the country's real estate (Longley Alley 2010b: 407–8).

Outside of the formal political arena, the regime in Sanaa faces a series of challenges which have increasingly attracted the attention of academics and policy-makers. The country is the poorest in the Arab world, has low levels of literacy and of primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment in education, and ranks 154 out of 177 countries in the UN Human Development Index. These difficulties are compounded by an alarming decline in the country's natural resource base. Yemen is, according to most observers, quickly running out of freshwater supplies and hydrocarbons (Hill 2008).

Adding to all of this, Yemen is beset by regional challenges to the authority of central government. The Houthi rebellion began in the Saada province in 2004 when anti-government demonstrations and disturbances by members of the *Zaydi* Believing Youth movement spread to Sanaa, with protesters criticising the regime for its cooperation with the United States in counter-terrorism. When the government attempted to arrest the leader of the movement, Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, fighting broke out. Since 2004, there have been six bouts of fighting with the loss of several thousand lives (including that of al-Houthi) and

nearly 300,000 people internally displaced (Boucek 2010: 1–10; UNHCR 2012).

While the protests that broke out in early 2011 have commanded international attention, southern Yemen has witnessed regular demonstrations against the Saleh regime since 2007. The Southern Movement (al-Hirak) began when a group of military officers, forced into early retirement after the 1994 civil war, started to hold weekly sit-ins in towns and cities in the south to demand better treatment from the regime in Sanaa. However, the protests grew rapidly and in December 2007, hundreds of thousands of people attended the burial ceremony of four men killed by security forces in October of that year (Day 2010: 8–9). The southern governorates contain only a fifth of Yemen's population but generate most of the country's wealth and there is a widespread sense of grievance at the region's economic underdevelopment and political marginalisation. The governors of all seven southern provinces come from the north (Finn 2011). As the Hirak movement spread, its demands became increasingly radicalised, with some calling for secession and independence.

The Yemeni party political system

Before unification, multi-party pluralism was banned in both parts of Yemen. In January 1990, the Committee for a Unified Political Regime, which had been entrusted with the task of defining the form of a unified state system, opted to retain the ruling parties of the North and the South, while permitting other parties to engage in political activity as well. The newly liberalised party political environment witnessed the registration of no less than 46 parties before the 1993 parliamentary elections. However, a much smaller number have since emerged as significant political players, the most important being the three parties that gained most in the first post-unification elections, the ruling GPC, Islah and the YSP.

Like the YSP, the GPC predates unification, having been established in 1982 to consolidate the position of Ali Abdullah Saleh, then president of the Yemen Arab Republic. According to al-Yemeni, the GPC came about as an organisation to rally support for the president and to curb the secret societies and organisations that had emerged in response to the ban on political organisations in the YAR (Al-Yemeni 2003: 26). Phillips suggests that it was also intended to undermine the increasing political power and capacity of Local Development Associations, the civil society organisations that emerged in North Yemen in the 1970s to provide education and basic infrastructure to local communities that were beyond the reach of the state (Phillips 2008: 46).

The original founders of the party were prominent social leaders and elites: *shaykhs*, social and religious figures, business leaders and intellectuals, representing traditional and tribal forces. However, while most of the country's regional, religious and tribal groups are represented in the leadership of the GPC, the most prominent leaders are those who have personal, family or tribal ties with the president, or those who have a trusted family background (Al-Yemeni 2003: 31). Therefore, the GPC is best understood as an instrument of regime survival and patronage with a very diverse membership base that includes Islamists, former socialists, tribal leaders, moderates and hard-line religious conservatives (Phillips 2011: 47).

Thus, while its programme identifies the GPC as a non-partisan, nationalist organisation, the goals of which are state-building, democracy, constitutional rule, modernisation and building military and security institutions, the reality is that the party is little more than a non-ideological pillar in Yemen's patronage system. The top echelons of the party function as a source of political patronage to be distributed by the president, while membership of the GPC is a sign of loyalty to the regime and a prerequisite if one hopes to be a beneficiary of that patronage (Longley Alley 2010b: 389–90).

Unlike the other two major parties in Yemen, the origins of Islah lie in the immediate post-unification period. The party was created in September 1990 largely by former members of the GPC as a new home for more religious members of the ruling party and to marginalise the YSP. Between 1990 and 1997, Islah retained close ties with the ruling GPC and the Saleh government. Since then, however, Islah has gone into opposition, distancing itself from an increasingly autocratic GPC-led regime. As will become apparent below, it was this move into opposition that facilitated, among other things, the formation of an opposition alliance with the YSP.

Islah, like the GPC, constitutes a coalition of somewhat disparate forces. In its early days, three tendencies were widely recognised within the party – tribal forces, ‘moderate’ Muslim Brothers and Muslim Brothers of a more radical inclination (Dresch 2000: 187). The radical grouping is exemplified by Abdulamjid al-Zindani, a controversial figure, who has maintained close relations with President Saleh while at the same time being identified as a ‘specially designated global terrorist’ by the US Government. This diversity means that, as with the GPC, it is difficult to pin the party down in ideological terms. Although the Muslim Brotherhood element constitutes its ideological core, its tribal component was critical in the early days of the party and has provided it with strong links to the GPC regime (Longley 2007: 258).

However, reference to the Islamist and tribal bases of Islah obscures the lack of cohesion that prevails within each of these constituent groups, and the set of complex identities that characterise their members. Tribal leaders are also religious and religious leaders often have tribal ties. An example of such overlapping identities can be found in Shaykh Abdullah al-Ahmar, who, until his death in 2007, was leader of Islah as well as head of the Hashid tribal confederation – the most powerful in the country – and of the Sanhan tribe to which President Saleh belongs.

He supported Saleh's candidacy in the 2006 presidential elections despite the fact that his own party had proposed an alternative candidate. Al-Ahmar served as speaker of parliament, under successive governments, and also had strong ties to the regime in Saudi Arabia, as well as long-standing links with Islamist trends within Yemen itself. Thus, while he was the most significant tribal figure in Yemeni political life, he was also an Islamist. To add to the party's complexity, Islah also includes within its ranks *Salafi Wahhabis* who do not follow al-Zindani, as well as a small number of Shia *Zaydis* (Schwedler 2006: 71–2).

Because of the inherently diverse character of Islah, no agreed position on democracy, or other sensitive political issues, such as the application of *sharia* or the role of women in public life, emerged during its early years. The radical wing of the party opposed the terms of unification in the first place because they provided for a democratic system of governance and for cooperation with the secular, leftist regime of the south. The Muslim Brotherhood element of the party, by contrast, supported democratic participation, but in the post-unification period this tended to be expressed in terms of support for 'pluralism', 'freedom', 'justice', and 'law and order', rather than 'democracy'. Others, such as al-Ahmar, seemed to adopt democratic practices for purely instrumental reasons (Schwedler 2006: 178–9).

However, with continued participation in the political system Islah's priorities changed. Today it presents itself, like other Islamist parties in the region, as a party committed to democratic principles. The shift in this direction began in 1997 when Islah left its place in government for the opposition benches and began to engage with other opposition parties, including the YSP. Since then, the party has called for the introduction of political and social reforms, including constitutional amendments to establish a fairer distribution of power between institutions, reform of the electoral law and the laws governing political rights, a strengthening of parliamentary oversight of the government's

socio-economic policies and a reduction in corruption (Hamzawy 2009: 13–15).

The YSP is the most cohesive and ideologically grounded political party in Yemen. However, it too has witnessed a strong diversity of opinion within its ranks during the course of its transformation from a Marxist to a largely social democratic party. The origins of the YSP lie in British South Aden in the late 1960s. In the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), which was established in the aftermath of the British withdrawal in 1969, all political parties were amalgamated into the YSP, which became the country's only legal party (Ishiyama 2005: 9). Like many other leftist regimes in the region, the YSP adopted socialist economics and embarked on a policy of nationalisation and land redistribution. Internal schisms in the party led to violent conflict within the PDRY in 1986, following which Ali Salim al-Baydh became its leader and the party began to shift towards more pluralistic politics. This move was largely associated with its general secretary at the time, Jarallah Omar, who argued that greater pluralism was necessitated by the weakness of the working class in Yemen (Phillips 2008: 46–7). The accession of al-Baydh to the party leadership also accelerated the drift towards unification. In the post-unification period, the YSP renounced its socialist outlook and, in its platform for the 1993 elections, presented itself as a social democratic party instead, committed to law and order and modernisation, as well as to tackling corruption.

After the 1994 civil war, al-Baydh left the country for Oman. The party was forced to leave the governing coalition and its assets were seized. However, most of the party's parliamentarians were allowed to remain in the country and the party began to move closer to the political centre. From 1998 onwards, the reformist wing of the party led by Jarallah Omar gained the upper hand and promoted the YSP as a social democratic party struggling to build a modern democratic state whose powers rest

on the fundamentals of the constitution and in which citizens are equal in rights and duties and human rights are respected (Ishiyama 2005: 18–20).

By 2002, the GPC's dominance of political life in Yemen, and the consequent shrinkage of the political space, led to an emerging consensus among opposition political parties that greater cooperation among the opposition was necessary in order to counter the increased power of the ruling party. This was particularly the case for Islah in the post-9/11 era, as the president identified Yemen as an ally of the United States in the war on terror, focusing attention on the asserted links between Islah and radical Islamism.

In 2002 Islah and the YSP joined forces with four smaller political parties to form a broad-based opposition alliance aimed at challenging the increasingly authoritarian nature of the GPC regime. The alliance, which became known as the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), also included the Popular Nasserist Unity Organisation, the Union of Popular Forces (a small party of *Zaydi* intellectuals), the conservative *Zaydi* Hizb al-Haqq and the Baath National Party. Ideological diversity apart, the most surprising aspect of the formation of the alliance was the fact that the YSP and Islah had been in violent conflict with one another just eight years previously. Some leaders of the Islamist party had played a major role in fomenting anti-socialist sentiment in Yemen before and during the 1994 civil war. Throughout the period from 1990 to 1997, vitriolic rhetoric characterised the relationship between Islah and the YSP. Islah members denounced those of the YSP as 'secularist, atheistic and traitorous apostates', while the YSP characterised Islah as a 'reactionary' force doing the bidding of Saudi Arabia (Browsers 2007: 567–9). All of this makes the eventual formation in 2002 of an alliance between the YSP and Islah remarkable.

The initial rapprochement between the two parties was very much a 'marriage of convenience', made possible by two separate

developments which followed the conclusion of the civil war in 1994. The first was the fact that the president sought to incorporate what was left of the YSP back into the Yemeni political system, in spite of the conflict that had taken place. This allowed the YSP to re-establish itself as a significant player in Yemeni party politics. The second was the fact that the position of the GPC was strengthened following the civil war and it no longer needed its junior coalition partner, Islah, to govern the country. By the 1997 parliamentary elections, the GPC concluded that it could put an end to its reliance on Islah without suffering significant electoral loss. As a consequence, Islah began to shift to a position closer to that of other opposition parties, warning of a GPC conspiracy against democracy. This move on the part of Islah was accompanied by a deepened commitment to democracy in party discourse. Whereas its programme for the 1993 elections had made reference to the peaceful transfer of power and 'consultative democracy', but not to parliamentary democracy, the 1997 programme was explicit about the need for pluralism and identified it as a cornerstone of democracy. This change in direction was a reflection not of the tribal elements within Islah or the radical Islamist element led by al-Zindani, but of younger, more moderate and pragmatic individuals within the party, who sought a modernisation of party structures and programme (Browsers 2007: 574–5).

However, more defensive motivations can also be identified, as the constituent members of the alliance sought protection from an increasingly autocratic regime through 'strength in numbers'. The hope was that the regime would be less likely to play individual parties off against each other or adopt repressive measures against them if they presented a unified front in the political arena more generally and in elections more specifically (Phillips 2011: 43–4).

The alliance with the YSP and other opposition parties under the umbrella of the JMP was, therefore, in large measure the

result of changes in policy positions within Islah. But it also reflected changes in the composition of the parliamentary party. From the mid-1990s the proportion of Islah MPs with tribal affiliations in the party's parliamentary bloc declined significantly, from 60 out of 63 MPs in 1993 to 11 out of 45 MPs in the 2003 legislature (Hamzawy 2009: 6). This decline in the party's tribal membership, which followed the party's break with the GPC, lessened its dependence on conservative tribal figures, creating a more receptive environment for the party's political activism, its alliance with the YSP and a move closer to the political centre.

The high point of opposition cooperation in Yemen before the events of 2011 which brought down the Saleh regime came when the JMP announced a single candidate, Faysal Bin Shamlan, a former minister of oil and mineral resources (1994–5) and an independent public figure, to oppose President Saleh in the first ever multi-candidate presidential elections of 2006. Bin Shamlan had southern roots and was indirectly associated with the socialists in the PDRY. Thus his candidacy had appeal to both the YSP and Islah. He performed well in the presidential poll, capturing 23 per cent of the vote nationally, but lost out to incumbent President Saleh, who retained power with over 77 per cent of the vote.

The informal political sphere in Yemen

The analysis of the formally established political parties provides at best an incomplete picture of political dynamics in Yemen. This is due in no small part to the low esteem in which parties and the parliamentary system in general are held by many Yemenis. There is considerable evidence that parliamentary institutions are weak and ineffective, while the established political parties and the parliamentary system are viewed unfavourably (NDI 2005; Saif 2000; Yemen Polling Centre 2010). This, in turn, is reflected in the extent to which the business of politics in

Yemen is done through informal channels. From its very beginning, the Saleh regime relied on compromise, co-optation and divide-and-rule tactics rather than outright confrontation with its opponents. While repression has been employed in Saada and in the south, Saleh more typically relied on a 'complex and flexible network of tribally and regionally based patronage relationships' in order to maintain his grip on political power (ICG 2011a). This is, to a large degree, because central government does not control the whole territory of the country, nor does the regime enjoy a monopoly of the use of force. In such circumstances, confrontation with powerful social forces is potentially risky. Since unification, family members and members of the Sanhan tribe, to which Saleh belongs, have been placed in key positions in the military security apparatus, while traditional elites, especially tribal *shaykhs*, have been incorporated into networks of patronage through direct funding, the distribution of government positions and privileged access to the private sector (Longley Alley 2010b: 387). The capacity of the president to distribute patronage was enhanced in the aftermath of the 1994 civil war when the regime moved to confiscate landholdings, private homes and other sources of wealth from leading supporters of the YSP, most of which were distributed among regime followers (Longley Alley 2010a: 75). However, regime reliance on patronage networks is also exemplified in the efforts made after the civil war to include some of the southern leadership in the system once more. Before the 2006 presidential elections, Saleh declared an amnesty for most of the former leaders of South Yemen and appointed a prominent southern figure as a presidential adviser. This approach has also been adopted in response to protracted discontent in the south. Opportunities in the private sector have been opened up for some, while several cabinet positions were reserved for southern politicians (including the minister for oil and mineral resources and the position of prime minister) (Longley Alley 2010b: 399).

The result has been the incorporation of elites into the networks of patronage controlled by the regime, and thus a disincentive to pursue radical change which might threaten those benefits. These networks extend across party lines. As discussed above, despite Islah's move into opposition to the GPC, many in its leadership maintain personal, financial and political ties to the president. This reinforces scepticism about the extent to which the party is committed to radical change in Yemeni political life more broadly and to the reform agenda of the JMP opposition alliance.

The combination of the penetration of the opposition by the regime and its reliance on informal networks to do business make it unsurprising that popular expressions of grievance now take place outside of the formal political institutions of the state, including the official opposition. Secessionist sentiment in the south and discontent in Saada in the north have, by and large, been voiced outside Islah or the YSP individually or the JMP collectively. As Longley Alley expresses it, 'a large portion of the oppositional strength in Yemen rests outside formal political channels' (Longley Alley 2010a: 84).

The Yemeni protest movement of 2011

The clearest expression of opposition outside the formal structures of political life in Yemen came with the outbreak of protests across the country in early 2011. Initially, several dozen student, civil society and opposition activists attended a rally in Sanaa following Zin al-Abidin Bin Ali's fall from power in Tunisia. The protest movement gained further momentum after Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's resignation the following month. The regime responded by filling Sanaa's Tahrir Square with its supporters. In response, anti-regime protesters occupied a crossroads outside the university and renamed it *Tagbir* (Change) Square, which became the centre of the Yemeni protest

movement (Fattah 2011: 81). Similar protests broke out in other Yemeni cities, including Taiz, Aden and al-Mukalla. In Taiz, thousands gathered after the fall of Mubarak, setting up tents in a central area of the city which was renamed *Hurriya* (Freedom) Square.

The protesters were characterised by their distance from the established political parties, which many saw as elements of a corrupt political system in need of radical change (Gordon 2012). Reports suggest that around half of the residents of the camp in Sanaa were unaffiliated with any traditional political alliance (Nevens 2011: 26). By March 2011, this movement had formed an umbrella grouping, the Civil Coalition of Revolutionary Youth, which brought together Yemen's main youth organisations. On 23 March, the Civil Coalition released a list of its demands: the immediate dismantling of the regime, the arrest of those involved in fraud or corruption, the drafting of a constitution to transform the political system from presidential to parliamentary, a decentralised government and full transparency. The overall vision of the protesters was 'to lay the ground for a civic, modern and democratic state which can interact with the realities of the modern world on the basis of equal citizenship, human rights, social justice, a plural political system, [and] the freedom of expression and opinion' (Nevens 2011: 26).

The protesters were supported by the Houthis movement in the north of Yemen and by the Hirak movement in the south of the country. The Houthis cooperated in the organisation of protests in a number of Yemeni governorates. The early phases of the protest movement also saw cooperation between protesters in the north and the south of the country. When the disturbances of early 2011 broke out, Hirak members agreed to work with protesters in the north to bring about an end to the Saleh regime. They agreed that calls for southern independence would weaken the prospects for achieving this goal and engaged in 'a flurry of communication, coordination and cooperation' (ICG 2011b: 11).

From the beginning, the regime adopted a number of strategies in response to the protests. There were attempts to suppress the protests and leading activists were arrested and imprisoned. Economic concessions were also announced, including pay rises for the military, security services and low-paid civil servants, as well as reductions in income tax and the introduction of new subsidies and the extension of social welfare assistance. How these initiatives were to be funded was never made clear (Boucek and Revkin 2011: 2). Regime repression escalated significantly on 18 March when attacks on thousands of demonstrators leaving Friday prayers in Sanaa left at least thirty people dead (Boucek and Revkin 2011: 3).

These attacks represented a turning point for the protest movement. Firstly, the opposition declared that dialogue with the regime was impossible from this point onwards. Secondly, the killings were followed by the defection of key supporters from the regime as around 20 MPs and approximately half the country's ambassadors resigned. The most significant development was the defection of one of the leading military figures in the country, General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar. Ali Mohsen, a cousin of the president, was a major player in the military campaign against the Houthi insurrection in Saada and has often been described as the second most powerful man in the country. He was also reputed to be opposed to the increased influence of Ahmed Saleh, the president's son (and long-time presumptive successor) (Hill 2011a: 3). Troops under Ali Mohsen's control surrounded the protesters in 'Change Square' in Sanaa, providing them with protection from regime forces on a scale that was not available to protesters elsewhere in the country.

This was followed in May 2011 by the withdrawal of their support for the regime by the al-Ahmar family. From independence until his death in 2007, Shaykh Abdullah al-Ahmar, paramount chief of the Hashid tribal confederation, to which the president's own Sanhan tribe belonged, was a key ally of the

president. When he died, his sons took up key roles in Yemeni public life. His eldest son, Sadiq, assumed the leadership of the Hashid tribal confederation. Another son, Himyar, was a member of the ruling party and the deputy speaker of parliament. Hamid, a member of Islah, which was founded by his father, is a billionaire with extensive business interests (Tayler 2011). In May, Saleh's Republican Guard attacked Sadiq al-Ahmar's compound in Sanaa. Saleh had accused al-Ahmar of orchestrating and funding the youth protests. Over 100 people were killed in the course of a week of fighting. The clashes added the leadership of the Hashid tribal confederation to the list of those opposed to the regime and transformed what had been a largely peaceful youth-led uprising into a power struggle between rival elites (Fattah 2011).

The increased involvement of established political actors in moves to unseat Saleh prompted serious concerns among many in the protest movement that it was being hijacked. The initial response of the opposition parties to the youth protests was one of wariness. In January and early February, the JMP organised major rallies in Sanaa, Taiz and al-Baydah governorates, at which protesters called for national dialogue and denounced poor living conditions and hereditary rule. But at this stage the JMP was careful to avoid open confrontation with regime supporters (ICG 2011a: 2). Philbrick Yadav characterises the JMP essentially as a 'loyal opposition' preoccupied with the 'court politics' of the capital and struggling to articulate a set of demands that could 'span the ideological stretch of its member parties' (Yadav 2011).

The JMP initially made a number of proposals that would have required Saleh to leave office within a year, along with the implementation of a number of other liberalising reforms. However, as the protests grew in scale the JMP began to shift its position and by February 2011 was supporting its demand for an immediate end to Saleh's rule (Kasinof 2011). Significant gaps remained between the positions of the protesters and the

opposition parties. The shift by the JMP in favour of the demands of the protesters was accompanied by claims that it was merely co-opting the protest movement for its own ends. Furthermore, there were suggestions that the role of the JMP in the anti-regime movement represented no more than a playing out of pre-existing tensions within the alliance and between it and the government, rather than a novel response to changed circumstances. In June 2011, one of the leading activists in the protest movement, Tawwakul Karman, was quoted as saying that 'the JMP is part of the regime we are trying to change' (Raghavan 2011). When in April 2011 the JMP negotiated an arrangement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), according to the terms of which the president would step down from his office thirty days from the signing of the deal, it did so with no input from the protest movement and without a broader mandate from the protestors to do so (Al-Sakkaf 2011). The Youth Movement's rejection of the GCC deal stems from their long-stated distrust of the established political actors. The involvement in the protest movement first of Ali Mohsen, then of the sons of Abdullah al-Ahmar, and finally of the Islah party and the JMP, were greeted with deep distrust by the Youth Movement. The old parties are seen as part of the system which needs to be transformed and an elite transfer of power (or power-sharing arrangement) is not seen to constitute a radical shift in Yemeni political dynamics.

Saleh agreed to the deal in April 2011 but repeatedly failed to sign it. In June, the bombing of the presidential palace caused serious injuries to the President and several senior government officials. Saleh departed to Saudi Arabia for treatment. However, despite expectations that this might lead to his permanent departure, he returned to Yemen in September amidst widespread violence and loss of life in the streets of Sanaa. Finally, on 23 November Saleh signed the GCC deal in Riyadh. Under its terms, Saleh would remain president until new presidential elections were held in February 2012. He and his family were

granted immunity from prosecution and he retained his role as head of the GPC. His executive powers were transferred to the vice-president. In early December, as envisaged by the deal, Muhammad Basindwa of the JMP was selected as prime minister and a national unity government of ministers evenly split between the GPC and the JMP took office. In February 2012, his former deputy, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, was the single, agreed candidate of both the GPC and the JMP in presidential elections, which unsurprisingly he won despite the opposition of many within Yemen's protest movement.

The GCC solution to Yemen's political crisis and the marginalisation of many within the protest movement was made possible not merely by the confluence of dominant domestic political actors but also by two other factors. The first was the shared interest of the two dominant international actors in a resolution of the crisis that avoided destabilising the country's political system. Saudi Arabia has long been concerned with the security situation in Yemen. A shared 1,800 kilometre border, a history of border disputes, and fears of arms, drugs and human trafficking across the border account for some of the Saudi concerns. The Saudis are also worried both about the Houthi movement in the north and the asserted linkages between the Houthis, Iran and al-Qaeda. The *Zaydi* (hence Shia) background to the Houthi movement underpins Saudi concerns. Both claims have been dismissed as far-fetched by most commentators (Day 2010: 9–10; Hill and Nonneman 2011: 18). Real or imagined, Saudi concerns have prompted significant involvement in Yemeni affairs for decades. The Saudis have historically tried to keep central government in Yemen weak and its political actors divided. To do this, they have cultivated relationships with political leaders in government as well as tribal leaders through an extensive patronage network (Haykel 2011; Fattah 2011).

The focus of the United States is on radical Islamism. In 2000, the al-Qaeda attack on *USS Cole* in Aden harbour killed 17

people. Prior to this, the US had a minimal presence in the country, although militants linked to al-Qaeda had been operating in the country since 1990, when Islamic Jihad in Yemen was established (Masters 2011). US concerns deepened after the attacks of 11 September 2001. Relations between the two countries improved in the context of the so-called war on terror. The US worked closely with President Saleh's son, Ahmad, and three of his cousins, who control Yemen's elite security and intelligence units. These were created, funded and trained with Western help after the attack on *USS Cole* (Hill 2011b). However, Yemeni reluctance to act decisively against individuals suspected by the US of involvement with al-Qaeda continued to bedevil relations. Senior US figures stress its commitment to strengthening the country's capacity to provide basic services and good governance, but counterterrorism remains the major US priority in Yemen, as is clear from the allocation of US\$ 75 million in aid to equip the Yemeni Ministry of Interior Counterterrorism Forces to operate against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (Sharp 2011: 12). However, the 'increasingly alarmist' claims about the nature of the threat posed by AQAP have been disputed by some (Harris 2010).

The strength of established political actors both within and outside Yemen combined with the lack of political experience on the part of the youth protesters to ensure their exclusion from the international negotiations at which the GCC deal was pieced together. Apart from lack of political experience, the Youth Movement in Yemen is also less monolithic than might seem to be the case. Al-Akhali describes three different categories of activists: non-political youth disinterested in taking an active role in the political process in the post-revolutionary period; youth aligned to existing political parties who intend to return to them in the post-revolutionary period in the hope of changing them from within; and independent youth who believe the only way to sustain the movement is to become part of the political process (Al-Akhali 2011).

These divisions within the Youth Movement are compounded by others within the broader opposition to Saleh and the GPC. The HIRAK movement is also internally divided and does not propose a single coherent position on the future of the country (ICG 2011b). Furthermore, the outbreak of fighting between Houthi forces and members of the Islah party similarly speaks to significant tensions within the opposition.

Conclusions

In Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, Islamist political parties find themselves in government largely as a consequence of the Arab revolts of 2011. However, there are at least three characteristics of the situation in Yemen that render the position of Islah unique.

Firstly, the transition to a post-Saleh order in Yemen has been brokered by external actors, namely the GCC with the support of the UN, but without the clear support of many of those who initiated the protest movement in Yemen and made transition possible. Secondly, Islah is a member of a coalition of opposition parties which, however ideologically disparate its members, is of long standing. Finally, under the terms of the GCC deal the JMP is not replacing the old regime but entering into coalition with the party that has dominated Yemeni political life since unification in 1990.

All of this has significant implications for how Islah will function in government in the future. This, in turn, will depend on how well the party and the new power-sharing government address key challenges that they face. In the first place, the new government must overcome interlinked difficulties of legitimacy and inclusivity. The fact that the deal with the GCC excluded the youth groups that initiated the protests against the regime is one aspect of this, as is the exclusion of the Houthis and the HIRAK movement. Without the inclusion of these forces, the new government will continue to be plagued by political instability.

However, to date, attempts to ensure the participation of all of these actors in the national dialogue process, as prescribed by the GCC deal, have been only partially successful. Secondly, there is the question of how effectively the GPC shares power with its erstwhile opponents in the JMP. The difficulties here are exacerbated by the fact that the GCC deal, for the most part, left intact the power structures of the country, which have been dominated for years by the GPC. Related to this is the coherence of the JMP as a functioning coalition within government. Sustaining an alliance whose key unifying characteristic is opposition to the GPC may constitute a very different challenge in the context of a power-sharing arrangement with that party. The new government also faces the challenge of accommodating the very different concerns of key external actors. Maintaining the territorial integrity of the country is central to both US and Saudi concerns, as is fear of the threat posed by radical Islamism. However, while US policy objectives in Yemen are not incompatible with the development of democratic politics in the country, this is by no means the case for Saudi Arabia, for whom the emergence of a democratic neighbour on its southern border is undesirable. Finally, the new Yemeni government must negotiate all of these potential difficulties in the context of the extensive socio-economic and resource-based problems that the country faces. Given the enormity of the challenge that lies ahead, Islah in government may before long be nostalgic for the certainties of opposition.

Notes

1. This chapter is based in part on an earlier paper on the dynamics of oppositional politics in Yemen. See Durac 2011.
2. The transfer of power was brokered by the six nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council with the support of European and American diplomats and was subsequently the subject of UN Security Council Resolution 2014, which called for its implementation. It was finally

signed in Riyadh on 23 November 2011. Henceforward, it will be referred to as the 'GCC deal'.

3. In 1990, the north had a population of 7.1 million people compared to 2.5 million in the south. Despite this, unification was premised on an equal share of political offices and power. However, the results of the 1993 elections ended any semblance of equality between the northern GPC and the YSP. The situation was complicated by the fact that unification did not bring about a merger of the two states – each retained a separate public sector and, crucially, separate armed forces.

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THE SYRIAN UPRISING AND THE POSSIBLE RESURGENCE OF POST-ISLAMISM

Line Khatib and Robert Stewart

Introduction

Religious revivalism, whether Christian, Muslim or otherwise, is a phenomenon that has become increasingly prevalent in many parts of the world over recent decades. Syria has not been an exception to this popular trend, despite the fact that its secular authoritarian leadership has manipulated the religious sector and made it illegal for religious actors to participate politically in the country. Indeed, there has been a full-fledged Sunni Islamic revival in Syria since the late 1980s,¹ a revival that can be seen and felt in nearly every facet of public life in the country (Khatib 2011; *al-Hayat*, 18 June 2005; Syrian Ministry of *Awqaf*, 31 December 2007, 31 December 2008). This change gives the strong impression that Syria's primary ethos and identity are Sunni Muslim, and that this is embraced by most if not all Syrians.² Yet the seeming omnipresence of this ethos and identity is in fact causing concern among the many Syrians who do not want to see a particular religious identity define the country's culture, let

alone its political life. This is especially true for those who look to the fall of Baathism in Iraq and the ensuing entrenchment of factionalism and religious violence as an ominous portent of what might occur.

As the country's regime today teeters due to a widespread popular uprising that has involved much violence and often divisive rhetoric on both sides, there is a strong risk of old divisions being reopened and old battles regarding the country's secular heritage³ and the place of Islam in the public sphere being re-joined.⁴ This has led to speculation among observers about the possibility of Islamists taking power if the regime falls. The present chapter joins that debate by focusing on the question of whether the Islamist movement might capture the state in a post-Assad Syria, as well as on the auxiliary question of the nature of the Islamist force that might attain power if Syrians get to vote in free elections.

The resurgence of Islam in Syria

The driving force behind the Syrian uprising that broke out on 15 March 2011 was originally overwhelmingly secular though has increasing levels of involvement by Islamic actors; yet the forces that might grab the reins of power once the authoritarian regime is eventually ousted are very likely to be Islamic. This is particularly the case because of the major Islamic revival underway in Syria over the last twenty or so years, which is evident in the emergence of a plethora of apolitical Islamic organisations, primary schools, colleges, summer camps and charitable associations, as well as Islamic bookstores, institutes and forums, and Islamic financial institutions. Islamised spaces have not only become more numerous in the country, but conservative attire, Islamic practices in nearly every realm of activity and Islamic literature have become increasingly common, with books written by Islamic scholars and activists dominating bookstores' shelves.⁵

It is a 'revival' or 'resurgence' because the early to mid-twentieth century saw a retreat of the previously overt Islamic religiosity from the country's public space.

Importantly, the present Islamist movement in Syria is not the same movement that dominated in the early to mid-twentieth century, which was a politically and socially autonomous movement led by the Syrian Muslim Brothers. That movement was almost entirely dismantled by the Hafez al-Assad regime in the late 1970s and early 1980s, following a bloody struggle that pitted the regime against the Muslim Brothers and a number of prominent secular leftist political parties. Before it was forcibly dismantled and depoliticised, Syria's Islamic movement had been a political movement that stood for elections, competed for seats in the Syrian parliament, and played a small but significant part in the country's relatively brief period of democratic rule during the 1940s and 1950s.

The Islamic groups that emerged in the aftermath of the government crackdown were forced to depoliticise to survive. They thus adopted a variety of survival strategies in the 1980s, strategies that bore fruit in the 1990s and the 2000s. These strategies have involved political quietism – at least partly as a result of the groups' Sufi roots – and have focused on fostering a discreet and gradual Islamic revival at the communal level. The groups have thus drawn upon their firm grounding in orthodoxy to initiate a programme of moral regeneration, or what the country's largest Islamic groups have called 'the dawn of an Islamic Renaissance' (*Bidayat al-Fath al-Jadid*). The programme has involved attempting to increase support for Islamic practices through vigorous *dawah* (preaching, proselytising) work and the generation and distribution of new Islamic literature. It has also involved recruiting young men and women to help disseminate the message.

Among these politically quietist Islamic groups, those that emerged as the most powerful were the ones that were co-opted

by the Syrian regime. The bargain struck was that in return for the regime's toleration, backing and even support, these groups' *shaykhs* would become part of the country's 'official Islam' and would act as *de facto* spokesmen for the regime, especially in times of crisis.⁶ This bargain was part of a larger survival formula known as 'authoritarian upgrading', first adopted during the 1970s under the iron rule of Hafez al-Assad and extended into the 2000s and the presidency of Bashar al-Assad (Heydemann 1999, 2007; Khatib 2011).

Syrian authoritarian upgrading has involved a number of socio-economic and political measures, of which the most important from the point of view of this chapter are state re-appropriation of religious institutions, undertaken to control the main sites of contention and the possible meeting points for the opposition; and a tightening of state-society corporatist relations through such means as the creation of youth federations like Talaeh al-Baath in 1977, and more generally through the reorganisation and restructuring of women, peasant, worker and artisan associations so as to link them directly to the Baath party's corporatist institutions. At an ideological level, Syrian authoritarian upgrading has prompted an increasing disregard for the secular principles that were once central to the Baath, in order to accommodate religious leaders. And from an economic point of view, it has led to increased economic incentives for cooperative Islamic leaders with the aim of safeguarding Islam from radicalisation.

The main effect of authoritarian upgrading within the Islamic sector is that the *shaykhs* who were not exiled or imprisoned became ever more dependent on the state, to the point of becoming regime cronies. At the same time, Syrian society became effectively saturated with state-approved Islamic religiosity, which sought to marginalise and ultimately to overwhelm the rival discourse advanced by the Islamist opposition as well as to burnish the state's pious credentials. It was hoped that these burnished credentials would help to broaden the regime's base

of support among the conservative Sunni classes, who constitute the country's powerful traditional bourgeoisie and whose support is seen as vital to regime stability.

Broadly speaking, the Syrian regime's programme of authoritarian upgrading sought to transform Syrian society from an ideologically diverse and dynamic society that is relatively difficult to control into an ideologically homogeneous and acquiescent society that is both more predictable and controllable. And while the formula used to upgrade authoritarianism has been a success in terms of ensuring effective regime control over the country's diverse and pluralistic society, it has also had the unintended effect of stimulating an Islamic revival in Syria (Khatib 2011).⁷ As was noted earlier in this chapter, this has translated into an increasing number of Islamic institutions. Thus recent estimates are that Syria has about 8,000 mosques, approximately two dozen institutes of Islamic higher education and some 600 quasi-official religious institutions (Syrian Ministry of Awqaf; *al-Hayat*, 18 June 2005). In 2005, out of 584 registered charitable organisations operating from within poor neighbourhoods and local mosques, 290 were Islamic and it is estimated that some 80 per cent of the roughly 100 charitable organisations in Damascus at the time were Sunni Islamic. These charitable organisations claim that they helped about 72,000 Syrian families in early 2000 and that in 2003 alone, 842 million Syrian Liras (approximately USD 13 million at today's exchange rate) were distributed to the families (*al-Hayat*, 18 June 2005).

Another aspect of the larger Islamic revival in Syria is the alliances that Islamic groups have managed to foster with an influential and affluent constituency, mainly the traditional bourgeoisie, some of whom have also been successfully co-opted by the regime, as well as religious Syrians who made their wealth working in the Gulf States (*al-Hayat*, 3 May 2006). This has given the groups an increased capacity to recruit new followers and a greater ability to maintain the support of their existing

ones. Even schools, which were once solidly secular environments, have been influenced by the Islamic revival: students are now increasingly taught by teachers with an overt religious agenda (All4Syria Website), many of whom are said to be directly linked to, and to be working with, 'official' and unofficial Islamic groups. At the same time, the virtues of leading an Islamic lifestyle have been effectively promoted through Friday sermons and prayers, books, pamphlets, a multitude of slick and well-organised Islamic websites⁸ and recordings available on the Internet and on CDs distributed at mosques and in the increasing number of Islamic bookstores within every neighborhood.

In considering the possible trajectory of the Syrian Islamic revival, it is important to keep in mind the recent election victories of Islamist political parties in Egypt and in Tunisia. The relatively free elections that propelled them to victory in those countries could very well be replicated in a post-Baath Syria – and given the strong likelihood that Islamist parties would enjoy a similar level of support in Syria as a result of the country's Islamic revival, it is worthwhile examining which Syrian Islamist groups would be likely to win the most seats in the national assembly. More particularly, might we expect that the groups that have achieved the greatest domestic prominence under the Assad regimes would retain their leading position in a post-Assad regime scenario? And if not, which groups are most likely to take over this leading position?

Which Islamist groups are most likely to dominate a post-Assad regime?

In answering this question, it is useful first to give a brief overview of Syria's Islamic movement. The movement can be divided into three main groupings based on their allegiance or non-allegiance to the Assad regime. While official Islamic *shaykhs* and groups in Syria – who as we have seen are the largest and most important

actors within the country's official Islamic sector – have accommodated and are so far continuing to accommodate the present regime (though this support is becoming increasingly tenuous and frayed within the present context in the country), anti-regime Islamic groups have either maintained a low profile politically or have only recently (in 2011 and 2012) expressed their opposition to the regime. It is uncertain how that opposition might translate into popular legitimacy and influence in the future, though it seems unwise to ignore or dismiss these groups' chances of either direct electoral success or of wielding more informal power, perhaps mediated by their relationship with their peers in the official Islamic sector.⁹ The third grouping is the exiled Islamists, namely the Syrian Muslim Brothers, who were forced into exile in the late 1970s and early 1980s and who have been 'anti-regime' since the authoritarian Baath took power in 1963. They did not have much of a presence nor much power within Syria until the outbreak of fighting that has recently engulfed the country and which has seen them assume greater prominence; yet their longstanding support of the opposition and their popular identification with the very strong challenge to the Assad regime in the early 1980s as well as their leading role in the anti-regime fighting of 2012 and 2013 seem likely to grant them support in the future and thus a base for reaching out to disaffected pious Syrians and disenfranchised Syrian youth more generally.¹⁰

Which of the Islamic groups within these three larger groupings is most likely to take a leading role on the Syrian political scene if or when the regime is ousted? The preponderant discourse in the popular uprising and the demands of the protestors have both been characterised by references to democracy, civil rights and the rule of law. It therefore seems likely that in the event of a transition towards democratic rule in Syria, voters who support the Islamists will tend to cast their ballot for those groups that have opposed the authoritarian Assad regime rather than for those that have supported it and spoken out on its behalf.

This is because the groups that have supported the regime have effectively become partners with the authoritarian forces that the popular uprising is struggling against, with resulting negative effects on their legitimacy and popularity. At the same time, the groups that have opposed the Assad regime have, as will be detailed later, taken positions that are more consistent with the discourse of the protestors. In light of these points, it seems most likely that the anti-regime Islamists will take a leading role in a post-Assad regime scenario.

What then can we say about the likely agenda of the anti-regime Islamists? There are a number of key themes within that agenda, though perhaps the most important from the point of view of many outside observers is whether they would prioritise human rights and pluralism or instead focus on Islamic duties, *sharia* law and the need to Islamise the state. To elucidate this theme (among others), it is useful first to delineate the discourse that opposition Islamists are propagating as well as the political alliances that they have formed, with a particular focus on whether they seem to be open to working with groups that do not share their Islamist outlook. Looking at their political history in Syria before their forced exile and depoliticisation by the Assad regime can also help to uncover patterns that could indicate how they might behave in the future.

While there are several anti-regime Islamist groups, by far the most important is the Syrian Muslim Brothers. Indeed, despite the fact that they were all but crushed by the Hafez al-Assad regime in the 1980s, they remain the most prominent, well-known and well-organised opposition Islamist group, a status that they have enhanced by their leading role in the partially recognised former government in exile of Syria, known as the Syrian National Council (now part of the Syrian National Coalition, though also still operating independently). They are also the only major opposition Islamist group that has advanced a well developed and explicit political programme, one that is likely to enjoy wide appeal among

supporters of political Islam and that could perhaps gain some traction with a broader cross-section of the country's citizens, depending on the group's success at portraying itself as seeking to represent all Syrians regardless of their religious or sectarian affiliations. This political programme means that they have a much greater likelihood of being able to engender significant political support in a post-authoritarian political setting. For these reasons, they will be the focus of the following section.

Pertinent historical context of the Syrian Muslim Brothers

The authoritarian Baathist regimes in Syria have been very effective at creating and deepening divisions within society, often by conflating religious and political identities, to the point that it is frequently forgotten how very different the pre-Baathist, post-decolonisation political landscape was in the country. More particularly, in the first part of the twentieth century so-called primordial sectarian identities and the now often-assumed confluence of religion and politics were not widespread.¹¹ If anything, Syrian citizens tended to vote according to ideological rather than sectarian convictions, Sunni Muslims included, while the leftist and socially liberal political parties were the most prominent in the country's national assembly. This was a time of nascent nation-building, when the country's system of parliamentary rule was becoming increasingly well established. Indeed, while the post-decolonisation period in Syria is often remembered for its series of *coup d'états*, it was also a time of rich democratic experimentation, with parliamentary life playing an important role in the country's politics despite the revolving door of leaders and regimes. Perhaps most importantly for this chapter, the Syrian Muslim Brothers participated fully in the country's emerging parliament, demonstrating throughout an overall commitment to two key constituent aspects of liberal democracy, namely compromise and pluralism.

The democratic pedigree of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and of the larger Islamist movement in the country sets both apart from the rest of the Islamists in the Arab world. This is because the Syrian Muslim Brothers not only *nominally agreed* to work within a secular political system and to compete with secular parties for parliamentary seats and public office as well as to try to influence government policy, but also *actively played* a constructive part in Syrian democratic political life throughout the 1940s and 1950s, until the parliamentary elections of 1961. During these two decades, many of its leaders became members of parliament as well as government officials and ministers, including such prominent Brothers as Issam al-Attar, Amr al-Khatib, and Zuhayr al-Shawish. And even though they only gained a relatively small number of parliamentary seats in the elections, the Brotherhood accepted the electoral results, engaged with other parties, debated and compromised on certain issues and successfully participated in the democratic system to influence debates and ensuing policy decisions taken by the parliament (Jabbour 1993; Talhami 2001).¹²

Current alliances and discourse

The Syrian regime has often portrayed Islamists as an imminent threat whose ascendance strongly risks igniting sectarian divisions and violence in the country. It has done so to justify its persecution of opposition Islamists, as well as to entice minorities and secular Syrians to close ranks with the regime and to offer their support. Many minorities and secular Syrians have also characterised the Islamist opposition as a threat to the country's prospects for stability and peaceful co-existence. Yet within their programme, the Syrian Muslim Brothers have adopted a political stance that is similar to the one that they pursued in the early to mid-twentieth century. Thus the group has expressed its continued willingness to work with and under the patronage of secular

parties and fronts. It has also expressed its commitment to liberal democratic rule, more explicitly to *dimucratiyya* (democracy) and not to the *shura* (the principle of consultation and consensus under an Islamic framework) that it used to proclaim, which has underlined its commitment to rights, civil liberties and freedom rather than to Islamic duties and to *sharia* law.

In terms of their willingness to work cooperatively with non-Islamists, the Syrian Muslim Brothers have, since their forced exile in the early 1980s, created coalitions and alliances with other opposition parties that do not share their Islamist stance. For instance, they met with Syrian opposition parties of leftist and liberal orientations in 2002 and 2004 in London and Paris. They also formed a coalition with Abdel-Halim Khaddam, a former Baathist and vice president of Syria, and joined in the creation of the National Salvation Front in 2006 (a self-proclaimed democratic opposition to the regime). In a recent interview (Abbadly 2006), Dr. Mounir al-Ghadban, head of the *shura* council of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, explained these two moves:

Yes, there is a minority in the lines of the Muslim Brotherhood that does not want a coalition with Mr. Abdel-Halim Khaddam. This is actually a healthy phenomenon for the Muslim Brotherhood which includes an opinion and an opposite opinion. But this minority did not rebel against the majority's opinion. I confirm that no Brother all over the world offered his resignation from the group. The coalition was presented to the group's leadership which studied it with all its details; the *shura* council has frankly authorised the leadership to make such coalitions. Then the new council approved this coalition.

The Syrian Muslim Brothers also signed the so-called '99 Declaration' in 2000, as well as the 2001 'Declaration of the 1,000'. These two documents are petitions endorsed by Syrian

intellectuals, artists and activists demanding democratic change in the country. The Brotherhood furthermore signed the 'Damascus Declaration for Democratic Change' of October 2005, which is a political document created by the mainly secular political figures and parties that make up the pro-democratic Syrian opposition. Perhaps even more significant is the Brotherhood's participation in the Syrian National Council (the united body of the secular opposition in Syria up until November 2012, which brings together multiple political actors from various points on the political spectrum), as well as their prioritisation of the Council as their primary political vehicle.¹³ In the words of the Brotherhood's leader, Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni (*al-Arabiyya*, 25 March 2012), '[w]e are not moving now as [the] Muslim Brotherhood but as part of a front that includes all currents'. This point is further buttressed by their move to help steer the Council into joining the even broader coalition of actors that together form the Syrian National Coalition.

Regarding the Syrian Muslim Brothers' commitment to democracy and to democratic principles, the group published a political programme in 2004 that was written by its former superintendent, Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni, which called for the creation of a 'modern civilian state' in Syria. More specifically, it called for a regime that would follow the rule of law and would be committed to pluralism, to a vital civil society and to the democratic rotation of political power.¹⁴

In 2009, the Brothers presented another political programme. Like the previous programme, it articulated the group's commitment to pluralism, dialogue and cooperation with other political actors and ideological currents. For example, the 2009 programme states (*Ikhwan Syria Website*, authors' translation) that:

The modern state we adopt and call for rests on a number of principles that we consider [to be] the foundation stone to build a state that is capable of assuming the duties of a

civilised project, most important of which are that it is a state whose legacy emanates from the identity and tenets of the Arab Islamic nation, and that it subsequently rests on the following principles: social contractarianism, citizenship, representation, pluralism, exchange of power, institutionalism and law...

We seek to cooperate with everyone...reasserting that when we rely on Islam in its middle ground and moderation, we do not claim that we are the party of Muslims, nor that we are the patrons of people in the name of Islam. It means that we have a program we present to people and that our path towards it is through dialogue with all social, ideological, political and religious currents; a civil dialogue in which minds do not narrow at any idea, and hearts do not harden when in disagreement.

It is interesting to note that unlike in its previous statements, the Muslim Brothers do not make reference to any ethnic or religious divisions between Syrians in their 2009 programme. Similarly, they have added a few sections to their official website, and have recently published a number of articles on their website and other Islamic websites that outline their history, listing their achievements and failures and also highlighting their commitment to pluralism and to 'civil rule'. Perhaps more significant is their participation in the Syrian National Council, whose guiding National Consensus Charter states that the Council aims to establish a modern, civil, democratic state in which human rights, an independent judiciary, freedom of the press and political pluralism are all guaranteed.¹⁵ There thus seems to be a conscious attempt by the Syrian Muslim Brothers to position themselves even more overtly as tolerant and pro-pluralism. More particularly, they seem to want to be seen as recognising the diversity of the Syrian people rather than as emphasising or playing upon their divisions and differences as a way of gaining political capital. This to some degree represents a conscious repositioning of

the group and a re-tweaking of their message since in the past, they had done such things as make statements about the plight of Syrian Kurds and denounce so-called 'Alawite' rule in Syria.

The commitments that were articulated in the 2009 programme were recently further elaborated and made even more explicit with the publication in late March 2012 of what the group called 'a pledge and charter' regarding its vision for a post-Bashar al-Assad Syria. According to the document (*Ikhwanweb*, 7 April 2012), the Brotherhood wants 'a democratic pluralistic State with a sophisticated power-cycling system... with a republican parliamentary system of government, in which the people choose their representatives and governors through the ballot box, in transparent, free and fair elections'. The document further states that the Brotherhood will work to create a state '... where all citizens are equal, with different ethnic backgrounds and religions, sects and convictions... where men and women are equal in human dignity, and where women enjoy their full rights'. That state would be '...committed to human rights: dignity and equality, freedom of thought and expression, freedom of belief and worship, freedom of information, political participation, equal opportunities, social justice... all citizens... shall also respect other ethnic, religious and sectarian groups' rights and privacy in all civil, cultural and social dimensions'.

The various positions staked out in the 2012 Charter quite clearly show the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood to be pro-democracy and supportive of fundamental democratic principles such as equality between citizens and transfers of power through electoral processes. They also show the Brotherhood's concern with countering the accusations that their rise represents a threat to Syrians, as well as their desire to defuse any potential concerns on the part of the international community regarding an Islamist group assuming political power by seeking to remove any ambiguity in terms of their socio-political vision. At the same time, it is worth noting an interesting subtlety in how the Brotherhood chose to

communicate that vision: in the article describing the Charter on the Brotherhood's English-language website, it quotes the document as saying 'the future state shall be committed to human rights: dignity and equality, freedom of thought and expression...' (*Ikhwanweb*, 7 April 2012); yet in its Arabic original, the document says that the future state will '...commit to human rights – as endorsed by heavenly religions and international conventions – of dignity, equality and freedom of thought and expression' (*Ikhwan Syria Website*). The removal of the words 'as endorsed by heavenly religions and international conventions' is presumably a clumsy attempt at defusing potential criticism that they have an agenda of taking power and then imposing religious – read, Islamic – norms and values on Syrian society. Yet taking the Arabic original at face value, it is quite possible to read it as a commitment to respect the plurality of viewpoints on such things as human rights in Syria, and as a statement of intent to attempt to integrate together those multiple normative positions. As such, it shows the Brotherhood to be operating like many democratic political parties, by pragmatically trying to appeal to their core constituency – in this case, supporters of political Islam – while simultaneously broadening their appeal beyond their core constituency, in this case to non-supporters of political Islam.

This interpretation is further buttressed by an interview with the recently elected secretary general of the Syrian Muslim Brothers, Riyad al-Shaqfah, regarding the group's ideas on the place of Islamic religious law in Syria. When questioned on the topic, Shaqfah sought to reaffirm the group's commitment to democracy and to the notion of individual freedom that is often seen as underlying effective democratic rule by emphasising a comment from the prominent Egyptian *shaykh* Dr. Yusuf al-Qardawi: 'freedom comes before the implementation of *sharia* (*al-Huriya qabl tatbiq al-sharia*)' (*Ikhwan Syria Website*; *Asharq al-Awsat*, 8 August 2010).

What this analysis makes clear is the degree to which the Syrian Muslim Brothers seem to have embraced a discourse and agenda that can be characterised as post-Islamic, which sees Islam and pluralism as compatible. They are effectively advancing a socio-political understanding that focuses upon accommodation and citizenship rights rather than upon the concept of cohabitation of different segments of society (which was their focus at the time of their persecution by the regime of Hafez al-Assad in the late 1970s and early 1980s). The basic difference is that rather than emphasising separate communities living together (cohabitation), they are now emphasising integration across communal lines based upon equal individual citizens and accommodation of difference. Their socio-political understanding also recognises the distinction between the political and the religious, though their programme does still cite morality as an essential part of politics. Ultimately, then, they articulate a vision of political Islam that is compatible with democracy and they have expressed their readiness to work with, and indeed are working with, non-Islamist political parties.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Syria is witnessing a full-fledged Islamic revival, one that has been building for more than twenty years. It has also argued that the present uprising in the country has opened a window of opportunity for the Islamist opposition movement to re-emerge onto the political scene after more than twenty years in exile and that the Islamist group that is most likely to dominate in a post-authoritarian Syria is the Muslim Brotherhood. Finally, it has demonstrated that the Syrian Muslim Brothers have, in word and deed, both historically and in more recent times, demonstrated a commitment to key democratic principles such as pluralism, dialogue and compromise. This is not to say that they have never made statements that could be

construed as sectarian or divisive in nature, simply that these statements are outweighed by the much larger body of evidence that shows their commitment to democratic principles. In light of this, it does not seem unreasonable to expect that the Brothers will prove constructive participants in a democratic Syria in the future.

Ultimately, Syria's future depends on what happens next. It is possible that radical forces, whether Islamist or otherwise, will take advantage of the chaos of civil war in order to impose their own vision of a new Syria. Should that occur, it is uncertain whether Islamism can come after post-Islamism in Syria. But if the Syrian National Council does succeed in forming a transitional government, then the country's Islamists will almost certainly join in the democratic political game that they last played more than 50 years ago. The key difference is that this time, after about half a century of authoritarian rule and as a result of the growing state-sponsored Islamic revival in the country, Syrians might be ready to elect a much larger number of Islamists to parliament than they ever did before.

Notes

1. The term religious revival does not necessarily mean an increase in religiosity; rather, it is an increase in overt, public religiosity. An *Islamic* revival is the permeation of society with activities, organisations, speech and attire that are considered to be 'Islamic' and that palpably impact on the way of life of the people on a daily basis.
2. Syria is an ideologically, ethnically and religiously diverse society. In terms of ethnicities, the country is 90.3 per cent Arab and 9.7 per cent Kurdish, Armenian and other. In terms of religion, 74 per cent of Syrians are Sunni Muslim, 16 per cent are other Muslim (including Alawite and Druze) and 10 per cent are Christian (of various denominations). The country also includes small Jewish communities in Damascus, al-Qamishli and Aleppo (Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009; CIA World Factbook).

3. Syria's secular cultural heritage is closer to the French system of *laïcité* than to Anglo-Saxon secularism. As such, it perceives the public space as closed to religion, an ideal that the Baath regime actively pursued in the 1960s. The last 20 years have seen the country increasingly incline towards secularism and away from *laïcité*, in other words, from a secularism which is essentially against faith to one that sees itself existing with faith (Roy 2007).
4. Baathist secularism was once seen as verging on atheism – indeed, in the 1960s Syria's Islamic movement considered the Baath discourse to be atheistic and accused the party of corrupting the public with their message. In the late 1970s, Saudi King Faysal and Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat went so far as to call it an 'evil' party (Olson 1982: 122; Van Dam 1996: 93).
5. Examples are Mustafa al-Sibai's *Asdaq al-Itijabat al-Fikriya fi al-sharq al-Arabi* [The Sincerest Intellectual Directions in the Arab East] and *Islamuna* [Our Islam] Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Buti's *Kalimat fi Munasabat* [Words on Occasions], Muhammad Omar al-Haji's *Alamiyat al-Dawa ila allah taala* [The Global Call to God]; and Muhammad Ratib al-Nabusli's *Muqawimat al-Taklif*.
6. These changes clearly underline the Islamic leaders' effective reading of, and tactical responses to, the shifting, non-political opportunity structures within Syria. The flexibility and innovation displayed by the groups are perhaps unsurprising when we consider their previously successful transformation in the face of modernity and its changing political environment. More specifically, we can point to their adaptation in the face of pressures from the rising *Salafi* movement that arrived in Syria from Egypt and the Gulf area in the early twentieth century and which involved switching to promoting a pietistic, orthodox interpretation of Sufism. This version of Sufism was notable for moving away from the order's mystical rituals in favour of a more orthodox interpretation, based at least partly on a view that the rigid division between the Sufi mystic camp and the Sunni camp is needless. This interpretation turned out to be more acceptable to a majority of Syria's educated Sunni populace. Given that a majority of Syrian Sunnis are Sufi and given that the division between *Salafi* and Sufi currents in Islam is less clear-cut than it appears to be on the surface – at least in Syria – it is important to understand Sufism in this context as meaning a form of historical Islamic traditionalism. In fact, populist Sufi orders of the early twentieth century, including

the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, accepted the *Salafi* interpretations and adopted its modernising outlooks, including the promotion of an overtly modernist Islam. It is modernist in the sense that it is shedding the mystical and ritualistic aspects that had developed over the previous centuries, in an attempt to meet the changing demands of modernity (Weismann 2000, 2005).

7. This is not to say that the Islamic revival is solely a result of the regime's actions – since there are clearly a variety of domestic and international factors that have helped to stimulate Syria's Islamic revival – but rather that the actions of the regime were a vital contributing factor to the Islamic revival.
8. The websites are much better developed than those of any other secular institution in Syria. For instance, see <http://www.taghrib.org>; www.sheikhrajab.org; www.kuftaro.org; www.drhassoun.com; www.zuhayli.net; www.bouti.com.
9. This latter factor would of course be greatly affected by the degree to which association with the Assad regime legitimises or delegitimises the official Islamic sector.
10. A further potential factor that could influence the Muslim Brothers' success in the future is the success of their Egyptian namesakes. Depending on how the Egyptian Muslim Brothers are seen to perform, the Syrian Muslim Brothers could either benefit or suffer from a halo effect.
11. Sectarianism, according to Ussama Makdisi (2008: 559–60) 'refers to a process – not an object, not an event and certainly not a primordial trait. It is a process through which a kind of religious identity is politicized, even secularized, as part of an obvious struggle for power'. A re-examination of Syrian history shows that sectarianism (politics organised along sectarian lines) was not very prevalent in modern Syria. While there were of course moments of sectarian tension and sectarian-related events, Syria's political environment in the early to mid-twentieth century was instead notable for its relative *lack* of sectarianism. It is possible to draw upon Makdisi's rationale that sectarianism arose when unequal relationships started to surface within the political environment in the aftermath of the French Mandate in the Middle East. In the case of Syria, sectarianism became increasingly salient when shifting political relationships started producing new socio-economic realities and related inequalities following the Baathist revolution. It was subsequently greatly inflamed by the

conflict between the opposition led by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Assad regime that erupted in the mid-1970s and culminated in the 1982 Hama massacre, and it became even more significant in the 2000s in the aftermath of the Hafez al-Assad regime. It is striking how similar the regime's discourse from the 1970s and early 1980s about the Islamist threat is to the discourse of today's regime. According to the present regime, the militant Islamist threat has not left Syria and much of the present violence is linked to Islamist radicals, the Muslim Brotherhood, and al-Qaeda.

12. This brief history is not meant to minimise the importance of the often-violent confrontation with the regime by a small element within the Brotherhood in the 1970s and early 1980s, but rather to show that the Brotherhood played a constructive part in democratic political life when politically included, and when a more or less democratic context was in existence.
13. One could argue that the reason for the Brotherhood's participation is that they wield great influence within this body; but wielding great influence does not detract from the fact that they have participated in a largely collaborative and constructive manner in it, which buttresses the argument being made here that they have demonstrated their willingness to work cooperatively with non-Islamists.
14. See al-Mashru al-siyasi li Suriya al-Mustaqbal, *The Political Program of the Future Syria*, available at Ikhwanweb at <http://www.ikhwansyria.com/ar/DataFiles/Contents/Files/word+pdf/mashro3-syasy.pdf>.
15. *National Consensus Charter*, available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/110916_SNC%20-%20National%20Consensus%20Charter.pdf [last accessed 12 April 2012].

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STRUCTURE, AGENCY AND THE HIZBALLAH DILEMMA IN THE ARAB SPRING

Karim Knio

Introduction

The Arab Spring revolts of 2011 were truly remarkable, posing an unprecedented challenge to the region's autocratic regimes. A year earlier, few would have anticipated the fleeing of Bin Ali from Tunisia, the resignation of Mubarak in Egypt, the dramatic end of Ghaddafi in Libya, the protests that deposed Yemen's Saleh and the revolt that could yet topple the Assad regime. Ironically, Lebanon, the traditional epicentre of crises in the Middle East, was sidelined by the region-wide revolt. The timid efforts to bring down a very well entrenched and sophisticated sectarian state in this complex Middle Eastern country were ephemeral and did not mobilise enough social support to materialise. Yet, amid this apparent Lebanese immunity from such transformations, the recent contradictory positions articulated by Hizballah *vis-à-vis* various Arab Spring revolts, exemplified by supporting the Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan, Bahraini and Yemeni protests but condemning the Syrian one, have once again opened up the party's identities and interests for debate.

This chapter seeks to explain why Hizballah has failed to reinvent itself in the wake of the ongoing Middle East transitions and why it is not willing, or perhaps not able, to diverge from its Iranian and Syrian pathways. To deal with this analytical problem, this chapter suggests an alternative reading of Hizballah's identity and interests in Lebanon drawing on Archer's morphogenetic understanding of structure and agency, an analysis which does not collapse the two into a single entity but dialectically traces their interaction over time (Archer 1995, 2010). Such a model allows us to analyse the conditions under which the party was formed and to study the interactions that subsequently affected its evolution and post-formation period. Consequently, this model also permits us to see to what extent the party can develop its current position in Lebanese politics and why it chooses to follow one particular trajectory over another. This stands in contrast to the rest of the scholarly literature on Hizballah, which tends to see the party either as a proxy client of Iran and Syria (Goldberg 2002; Byman 2003) or as an embedded social force mainly catering for its Shia constituency (Hamzeh 2004; Harik 2004; Harb and Leenders 2005).

To elucidate these points further, this chapter will proceed as follows. The following section will present Hizballah's positions on the various Arab Spring revolts. Then, it will elaborate on the 'morphogenetic' analysis of structure-agency before it situates this conceptualisation within an analysis of Hizballah's role in Lebanon over time.

Hizballah and the Arab Spring

It is hardly surprising that Hizballah's attitude towards the Arab Spring has in general been positive. After all, the party's *ethos* and *telos* resonate well with the images of popular resistance and defiance now reverberating in the proverbial 'Arab street'. For more than three decades, the party's iconic stature epitomised its relentless military and ideological resistance to Israel, Zionism

and US/Western hegemony over the Middle East. This has put the party at odds with various Arab regimes that have both normalised their relations with Israel and the US and consistently exploited *al-mabrumeen* (the deprived) and *al-mustadafeen* (the marginalised) in their own countries.

Speaking at a party festival held in March 2011, the secretary general of Hizballah, Hassan Nasrallah, hailed the Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan revolutions and offered his support for the revolutionaries in Bahrain and Yemen. He considered that 'a major victory was achieved in Egypt and Tunis, and this prompted the Libyan regime to ignite a cruel internal war, and put the regimes of Yemen and Bahrain on the verge of civil war. Had it not been for the determination of the people to preserve the peaceful nature of their movements, there would have been civil wars as a result of the regimes' performance' (Shmaysani, 2011). Similarly, he contended in relation to Egypt's uprising that 'we cannot stand idly when the disputes take place between the oppressed and the oppressor, between right and wrong' (Khalaf and Fielding-Smith, 2011).

He also voiced strong support for the freedom movements sweeping Yemen and Bahrain. In relation to Yemen, he declared that 'it is not possible to keep silent about killing and oppressing the demonstrators there. We praise the steadfastness of the Yemeni people and their commitment to their peaceful movement, although we know that Yemen is full of weapons' (Shmaysani, 2011). As for Bahrain, he condemned the Arab governments' silence on a rightful plea for change and dignity, and questioned whether this silence was due to sectarian reasons. He maintained that 'I find it very weird to hear some people calling on Egyptians to take to the streets, Libyans to kill Ghaddafi, but when Bahrain is involved, their ink dries out, and their voices dampen. What is the difference between the al-Khalifa regime and the regimes of [Hosni] Mubarak and Ghaddafi?' (Shmaysani, 2011).

Against this background, the position taken by the party *vis-à-vis* Syria, a close ally, was clearly contradictory. Branding the Syrian regime as Lebanon's protector during the civil war, Nasrallah argued that Syrian protests seeking to topple the Assad regime were backed by the US and Israel (*Al-Manar* TV, 25 May 2011). 'The difference between the Arab uprisings and Syria... is that President Assad is convinced that reforms are necessary, unlike Bahrain and other Arab countries', he said during a speech celebrating the eleventh anniversary of the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon (*Al-Diar*, May 2011). 'Bashar [al-Assad] is serious about carrying out reforms but he has to do them gradually and in a responsible way; he should be given the chance to implement those reforms' (*Al-Jazeera*, May 2011).

Calling on the Syrians to support their president and regime, Nasrallah outlined four conditions for handling the crisis. According to Nasrallah: 'All these factors impose on us... as a resistance to first be keen on Syria's stability, its regime and people. Secondly, we urge the Syrians to protect the regime and give it time to bring in reforms... and to opt for dialogue rather than conflict. Thirdly, as Lebanese we must leave the Syrian people to sort out their own problems and not interfere. Fourthly, we [as Lebanese] must reject any resolutions against the Syrian regime' (*Al-Diar*, May 2011).

Given these sharp contradictions in Hizballah's discourse, I argue that a rethinking of the party's identity and interests is needed. Building on a 'morphogenetic approach', this chapter argues that while Hizballah's relationship with Iran was materially and ideationally necessary across time, its engagement with Syria was more evolutionary in its nature. The relationship with Syria morphed from a logistical 'marriage of convenience' type of alliance during the Lebanese civil war to a more structural and long-term type of alliance following Syria's post-civil war rule over Lebanon. This explains why the party was able to reinvent its identity and interests in the early 1990s, as opposed to its

more recent rigid political positions rejecting disarmament and denouncing the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL). Hizballah's support for the Arab Spring and dismissal of the Syrian uprising should be read in this context.

Structure-agency and the morphogenetic approach

The debate on structure-agency and the tools of analysis that it generates are one of those omnipresent and everlasting discussions in philosophy, political theory and the social sciences. This is hardly surprising given that structure-agency is *par excellence* an ontological question whose thematic contours oscillate between context and conduct, nature and nurture, determinism and voluntarism, fatalism and intentionalism.

While 'older' debates about structure-agency seemed to hover between structure-led (structuralism) and agency-led (intentionalism) types of analysis, more contemporary treatments of this topic insist on the mutual constitutiveness and the interwoven nature of these two concepts (Adler 1997). This is best captured by Anthony Giddens's structuration theory, which defines structures as chronically reproduced rules and resources instantiated by knowledgeable, practically skilled and reflexive human agents (Giddens 1984). Although this Giddensian interpretation of structure-agency is widely accepted in academic fields today, it has been subject to critical-realist critiques which have sought to relate structure and agency over time rather than collapsing them into one singular entity.

There are a variety of critical realist approaches that deal with the structure-agency debate (see e.g. Jessop 1996, Bates 2006). Due to space limitations, I will here only focus on Archer's (1995; 2010) morphogenetic approach. Archer maintains that social forms (structure and culture¹) exist prior to social action (agency²) and hence are located in different temporal domains. Structures and cultures shape and condition social action; yet

agents and actors are not mere puppets or social automatons in this respect. They are conscious, reflexive and can attempt to transform their own surroundings. Whether they are able to transform or reproduce an existing order depends on the intersection between structure, culture and agency over time. Archer's morphogenetic approach therefore distinguishes between three analytical moments: *conditioning*, *interaction* and *elaboration/reproduction*.

In brief, the conditioning phase refers to the necessarily internal relations tying structures and cultures to people. Structures' necessarily internal relations are material *par excellence* (whether they are physical or human), implying the prevalence of 'practice' as an activity linking people to particular objectives (Archer 1995: 176–7). Cultures' necessarily internal relations, by contrast, refer to the realm of ideas, their properties and meanings (ibid.: 181). Both structural and cultural conditioning implies the embeddedness of 'persons' in a whole range of different collectivities (agents).

Archer's interaction phase refers to the relationship between social forms (structures and cultures) and social action (people). Based on this distinction, Archer proposes four situational logics that characterise structural, cultural and more importantly structural-cultural interactions. These situational logics are derived from whether necessary and contingent structural and cultural emergent properties are also complementary or incompatible (Table 1).

Table 1 Structural-cultural interactions

	Necessary	Contingent
Complementary	Logic of Protection	Logic of Opportunism
Incompatible	Logic of Compromise	Logic of Elimination

Adapted from Archer 1995: 303.

Accordingly, the logic of protection implies a necessary structural-cultural complementary relation where there is a complete harmony between material and ideational components. Continuity, not change, is to be expected from this particular context. The incompatibility of necessary structural-cultural interactions means that an initial will to defect is not strong enough to materialise, hence the logic of compromise. In cultural terms, this takes the form of syncretism between various theories, beliefs and values, for example, while it indicates the containment of different vested interests in structural domains. In contrast, the logic of opportunism refers to situations where further material diversification (for example diversification of production) or cultural specialisation (rise of particular schools of thought) allows certain groups to benefit from this context and seriously challenge the existing order. The logic of elimination or competition signifies the willingness of certain groups to nullify the opposition and change the system. Clearly, structural-cultural interactions are both mediated via agency and what Archer calls the 'double morphogenesis of agency' (Archer 1995: 255).

Under elaboration/reproduction, Archer's approach aims to discern the conditions under which social actors representing agents contribute towards the reproduction (morphostasis) or the transformation (morphogenesis) of the existing system. Accordingly, Archer distinguishes between four logical possibilities (Archer 1995: 308–24):

1. Conjunction between structural and cultural morphostasis.
2. Conjunction between structural and cultural morphogenesis.
3. Disjunction between structural morphostasis and cultural morphogenesis.
4. Disjunction between structural morphogenesis and cultural morphostasis.

Structural and cultural morphostases refer to the prevalence of necessary internal relations (complementary or incompatible) over contingent considerations. Hence, they both privilege the logics of protection and compromise. In contrast, structural and cultural morphogenesis refers to the prevalence of contingent relations (complementary or incompatible) over necessary internal relations. Hence, they both privilege the logics of opportunism and elimination or competition (Archer 1995: 302–8).

Therefore, if we go back to the four propositions presented above, we find that the first proposition leads towards a visible continuity of the system (no change is possible), while the second leads to a complete change. The third and fourth propositions are more complex and require a detailed analysis of the situational logics surrounding them. The third proposition implies the beginning of a gradual ideational shift, which can potentially stimulate a slow-paced social regrouping process, while the fourth proposition suggests the rise of a multitude of material interest groups which are becoming more ideationally articulate (Archer 1995: 315–18).

In a nutshell, the morphogenetic approach links structures, cultures and people over time without collapsing them into a singular undifferentiated entity. In so doing, this approach relates the genesis of vested interests in society to the mechanics of power and exchange among agents in a non-deterministic fashion. This is because the morphostasis/morphogenesis analytical moments envisaged here feed into the conditioning stage of the next temporal cycle, exhibiting change and continuity across time (Archer 1995: 337).

Analysing Hizballah over time: a morphogenetic view

Drawing on Archer's morphogenetic approach, I will distinguish between the three analytical moments of conditioning,

interaction and elaboration/reproduction. Prior to this, it should be made clear to the reader that Hizballah is seen here as an agent or a collectivity acting on its structural and cultural surroundings. The temporality of this analysis covers the period preceding Hizballah's formation (ca. 1982) until the present.

The conditioning phase covers the period stretching from the late 1970s, when the members of the party took part in Musa al-Sadr's Movement of the Deprived (*Harakat al-Mahrumin*), until 1982, when the party was formed following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon (Norton 2008).³ Three necessarily internal relations come to the fore in this respect: the historical marginalisation of the Shia community, exacerbated by a war-torn Lebanese state;⁴ the cultural endorsement of the 'Karbala Paradigm'⁵ in Lebanon, enunciated through resistance against the Israeli invaders and oppressors and their regional and international allies; and the financial support the party received from the new Islamic regime in Iran in 1979 (Norton 1999; El-Husseini 2010; Saouli 2011).

Recalling the morphogenetic approach, necessary internal relations are in themselves emergent properties formed in previous eras and the results of an anterior cycle of reproduction/elaboration. I do not have the space to dwell on the origins of these necessary internal relations, but the marginalisation of the Shia community, for example, can be traced back to the Ottoman and French mandate periods. Similarly, the Karbala paradigm refers to an ideational structure that galvanised the Shia political street in the 1960s and 1970s (Ajami 1987), which is in itself linked to inter-subjective meanings and collective images corresponding to events that originally occurred in the seventh century. Nevertheless, it is very important to emphasise here the Lebanese nature of a materially specific socio-economic context, which was further articulated by material and ideological support from the Islamic Republic of Iran. In other words, the marginalisation of the Shia community in Lebanon, the ideational aptitude for resistance provided by the Karbala paradigm, the

financial support from Iran and the war with Israel in 1982 were crucial factors contributing to the formation of Hizballah and the future trajectory/fortunes of the movement.

The interaction of Hizballah with various other structural/cultural entities and players can be divided into two periods. The first stretches from 1982 until shortly after the end of the Lebanese civil war (1992), marking Hizballah's decision to participate in the first parliamentary elections that followed under the new leadership of Hassan Nasrallah (Hamzeh 1993). The second period stretches from 1992 until the unilateral withdrawal of the Israeli army from southern Lebanon in 2000. The reason behind this distinction is straightforward. The interaction of Hizballah with war-torn Lebanon at the end of the civil war is fundamentally different from its interactions with a Syrian-dominated post-civil war Lebanon.

During the civil war, the initial aim of the party to create an Islamic republic in Lebanon was gradually sidelined by a dedicated effort to fight Israel in the south of Lebanon. Hence, this niche specialisation in the practice and rhetoric of resistance favourably distanced the party from the deleterious partisanship effects of the civil war. While the party's financial and logistical dependence on Iran was necessarily increasing, its relationship with Syria was contingent, to say the least. In fact, Norton illustratively recounts the acrimonious relations between Hizballah and the Syrian regime during the mid-1980s, especially after the 'War of the Camps' involving the Syrian-backed Shia militia AMAL and PLO fighters (Norton 2008: 71–2). These conflictual relations persisted until the end of the 1980s when the Syrian regime again backed AMAL against Hizballah in the military battles of *Iqlim al-Tufah* in south Lebanon in 1988–89 (ibid.: 73). The positive turn in Syria-Hizballah relations only started towards the end of the Lebanese civil war and was cemented through Hizballah's participation in the parliamentary elections of 1992.

As several scholars have pointed out, there were many reasons behind such a key decision (Alagha 2006; El-Husseini 2010). The end of the Lebanese civil war, the late Khomeini being succeeded by Khamenei in Iran, the assassination of former Hizballah chairman Abbas Moussawi and his replacement by Hassan Nasrallah, and the end of the Cold War and its effects on both Syria and Iran are all contributing factors. Yet, what is surprising here is the analytical coincident of the Iranian and Syrian roles as legitimate patrons of Hizballah (Goldberg 2002; Byman 2003). A deeper analysis of this period reveals how necessarily compatible the relation between Hizballah and Iran has always been and how contingently compatible the relation with Syria became. Drawing on the situational logics depicted by Archer within the structural-cultural interaction phase, it is clear that what characterises this period is the *logic of opportunism* (contingent compatible), where an Iranian-backed Lebanese force representing a particular socio-economic base forged an alliance with an increasingly dominant Syrian player in Lebanon.

Compared with this logic of opportunism, what seems to characterise the period between 1992 and 2000 is a *logic of protection* (necessary compatible) or integration, where Hizballah became an important pillar of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. During this time, the Syrian regime played a very important role in 'normalising' the status of Hizballah within the complex Lebanese configuration and protected its military and socio-economic autonomy in southern Lebanon. When former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri sought to redeploy the Lebanese army along the Israeli border in 1993, a symbolic act of territorial sovereignty, he was opposed and defeated by a powerful Hizballah-Syria alliance, which insisted on the separation and complementarity between the Lebanese army and Hizballah's military resistance. This was famously coined by the slogan '*Jaysb, Shaab, al-Mouqawama*' – Army, People and Resistance – which the party advocated (Alagha 2006). Following that, Hizballah's support

for the pro-Syrian Lebanese president Elias Hrawi and the former head of the army, later President Emile Lahoud, was unequivocal (El-Hokayem 2007).

Hence, the conditions under which the 'Lebanonisation' thesis of Hizballah (Ranstorp 1998; Hamzeh 2004; Harik 2004; Harb and Leenders 2005) occurred have to be explained via the complex metamorphosis of Syrian-Iranian roles *vis-à-vis* the party over time. In other words, the necessary compatible relations with Iran and the contingent compatible relation with Syria between 1982 and 1992 morphed into a necessary compatible relation with both Iran and Syria between 1992 and 2000. Such an important distinction sheds light on how the party strategically conceived its interests, ideas and course of action after the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000.

But why then should we end the interaction phase in 2000? What is so specific about this time juncture? Why not another point in time? The answer to these questions is again straightforward. The Israeli withdrawal opened wide the 'resistance Pandora's box', both in Lebanon and within Hizballah itself, as to whether the party should relinquish its military resistance and integrate within the Lebanese political fabric, or continue with the duality that had characterised the previous period. All of the events after 2000, as I will show below, indicate that Hizballah, facing many critical junctures where the party could have opted to reinvent its own identity, has systematically chosen to reproduce the *status quo*. It should be clear to the reader by now that *status quo* here refers to the period 1992–2000 and not 1982–92.

Hizballah's morphostasis after 2000

Facing a string of domestic and regional transformations during 2000–04, Hizballah's behaviour was morphostatic *par excellence* during this period. The parliamentary electoral victory of Rafiq

Hariri's movement, *al-Mustaqbal* [Future], in the major cities of Beirut, Tripoli and Saida in 2000 challenged the party and encouraged it to deepen its ties with the pro-Syrian Lebanese President Emile Lahoud, whose relationship with Hariri was nothing short of confrontational. In parallel, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 threatened the Syrian regime's hegemony in Lebanon and pushed it to seek an unconstitutional (even though such a precedent occurred before) re-election of President Emile Lahoud. The move was initially opposed by Hariri and his allies, who nevertheless ended up voting for Lahoud's extension.

This tension was further exacerbated with the introduction of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1559 in 2004, which focused on the importance of free and fair elections in Lebanon without foreign interference and on respect for constitutional rules, in addition to the withdrawal of the remaining foreign forces from the country and disarmament of all militias. Unsurprisingly, Hizballah condemned the resolution and castigated it as an illegitimate (Western) foreign intervention. The party also played a very active role in the re-election of Emile Lahoud in a clear act of defiance *vis-à-vis* the international community (Knio 2005).

The assassination of Rafiq Hariri on 14 February 2005 sparked a popular uprising against Syria's long-term hegemony over Lebanese politics. While the powerful Sunni leader was perceived to be tacitly joining the ranks of an embryonic Druze-Maronite opposition force, his funeral paved the way for a popular upheaval against Syrian domination, culminating in a mass opposition rally on 16 February that defied a government ban on peaceful demonstrations. The magnitude of this sudden upsurge of people's power overwhelmed the pro-Syrian Karami government, which was ousted. Unable to form a new government, Karami resigned on 28 February 2005 (*BBC News*, 28 February 2005).

Initially, the political demands of this popular movement called for a timetable for the complete withdrawal of Syrian

troops and intelligence services, the removal of Lebanese intelligence chiefs, the appointment of a 'neutral' government with the task of preparing parliamentary elections for May 2005 and the initiation of an international investigation into Hariri's murder. In response, Hizballah and its allies organised a popular rally on 8 March where the demands for an international investigation into Hariri's assassination and the withdrawal of Syrian military presence in Lebanon were balanced with a clear opposition to the predominantly anti-Syrian rhetoric in the country. Hizballah's charismatic leader, Hassan Nasrallah, reminded his followers that it was premature to accuse Syria of committing this crime and urged all political leaders to strengthen Lebanese-Syrian ties and protect Hizballah's military resistance against Israel (Knio 2005).

In the wake of these developments, the leaders of a loose alliance comprising Sunni, Druze and various Maronite political movements organised a parallel popular rally on 14 March where they reiterated their anti-Syrian position and repeated their demands for a complete Syrian military withdrawal, as well as the resignation of pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud and his newly appointed prime minister, Omar Karami. Karami was unable to form a new government amidst the strong popular support that the 14 March rally received. This led towards his second consecutive resignation and the appointment of an interim government, headed by Najib Mikati, whose sole responsibility was organising a new parliamentary election in May-June 2005.

The results of these elections gave the loose Sunni, Druze and Maronite conglomerate, now known as the 14 March political movement, the upper hand in parliament as they gained 72 seats out of 128, but fell short of securing the 86-seat threshold needed to pass constitutional amendments. The formation of the new 'unity cabinet' reflected this parliamentary victory (22 seats out of 30) and for the first time included three Hizballah

ministers. Although Hizballah contested this election as an ally of 14 March, it soon became clear that the country was firmly divided into two camps: the anti-Syrian 14 March movement comprising a Sunni, Maronite and Druze constellation of parties (the Future Movement, Kataeb party, Lebanese Forces and the Progressive Socialist Party) and the pro-Syrian 8 March movement comprising an alliance between the two biggest Shia movements (Hizballah and AMAL) and a Christian-based front known as *al-Tayyar al-Watani al-Hurr* [Free Patriotic Movement] (Harris 2007).

Between June 2005 and February 2006, the 14 March group, now in government, tried to reach an agreement on a deployment of the Lebanese army along the southern border with Israel and the decommissioning of arms held by Hizballah's militia, in line with UN Resolution 1559. But the minority veto power available to Hizballah and its allies in parliament prevented the realisation of these demands. In parallel, the pro-Syrian President Lahoud joined the ranks of the opposition and contributed to the institutional inertia. Meanwhile, political polarisation was further exacerbated by a string of political assassinations which targeted key anti-Syrian politicians, MPs and journalists such as Samir Kassir, George Hawi and Gebran Tueni (*Al-Nabhar*, 2007).

In light of these developments, and in order to break this institutional impasse, the speaker of parliament called for a 'national dialogue' forum, to which all leading political actors were invited to discuss the many sensitive issues that still divide Lebanese society. Held for a period of four months (March–June 2006), the forum tackled seven specific issues, including territorial disputes over the Shebaa Farms, the future of Hizballah as a resistance force and its weapons, an international tribunal to investigate Hariri's murder, the future of the presidency of the republic as an institution, a new electoral parliamentary law, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and finally economic policy and

development. Apart from agreeing on the Lebanese identity of the Shebaa farms, the economic necessity of targeting neglected urban and rural areas and the non-naturalisation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, no other compromise was reached amidst Hizballah's rejection of disarmament and the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south (Harris 2007).

In July 2006, Israel launched massive sea and air attacks in Lebanon in response to the abduction of two Israeli soldiers by Hizballah militants. In addition to the high civilian death toll (at least 1,200), Lebanon was subject to large-scale population displacement and wide-ranging destruction of its physical infrastructure. After 34 days of intense fighting, a ceasefire between Israel and Hizballah took effect on 14 August 2006 (UN Resolution 1701). In consequence, an enlarged UN peacekeeping force (UNIFIL-II) was stationed along the Israeli-Lebanese border. This border patrol was reinforced in September by the Lebanese army, which was deployed in the south for the first time in more than two decades (Hafez 2008).

After the cessation of military operations, the political tensions between the two competing camps resumed. In response to Hizballah's demands for greater representation of its allies in the cabinet in order to secure a 'blocking third' veto, the 14 March group imposed unconditional acceptance of the international tribunal, whose draft protocol was then ready to be signed by the Lebanese government and parliament. In an attempt to prevent the tribunal from being ratified, six Shia ministers representing AMAL and Hizballah resigned collectively from the cabinet on 11 November 2006. When the government adopted the vote on the basis of a two-thirds quorum, the president and the speaker of parliament declared the decision unconstitutional given that a major sect was no longer represented in the cabinet. Meanwhile, political assassinations resumed when the anti-Syrian minister of industry Pierre Gemayel was murdered by unknown gunmen. Although the many assassinations had reduced the government's

cabinet to one above the two-thirds quorum required for constitutional legitimacy, the executive branch, backed by the international community, refused to give the opposition the minority blocking threshold it demanded. Hizballah and the 8 March movement retaliated by organising a mass sit-in where its supporters encircled the government's headquarters in Beirut, demanding its resignation and the formation of a new national unity cabinet (El-Hokayem 2007; Hafez 2008).

In May 2007, Prime Minister Fuad Siniora asked the United Nations to establish the international tribunal outside Lebanon with a majority of international judges and an international prosecutor in line with article 7 of its charter. The UN accepted this plea and gave the Lebanese parliament until 10 June 2007 to approve the tribunal before it became a *fait accompli*. This development signalled a moral and political victory for 14 March, but it did nothing to deflect the political crisis in the country.

From June 2007 until May 2008, the debate shifted from the international tribunal dossier to the presidential elections that had been postponed since 25 September 2007. Although both camps eventually agreed on the relatively 'neutral' candidature of General Michel Suleiman as the future president, the divergence of interpretations on the mechanism of the election process itself produced another interminable crisis. Several proponents within the 14 March group argued that the inability to elect a president with a two-thirds majority in the first round allowed the parliament to fill that position with a simple majority vote in the second round under article 49 of the Lebanese constitution. In contrast, Hizballah and its allies insisted that any presidential election invariably necessitated a two thirds majority. The stalemate was further exacerbated when the tenure of President Lahoud ended in November 2007. The 14 March led government argued that the powers of the presidency should constitutionally shift towards the council of ministers in the case of a vacuum, whereas the 8 March group maintained its

position that the incumbent government was unconstitutional. Despite the Arab League's relentless efforts to bridge the gap between the two rival factions, institutional paralysis persisted in parallel with an ongoing cycle of political assassinations, which targeted another two 14 March MPs (Walid Eido and Antoine Ghanim) and the army general Francois al-Hajj (*BBC News*, 12 December 2007).

This institutional impasse escalated into a military confrontation towards the beginning of May 2008 when the cabinet decided to close down Hizballah's independent telecommunication network, claiming that it posed a threat to national security and sovereignty. The government also removed the chief of security at Beirut airport for alleged Hizballah sympathies. Hizballah considered this move to be an 'act of war' and ordered its militia to seize West Beirut until these decrees were withdrawn. The military takeover ended after four days when the government agreed to revoke its measures in exchange for Hizballah's military retreat (Moubayed 2009). In an attempt to contain and solve the rising sectarian tensions created by these events, the Qatari government invited major Lebanese leaders to a meeting in Doha in the hope of putting an end to more than 18 months of political deadlock. On 21 May 2008, the leaders reached a five-point agreement in which the opposition got a 'blocking third' minority veto in the newly formed national unity cabinet in exchange for facilitating the election of former General Suleiman to the presidency. The agreement also envisaged the removal of protest camps situated in central Beirut, banned the use of force in any internal conflict and adopted a new parliamentary electoral law that divided the country into smaller electoral districts. Accordingly, General Suleiman was elected president on 21 May 2008 and a few days later appointed Siniora for another consecutive premiership. A new 30-seat cabinet was formed on 12 July 2008, comprising sixteen ministers from 14 March, eleven from 8 March and three named by the president (Knio 2008).

The 2009 parliamentary elections gave the 14 March alliance a slight majority and installed Rafiq Hariri's son Saad as prime minister of yet another national unity government. The entente between the two camps broke down in 2011, however, when Hizballah managed to topple the government and influenced the constitutional means employed, electing Mikati to head a new government. In July 2011, Hizballah Chairman Hassan Nasrallah refused to hand over four of his party's members, who had been indicted by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) for the killing of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, under the pretext that it constituted a Western/American/Israeli plot aimed at Hizballah's resistance (*The Guardian*, 3 July 2011). More recently, the extent of polarisation between Hizballah and the 14 March group has been further accentuated following the arrest of pro-Syrian former minister Michel Samaha and the assassination of Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan (*The Guardian*, August 2012). Unable to cast a vote of no confidence towards the current government, the 14 March group has been boycotting any cooperation or dialogue with Hizballah, whom they believe have directly been associated with these recent security breaches. Hizballah, on the other hand, denies these accusations and maintains that 14 March politicians are gambling on a potential breakdown of the current Syrian regime in order to weaken Hizballah and the resistance project in Lebanon; a feat that fits within Israel's interests in the region (*Al-Nabaz*, December 2012).

In sum, Hizballah's political behaviour has been morphostatic in its nature between 2000 and 2012. This is due to the party's unwillingness to change the situational logic of a previous historical phase (1992–2000) characterised by a Syrian hegemonic order in Lebanon, which in turn has prevented Hizballah's disarmament and has institutionalised a 'political party/military resistance' conundrum in this complex Middle Eastern state. From this perspective, all of the events reported above show how Hizballah has deployed a variety of strategies and manoeuvres to both oppose and contain any dissident views that questioned and

challenged Syria's position in Lebanon and the party's military and cultural resistance.

It could be argued that the year 2005 denotes the beginning of another phase in Hizballah's trajectory since it highlighted yet again a historic decision to participate in the government for the first time ever in the wake of Syria's military withdrawal from Lebanon. Nonetheless, such an argument needs to be subjected to greater scrutiny since it ultimately conflates two sets of relations: political strategies/manoeuvres with situational logic and Syrian military dominance with Syrian hegemony. The relevance of the morphogenetic approach here is pertinent since it allows us to see how Hizballah's perception of a weakened Syrian military dominance in Lebanon after 2005 motivated it to deploy a new strategy (joining the government) in order to preserve a previous situational logic (Syrian hegemony in Lebanon) which, exceptionally, granted the party a unique military presence in the country. Behind the façade of a novel political intervention therefore lies a line of continuity which can be traced to the year 2000.

Conclusion

Hizballah's Janus-faced entanglement with the Arab Spring movements has revealed many dynamics about its interests and ideas and how they evolved (or didn't) over time. Despite the humanitarian and moral implications of the current Syrian crisis, Hizballah has deliberately opted to side with the Assad regime, its strategic ally. More recently, the party has militarily sided with the Syrian regime and greatly contributed to its counter offensive in recapturing the town of Qusair and other strategic positions around Homs. This has sharpened the divisions in Lebanon between Hizballah's protagonists and adversaries, and again brought to the fore debates about the party's identity and interests. Does this make Hizballah a proxy client of Iran and Syria? Not necessarily. Throughout its history, the party has managed to become a symbol of military resistance

against foreign oppressors (Israel and the US) and a promoter of social resistance against tyrannical, discriminatory and exclusionary Arab regimes. By virtue of its political slogans and socio-economic welfare services, the party has successfully produced a new structure of meaning revolving around concepts such as defiance, resistance and emancipation, which were particularly well received in Lebanon and the Arab world after the July 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. But then again, how is it possible to juxtapose such a new structure of meaning with the party's position *vis-à-vis* the Syrian case? How can we understand this complex nature of Hizballah?

To answer this problem, I turned to Archer's morphogenetic account of structure-agency, which does not conflate the two in a non-meaningful entity but traces their interactions over time. This allows us to locate the necessary internal relations that define the basic interests and identities of the subject matter – a historically marginalised, predominantly Shia social force exhibiting normative appeals for redistributive justice and resistance against the oppressor, whose institutionalised activities are primarily funded by Iran – and to study how such necessary relations *condition but do not determine* political behaviour. Hence, I showed how these necessary internal relations mix with a variety of contingent factors that can better explain why the party's interests and ideas took a particular form at a particular time. From this perspective, I demonstrated how the necessary compatible relations with Iran and the contingent compatible relations with Syria between 1982 and 1992 morphed into a necessary compatible relation with these two countries in 1992–2000. This evolutionary transformation is to be compared with the morpho-static position the party has occupied since 2000 as it refused to change any aspect that could alter the predominant *situational logic* of the 1992–2000 era. In other words, this morphogenetic analysis allows us to understand the conditions under which the party was able to reinvent its interests and identity between 1992 and 2000 (compared to 1982–92) and how it eventually became

a prisoner of its own position after the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000.

Therefore, the Janus-faced position taken by the party *vis-à-vis* the Arab Spring movements should be seen within a context in which the current leadership in Hizballah only seeks to reproduce the *status quo* and seems incapable – at least for the time being – of escaping from the once-evolved Iranian and Syrian patronage umbrella in which it is currently embedded. Contrary to the mainstream academic literature on Hizballah, I argue that the collapse of structure-agency evident in these analyses, in which Hizballah is permanently a proxy client to Iran and Syria or a local pragmatic force, obfuscates our analysis of the party and does not allow us to delineate both its evolution and its stasis over time.

Notes

1. Archer (1995) distinguishes between Structural Emergent Properties (SEP) and Cultural Emergent Properties (CEP). Both constitute what she calls social form. Following Archer, I will refer to SEP in the article as structure and CEP as culture.
2. Archer (1995) distinguishes between Persons, Agents and Actors. She refers to the temporal relation between these three categories as People Emergent Properties (PEP). Following Archer I will refer to PEP in this article as people.
3. The party's official inauguration, however, was declared in February 1985 in a manifesto entitled 'An Open Letter: The Hizballah program'. See Alagha (2001).
4. This does not mean that the marginalisation of the Shia community did not occur prior to the Lebanese civil War. Yet, from a morphogenetic approach the marginalisation of this sect during the civil war constitutes an internal necessary relation behind Hizballah's genesis.
5. The 'Karbala Paradigm' refers to the foundational Shia narratives of describing the martyrdom of Imam Hussein Bin Ali (one of Prophet Muhammad's grandsons), who was assassinated by the Umayyad rulers in Iraq in 680 CE. The paradigm is infused with ideas of martyrdom, sacrifice, commitment to a cause, passion and resistance against oppressors (El-Husseini 2010).

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DEMOCRACY AS A MINOR NECESSITY IN HAMAS'S NARRATIVE

Basem Ezbidî

Introduction

Since Hamas was founded in 1988, there has been an upsurge of interest in a range of issues relating to the movement's political platform, particularly its views on democracy. Most studies have placed Hamas among Islamic movements, assigning to it a 'distinct Arab-Islamic way of thinking' (Tilly 2004). While researchers utilising different approaches and methodologies have differed over the question whether Hamas agrees or is at odds with democracy (Brynen et al. 1995), most studies produced have not paid enough attention to the impact that the interrelations between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA) have had on Hamas's stand towards democracy. Even the perspective modelled on the four ideal types of party¹ is insufficient. Defining Hamas as a political party because it participates in elections and places candidates in public office is insufficient and of limited value, since it gives little consideration to the atypical circumstances in Palestine and the general lack of proper political parties caused by the non-existence of a truly sovereign polity.

Taking the issue of participation in government as an indicator, there have been varying views regarding the importance of democracy in Hamas's discourse and practice. Some researchers have considered Hamas's participation as a constructive step, since it embodied the movement's willingness to uphold the will of the people. Another view supposes that Hamas participated with the intention of replacing the PA with a radical religious order that would not only alienate others but also alter the very rules that allowed Hamas to win in the first place. Yet a third view states that through participation in the elections, Hamas wished to consolidate its standing in national politics and that it used all attainable means towards the aim of ending the occupation, independently of their impact on democracy. This work subscribes to this third view, since it most closely reflects Hamas's aims within the particularity of the Palestinian case.

The distorted case of Palestine makes an assessment of Hamas's views – or those of any other Palestinian party regarding democracy – difficult, since the central concern of Palestinians is to end the occupation, and not how to manage an occupation-generated condition democratically. After nearly two decades of failing peace processes, there is still no true sovereignty and the conditions necessary for developing democracy remain disturbingly missing. The lack of control over land and resources leaves no solid base for the development of effective institutions, sound laws or a genuine economy.

Currently, Hamas represents one of the two opposing narratives of struggle dominating the Palestinian political scene, the first relying on negotiation and exemplified by Fatah, the other relying on resistance and represented by Hamas. But the profound political differences between the two tendencies are a reflection of their varying assessment of how to deal with the national condition (occupation) and not of how they perceive and internalise democracy. The ruinous split over the past five years is a by-product of the unsettled clash between these two

narratives. The recent Cairo (2011) and Doha (2012) agreements and the Arab Spring are appraised by both sides primarily based on how they validate one narrative over the other (whether they may contribute to independence) and not on their direct influence on democracy in Palestine. Even if the Arab Spring, which is grounded in the themes of dignity and emancipation, gains ground in Palestine, its chief impact will consolidate either the line of resistance or the line of negotiation, but it will not 'democratise' the malformed Palestinian Authority. Only after one of the two approaches has succeeded in generating a truly unified and liberated Palestinian entity can the status of democracy be determined.

For Hamas, the issue of Palestine is not only about faith and belief, but also about land and a nation. The struggle is less between two rival religions, Islam and Judaism, than between two irreconcilable national projects; and it is generally part of the larger conflict with the colonial 'Christian' West. And while the PLO and Fatah nationalised religion in the service of their more secular vision, Hamas Islamised nationalism.² Consequently, to grasp what Hamas stands for necessitates that one sees it as a national movement with religious credentials and/or as a religious movement with a national agenda, but not as a static religious movement. Moreover, the question of democracy in Palestine has been intertwined with the conflict (or the peace process), where the labour of achieving the latter affects the prospects of materialising the former. Such a linkage became more evident in the aftermath of Hamas's victory in the elections of 2006 and recently after signing the Doha reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah. Also, it is becoming of special concern in the midst of the ongoing changes in Arab countries, where Islamists are gaining an influence and the prospects of democracy are being discussed in all circles.

The analysis presented here argues that most studies have not paid enough attention to the impact that the interrelations

between Hamas and the PA have on Hamas's stand towards democracy. It asserts that a study concerning the relevance of democracy in Hamas's platform necessitates an acknowledgment of the dynamics governing the functions and structures of the Palestinian Authority. These parameters have fundamentally impacted on Hamas's decisions regarding participation or boycott of the political system. Elections held under occupation may be futile as an indicator of public preferences, as there is a linkage between liberty and democracy: without a context of national freedom and true sovereignty, citizens are unable to effectively participate in governance or to freely choose among political alternatives. In Palestine, the elections of 1996 and 2006 were not carried out as a response to the general will of the people, but rather to legitimise an entity that was predetermined by external players and to enable it to better serve the so-called peace process in a manner that satisfies Israel. It is not suggested here that elections (as an indicator of democracy) are not important in making sense of Hamas. However, there are other important variables, such as the conflict with Israel and the rules governing the PA, which need to be addressed too. The prevailing condition of occupation makes national liberation the main political goal for Palestinians, an issue that carries considerably more urgency than an externally driven democracy – unless democracy is to be understood as a course for the materialisation of national independence.

This chapter analyses Hamas's position and conduct in the context of the complex relationship that has existed between the three main players in the conflict, Hamas, the PA and Israel, showing that their individual positions towards many, if not most issues was influenced by the other players and their respective interactions. The following questions will be tackled. Since democracy is not a premise that guides Hamas's discourse and conduct, what were the determinants governing Hamas's approach to participation in or boycott of the PA system? Are these determinants

political or ideological? What affects the movement's ideological and political underpinnings? This research will focus on the mode of interaction between Hamas and its immediate environment, mainly the PA. Dividing Hamas's evolution into three stages – challenging the regime from the outside (1988–2005); entering the regime to seek a role (2005–07); and rebelling against the Palestinian Authority (2007 to present) – the investigation will focus on assessing the immediate objectives and tools which Hamas has utilised in each stage. This analysis will help to assess whether this experience is likely to encourage further Hamas's engagement in the current system and to outline the terms and conditions that are likely to guide such engagement.

Challenging the regime from the outside (1988–2005)

In 1988 Hamas was founded in the context of an increasing Islamisation of Arab society in the aftermath of Khomeini's revolution in Iran and with the aim of opposing both the occupation and the secular PLO. In its earliest stage, Hamas enjoyed the tacit toleration of Israel, which hoped that this new movement would weaken Yasser Arafat's Fatah and the PLO. The first *intifada* was an opportunity for the movement to establish its credentials successfully as not only a religious but also a political force and it gained a sizable constituency. The Oslo Accords and the ensuing peace process, developments that began in 1993 and brought the first *intifada* to an end, were considered by Hamas to be an Israeli means of 'legitimising' its position and thus of perpetuating its occupation of Palestine; not to end it, but merely to alter its image, turning an oppressive measure into a seemingly peaceful and legitimate institution. And in fact, since Israel was granted the upper hand in determining the outcome of the peace process, it was able to place its occupation on a higher 'moral'

ground and to depict Palestinian resistance as a relentless campaign of terror designed to end the peace process, rather than a struggle to end the Israeli occupation.

Since it was considered 'anti-peace (process)', Palestinian resistance had to be combated by Israel, the PA and the international community. And under the pretext of combating terrorism, Israel consolidated its occupation on the ground and tightened its control over the PA, while projecting itself as a genuine peace-seeker which lacked a like-minded Palestinian partner. For the Palestinians, the weaker part in this zero-sum game, the Oslo formula deepened their vulnerability and enabled Israel to expand settlements, control resources, arbitrarily impose sieges and road blocks, and to erect a wall that separates not only the West Bank from Gaza, but also communities within the two territories, thus destroying the local economy.

The Oslo 'peace process' demanded the creation of an authority neither strong enough to compel Israel to deliver on the 'promise' of the Oslo Accords, nor weak enough to allow other Palestinians to take over. Defying its name, the PA possesses neither the right, nor the resources, nor the legal authority to end the expansion of settlements or the construction of the separation wall; but it was granted the tools and capability to serve Israeli security requirements effectively. Palestinian demands were addressed only superficially, in a manner incapable of reversing Israel's colonial ambitions. The PA was and is expected to adjust to and accommodate, but not to succeed in challenging the conditions of profound inequality perpetuated on the ground. Ultimately, Palestinians have been left with numerous constraints and few resources to govern themselves, which has severely undermined their ability to develop the conditions required for the materialisation of democracy.

Hamas never shared Fatah's optimism regarding the shaky promise of the Oslo Accords. It considered the establishment of the Palestinian Authority an illegitimate extension of the

injustice enshrined in agreements they never recognised; and therefore, the movement remained sceptical towards the PA. Hamas rejected Fatah's frequent calls to participate in running the PA, since it felt that such a call was merely aimed at containing the movement. To Hamas, the PA was created to serve Israeli needs and not to respond to the Palestinian aspirations of self-determination and independence.

At this stage, four different views appeared within Hamas concerning the best way to emphasise the movement's rejection of the PA's purpose. The first traced the illegitimacy of the PA, the many constraints placed upon it, and subjected it to foreign, mainly Israeli, pressures and dictates. The second view attributed the PA's illegitimacy to the absence of effective Palestinian legislative institutions. A third, more flexible view argued that Hamas could recognise the PA as an institution, while disagreeing with its purpose and practices. The fourth view saw no possibility of co-existence between the PA and Hamas. Nevertheless, these assessments all rejected the PA's legitimacy, since any other step would have entailed the abandoning of armed resistance and acceptance of the Oslo Accords; with all the restrictions entailed in these Accords, Hamas could not function as a 'constructive' opposition within its scheme.

Instead, Hamas absorbed the varying opinions and minimised their differences. For instance, the movement never explained how to preserve both armed resistance and co-existence with PA, the former requiring secrecy whereas co-existence required openness. Hamas thought it could at the same time adopt both military and political tools, whilst the PA was unwilling to tolerate the functioning of an untamed opposition group in the areas under its 'control'. It feared that this might weaken its position in the negotiations and lead to further Israeli intransigence, since Israel was likely to use such groups as a pretext to excuse it from 'peace process' obligations. Nasser al-Shaer, who is close to

Hamas, commented (Al-Shaer 1999: 77) on this dilemma at the time by arguing:

This is a complex equation in terms of contradicting principles, i.e. the principle of resisting the occupation to achieve liberation on the one hand, and the principle of national unity and the prevention of internal strife that might lead to the collapse of the entire country, on the other. Neither one of these principles can be achieved, unless at the expense of the other.

In dealing with each other, the PA and Hamas adopted similar tactics; despite mutual opposition, they left the door open for possible engagement. The Palestinian Authority fluctuated between on the one hand repressing Hamas, arresting members and closing Hamas-run institutions and on the other demanding that Hamas join in and engage with the PA, all with the intent of 'domesticating' the movement in order to turn it into a peaceful opposition. Hamas likewise opposed the PA on the one hand and compromised to avoid repression on the other. The challenge before the movement was, and still is, the question of how to co-exist with an illegitimate authority that is complicit with Israel, while nevertheless remaining an opposition group. To cope with this dilemma, Hamas stressed the PA's illegitimacy when it faced repression (especially on the eve of any round of negotiations between the PA and Israel) and emphasised the importance of co-existence with the PA when pressure on the movement was eased (a means used by the PA after stalled negotiations in order to pressure Israel). Such a two-sided position was expressed by Hamas's founder, Ahmad Yassin, when in the run-up to the 1996 elections he expressed his respect for the PA and its leadership, as well as his wishes for the Legislative Council to succeed, while nevertheless emphasising the legitimacy of armed resistance against Israel and rejecting any form of dialogue with

the Israelis (*Al-Quds*, 15 October 1997). But overall, the PA's inability to extract tangible gains in negotiations with Israel and its inability to achieve real progress towards national liberation and reconstruction strengthened Hamas's rejection of the PA's legitimacy. On this ground, Hamas refused Yasser Arafat's many calls for participation in the Palestinian cabinet and insisted on preserving armed resistance. Thus, the relationship between the PA and Hamas underwent an oscillating ebb and flow, ranging from exceedingly tense to peaceful and harmonious.

The controversy over Hamas's participation in the PA Legislative Council elections of 1996 was a significant milestone. However, while one camp refused and the other endorsed participation, both views were determined by political considerations and not by religious dogma or ideology.³ The first argued that the Legislative Council would enjoy only limited power if not elected on a broad base. Furthermore, it was contended that these elections excluded the Palestinians in the diaspora and were inappropriate for the Palestinians of Jerusalem, who were to participate by postal ballot, which carried the implications that they were residing on foreign land and that the elections would be held under Israeli supervision. According to this opinion, participation in these elections and under these circumstances was perceived as surrender to the Oslo Accords and as a consolidation of an illegitimate authority that wished to end resistance.

The pro-participation camp stressed that Hamas had already participated in elections for chambers of commerce, universities and trade unions; that it had frequently advocated elections for PLO organs; and that hence it was capable of participating in legislative elections. Shaykh Ahmad Yassin (*Al-Nahar*, 3 April 1989) expressed his conviction by saying 'I want a multi-party democratic state, and those who win the elections should be in power; even if the Communist Party were to win, I will respect the desire of the Palestinian people'. This view also argued that participation was an opportunity to benefit from the election

campaign, to promote Hamas's advocacy efforts and to prevent electoral fraud; whereas a boycott would leave the citizen with no other alternative than that represented by the PA and would put all citizens under PA control.⁴ It furthermore contended that successful Hamas candidates would be provided with political immunity, which would benefit the movement both internally and externally. Additionally, the election was seen as an opportunity to strengthen the legitimacy and popular standing of Hamas, a status that Islamists in many neighbouring countries wanted to attain. Finally, participation would give Hamas the chance to monitor and actively participate in the process of national reconstruction, including the fight against corruption. In the end, the final decision to boycott the 1996 elections was made by the less 'moderate' Hamas leadership abroad based on the movement's rejection of the Oslo Accords.

Until 2000, Hamas benefited from the continued failure of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and from the mounting corruption within the PA, which allowed the movement to present itself as more patriotic and as 'purer' than the PA. The outbreak of the al-Aqsa *intifada* was perceived as a development that essentially validated Hamas's assessment of the Oslo Accords and of the PA. Furthermore, it was considered an opportunity to redefine the rules of conflict between the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian resistance, allowing Hamas to stress that occupation should be combated with armed struggle, not with an unjust peace. During this period and until 2005, Hamas not only gained enormously in strength and popular support,⁵ it was also able to maintain its internal cohesion despite the assassination of many of its first-line leadership, such as Ahmad Yassin, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, Ismail Abu Shanab, Jamal Mansour, Jamal Salim and Salah Shehadeh.

Most tangibly, the second *intifada* led to Israel's reoccupation of the territories under the Palestinian Authority and ultimately caused the collapse of the Oslo Accords. The Palestinian

leadership was further weakened when accusations of corruption and terrorism surfaced. And while Fatah (and the PA) suffered internal deterioration through strife between factions, especially after the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004, Hamas was able to maintain internal cohesion and strength and enjoyed a growing degree of popular support. The movement reached a new stage in its development as an Islamic movement with a national agenda, which brought a profound change to society and politics in Palestine.

Entering the regime to seek a role (2005–07)

Hamas's involvement in the political system developed gradually and came about only after the movement had secured the strength needed to engage in open rivalry, taking the municipal elections as a starting point. These elections were held in December 2004 and May 2005 with the widespread participation of political parties, which included Fatah and Hamas. Hamas's opponents had attributed the movement's previous boycott of elections to its desire to conceal its insignificant popular appeal, which was thought not to exceed 25 per cent of public support. Through its participation Hamas wanted to prove that this claim was false.

In the municipal elections to the eight municipalities in the Gaza Strip, Hamas won four major municipalities and secured 80 per cent of the votes cast, whereas Fatah won in three municipalities, securing only 12 per cent of the votes. In the West Bank, Hamas won 26 municipal councils and Fatah 47. In terms of total votes cast in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Hamas received 60 per cent, even though Fatah won 60 per cent of the seats.⁶

This outstanding performance was due to Hamas's steadfast support for the line of resistance; its adoption of simple and popular slogans in the campaign; its running of very successful

charitable work; the experience it had gained in elections for community organisations, such as universities and trade unions; a large measure of public sympathy due to the Israeli assassination of many of its leaders; the in-fighting that was damaging Fatah's unity, especially after the death of Yasser Arafat; and the weakness of other PLO groups (Al-Sahli 2006).

Despite the local nature of the municipal elections, their political impact was noteworthy, as Hamas became a major force that could no longer be ignored. Hamas and others interpreted the election results as an indication of its widespread popularity and of its prospects for the 2006 elections. They revealed not only Hamas's power, but also the weakness and fragmentation of Fatah and other PLO groups. After 16 years of opposition, the success of the municipal elections paved the way for Hamas to enter the system (Ezbidi 2005), which was achieved with the Cairo Agreement and the PLC elections.

The Cairo Agreement set out the procedures and details for the 2006 elections, entailed a truce with Israel and called for the reforming of the PLO. Hamas saw in this agreement the beginning of a new political chapter, an era based on the changed realities brought about by the Al-Aqsa *intifada* and not on the stipulations of the Oslo Accords. It also perceived the new agreement as a major success, since it provided unequivocal recognition of Hamas as a formidable player. Thus, to project its future role in Palestinian politics, Hamas outlined its perspective on democracy and declared the movement's participation to be based on the following principles: an end to the Israeli occupation; a commitment to partnership on the basis of political pluralism and a shift away from serving factional interests towards serving the interests of the people; regular elections to be held at all levels; the separation of the judiciary from the executive; a reform of the security system; a rebuilding of the PLO; and fair election laws and an independent elections committee. It also aimed at 'fixing previous mistakes', which related to corruption,

patronage in hiring and other governmental ills, as well as to the peace process (Haniyyeh 2005). These conditions were indicative of the many difficulties that were to encounter the relations between Fatah and Hamas later on.

Justifying its participation in the system, Hamas provided political rather than ideological reasons. It argued that the Oslo Accords were no longer binding due to Israel's reoccupation of Palestinian territories and repeated declarations that the Oslo process had failed; moreover, Hamas asserted that by participating in PA bodies, it intended to disavow the Oslo Accords and to protect its line of resistance. Further justification was the intention to stop the internal deterioration of Palestinian government; to salvage both Palestinian society and the economy, which had been suffering under the PA and were characterised by poor living conditions, corruption and mismanagement; as well as to maintain a strong opposition to the heavy reliance on foreign aid, which Hamas considered a major source of dependency and corruption. Hamas leader Osama al-Mozaini from Gaza argued that 'it was our political and moral duty to participate in order to stop the internal decay; therefore, as a party we adopted the slogan "Change and Reform"'.⁷

To this end, Hamas presented a flexible political platform on a range of issues. It declared its acceptance of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders; a willingness to initiate a political partnership with Fatah and others; readiness to reach a truce with Israel; acceptance of unarmed forms of resistance and readiness to confine armed resistance to the 1967 territories; and finally its eagerness to participate in the process of national reconstruction (*The Palestinian Information Center*, 14 January 2006). With these measures, Hamas wanted to win over two constituencies, on the one hand its own supporters, on the other independents and Fatah sympathisers who were critical of the PA's performance.

The sweeping victory Hamas achieved surprised many, including Hamas itself.⁸ This victory and the formation of a

Hamas-only government in early 2006 represented the movement's greatest achievement since its foundation. It enabled Hamas to make the transition from an opposition group into a governing body and carried the hope that the movement would be able to modify the PA's structure and policies and to influence its ties with Israel. But immediately following the elections, Hamas faced its first challenge when the formation of a new government was boycotted by Fatah and other groups due to political differences, forcing Hamas to form a government with some 'independents'. At that time, Hamas was no less flexible than Fatah and others in terms of forging compromises in order to entice other groups to participate in the government. Hamas did not compromise on its election platform, which repeatedly stressed (*The Palestinian Information Center*, 14 January 2006) that 'the arena of the Palestinian national action is open to various views and initiatives in resisting the occupation' and stated that Hamas would seek 'cooperation and coordination with all parties... and that despite the differences in views it is not permissible to use violence or arms to settle disputes'. But it did not find a partner in Fatah.

Other groups, particularly Fatah, refused to participate in a Hamas-led government, arguing that Hamas's position on many political issues had remained obscure, especially its stance towards the PLO. This view was expressed by Azzam al-Ahmad, who stated (*Al-Ayyam*, 21 February 2006) that 'Fatah will not join the government unless [Hamas] recognises both the PLO program, upon which the Oslo Agreement was signed, and all the subsequent agreements... upon which the elections were held and run by all'.

Hamas differentiated between Fatah and other groups. The movement maintained its relationship with Fatah on the basis of their 'partnership in resistance, and [based on the awareness] that strengthening the relationship between both sides strengthens the Palestinian people and serves their cause'.⁹ By treating Fatah as an equally powerful player, even though it had won with a

margin wide enough to allow it to govern independently, Hamas sought to strengthen its own position and influence in governance. However, Fatah did not welcome Hamas's offer (a lesser number of posts in the cabinet), since it perceived it as patronising rather than as an actual recognition of Fatah's strength and status. Hamas did not reach out to the marginal groups, since they enjoyed little popular support; the movement was aware that they could easily be bypassed if it could reach an understanding with Fatah.

In the end, Hamas formed a government that shortly after being sworn in had to cope with an Israeli blockade, the arrest of a good number of its elected representatives, a harsh international economic and political boycott, and consequently very difficult domestic living conditions. The gap between Hamas and internal as well as external parties therefore gradually widened, especially between the Hamas-led government and the Fatah-controlled presidency. It became increasingly difficult for their two contradictory political programmes to co-exist, which forced the Hamas-led government to function alone. Hamas did not and does not believe that it failed; rather, it was thwarted by internal and external parties. The movement refused to be held responsible for the impasse, convinced that it still held a democratic mandate to govern. Ultimately, Hamas realised that winning elections was not enough and that political partnership with Fatah was unavoidable in order to alleviate the international boycott of its rule, a move that led to the signing of the National Consensus Document with Fatah in May 2006.

However, the agreements of the National Consensus Document proved insufficient and when violence erupted and escalated in the streets, the two parties were forced to renegotiate. They signed the Mecca Agreement in March 2007, which outlined conditions for the formation of a national unity government. The conflict of powers and legitimacy was now taken from the street into the PA's institutions. Hamas found itself positioned between

ministries that were controlled by Fatah and other PLO groups and the office of the presidency, which monopolised and controlled money, security and negotiations with Israel. The movement was left with little or no influence. On the surface, the wrangle was over the mandates and responsibilities of the council and the presidency, while in fact it was over different perceptions of legitimacy and representation. This strife so immensely deepened the gaps between Hamas and Fatah, as well as between the PA and the public, that the national unity government was paralysed. Hamas found itself faced with a tough choice: it had to either 'acquiesce' to Fatah and its external backers or to rebel against the 'system'. And that it did in the summer of 2007.

Rebelling against the Palestinian Authority and splitting up the country (2007 to present)

In the summer of 2007, Hamas took over Gaza by force, splitting up the country into two antagonistic entities. Gaza has been run by a government headed by Ismail Haniyyeh, which President Abbas declared illegitimate after he dismissed Haniyyeh in June 2007. He replaced him with Salam Fayyad who headed the West Bank government, which in turn was declared illegitimate by Hamas. Hamas has adamantly defended its taking control over the Gaza Strip and provided varying justifications, to the extent that some leaders even described it as a democratic step. Yousef Rezaqah stated that 'the take-over of Gaza may look contrary to the principle of exchange of power, but in fact it supports democracy, since the intention was to restore the course of events and not to replace the existing political system, since Hamas neither wishes to form another political system, nor desires to establish an Islamic emirate. On the contrary, we have always called for dialogue and national unity.'¹⁰ And senior leader Mahmoud al-Zahar affirmed (Ezbidi 2010: 122) that 'those who took over the Gaza Strip would take over the West Bank if Israel were

to withdraw from there'. Ismail Haniyyeh, Faraj Rummana and Hassan Abu Kouaik expressed more moderate views, Rummana stressing that Hamas's policy had always called for dialogue and the settling of differences through peaceful means, reassuring further that Hamas would not repeat the Gaza experience in the West Bank.¹¹ This discrepancy of positions within the leadership is possibly an indication of the extent to which Hamas was surprised by the swiftness of events. It reflects also that Hamas was not able to defend its forceful takeover and that it feared revenge against the movement in the West Bank, which explains the moderate views of its West Bank leaders.

Contrary to Hamas's initial estimates, public opinion was not sympathetic to its move. Support for Hamas in the Gaza Strip dropped within four months from 29 to 23 per cent, while it rose for Fatah from 31 to 43 per cent. Additionally, 66 per cent of the public expressed support for internal reforms, but not through force (Near East Consulting Institute 2007); and while 46.7 per cent of the people in Gaza reported that conditions worsened after the takeover, 43.5 per cent blamed Hamas and 28.4 per cent blamed Fatah (Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research 2007). These numbers were less an indication that support for Hamas had switched in favour of Fatah; rather, they expressed the degree of public rejection of Hamas's violent approach.

While the division has made impossible Hamas's original platform of 'reform and change', as articulated in 2006, its programme of combining governance with resistance has been deeply affected as well; in fact the two themes have proven to be irreconcilable. Governance requires secured resources and freedom of movement, which necessitates a degree of pacification and co-existence with the occupation, while resistance calls for escalation. In fact, because Hamas is a resistance movement that has to operate under the condition of internal division, Israel has easily been able to close borders, prevent the import and export of goods, restrict the movement of persons, confiscate funds and

destroy the infrastructure of Gaza.¹² Thus, despite the movement's defiance of aggressive Israeli measures, it had to undergo an undeclared shift in its policy and to show readiness for a truce. When after the war of 2008–09 the Hamas government still refused to recognise Israel, to abandon the resistance track or to commit to the Oslo Accords, it had to face an Israeli, Arab and international siege. Thus, even when Gaza remained the stronghold of the resistance, self-preservation became an urgent need for the movement, no matter what the consequences were.

Hamas's rule in Gaza

The *de facto* government Hamas formed after the takeover of Gaza has shown considerable strength and endurance. Much of its success has been due to its closeness in most aspects with Hamas, although that relationship has also brought unexpected complications. Yezid Sayigh argues that from the outset, Hamas did not wish to repeat the mistakes of its rival, the long-dominant Fatah, with respect to its symbiotic relationship with the Palestinian Authority. It believed that Fatah was drawn into compromising on national goals by the mundane needs of governing daily life and by the desire to preserve its hold on power (Sayigh 2010: 1).

The relationship between Hamas and Gaza's government has been complex. Control over Gaza left the movement with an opportunity to proceed with its Islamic agenda and with 'armed resistance' against Israel. But soon, the practical requirements of governance forced Hamas to revise both its militant political discourse and the Islamist social ideology of its core constituency, issues that have constituted a major challenge up to this day. Generally, government ministries and agencies have exhibited enviable levels of coordination, information sharing and mutual support. They were complemented by Hamas-affiliated grassroots organisations, ensuring that government policies stayed in harmony with Hamas's broader agenda.¹³ Its exclusive control

over institutions was tightened after a boycott policy was initiated by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in July 2007 which demanded that around 70,000 PA employees in Gaza stay away from work. In fact, this move enabled the Gaza government to replace thousands of employees with Hamas members.

To consolidate its rule of the new entity, the Gaza government has given the question of security significant attention, treating it as a priority after deep public discontent with the armed lawlessness of the pre-2007 years. Unlike Fatah-affiliated PA security agencies, the Hamas-run ministry of the interior has exercised effective control over security-related operational branches and civilian departments alike. Hence, the Haniyyeh government has consistently stressed this issue as its particular strong suit and has been notably successful in imposing its overall control and in keeping law and order; and it has done so not merely through intimidation and coercion.¹⁴

Opinions regarding the nature of the government ruling Gaza fall into two camps with some considering it enlightened and flexible, others narrow, dogmatic and traditional. In fact, elements of both aspects can be found in the statements and policies articulated by the government. The treatment of NGOs is a case in point. The government initially left them alone; but acting in retaliation against the PA's closure of hundreds of NGOs in the West Bank that were believed to be affiliated with Hamas, it closed down or restricted a significant number of them from mid-2008 onwards, mostly Fatah-affiliated organisations. Following the war in Gaza, the government changed its harsh approach but still sought a considerable amount of control, requiring NGOs to re-register with the ministry of the interior and to obtain prior permission for all their activities. Again, this mirrored the new requirements applied by its PA counterpart in the West Bank; and, as there, it provided a means of political vetting.

The Islamisation of society has accelerated in reaction to the domestic challenge posed by *Salafist* groups. Since June 2007,

the government and Hamas have attempted to control Islamic 'infrastructure' by asserting control over mosques, by training and appointing their own preachers, taking over *zakat* (Islamic tithes) committees and by tolerating the radical but unarmed Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami while clashing increasingly frequently with *Salafist* groups for control over their mosques. In August 2009, the police moved against one such group, Jund Ansar Allah, after it had declared an Islamic 'emirate' in the southern city of Rafah. This confrontation left 25 dead, including the group's leader and five Hamas police officers. Other *Salafist* groups were targeted in February 2010 amidst government accusations that former Fatah members had joined them in seeking revenge against Hamas (Sayigh 2010: 4).

Although the Gaza government nominally upholds existing laws that assure civil liberties, other bodies, such as the *dawah*¹⁵ arm of Hamas, boldly promote Islamist social and religious agendas. Their activism came to the fore in the summer of 2008 when they denounced the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) for running mixed-gender youth summer camps and organised their own segregated programme in direct competition.¹⁶ But it has not been easy to uphold neat distinctions between the government and Hamas as a movement, as individual government officials and agencies have periodically issued their own Islamisation guidelines. In the summer of 2009, for example, the ministry of the interior launched a campaign to impose a 'proper' dress code on women, also separating unmarried men and women on the beach and banning women from riding motorcycles. In early February 2010, the ministry called on all institutions to follow suit and Islamise government agencies. However, when certain measures caused objections, such as the requirement that female lawyers wear the *hijab* in court, the government retreated and took public steps to control the damage, although this did not end other, more discreet measures. For example, the Internal Security Agency

has notified NGOs that conducting 'joint activities' involving boys and girls will incur an automatic fine. Government officials insist that they do no more than 'advise' or 'recommend' with respect to desired modes of behaviour or dress, but many people acquiesce to avoid trouble and escape the constant attention of Hamas's *dawah* arm and mosque imams (Sayigh 2010: 5).

After nearly five years of Hamas rule in Gaza, a new elite is emerging, comprising senior Hamas figures, bureaucrats, security figures and tunnel economy agents. With members and supporters constituting a high proportion of the 32,000 government employees, a network of Hamas-associated Islamic charities and *zakat* committees complementing social welfare, and the implicit support of the 40,000–50,000 people who worked in and around the Hamas-regulated tunnel economy until recently, the movement can rely on a substantial and loyal core constituency. The emerging elite is becoming a centre of political weight within Hamas, consolidated by the ongoing shift of power from the external leadership into the Gaza Strip and complemented by the rising influence of Islamists after the outbreak of the Arab revolutions and their positive impact on both Hamas's political standing and its rule in Gaza.

The gravel path towards reconciliation

Since the summer of 2007, the rift between Hamas and Fatah has deepened as the two rival governments, with different structures, agendas and priorities, have consolidated their hold in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In these entities, both sides thought that they would be able to put into practice their two respective agendas without having to fear interference by the other. Although the division was a blow to Abbas's power, it also provided him with relief from Hamas's intransigence and he became free to move forward in the so-called peace process; relieved as well since Israel could no longer hold him responsible

for Hamas's actions. Israel was able to isolate Hamas in Gaza and to negotiate with an injured Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. But in fact, both have gained little ground in the national goal of true liberation and independence.

Attempts have been made to settle the discord between the two entities. There are four main reasons for their failure. First, both sides disagree over the issue of their respective legitimacy, each party perceiving itself as more legitimate than the other. Hamas persists on its 'right' to govern (based on the election results) and Fatah on Abbas's 'right' to control security, money and the negotiations with Israel (based on a narrow interpretation of his constitutional 'right'). Moreover, each side perceives the other as an impediment to the materialisation of its own political programme and its overall strategy for achieving and securing Palestinian national rights. These two diverse perceptions have prevented both sides from agreeing on core issues raised in the various initiatives, such as elections, the national unity government, security, the PLO and the accords signed with Israel.

Second, the two entities in the West Bank and Gaza, responding to different constituencies, priorities and challenges, have developed in very different directions. Gaza citizens have to cope with the excruciating living conditions of unemployment and poverty inflicted by the imposed siege and with the frequent Israeli attacks on its infrastructure and population, which were not restricted to the two wars on Gaza of 2008–09 and of November 2012. The West Bank regime, on the other hand, has been preoccupied with the institutional reforms of Salam Fayyad's government, and most of its people are preoccupied with paying off loans that were granted easily and abundantly in the latter half of the last decade. Another concern is the preservation of 'law and order' in compliance with the Kenneth Dayton Plan¹⁷ in preparation for the supposed birth of a Palestinian state, which includes the repression of any kind of opposition to the peace

process. Exposed to such dissimilar conditions, both entities have developed different priorities: survival and political steadfastness in Gaza and a degree of stability and economic improvement in the West Bank.

Third, Israel is pressuring both sides with the intention of perpetuating and deepening the rift, since a divided enemy serves best its colonial interests. Abbas-Fayyad's rule in the West Bank is exposed to enormous political and financial pressure with Israel opposing the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, rejecting Abbas's strategy of moving the topic of conflict to international organisations (obtaining the UN approval of Palestine's status as a non-member observer state in November 2012), and withholding Palestinian tax revenues. These measures prevent the development of a truly sovereign Palestinian entity. In Gaza, Israel frequently targets Hamas militarily to keep stressing its view of the terrorist nature of the entity, a strategy that in fact has succeeded in radicalising the movement overall. And while antagonising the two entities, Israel continually stresses that its security concerns (which are difficult to identify and act upon) must be addressed in any future agreement between both Palestinian sides.

Fourth, in the past, the Arab countries have given only half-hearted support in their attempts to promote intra-Palestinian reconciliation. Driven by the fear of strengthening their own religious parties through the presence and example of a strong Hamas, they showed neither the genuine will nor the neutrality that would have been necessary to bring the two sides together. Regarding core issues, the Saudi (2007), Yemeni (2008) and Egyptian initiatives (2008 onwards) were more accommodating of Fatah concerns and less responsive to Hamas's demands, treating Hamas as an immature faction rather than as a legitimate player entitled to concessions from Fatah. The Mubarak regime buttressed this political firmness towards Hamas through a variety of measures on the ground, such as tightening the siege of

Gaza by restricting the passage of goods and persons through its border crossings.

While in February 2012, inspired by the changes in the Arab countries, an agreement between Fatah and Hamas was finally signed in Doha (outlining the formation of an interim government of technocrats, under the direction of Abbas as prime minister, to prepare for elections on several levels), relations between the two sides remain fragile. Fear and mistrust persist and serious political and ideological differences have not been bridged, most notably with regard to the question of how to achieve Palestinian national rights. Fatah still favours an approach that adopts negotiations, recognises Israel and accepts the establishment of a Palestinian state on 22 per cent of historical Palestine. Hamas on the other hand, considers resistance – at least in theory – a priority and rejects the three infamous conditions of the Quartet of condemning terrorism, recognising Israel and accepting the Oslo Accords. Consequently, the two parties continue to show caution in their tactical employment of the reconciliation, contending over the composition of the government and its political platform, over the elections, the way to reform the PLO, general security arrangements and the strategy of resistance.

Presently, Hamas is vigilantly cautious and not inclined to rush the reconciliation for a number of reasons. If elections are to take place, as the Doha Agreement proposes, it still appears unlikely that Israel and the USA will agree to Hamas's participation this time unless they are close to sure that it will lose. Moreover, many Palestinians might be reluctant to vote in favour of the movement's candidates because they know that the elected representatives would not be able to implement their programme. Furthermore, if the movement wins, it will probably be boycotted. If it loses, this would be a sign that it had not been able to maintain the popular support it achieved in 2006 and, consequently, Hamas could more easily be targeted by the new authority since it would have lost its popular and constitutional

legitimacy (Ezbidi 2011). Hamas also fears that Abbas's control of the election procedure, as proposed by the Doha Agreement, would give him the upper hand in determining the final shape of the government.

Thus, internal tension between supporters and opponents of the Doha Agreement has mounted within Hamas (especially in Gaza), even though a large segment of Hamas regards certain developments such as the movement's resistance during the Israeli war on Gaza in November 2012 as supportive of the movement and of its doctrine in Palestine, a development that might outweigh the movement's lack of direct influence on the elections. Hamas has expressed its contentment with the changes in the Arab world, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia, where the Islamists became the ruling parties.¹⁸

Hamas and the Arab Spring

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Hamas realises that the demonstrations and subsequent changes of government were brought about by ordinary people in the streets and not by the traditional Islamic or secular political parties, a development that has shown a wide rift between these parties and the people. Hamas is aware, therefore, that it may need to pay more attention to the will of the people as well, a theme that can partially be achieved through reuniting Palestine.

Initially, Palestinians perceived the changes in the Arab countries as a transformation that would eventually coerce Israel to respond to their aspirations. Hamas in particular viewed these changes as an opportunity that might provide the movement with new strategic spaces closer to its ideology and more supportive of its resistance line. It hoped that the new Arab allies would reject normalisation with Israel, check the developments of a peace settlement, ease or lift the siege imposed by Israel, promote a reconciliation with Fatah and support a reorganisation

of the Palestinian domestic condition on a basis where Hamas becomes effectively involved in determining national priorities. Hamas continued its efforts to strengthen ties with Arab Islamists, hoping that such ties would support its political standing in the rivalry with Fatah and fight the Israeli occupation.

However, such gains have not materialised since the new Arab regimes remained preoccupied with their internal concerns. From the beginning, Islamists in Egypt, represented by president Morsi and the Muslim Brothers have encountered enormous challenges including the failure to reach a solid understanding with other, 'mainly secular' political forces over the constitution and other policy issues. They also remained weak and susceptible to western and particularly American influence, much like the Mubarak regime previously, a fact which has proved an embarrassment and raised questions about the Islamists' ability to formulate a new direction. This implies that Islamists were carrying on with past approaches rather than pushing for a real departure regarding the question of Palestine.

The lack of genuine change in Egypt's relations with Gaza angered Hamas and prompted its leaders to express their discontent with post-Mubarak Egypt. For example, although Egypt in principle opened the border at Rafah, the crossing was frequently closed, Gaza's citizens were not able to move freely and goods were still in short supply, even the basic necessities of life. A case in point was the electricity crisis, which prompted Ismail Haniyyeh to ask in his weekly address in March 2012: 'is it reasonable that Gaza remains without electricity a year after the revolution in Egypt? Is it reasonable that Gaza remains under blockade a year after the dismissal of the tyrant (Mubarak) regime?' (Mayton 2012). Similar views were expressed by other Hamas leaders, frustrated and discontent with the lack of change in the Arab approach towards Palestinians, and eagerness to see the siege of Gaza lifted and a grand strategy towards Israel adopted. The Israeli war on Gaza in 2012 revealed the modest nature of change

brought about by the new regimes, particularly in Egypt, which implied that the cruel Israeli approach towards the Palestinians could be maintained in Gaza and the West Bank.

The weak external support has increased the pressure on the Palestinian factions to unify, a crucial issue if they are to succeed in challenging Israel before United Nations bodies and the International Criminal Court (ICC), and hold it accountable for atrocities committed against Palestinians. It is clear that in order for such moves to be successful, both the PA in Ramallah and Hamas in Gaza need to formulate strategies that are responsive to the aspirations of Palestinians by utilizing both Gaza's resources of steadfastness in the face of frequent Israeli aggression and the diplomatic success in the General Assembly that Ramallah achieved by obtaining recognition of the state of Palestine in November 2012. If such a united strategy were to be successful, Abbas will be able to strengthen his standing in any future negotiations with Israel, and Hamas will equally be able to enjoy international legitimacy and acceptability, which may lead to a lifting of the siege of Gaza and to the movement's removal from the list of terrorist organisations.

Conclusion

Hamas was established at a time when the influence of the PLO in the occupied territories was in decline. In the context of its political and ideological rivalry with Fatah and the PLO and being an Islamist movement, it had a pressing need to legitimise an Islamised narrative of resistance. Thus, Hamas brought an important challenge to the course of the national struggle, in fact Islamising its strategies and tactics.

Hamas's positions and conduct could best be explained in the context of the complex relationship that existed between the three main players in the conflict, Hamas, the PA and Israel, which were all profoundly affected by the interactions between

the other two. Throughout the 1990s and in line with its strategy of challenging the regime from the outside, Hamas opposed the Madrid Conference (1991), the Oslo Accords (1993) and the Palestinian Authority (1994) through a combination of violent attacks on Israeli targets and a boycott of the PA and its institutions.

The eruption of the second *intifada* in 2000 brought the 'peace process' to a collapse and validated for many Palestinians the position Hamas had held all along, asserting that negotiations could not lead to peace without the threat of resistance. It thus paved the way for the development of new rules of engagement, since all Palestinians were united in facing the perils of intensive Israeli assaults against their authority, institutions and factions over five difficult years. Thus, while the Oslo Accords had served as a divisive factor between Fatah and Hamas, the *intifada* played a moderating role and mitigated the differences between both sides. By the end of its first stage of engagement in the Palestinian condition, Hamas's strategy of disobeying the rules prescribed by the Oslo Accords had succeeded and thereby consolidated its narrative of resistance. Throughout this time, internal political and ideological solidity remained a top priority, since it enabled Hamas to withstand the repression from Israel and the PA.

In the next stage, Hamas attempted to gain formal legitimacy for its political outlook grounded in resistance, but this time through participation rather than a boycott of the system. Hamas strove for acknowledgement of its 'right' to have an impact on the direction of the nation in both internal policies and the peace process. However, this desire was fiercely resisted by the Fatah-dominated PA, by Israel and by the international community. Hamas was deemed unfit to become a legitimate player, even though many have understood the movement to have played by the rules, engaged in the democratic elections of 2006 and won its right to form a government through a

process that was internationally declared to be fair and transparent. Nevertheless, in order avoid marginalisation, Hamas was forced not only to attempt co-existence with and incorporation by Fatah as a domineering junior player, it was also pressured to accept the infamous Quartet terms, demands that the movement fiercely opposed, such as abandoning resistance, recognising Israel and accepting the agreements that had been signed with Israel. Being the winner of the elections, Hamas refused a junior role; and being a resistance movement, it could not accept the terms of the Quartet. Hamas was well aware that Arafat's acceptance of these terms had yielded no gains and had failed to bring Palestinians any closer to the consolidation of their national rights. What is more, while Hamas reluctantly accepted some of the conditions of the Quartet, Israel continued to defy obligations outlined in the agreements that it had signed, the very agreements Hamas had adamantly refused. Israel continued to change the conditions on the ground, expanding and creating new settlements, confiscating Palestinian land, demolishing houses, intensifying its attempts to deny Jerusalemites the right of residency in their home city, defying the International Court of Justice's ruling against the building of the separation wall on Palestinian territory, separating communities and cutting off economic resources, while all the time presenting the Palestinians as an obstacle to peace.

Faced with boycott and ostracism, Hamas would argue that the proper question to be raised is not whether the movement's political thinking is, or was, in accord with 'democracy', but rather, whether the PA system itself is and was democratic or not. The answer is a clear 'no' if the rules under which Hamas was operating are subjected to the same scrutiny as its narrative and thinking. Attempting to emphasise its 'right' to change the rules that denied its narrative and excluded it from the system, and as a reaction to the PA's disregard of the rules of representation, a core value of democracy, Hamas rebelled against the PA

and its backers. This rebellion came after the flexibility that had been expressed by Hamas was not matched in the conditions set by Abbas, Israel and the Quartet.

As to the current stage, the separate and parallel entity established in Gaza sees itself as an (if not *the*) embodiment of legitimacy and resistance. However, it has been boycotted and placed under an internationally condoned siege imposed by Israel. By running and governing this impoverished entity, Hamas wishes to stress its indispensability in Palestinian politics and society. The question whether that entity is proceeding towards democracy or not is irrelevant for the movement as long as it enables Hamas to utilise it as a bargaining chip in the future relations with the parties involved. The Israeli inflexibility combined with Fatah's stumbling block approach towards achieving a truly sovereign Palestinian state are circumstances likely to keep Hamas away from re-engaging in the system. Only if and when the old rules of engagement are changed, Hamas may return Gaza to the Palestinian Authority; and it will do so only when Fatah comes to terms with the fact that its political survival lies as much in the hands of Hamas and its Islamist brethren in Egypt and elsewhere as in the hands of Israel and the United States.

Notes

1. This classification is political science-based and presents four ideal types of political party: vote-seeking, office-seeking, policy-seeking and intra-party democracy maximisation (Strom 1990).
2. The first and second Intifadas can be viewed as part of a *jihad* that emanated from the mosques and embodied the return of the Palestinian people to their 'authentic Islamic identity and belonging', a line of argument that resonated positively with a sizable constituency (Susser 2010).
3. When Hamas's founder, Ahmad Yassin, and its leader, Mousa Abu Marzouk, called on the movement to participate in the legislative elections of 1996, these calls were not generally accepted. Other

leaders within the movement were able to thwart those calls and deem them personal views that were not obligatory for the majority of Hamas's members. The movement did not want to confuse its followers, fearing that participation in the elections might be perceived not only as a pragmatic step but as legitimating the PA.

4. Ismail Haniyyeh asserted that Hamas's participation in the elections was in response to the desire of many Palestinians, who were looking for a 'clean and pure alternative' (Al-Hindi 1999: 25–29).
5. Support for Hamas was 17 per cent in 1994, dropped to 6 per cent after the 1996 elections, jumping back up to 13 per cent in 1998 following Palestinian-Israeli clashes (Tunnel clashes) and remaining at that level until the al-Aqsa *intifada* in September 2000. See opinion polls conducted by the Centre for Palestine Research and Studies, in Nablus, Palestine: <http://www.pcpst.org/arabic/survey/polls/cprspolls/intro.html>.
6. Fatah won a large number of seats in remote and small towns and villages with small populations. See final results published by the Central Elections Commission, available in Arabic at: <http://www.elections.ps/ar/tabid/579/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.
7. Interview with Osama al-Mozaini, April 2009.
8. Adnan Mansour commented retrospectively: 'we were surprised by the percentage we achieved.... We expected to become a strong opposition, but not a party that fully governs.' (Interview, Nablus, June 2011).
9. Mousa Abu Marzouq in an interview (*The Palestinian Information Center*, 2007).
10. Interview with Yousef Rezqa, May 2008.
11. <http://www.islammemo.cc>.
12. For instance, after an Israeli soldier was abducted in 2006 Israel arrested many of Hamas's deputies in the PLC, crippling this body's work; it also arrested a number of the ministers in Hamas's government. In 2008–09, Israel led a vicious assault on Gaza that left 505 Palestinians dead and 2,205 wounded.
13. For example, the 'Hamas Mass Action Apparatus', the 'Neighbourhood Reconciliation Committees' and the *Dawah* arm of Hamas (religious proselytising), as well as its security apparatus and its military wing, the Qassam Brigades (Sayigh 2010: 2).
14. Sayigh (2010: 3) agrees with that and his assessment was also confirmed by human rights organisations, including the Palestinian Commission for Human Rights.

15. The *al-Dawah* unit is a department within Hamas that has been assigned the task of carrying out educational (religious and cultural) activities with the intention of attracting and recruiting new members to the movement's political, military and security arms.
16. See the website of the Ministry of Youth and Sports: http://www.mys.gov.ps/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=10&id=32&Itemid=92.
17. A security plan put together in 2007 by the retired American general Kenneth Dayton, stipulating that Palestinian security personnel attain specific 'professional' training on security matters and maintain ties with their Israeli counterparts on security matters.
18. See statements and speeches by Ismail Haniyyeh and other Hamas leaders at the blog of Larbi Sadiki (*Aljazeera English*, 29 December 2011).

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THE MELDING OF ISLAM AND SECULARISM: THE HEADSCARF BAN IN TURKEY

Yıldız Atasoy

Introduction

The wave of rebellions across the Middle East and North Africa, also known as the 'Arab Spring', have drawn on high levels of unemployment, poverty and inadequate social welfare programmes, combined with the political repression of old authoritarian regimes, to mobilise support. The current global economic crisis has played an important role in the outbreak of these rebellions, often expressed through the slogan 'bread and freedom' (e.g. McNally 2012). Citizens participating in the Arab Spring insist on the restoration of citizenship rights, often combining economic and social issues with demands for democracy. On the other hand, we have observed that each of these mobilisations has been countered discursively through a fear politics which holds that Islamic-oriented groups and political parties are manipulating the citizenry. I suggest that such fear politics are centred on the contention that Islamic individuals and groups are 'masters of deceit', hiding a programme of Islamisation of

the state behind citizen demands for democracy. The roots of this fear are embedded in a broader debate on the compatibility of Islam and modernity. Needless to say, there is significant geo-historical diversity across places and cultures, and context specificity always matters in any meaningful analysis of social change. Regardless, in both scholarly and journalistic writings the future outcome of the Arab Spring has frequently been discussed in relation to the applicability of the 'Turkish model' in the Middle East and North Africa, as Turkey is typically viewed as expressing a convergence of Islam, democracy and modernity. It is my conviction that no social experiment with democratisation can be taken as a 'model' for imitation and/or replication elsewhere, to the neglect of the highly variable geo-historical specificity of context. Democratisation points to a process of change in the context of public politics within which a shift in state-citizen relations can occur towards greater and more equal citizen participation, enhanced citizen control over governance and extended citizen protection from arbitrary action by government (Tilly 2004). This is a highly contentious process as various groups and movements struggle for the power to reshape society and position themselves in history. Rather than presenting the democratisation process experienced in Turkey as one which aggregates into a 'model' of state restructuring, my chapter therefore offers a case-specific observation of a contentious politics of rethinking citizenship through an analysis of melding religious issues and secularism in Turkey.

Can there be a 'melding' of secularism and Islam? I examine this question by considering the important case of Turkey. *Laiklik*, which refers to the state regulation of religious beliefs and practices, has long been a key conceptual component of the state's management of a social-change trajectory. Although *laiklik* continues to cultivate a general ethos of attachment to the primacy of the state in social relations, Turkey is currently experiencing a shift in its social-change model from one centred on

state primacy to another centred on a citizenship ethic based on individual rights and freedoms. In reorienting a social-change model, Islamic groups' response to the headscarf ban in particular plays a significant and constructive role. It is within the context of this process of change that there is a rethinking of a relationship between secularism and Islam beyond the symbolic boundaries of *laiklik*.

The changes now occurring in Turkey are more complex than theories of modernity would suggest. Turkish society today is more secular without being less religious, probably because of the growing political involvement of Islamic groups and individuals over concerns with repressive state practices. An analysis of the current headscarf ban in Turkey shows the nuanced ways in which Islamic groups redefine the headscarf as a civil matter with a religious dimension. This finding is an important contribution to sociological accounts of modernity, which tend to conceptualise secularism and religion as possessing all-encompassing qualities, each associated with its own distinctive views on ethics, politics and cultural values and norms. Before providing a detailed analysis of the Turkish case, it is important to discuss the limitations of theories of modernity. I will then be able to offer a more contextualised perspective on the ebbs and flows of a long twentieth century coupling of secularism and Islam in Turkey with regard to political struggles over citizenship rights.

The secularism of modernity: a critical analysis

In Middle English the term 'secular' originally referred to clergy who were not bound by monastic religious rules. It was also used to refer to 'this worldly' as opposed to the 'other worldly' realm monopolised by the Catholic Church. For centuries following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 the term secular was often used to describe the confiscation of church lands, property and various other state measures taken to weaken the Church (Keddie 2003:

14–18). It was only in the nineteenth century that the word began to be associated with a belief that religion should play no role in the affairs of the state. This association was first made in 1851 by the atheist George Holyoake, who used the term secular to distinguish his position from the then morally unacceptable position implied by the words 'atheist', 'infidel' and 'unbeliever' (Royle 1974).

Many have shown that 'secularisation' in Europe has been a long-standing process of social transformation – including the influence of seventeenth-century religious struggles for freedom from Church dogma (Cox 2006: 11–34), eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinking (Hawthorn 1976) and the nineteenth-century rise of a market society (Polanyi 1944). All these developments culminated in 'modernity' as the combination of a particular social reality and a particular worldview replacing the old system symbolised by the Church (Wallerstein 1995: 74). For Charles Taylor (2007), 'secularism' is the worldview of modernity. However, Philip S. Gorski (2000) shows that this argument cannot be empirically sustained. The Middle Ages was neither a period of universal faith in Christianity nor a period of popular superstition, but rather an age in which faith and magic were intermingled. Referring to the findings of Reformation historians, Gorski (2000: 139) further argues that 'the fragmentation of the Western Church actually stimulated a *tighter* relationship between the church and state, and *profoundly* increased the authority of religious elites and institutions in all areas of social and political life'.

Having said this, there is no doubt that the modernity thesis, which expects a general secularisation of society, has been a dominant paradigm in much social science literature. Many social theorists, including Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Daniel Lerner, Daniel Bell, Ernest Gellner and Anthony Giddens, have held the view that the accumulation of techno-scientific knowledge and the growth of secular bureaucracies would form

the primary institutional means for organising society and that the world would converge under the modernising pressures of the capitalist market economy. Although the boundaries separating the secular and the religious have never been clearly shown, these scholars have often seen secularisation as a movement towards 'individualism, rationality and progress'. Progress in this context refers to an irreversible movement towards a world unified around rational arrangements that liberate 'the people' from a traditional order rooted in social-cultural certainties provided by religion and feudalism (Shanin 1997: 65).

Clearly, religion has not faded. There is also a worldwide rise in 'religiopolitical' movements, which, according to Keddie (1998: 697–99), cannot be captured by reference to a religious resurgence, as it tends to overemphasise the religious at the expense of the political. In order to make meaningful sense of the relationship between the religious and the secular, we need to uncover how 'secularisation' is entangled with a specific modernity project.

According to Giddens (1990: 36–45), with modernity, 'reflexivity' becomes the defining characteristic of all aspects of human life. Reflexivity is not limited to the reinterpretation, clarification and monitoring of behaviour and its contexts, but involves the continual generating of systematic self-knowledge in reconstituting social life. Modernity's vastly enhanced reflexivity would imply that 'certainties' provided by religious knowledge (Berkes 2008: 8) cannot be part of modernity. There is no universally accepted definition of religious knowledge (or secular knowledge, for that matter), whether it is based on a 'divine command theory' derived from religious texts or the philosophical study of morality (Mariam Attar 2010). However, religious knowledge usually refers to some form of 'continuity' in moral values and rules of behaviour based on general normative statements and ethical judgments. For Giddens, then, 'reflexivity' undermines the religious knowledge base of behaviour. However, research on Muslim women's head-covering practices does not support such

a contention. Muslim women in Turkey articulate their concerns over the headscarf ban with self-referential notions about more comprehensive individual rights and freedoms, while they also embrace and uphold dominant Islamic norms (Atasoy 2009: 201–38). These women wish to open a debate on the multidimensionality of engagement between individual rights and democracy for individuals and groups with religious orientations.

For Charles Taylor (2007: 16–9), secularity is coterminous with an 'epochal possibility' of self-sufficient humanism. The coming to a 'secular age' constitutes a background framework involving what it is to be a human agent, a person or a self (Taylor 1989: 3). This is a more complex view of secularism than what is assumed by a decline of religion. Because Taylor (2007: 16) conceptualises the religious too narrowly 'in terms of the distinction immanent/transcendent', he still explains secularisation as a universally applicable notion of modernity that ends the era of 'naïve religious faith' in the transcendent. This approach oversimplifies secularism's entanglement with political rule. Deficiencies of this approach can be observed through an analysis of the consequences of the headscarf ban in Turkey for diminishing the conditions of citizenship.

In discussions of secularisation in Muslim-majority countries, Ernest Gellner (1983) sees a *lack* of modernisation as resulting from Islam itself. He understands Islam to be inherently unresponsive to modernity's reflexivity, which is viewed as essential for achieving progress. In his *Muslim Society*, Gellner (1983: 1) writes: 'Islam . . . holds that a set of rules exists, eternal, divinely ordained, and independent of the will of men, which defines the proper ordering of society.' This is similar to a contention made in *The Global Age* by Martin Albrow (1997: 55) that 'the old world religions (or) Traditional cultures . . . were ever present features of the Modern Age, without being modern'. For Sami Zubaida (2005), however, this explanation cannot hold true for the histories of secular experience in the world, including

Western Europe and Muslim-majority countries. He argues that the Islamic knowledge development process has always included features of modernity.

In *The Passing of Traditional Society* Daniel Lerner (1958: 45) identifies three stages of the modernisation process in several Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East: tradition, transition and modernity. For him, transition implies that the psyche of members of traditional society is turned towards modern urban society and shaped by physical, social and psychic mobility. A mobile personality is characterised by rationality and empathy, the latter being defined as the capacity to see oneself in the other's situation, which enables newly mobile persons to operate efficiently in a changing world (Lerner 1958: 49–50). For Lerner, the mobile type of personality constitutes the cultural backbone of capitalism, which he claims is lacking in 'Muslim societies'.

In *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* Daniel Bell (1979: 10) subdivides modern society into three distinct 'realms': techno-economic structure, the polity and culture. Techno-economic structure refers to economic life, governed by rationality. It consistently drives towards minimising cost and optimising output through efficiency, productivity and productiveness. The polity refers to the distribution of legitimate power in society, the central principle of which is the consent of the governed. This principle is assumed to be egalitarian in the sense that each person has a more or less equal voice in providing this consent. For Daniel Bell (1979: xvii), 'the axial principle of modern culture is self-expression and self-realization'. It is in the distinct history of European modernity that Bell identifies a moment when there was unification between these three realms, resulting in the formation of 'bourgeois society'. This involved a historically specific conjunction between individual entrepreneurship and personal economic responsibility in the economy, liberal resistance to state intervention in the polity and an emphasis on 'expressing the self, rather than a set of issues prescribed by tradition, in culture'.

(Waters 2003: 157). In this type of society, 'work... has always stood at the centre of moral consciousness', replacing religion as a source of morality: "In the sweat of thy brow", says Genesis, "shalt thou eat bread" (Bell 1960: 271). A lack of unification between the three realms is taken as a sign of inadequate formation of capitalist dispositions as well as institutions.

Here, Bell establishes a theoretical linkage between secularisation and modernisation, but without an explanation for a sudden drop of religion from the culture of capitalism. The decline of religion carries a Weberian bias of modernity. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Max Weber (1930/1984) identifies the religious ideas of salvation and moral ethics as economically relevant to the creation of 'Western modernity', but not to its routinisation, which requires institutions of rational discipline (cf. Alexander 2003: 8). Weber does not promote an argument for a theory of modernity in which material self-interest is the only, or even the principal, wellspring of human action (Camic et al. 2005: 19). Nevertheless, because of the theoretical concealment of religious experience in the routinisation process, the high level of religious expression and belief in the United States, for example, is either dismissed as an anomaly for an industrialised, modern society (Gill 2008) or theorised as an expression of 'secular rituals' (Wilson 1966) and a case of 'passive secularism' (Kuru 2009) whereby the state plays a neutral role towards the public visibility of religion. In contrast, Muslim-majority countries receive a disproportionate amount of attention in regard to the study of religion in politics. An alleged inadequate formation of a capitalist disposition is presented as causing the political mobilisation of religious tradition against modernity in Muslim countries (Marty and Appleby 1994). Although explanations vary, Western Europe provides an empirical source of modernity for cross-national comparison (Moore 1966). And Turkey is often presented as having successfully completed the process of transition from 'tradition' to modernity (i.e. with modernists prevailing

over traditional Islamists). This is frequently explained in terms of the 'assertive role' played by the Turkish state in promoting the values of individuality, self-expression and self-realisation through a programme of secularisation. This perspective simultaneously presents the Muslim women's wearing of the headscarf as an expression of anti-modern backward Muslim tradition that excludes women from public life (Atasoy 2003: 145).

According to Ahmet Kuru (2009: 161–235), Turkish state policy towards Islam expresses an *assertive secularism* that displaces religion from the public sphere and confines it to the private domain of family. As I will discuss below, this is not representative of the Turkish case. Nevertheless, it is the 'assertive' nature attributed to Turkish secularism that scholars of modernisation theory have valued as the basis for a political 'take-off' in Turkey directed towards the transmission of modern culture to the entire citizenry. Çağlar Keyder (1997) has developed a more sophisticated version of the secularisation thesis. He argues that the continuing significance of Islam is in part a political protest movement expressing the grievances of the poorest, marginal segments of the population excluded from the benefits of modernisation. Consequently, a list of prescriptions often follows – that the state needs to play a more 'assertive' role to displace Islam from the public domain. I have shown elsewhere that Islamist politics does not reflect a protest movement of the poor and marginalised, but constitutes a multidimensional coalition (Atasoy 2009).

This chapter demonstrates that Islamic religious beliefs and expressions are no less relevant, and perhaps more relevant, to the struggle of Muslim groups and individuals for greater citizenship rights. There is no impasse between the secular and the religious; they have been melded in the long history of state formation in Turkey. Undoubtedly, this melding has created significant structural constraints and political repression as well as opportunities for participatory politics in Turkey. Much of the

research on repressive political environments interprets 'resistance' mobilisation in terms of collective revolt (Goodwin 2001; Maher 2010). I make the case here that the politically *repressive* context of Turkey's modernity project has precipitated the emergence of Islamic political movements. Because Turkey has established a multi-party democratic system since 1945, there are also *opportunities* for Islamic groups and individuals to rest their political actions on participatory politics. Turkey has achieved a political compromise between secular and Islamic political elites, and pro-Islamic political parties have been incorporated into electoral politics. Islamic politics does not undermine secularism as a cultural framework of capitalism, but signals that its dynamics are changing. It is these changing dynamics that remain largely unexamined. Such neglect excludes from analysis the power relations that set the basis for the emergence of contentious politics from within secularism.

Turkey's multi-party democratic political system has prevented Islamic groups from developing the perception that there is 'no other way out' (Goodwin 2001) but to revolt. There have been six legally established pro-Islamic political parties since the late 1960s. Among them, the Welfare Party¹ was the first democratically elected party to form a government in 1995, in coalition with the centre-right True Path Party. After winning both the 2002 and 2007 national elections, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) secured two consecutive five-year terms as the first ever 'pro-Islamic' majority government in Turkish history. Even though the role of violent Islamist groups is highly marginal in Turkey, the military and judicial bureaucracy closely monitors the AKP's actions out of fear of *Islamisation-by-stealth* (Atasoy 2009). The notion of an 'Islamic threat' to the secular state is also mobilised to justify a variety of repressive bureaucratic measures against Islamic individuals and groups, including the headscarf ban. Islamic groups' responses change from concessions to 'transformative resistance' (S. Gill 2007: 117) politics through

engagement with a citizenship rights movement (Atasoy 2009: 164–220).

In short, there are many dimensions to the power plays between Islamic groups and the secular state. This chapter argues that an understanding of Islamic politics requires light to be shed on both the conditions of repression and opportunities at the level of state policy, as well as an appreciation of how groups and individuals perceive these conditions for their mobilisation and greater participation. I examine how some Islamic groups in Turkey utilise non-religious categories of citizenship rights to advance their participation in the restructuring of the state. My empirical focus is on the Islamic shaping of a 'transformative resistance' politics against the headscarf ban, in effect since the military coup of 1980.

Secularism in Turkey, defining Islam as a public religion

Kemalism, named after the founder of the Republic of Turkey Mustafa Kemal, discursively frames Turkey's modernity projects. Its specific principles include republicanism, nationalism, *laiklik* (secularism), populism, statism (*devletçilik*) and revolutionism/reformism. These principles were accepted as the official state ideology in 1931 and then incorporated into the constitution in 1937 as the unchangeable founding principles of the Turkish republic. *Laiklik* assumes a position of the highest ideological importance within Kemalism (Oran 2007). *Laiklik*, a word drawn from the French *laïcité*, does not correspond to a separation between the state and religion, but to the regulation of religious institutions, education and normative standards by the state. *Laiklik* embodies a specific reconfiguration of the state that has allowed it to act with key agency in creating 'national citizenship'. Turkey's *laik* trajectory of social change *repeats* the long established Ottoman pattern of experimenting with secularism, but it is not the outcome of a *culminating* process.

The most novel aspect of Ottoman secularism, formulated during the Tanzimat era (1839–76) of state restructuring, was its recalculation of social criteria for state membership – equality before the law among all Ottomans (Davison 1993: 64). Ottoman reformers were concerned with the adjustment of the Ottoman economy to the requirements of the nineteenth-century market economy and with saving the empire from disintegration. They saw the reforms as governing vehicles for cultivating a new ethos of sovereignty. ‘National citizenship’ was adopted as a cultural scheme for state membership dissociated from religious community affiliations. In political terms, the Tanzimat project came to mean the suppression of heterodox elements in society and the levelling out of cultural differences historically expressed in the classical Ottoman *millet* system (Atasoy 1997). The Tanzimat reforms failed to embed state membership within a culturally unified conception of the *Osmanlı* nation.

Tanzimat reformers’ secular imaginary reflects an idealised notion of European civilisation as universal (Güngör 1999: 16–23) – to be emulated on the route to modernity. Islam was seen as the backbone of Ottoman Muslim cultural practices and normative standards, yet Ottoman Muslims should have belonged to European civilisation. This signals the beginning of a series of experiments in devising a social-change model. A small group of intellectuals who called themselves the *Yeni Osmanlılar* (Young Ottomans) in the 1860s opposed wholesale replacement of the former system with a European model (Mardin 1962). They wanted to blend what was conceived as an Ottoman-Islamic culture with what was seen as European civilisation. Yet, they found it extremely difficult to embrace a solid position that would allow them to blend both. They ended up walking ‘the thin line of modernity’ (Pandolfo 2000), thus generating a genuine political debate on culture production between secular and Islamic notions of nationhood.

In this debate, Ottoman reformers advocated the adoption of Western technology, but not its culture. They argued

that a nation which turned its back on its own culture could only produce a rootless imitation. For them, this was a call for disaster. The controversy was temporarily settled in the 1930s when the founding leaders of the Turkish state decided that industrial development required a thorough adoption of Western techno-scientific and socio-normative patterns. Kemalist cadres firmly believed that modernisation was 'a universal necessity' needed to catch up with the level of economic development and technological advances in Western Europe. Nevertheless, as was the case with the men of Tanzimat, for the Kemalist elite the emulation of Western ways did not mean state-religion separation, the displacement of Islam from the public sphere or religious decline. They wished to achieve a level of Western modernity through *laiklik* by keeping religion under the firm control of the state.

The complexities of the genealogy of Turkish citizenship, including the status of non-Muslims, have been extensively studied elsewhere (e.g. Keyman and İçduygu 2005). It is important to note that *laiklik* represented a particular genealogy of citizenship associated with 'formal nationality' (Rubenstein and Adler 2000). In political terms, *laiklik* combined a faith-based ethos with the virtue of loyalty to the state. The establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) in 1924 was crucial for the Kemalist elite to achieve greater state control over religion (Tarhanlı 1993) and the creation of what I call the *citizen-Muslim* (Atasoy 2009: 91). The DRA is a government-funded and controlled organisation operating under the office of the prime minister. It is responsible for the production and dissemination of religious knowledge, the employment of religious personnel, the management of mosques and Quran schools, and the organisation of pilgrimages. It defines 'religious affairs' in terms of beliefs (*itikadat*) and ritual worship (*ibadat*) as 'matters of personal piety', while normative regulation of the economy, society, policing and education is relegated to other branches of government

(Bardakoğlu 2006: 10–11; Kara 2008: 60–4). However, since differences in, and the appropriateness of, various Muslim beliefs and practices were believed to have consequences for state formation, the promotion of Muslim religiosity was restricted to a form of Sunni Islam. For example, the DRA does not recognise the Alevi faith as distinct, but as a sub-group of Islam and a form of national folklore (Demirelli 2004). Consequently, the public performances and visibility of the Alevi Muslim religion through the *semah* ritual were restricted (Tambar 2010). This is despite the fact that Alevis constitute 15 to 20 per cent of the Turkish population.

The DRA has experienced changes in its organisation and duties over time (Gözyayın 2008). With the passing of Law No. 633 in 1965 the DRA's role was clearly redefined as being 'to serve and enlighten society, and thus solidify the unity and integrity of the nation' (Adanalı 2008: 230). The 1965 modification of the DRA's public role added ethics (*ahlak*) to its management of religious affairs. This law placed Islam *explicitly* under the state definition of national unity through 'religiousness based on a moral foundation' (Bardakoğlu 2008: 174). The DRA repeatedly states in its publications that it advocates a 'correct form' and rational understanding of religion, cleansed from superstition, thus working to ensure the modern and civilised formation of the Turkish nation (e.g. *Diyanet Aylık Dergisi* 2006: 1, 9–27). By dissociating the so-called 'superstitious' and the 'irrational', including Islamic mysticism (*tasavvuf*), from a 'true' understanding of Islam, the DRA mediates the blending of Islam with notions of citizenship.

The DRA regards religion both as a private matter of faith and as a public matter of national morality. This elevates Islam into the domain of what José Casanova (1994) calls 'public religion', in the sense that private and public morality issues are combined politically by the secular bureaucracy of the state. This is contrary to the prediction of modernisation theories that religion

will become a private matter and retreat from its public role. By promoting Islam as a public religion, the DRA actually contributes to the 'deprivatisation' of religion (Casanova 1994: 6). The public sphere of politics and the economy thus becomes open to religiously inspired 'renormativisation', as long as it stays within the boundaries of state regulation. Politically mobilised Islamic groups in Turkey today are part of this process of 'renormativisation', which facilitates debates on reconfiguring state-citizen relations.

Islam in social-reconstruction debates

The nation-state of Turkey has experienced several periods of restructuring in which Islam has played a part. During the single party regime between 1930 and 1945, non-state-sanctioned thinking and cultural practices were viewed as a potential cause of religiously inspired opposition to the *laik* state. Political space was refigured in a manner inimical to the expression of cultural pluralism. With the establishment of the multi-party regime in 1945 and the rise to power of the Democrat Party (DP) in 1950, the intellectual debate on Islam's public role re-emerged. The DP integrated smallholder peasants along with their Muslim beliefs and practices into the post-war modernity project. During the 1970s, the debate over the role of religion was revived within the pro-Islamic National Salvation Party. The NSP popularised the theme of Western imperialism and questioned the presumed universality of a Western model. After the military coup of September 1980, Islam was explicitly integrated into the official state ideology of Kemalism, thereby creating a 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' (Güvenç 1991). The principal goal of the military regime (1980–83) was to depoliticise urban marginal groups and youth. The military saw Islam as a panacea for containing ideological politics, especially the Left. However, more radical manifestations of Islam emanating from the religious orders

were also subject to close scrutiny. The Motherland Party (MP), which came to power in 1983, although not an Islamist party, combined a mixture of economic liberalism, nationalism and some Islamic platforms (Atasoy 2003). The 'pro-Islamic' Justice and Development Party (AKP) currently in government has deepened economic liberalisation projects by fusing Islamic ethics and Western modernity. As many Ottoman reforming intellectuals had done more than a century ago, the AKP is blending Western standards and Islamic normative principles through Islam's engagement with liberal democratic principles and the neoliberal market economy, but in a way that the West is no longer perceived as a coherent cultural unit of modernity. It is regarded as an economic power within the larger space of global competition.

Many commentators agree that the modernisation process in Muslim-majority countries has often been accompanied by authoritarian political rulers whose pursuit of 'development' through a general transformation of society fails to ensure greater social welfare for the majority of the population (Zubaida 2005). In the case of Turkey, Haldun Gülalp (1997) attributes the rising importance of Islamic politics to the frustration of the general population with socio-economic inequalities. According to Çağlar Keyder (1997), the actual practice of modernisation – one which did not expand political liberalism and citizenship rights in society – is responsible. At fault is not the modernisation project itself but its unsuccessful or limited application by political rulers.

Basing my argument on the long history of *laiklik*'s entanglement with state rule in Turkey, I suggest that Islamic politics cannot be unambiguously associated with the general level of modernisation as if there is a zero-sum relationship between the religious and the secular. The relationship is more dynamic, and includes such topics as 'religious freedom' and 'religious pluralism' (Finke 1990; Hanson 1998; A. Gill 2008). For example,

Muslim women in Turkey articulate their concerns over the headscarf ban as a civil matter with a religious dimension and in terms of individual rights and freedoms. We must disentangle the term 'secularism' from its various, often ideologically intertwined meanings. As a historical phenomenon, secularism continuously blurs religion and politics. In analysing whether Egypt is a secular or religious state, for example, Hussein Ali Agrama (2010) argues that the 'secular' blurring of religion and politics occurs precisely because of the very precariousness of the categories it establishes, which then creates the problem of drawing proper boundaries between what is considered religious and what is not. As argued by Ali Bayramoğlu (2009) in the Turkish case, there may not be much difference between those who identify themselves as 'secularists' and others defined as 'Islamists'. It seems to me that what needs to be studied, then, is the political process of restructuring state-citizen relations, within which the tensions of secularism are played out.

Islamic transformative resistance politics

Islamic-oriented groups in Turkey today are reformulating the conception of modernity in terms of a dialogue between the two modernities as outlined in *What is Globalization?* by Ulrich Beck (2000). The first modernity represents the Westphalia system of situating state formation and the economy within national jurisdictions and the second refers to a post-national era. As explained above, Turkey's first modernity spans a long history from the Tanzimat reforms of 1839–76 in the Ottoman Empire to the present. Islamic groups today are re-evaluating the foundational logic of the first modernity by embracing a politics of diversity expressed through *engaged* citizen participation in society and a 'democratic rights' platform. This involves a substantive rethinking of the citizenship rights of individuals and communities. In what follows, I review the Islamic pursuit of a social change

trajectory by focusing on the example of women with headscarf concerns.

The headscarf ban, 1980-present²

There has never been a law regulating women's dress in Turkey. The 1925 Hat Law was enacted for men to ensure that they would wear Western-style clothing. Only state-employed religious personnel were permitted to wear religious garb and then only during religious ceremonies (Çınar 2005: 70). The law did not include an outright ban on women's Islamic dress, nor did it clearly indicate how women should dress. Nevertheless, a shift away from the Islamic code of dress was a Kemalist cultural imperative for women's presence and representation in the public sphere. Those who did not comply were quickly singled out as backward and culturally ill-suited for modernity. Women who wore Islamic clothing were displaced from the public sphere of employment, education and politics, and pushed into a marginalised existence. Mustafa Kemal's Kastamonu speech on 30 August 1925 is illustrative of this social imaginary:

I have seen women in some places who throw a piece of cloth or a towel or something like that over their head, and hide their faces and eyes, and when a man passes by she turns her back... What is the meaning and sense of such behaviour? Gentlemen. Can the mothers and daughters of a civilized nation take on such a strange shape and adopt this strange manner, this barbarous posture? This image makes the nation an object of much ridicule. It must be remedied at once. (Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu 1990: 95, my translation)

Since the end of the 1960s, an intense epistemological debate has ensued over the political meaning of women's coverage as more

covered women began to participate in the public sphere of education. This debate has centred on the notions of *çarşaf*, *başörtüsü* and *manto/pardösü*. *Çarşaf* refers to a black garment that conceals the entire body. It usually consists of a top part which covers from the head to the hips and a lower part which is worn like a long skirt. *Başörtüsü* refers to a headscarf tied under the chin which covers the head and the neck. *Manto* refers to a woman's long-sleeved winter overcoat which opens in the front and is of varying length. *Pardösü* is a light overcoat worn in the warmer months and has been widely worn since the 1980s. *Çarşaf* has been defined 'as an uncivilized form of dress embarrassing Turkish women's image in the world' (Aksoy 2005: 138). Because some municipalities banned the *çarşaf* in 1935 (Arat 1998: 55), it was generally assumed that it was illegal to wear, and women therefore began to wear the *manto/pardösü* instead as an overcoat to complement the *başörtüsü*. The wearing of *başörtüsü* outside the home was generally accepted as customary social behaviour. However, women were expected to take it off if they desired to be present in the state sphere of paid work, education or politics. As the number of university students wearing the *başörtüsü* and long coat began to increase in the late 1960s, the *başörtüsü* and long coat also began to be perceived as signs of religious backwardness. Given that there was no legal ban, school administrators used by-laws to prevent students from wearing the *başörtüsü*. Since the 1980 military coup, the word used to describe women's Islamic body-covering practices has changed once again from that of the *başörtüsü* and *manto/pardösü* to the *tüurban*.

Defining the headscarf as a symbol of political Islam, the military government (1980–83) made a number of amendments to the clothing by-laws pertaining to students and public employees. On 7 December 1981, female students were banned from entering classes wearing the headscarf. In the same year, another amendment to the education ministry's by-laws stipulated that students and employees were required to wear simple,

'contemporary', 'modern' clothes in accordance with Atatürk's principles (*Resmî Gazete*, 7 December 1981). Since private universities had not yet spread throughout Turkey, this by-law required that all university students remove their headscarves. Under the military government's imposition in 1983, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) required university police officers and security employees to inspect student clothing at university entrance gates (Aksoy 2005: 166). Those who insisted on wearing the headscarf were either refused admittance to their schools or subjected to disciplinary measures, including expulsion, by university administrations. Still others decided to leave school rather than expose their hair. And some students even chose to wear a wig over their hair or headscarf (Atasoy 2009: Chapter 7). Those who did not wish to jeopardise their education chose to reveal their hair. In 1984 YÖK amended its by-law, after the election of the MP to government, by allowing students to cover their hair in a more 'modern, contemporary' style, which it defined as the *türban*. YÖK was expecting students to adopt a European style *türban* which is tied behind the head and reveals the neck and ears.

However, students' actual *türban* wearing practices have taken a turn as they adopted a different form of head covering, folding the headscarf neatly under the chin to conceal the neck and completely cover the hair, ears, back of the head and shoulders. Three or four pins are often used to prevent the scarf from slipping and revealing the hair. In the case of the *başörtüsü*, the head, hair and ears are also covered but the scarf is knotted under the chin, sometimes revealing part of the neck. This form of headscarf is not held in place with pins. As a result, it may slip and reveal a small portion of hair on the forehead. It should be noted that both styles fully reveal the face. Due to a lack of clarity in differentiating different styles of head covering in regard to their 'modernity', the 1984 YÖK by-law merely introduced greater complexity into the debate by making an arbitrary distinction

between *başörtüsü* and *türban*, thereby symbolising two opposing political positions. From 1984 onwards, women wearing the headscarf have come to be addressed as *türbanlılar* (women with a turban). In contrast, the *başörtüsü* is now associated with the innocence of an older generation of Turkish-Muslim women representing women's piety. These controversial developments resulted in yet another YÖK by-law in 1998, after the so-called soft military coup of 1997, which completely banned the wearing of the headscarf at schools by designating it the main axis of the *laik*-Islamist political divide (Günay 2001: 14). As of November 1999 the ban has been implemented in universities across Turkey. It remains in effect.

The implementation of the clothing by-law has caused widespread anxiety among students, their families and other members of society. There is no accurate statistical data to reveal the actual number of students affected by the headscarf ban, but it is estimated that 80,000 students were expelled from school in 2004 as a direct outcome of the ban (*Today's Zaman*, 1 October 2004). In actuality, hundreds of thousands of students have been expelled. Given that many of the students wearing headscarves did not attend classes regularly because of the ban, they were essentially disqualified from continuing their education. This is despite the fact that a vast majority of women in Turkey do not see the *türban* as problematic in any way. The *Milliyet Newspaper* (31 May 2003) reported that about 75.5 per cent of the total adult population of 42 to 44 million are against the headscarf ban in universities and only 13 per cent of the adult population view the *türban* as an expression of political Islam.

The headscarf ban and transformative resistance politics

In response to the developments outlined above, Islamic women have framed the debate within the individual rights discourse

of liberal democracy. By connecting their concerns over the headscarf ban to the state's violation of human rights, Islamic women are demanding that the state be held accountable for the democratic rights of individuals. Their actions have been transferred to a legal foundation in the courts with thousands of students filing court applications. Some of these court cases have been settled in favour of the students, but then appealed by the state prosecutor to the Council of State, which has upheld the legality of the ban. Other students have taken their cases to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) (Aksoy 2005: 269–73).

The pro-Islamic AKP has also defined the headscarf ban in relation to women's 'democratic rights'. However, the military and the judicial bureaucracy have placed the AKP under suspicion of anti-*laik* charges. When threatened by the constitutional court, the leadership cadre in this political party has chosen to withdraw its commitment to lifting the ban, no doubt a result of interest-based cost-benefit calculations. Its evaluation of 'the risk and cost' of action is not without merit. The party closure case of the AKP is illuminating.

On 9 February 2008, the AKP government successfully passed a bill in parliament permitting female students to wear the headscarf at universities. Shortly thereafter, on 14 March 2008, the bill was countered in an indictment submitted to the constitutional court by the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals. The indictment accused the AKP of undermining Turkey's *laiklik* system and asked for a ban on the party as well as a ban on the prime minister, president and 69 other party members from participating in politics. The AKP avoided being closed down by the Constitutional Court when the court ruled against banning the party on 30 July 2008. Nonetheless, the party was certainly intimidated, as ten out of the 11 judges on the Constitutional Court agreed that the AKP has become a 'focal point for anti-secular activities and needs a

strong warning' (Şimşek 2008). The decision included a clause stating that:

If attempts are [made by the AKP] in the future to take steps considered against *laiklik*, the chief prosecutor will immediately open a new closure case, in which the Constitutional Court will not [have] to examine it from scratch, but [merely] continue from the previous case (Bulaç 2008).

The withdrawal of the AKP's commitment to lifting the ban has probably contributed to university students playing a greater role in grass-roots activism. For example, Ak-Der, founded in 1999 as a non-governmental women's rights organisation, plays an active role in women's struggle against the headscarf ban. The organisation was also registered with the UN in 2008 as an NGO with special consultative status on women's human rights in Turkey. For Ak-Der, the headscarf ban discriminates against women on the basis of freedom of choice, equal opportunities, the right to education, labour market participation and political representation. Although it is not an exclusively women's organisation, the Mazlum-Der, founded in 1991, also articulated the headscarf ban as a violation of women's human rights. These organisations held in common an emphasis on the citizenship and human rights dimension of the headscarf issue. Because it establishes a more explicit link between Islamic ethical thought and human rights, I provide greater detail on Mazlum-Der's critique of the headscarf ban.

The Ak-Der

Ak-Der focuses its activism on the single issue of the headscarf ban. Its funding comes from membership subscriptions and donations received in compliance with the laws of Turkey. It has no

affiliation with a political party. The founders of Ak-Der include women who themselves were discriminated against as students, lawyers, medical doctors, teachers and professors.

Ak-Der links the headscarf issue to the principles of individual rights, freedoms and equality as specified in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ak-Der appropriates the declaration's statement on citizenship rights, which asserts that 'everyone is entitled to realization, through national effort, and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and the resources of each state, the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality' (McMichael 2004: 19). As the ban has no legal grounding, Ak-Der has fought it as a justice issue. It promotes its position through books, newsletters, position papers, press releases and survey results, as well as DVD, CD and VCD releases, and various social network formats including YouTube, internet blogs and Facebook. Ak-Der has taken on more than 600 cases for women claiming violation of their human rights because of the headscarf ban, out of some 30,000 similar cases in the courts (Eraslan 2004: 823–4). Ak-Der (2008) also offers legal counselling services for covered women who wish to continue their education abroad. It is estimated that 3500 women have travelled abroad to study since 2000 because they were not permitted to attend classes in Turkey (Eraslan 2004: 820–1). Those students with the personal financial means to continue their education abroad are of course able to circumvent the ban. Some women from lower socio-economic backgrounds are also able to study abroad with the financial assistance of Islamic non-governmental organisations (Maden 2008).

Mazlum-Der

The Mazlum-Der (an organisation supporting human rights and the solidarity of oppressed people) was founded by a group of

54 Islamic and nationalist individuals as an alternative to left-leaning human rights organisations in Turkey. It derives its financial support from members' subscription fees, as well as donations. It is completely independent of the state and other political parties. The Mazlum-Der is sensitive to the headscarf ban but argues that other issues surrounding women's human rights should not be ignored. These issues include gender-based wage discrimination, honour killings and police harassment of Kurdish women. According to Mazlum-Der, any attempt to restrict human rights that cannot be justified on the principles of human dignity and justice constitutes oppression and a violation of human rights.

The Mazlum-Der does not take the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as the basis for a claim of universal human rights. According to its mission statement (page 1) 'Mazlum-Der believes that human rights are universal... [They] are rights bestowed by God, without any exception, to every individual with full equality in line with human dignity.' For the Mazlum-Der, the universality claim of human rights should express an explicit justice ethic. The source of this ethical principle is divine power, a claim to religious universality. Page two of the mission statement reads:

This fundamental principle which provides for 'being a witness of the truth', expresses an understanding which discards the idea based on preferring 'society' to 'the individual', 'the majority' to 'the minority' and 'the ones from us' to the 'right and just ones'. This ethical principle... requires that we defend human rights as a general category for everyone... this ethic is to defend human rights on a deontologic[al] ground... based on evaluating the 'goodness' of an action or deed according to the consequences it produces. Hence, for the Mazlum-Der to defend human rights without discrimination... is a moral, ethical imperative.

For the Mazlum-Der, the moral imperative of human rights transcends national borders and requires 'above-politics cooperation' at the world level (Mission Statement: 2). The Mazlum-Der agrees with the UDHR in extending the same set of rights to all people and regarding all people as equal. However, it disagrees with the UDHR's attachment of human rights' implementation to the responsibility of individual nation-states. Because national implementation of human rights is monitored through the rulings of various international organisations, such as the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), a particular European understanding of human rights is elevated to the status of universality. According to the Mazlum-Der, this undermines the universality principle of human rights discourse. Therefore, the Mazlum-Der argues (as indicated on page two of its mission statement) for the need to develop a human rights understanding and implementation procedure based on justice, free from any kind of double standard that emerges from within an undemocratic global system reproduced ideologically and institutionally through various international conventions and declarations.

Ayhan Bilgen (2005: 78–9), former president of Mazlum-Der, argues that covered women should not expect international organisations to monitor the Turkish state's violation of basic normative conditions of religious freedoms and rights under the headscarf ban. By applying to the ECHR to have the headscarf recognised as an expression of women's religious beliefs, Bilgen suggests that Islamic groups have legitimised the ECHR as an agent with the authority to deliberate on and decide whether women should be allowed to wear the headscarf. Here, the issue for Bilgen is not whether wearing the headscarf is subject to democratic debate, but how to constitute an ontological basis of existence for Muslims beyond and outside the moral authority imposed by the state and state-like institutions.

The Mazlum-Der's critical stance on the dominant position of the UDHR in framing human rights discourse reflects its

commitment to the notion of what Gandhi (1938) called 'moral universalism' – a concept based on the mutual respect of individuals and the collective struggles for self-determination and self-definition against social injustice and prejudice. Its mission statement (page two) states:

In the struggle [for] human rights... it is crucially important that the international community puts human rights and freedom under the guarantee of law through internationally recognized documents. However, we need to point out that international documents signed by many countries through the United Nations are not sufficient in either content or power of enforcement... Thus, in order to improve human rights, the human rights defenders of the world need to be open to all cultures of the world, not just to their own, and should develop a vision for transforming the gains of each civilization to the gains of humanity.

As Hannah Arendt (1951/1986: 298) wrote in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, an abstract idea of humanity itself does not guarantee 'the right to have rights, or the right of every individual to belong to humanity'. For Mazlum-Der, 'the right to have rights' is morally embedded in God's 'divine justice', which cannot be confined to the national/international jurisdictions of state-led projects.

Conclusion: the moral embeddedness of citizenship

Muslim groups have responded to the headscarf ban by highlighting the moral-ethical dimension of an individual's right to self-define. It is important to note here that the AKP government in Turkey has finally managed to respond to women's demands and partially lifted the headscarf ban. The government passed a law in 2012, allowing female students to wear the headscarf in schools providing religious education. The partial removal of the ban was

part of a law which ended the requirement that students wear a uniform in schools. In October 2013, the AKP government also partially lifted the headscarf ban for civil servants. Nevertheless, a more general headscarf ban remains in effect for students in universities and for judges, prosecutors, police and military personnel in the public sphere of employment. Can an approach to the headscarf ban from a moral-ethical perspective be interpreted as a call for a different kind of modernity, one which challenges the state-centric politics of the first modernity? To help answer this question, I invoke the notion of 'comprehensive democracy', articulated by Pratap and Priya (2004), referring to a way of life rather than a mode of governance. It combines the idea of *vasuthaiva kutumbakam* (a Sanskrit word, meaning 'the world is a family') and the Gandhian word *swaraj* (self and rule). Working for a comprehensive democracy implies *sampoorn swaraj* (full realisation of self-rule). *Swaraj* relates to all dimensions of human life and applies to human relationships at all levels, from the individual to the global (Pratap and Priya 2004: 3). Such an approach identifies self-rule not with *demos*, the people defined in terms of state membership, but with *demoi*, peoples (Bohman 2007: 19–57). This approach helps us take into account the meaning of the headscarf as integral to a women's right to self-definition and right to live with a particular moral, cultural and spiritual orientation. It also requires rethinking the basic epistemic assumption of citizenship beyond its singular territorial connotation of space (country or the state) and its territorialised political subjects (state membership). In short, it requires a rethinking of citizenship, cultural membership and human life beyond the state.

Notes

1. After its closure, the Welfare Party re-emerged under a new name in 1998, the Virtue (Fazilet) Party. The Virtue Party was the continuation of the Welfare Party in terms of its *milli görüş* (national view) ideology, party leadership and organisational structure. The AKP emerged in

2001 as the moderate faction of an Islamic political orientation after its split from the Virtue Party. Although it is a descendant of the Welfare/Virtue Party, the AKP represents a more liberally oriented Islamic discourse which I define as 'liberal Turkish Islam'.

2. The following sections of the chapter are based on Atasoy (2009).

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POSTSCRIPT

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This book has aimed to illuminate issues that have affected the various Islamist movements in the Middle East in their deliberations over the question of participation in political systems, be they autocratic or democratic. To this end, it has analysed the many manifestations of Islamism that have emerged over the past three decades, mainly as an ideology of opposition to the ruling regimes; and it has examined the role of Islamists in the Arab revolts and in the emerging post-revolt states. The various chapters have analysed the ways in which Islamists and the revolts have impacted on each other. They have also focused on the extent to which Islamists chose to cooperate with other trends and trend-setters, and reflected on whether such cooperation could strengthen the drive towards a democratic 'post-Islamism'. In order to explore these issues further, a few preliminary questions have to be clarified: How can the Arab revolts be characterised? Who are the Islamists and what are their ideological roots? What type of politics will they pursue and which policies will they champion? Can they hammer out an ideological platform for social and political change that is widely supported? Understanding these issues is essential when trying to grasp the

future direction of Arab societies under the rule of Islamists; be it partial or full. Additionally, the impact of the domestic and external environments of various Arab societies on their transformation has been scrutinised.

There is no doubt that the Arab revolts and the subsequent regime change in some countries are watershed events that promise to reshape the political, social and cultural scene in the region. In particular, some of these changes may allow for the emergence of a new type of politics that incorporates the themes of post-Islamism and post-secularism and thus may fundamentally change the future of Arab societies. Each of the countries affected will be impacted differently, owing to the diversity of local conditions and as a result of the political and ideological variations among the Islamists themselves. Understanding, or predicting, answers to questions regarding what direction these developments might take necessitates a closer look at the origin and identity of Islamists.

Over the last two decades, the term 'Islamism' has carried two distinct connotations. Within the Middle East region, the term 'Islamists' denotes groups that use Islamic teachings as a guideline for participation in the public domain. Most of these groups see no contradiction between these teachings and the practices of democracy. Being part of the opposition, they consider their political activism to be a reaction to decades of authoritarian rule. The other connotation can be found in the writings of Western scholars who deem Islamists to be political actors who use violence not only as a means but also as an end, while subscribing to dogmatic principles that pay no attention to the will of the people and their worldly aspirations. The latter view downplays the political and interpretational differences among different Islamist groups, for example the sharp criticism expressed by *Jihadi Salafists* (like al-Qaida) of Hamas when the latter took part in the Palestinian elections in 2006, or of the Muslim Brotherhood for its opposition to the use

of violence, its participation in the 2012 elections and its acceptance of the position of ruling party in Egypt. Brutal regime repression forced the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood to work within the political system following the Hama massacre in 1982, which cost the lives of thousands of people and led to the imprisonment or banishment of many thousands more. Moreover, this experience prompted other mainstream Islamic movements to avoid armed conflict, remain patient and bide their time. Yet, the Western notion of the 'militant Islamists' was exploited by despotic Arab regimes, which suppressed the Islamist opposition in order to prolong their unpopular reign.

Dissimilar movements and trajectories

Obviously, Islamists do not constitute a monolithic body: they operate under dissimilar conditions and dynamics, their political and ideological orientations and aims vary and they differ in their approaches when interacting with their respective environments. Islamists are the ruling party in Turkey, Egypt (until recently) and Tunisia; part of a ruling coalition in Lebanon; a parliamentary bloc in both Jordan and Yemen; banned in Algeria; and 'governing' – but also subjected to an international boycott – in Palestine. They operate under varying internal environments, such as sectarianism in Bahrain; tribal rivalry in Libya and Yemen; ethnic divisions that are threatening to tear apart Syria; a colonial occupation in Palestine; and smouldering social and economic problems in Egypt. Not only have the dissimilar conditions profoundly impacted on Islamists' political flexibility, on their capacity for political action and on their ideology; it is also very likely that they will continue to produce dissimilar modes of political institutionalisation of Islamism, entailing a variety of future trajectories and outcomes.

Islamists are neither newcomers to politics nor zealots motivated by a radical ideology. Historically, they have played a key role in

Arab politics and society, often being represented among the opposition. They have participated in parliamentary elections; entered alliances with secular, nationalist and socialist forces; participated in several governments – in Sudan, Jordan, Yemen, Algeria and Palestine; and they have at times forged alliances with non-Islamic regimes, such as the Nimeiri regime in Sudan in 1977. Parallel to their participation in elections, alliances and governments, other developments have contributed to their maturation and strength: the Iranian Revolution in 1979; the military coup in Sudan in 1989; the demise of the communist bloc in the late 1980s; the electoral victory in 1991 of the Algerian Salvation Front, which was subsequently denied its right to govern by the local army; the conquest in 1996 of most of Afghanistan by the Taliban, which led to the establishment of its Islamic emirate; and Hamas's victory in the legislative elections in Palestine in 2006. The victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the 2002 elections in Turkey was a crucial, inspirational development for many Islamic movements. Although the AKP does not describe itself as Islamic, its ideology is based on an Islamic frame of reference and its experience in heading a multi-party democracy in a country that under its rule has had substantial economic growth has been perceived as a successful model by many Islamists.

In general, Islamists have faced massive repression from Arab dictatorships, which became more severe following the US-led war against 'terrorism', in which Islamists and their institutions were cruelly suppressed. This experience has produced bitterness, overzealous slogans and intolerant threats from particular individuals, who are now in many cases members of parliament and in others have only recently been released from prison. In fact, like other repressed groups, Islamists in their current political and ideological manifestation can be seen as a by-product of authoritarianism and of exclusionary practices that annulled political and civil rights, placed the state's resources in the grip of ruthless rulers and their families, and institutionalised

corruption and vice. Under these tyrannical and cruel conditions, Islamists became the most wronged victims, since they were 'common enemies' for Arab rulers and Western countries alike, enabling the former to garner support from the latter (mainly the United States) in the context of the so-called 'war against terrorism' which bolstered their regimes and legitimatised oppressing the people.

Leaderless revolutions

Sparked in late 2010, the Arab revolts were a cry in unison from ordinary people against the governing cliques and the impotent opposition forces. Without being guided by political parties, these people participated in demonstrations in order to protest decades of despotic rule that had left the majority of the population poor and disenfranchised, affecting particularly the youth. While their slogans expressed a deep sense of social, economic and political deprivation, they displayed very little religiosity. However, they were not only directed at the ruling parties, but also constituted a vocal protest against the impotent secular and Islamic opposition forces that had allowed ruthless leaders to enslave Arab societies for decades. Thus far, the protests have led to the overthrow of four dictators (Bin Ali, Mubarak, Ghaddafi and Saleh), spread to countries such as Jordan and Bahrain, and strongly afflicted Syria, where a bloody internal conflict is being fought. Almost two years since the revolt began the liberal and progressive voices that first rallied the Arab streets have been drowned by the slogans of the better-organised and more popular Islamists, who have filled the power vacuums left in the wake of the revolutions. In sum, while Islamists were neither the most vocal nor the most prominent party in the revolts, being better organised than other groups they benefited from their outcomes and have since remained at the forefront of political events.

The implications of these revolts for the mainstream image of Arab political culture in the West are far-reaching. The revolts have not only changed conditions on the ground, they have also invalidated the long-held claim that Arabs are powerless. The uniqueness of the revolts in this region lies in the fact that they were not borne of political parties and ideologies. Instead, they exemplified the popular will and redefined the connection between the people and the state in terms of notions of citizenship and civil rights and liberties. Thus, these developments contradict the Orientalist assumptions that Islamic and Arab political traditions are incompatible with revolution and shows that the right to resist bad government is not a Western prerogative. Scholars such as Bernard Lewis and Daniel Pipes have argued that Muslims are unfit for democracy and that 'enlightened secularists are better than democratic Islamists', deeming Islamism as congruent with autocracy while considering secularism to be in conformity with, even a prerequisite for, democracy. On this basis, Western governments concluded that Islamists could not be trusted (with either democracy or governance) and that the West should devote time and resources to the promotion of secularism in order to promote democracy, an approach that has been adopted by Western governments for decades. However, there is agreement among Middle Eastern scholars that this approach fostered compliant and accommodating regimes rather than promoted true democracy.

The Arab masses have defied the fatalist view of Islamists and proven that devout Muslims are not bound to obey autocratic rulers who shun justice and freedom, themes that were forcefully present in the Arab revolts and are expected not to disappear from public discourse any time soon. In the past, neither were the vanquished secular regimes of Bin Ali, Mubarak, Ghaddafi and Saleh democratic, nor are the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and al-Nahda movement in Tunisia autocratic. Secular regimes that championed nationalism, socialism and the liberation of

Palestine have achieved very little except to reinforce repression and exclusion. This has compelled people to join the opposition, which in many cases is represented by Islamist parties. The secular regimes have presented Western governments with a fictitious choice between themselves and the Islamists: either to accept the regimes' ruthless but pro-Western rule or to see anti-Western Islamists seize power. In reality, the approach of Islamists such as Hamas, al-Nahda and the Muslim Brotherhood towards the West has remained conciliatory, balanced and pragmatic, as well as fully aware of the importance of cooperation with Western countries in an interconnected world. Such a stance should be considered reassuring by the West and utilised as an opportunity to demonstrate that Western governments will no longer support despotic regimes and instead promote democratic processes in the Arab countries, as well as refuse to intervene in favour of one party over another and accept the results of the democratic process even when the winners are not their preferred choice.

Communities of interpretation

The revolts have made it plain that in post-revolt Arab societies, religion is becoming influential and increasingly assuming the role of what Habermas describes as 'communities of interpretation' within the public arena of secular societies. According to Habermas, religion has the ability to influence public opinion in any society by weighing in on key issues irrespective of whether the arguments are convincing or objectionable. He further points out that while modern Western states maintain a strict separation between religious and political institutions, and even though these governments remain independent of religious institutions, the public sphere remains open to all citizens, who as equals can freely interact with each other using both secular and religious arguments. However, the domain of the state, which monopolises coercive power, should not become party to

conflict between religious communities, otherwise 'the government could become the executive arm of a religious majority that imposes its will on the opposition', as Habermas maintains. Such a state of affairs differs from radical secularism, which seeks to eliminate religion from the public sphere in order for democracy to be maintained, a model that was awkwardly reproduced by Bin Ali and Mubarak, who banned and outlawed all religious parties in their respective countries. Post-secularism in the Arab world is in the process of putting into practice the type of politics described by Habermas and of allowing for the emergence of a discourse that has long suffered under oppressive secular rulers.

Similarly, the discourse that Asef Bayat has termed 'post-Islamist' can be described as emphasising religiosity and religious rights, but nevertheless granting individual choice and liberty. It thus diverges from the traditionally recognised Islamist discourse that fuses religion and responsibility. Post-Islamism seeks to bind Islam with individual preference and freedom, with democracy and modernity; it is expressed by acknowledging secular requirements, being thus characterised by freedom from rigidity, and by breaking down the monopoly of religious truth. Post-Islamism has found its expression in the Arab revolts in the sense that they were not fuelled by an intense and passionate religiosity, as was the case with the Iranian revolution. However, the revolts were not prompted by radical secularism either. The slogans have focused on dignity, freedom and social justice, demonstrating that people feel entitled to these civic values and to the freedom to pursue their own lives and beliefs to the best of their ability. Here, Islamic thought is associated with liberal principles and Islamists maintain that Islam can provide answers to many questions concerning politics, justice and social issues. These answers nevertheless exhibit a wide spectrum of Islamist politics, encompassing pragmatist, liberal, democratic, militant, extremist, and autocratic strands. They reveal not only a variety of analyses and interpretations of Islamic teachings, but also distinct approaches

and means to achieving political aims and goals. Thus, Islam is considered a tolerant religion that embraces diversity and pluralism among peoples and cultures, calls for mutual recognition and coexistence, accepts civilizational and religious pluralism and contests the use of force to transform a civilisation or enforce religious orthodoxy. Inspired by these themes, most Islamists in the Arab world are now gradually abandoning their opposition to electoral politics, gender equality, minority rights, free media and human rights. They maintain that they can not only justify but also incorporate these principles into their religious philosophy and values. In this way the Islamists can be more in accord with the values of people holding secular views and those who support democracy, human rights and gender equality. They are also in line with those who wish to see greater economic progress and development, and advocate a genuinely democratic approach to solving the problems facing their societies.

Certainly, the Islamists' participation in governance gives rise to a number of challenges that they must overcome by devising responsive social and economic policies and by accommodating contrary views. Arab societies need political consensus and the participation of all political groups, regardless of their electoral strength. Also, Islamists must refute the belief that they are inherently undemocratic and will not cede power once in charge of government. In order to dismiss such fears, Islamists must develop an inclusive and responsive approach that shuns the old strategy of *al-mugalaba* (which implies staying on the margins of politics by becoming a formidable opposition in the parliament rather than a governing party). Furthermore, they must develop a solid and durable mechanism for ensuring accountability and responsibility. To meet people's expectations, the rule of Islamists must not only be different from their despotic predecessors, it has to provide a reassuring alternative that is based on institutionalisation of the democratic process as a way of securing civil rights and liberties. It is the interplay between Islamists and others that will promote

democratic transition and political consensus which can provide the political stability that has been missing for decades.

As of now, there are people who do not agree with the view that post-Islamist movements must be accepted only because they have emerged victorious in the Arab Spring revolts. Some consider the revolts to have been initiated by Islamists, presenting Islamists as the makers of the Arab awakening. Others intend to prevent the Islamists from commandeering the Arab Spring and to seize power with the help of the West. Yet others suggest that Islamists should be allowed to rule, as this will be an opportunity to prove their certain failure in governing a country and responding to the aspirations of its citizens. This viewpoint holds that the Arab people will defeat Islamists, as has been the case with Morsi's rule in Egypt, and that modernists will return victoriously, welcomed by the people. Some argue that it would be a grave mistake if the modernists withdrew from the battle, because they fear that once Islamists assume power, they will consolidate their rule. Thus, they demand a transitional phase to give their movements the opportunity to organise into political parties in order to compete on equal terms in elections. One has to keep in mind that at this point, Islamist parties, having provided the opposition under the former rulers, are so far the only organised political bodies. Proponents of this view persist in giving in neither to the Islamists nor to the West. Instead, they insist, non-Islamists should organise their ranks and recapture what they see as the co-opted Arab Spring.

The Islamist challenge

The validity of one opinion over the other will depend on the future conduct of Islamists. While they are in power now, their biggest challenge is yet to come. The question is whether they can offer solutions to the economic hardships that brought people out onto the streets in the first place. And will the Islamists

meet their people's needs through the conduct and compromises of government rather than through the imposition of an ideology in the name of religion? Their ability to satisfy people's demands and aspirations will largely depend on the manner in which they address and handle a number of challenges.

The first challenge, particularly in Egypt, is the Islamists' inexperience and lack of a political platform, factors that make them inadequately prepared for the tasks of governing and of tackling the thorny issues afflicting Arab countries. Thus far, no definitive agenda has been provided by Islamists concerning how they intend to interact and cooperate with other, 'mainly secular' groups, or how they plan to handle the challenging and pressing issues of poverty, low productivity, deterioration of health care and educational systems, social tension, as well as the numerous external policy challenges.

The second major challenge, again particularly in Egypt, is the ambiguous frame of reference for the Islamist government. Thus, the status of the parliament under the Temporary Constitutional Declaration remains unclear and Islamist members of parliament are taking little responsibility for the government's decisions and policies in both the domestic and the foreign realm, while members of other parties have too little influence to challenge these decisions. Initially, this situation was exacerbated by an increasingly tense relationship between the Brotherhood and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which exploited the unclear framework until President Morsi replaced its top leadership with generals that had no connection with the ousted Mubarak regime (which was considered risky at the time and proved unwise, since he made enemies that have since retaliated by ousting him). However, the situation became even more complicated in November 2012 when the president neutralized the judicial system, which had by then emerged as his key opponent, by granting himself greater powers and declaring that the courts were disqualified from challenging his decisions. Morsi

put himself above oversight and gave protection to the Islamist-led assembly by writing a new constitution. Currently, the challenge before Egypt's new president was to reconcile his desire to hold onto supreme 'imperial' powers with securing the approval of all Egyptians, a move that was strongly opposed by secular and nationalist political and social forces.

A third challenge is posed by the difficulties political movements experience when having to transform into political parties and governing agents. In Egypt, this is exemplified by the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood has not been ready to hand over political power to its parliamentary bloc, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). Political decisions, as Issandr El Amrani argues (this volume), are still made by the Brotherhood, which regards the FJP as being little more than a political tool for its own interests. The question of whether the movement's MPs answer to the party or to the Guidance Council cannot be answered satisfactorily. The same dilemma can be found in Palestine, where it has not been easy to uphold neat distinctions between the government of Gaza and Hamas as a movement, as individual government officials and agencies have periodically issued their own Islamisation decrees and influential Hamas political and security figures have intervened in public policies and decisions.

The fourth challenge is posed by the *Salafi* (*Wahhabi* and *Jibadi*) groups found in many countries, such as Egypt, Morocco, Yemen and the Gaza Strip. *Salafis* perceive themselves as the proponents of 'authentic' Islam and as its defenders from secularists, whom they consider the arch-enemies of religion and traditional values. It is likely that these groups will continue their strong opposition to the policies adopted by Islamist governments, viewing them as too accommodating of secular values and not responsive enough to the exigencies of traditional Islamic thinking and conduct.

The fifth challenge is due to the fact that, thus far, Islamists have not succeeded in differentiating their political outlook

and interests from those of Western countries, particularly the United States. This raises the question of what are the fundamental differences between the Islamists and the former regimes with regard to the highly unpopular policies of Western governments? Islamists are expected to spell out their positions vis-à-vis the policies of Western countries on crucial issues such as Palestinian statehood, the on-going conflict in Syria and Iran's alleged nuclear ambitions. These points of disagreement between Islamists and the West must be made clear if the Islamists are to be credible in opposing unjust Western policies that are at odds with those of the region's youth, the true authors of the Arab Spring.

The most recent challenge likely to affect the outlook of Islamists in Egypt and other Arab countries is the Egyptian army's toppling of president Morsi following massive street protests. Deposing an elected president by force raises serious questions regarding democracy's future not only in Egypt but the region. The deadly clashes between the Army, Morsi's followers and opponents have put the country on edge. The question arises: when electoral results are denied, what is the moral justification for demanding that Islamists not prefer 'bullets over ballots'?