

PARTY SYSTEM RELIGIOSITY AND THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY IN
PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM COUNTRIES

By

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To my family,
who did a hundred times more than their best

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	<i>Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi</i> – Justice and Development Party
ANAP	<i>Anavatan Partisi</i> – Motherland Party
AP	<i>Adalet Partisi</i> – Justice Party
CHP	<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i> – Republican People’s Party
CPR	<i>Congrès pour la République</i> – Congress for the Republic
DP	<i>Demokrat Parti</i> – Democrat Party
DSP	<i>Demokratik Sol Parti</i> – Democratic Left Party.
DYP	<i>Doğru Yol Partisi</i> – True Path Party
FIS	<i>Front Islamique de Salut</i> – Islamic Salvation Front
FLN	<i>Front de Libération Nationale</i> – National Liberation Front
FP	<i>Fazilet Partisi</i> – Virtue Party
FDTL	<i>Forum Démocratique pour le Travail et les Libertés</i> (Ettakatol) – Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties
Gerindra	<i>Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya</i> – Great Indonesia Movement Party
GIA	<i>Groupe Islamique Armé</i> – Armed Islamic Group
Golkar	<i>Partai Golongan Karya</i> – Party of the Functional Groups
HAMAS	<i>Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyah</i> – Islamic Resistance Movement
HMS	<i>Harakat mujtama' as-silm</i> – Movement of Society for Peace
HDP	<i>Halkların Demokrasi Partisi</i> – Peoples’ Democracy Party
Hanura	<i>Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat</i> – People’s Conscience Party
MG	<i>Millî Görüş</i> – National Vision
MHP	<i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i> – Nationalist Action Party
MNP	<i>Milli Nizam Partisi</i> – National Order Party
MSP	<i>Milli Selamet Partisi</i> – National Salvation Party

MRN	<i>Mouvement pour la Réforme Nationale</i> – National Reform Movement
MTI	<i>Mouvement de la Tendence Islamique</i> – Movement of Islamic Tendency
NU	<i>Nahdlatul Ulama</i> – Revival/Awakening of Ulama
PAN	<i>Partai Amanat Nasional</i> – National Mandate Party
PBB	<i>Partai Bulan Bintang</i> – Crescent Star Party
PCOT	<i>Parti Communiste des Ouvriers de Tunisie</i> - Tunisian Workers' Communist Party
PD	<i>Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë</i> – Democratic Party of Albania
PDI-P	<i>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan</i> – Indonesian Democratic Party Struggle
PDM	<i>Pôle Démocratique Moderniste</i> – Democratic Modernist Pole
PDP	<i>Parti Démocrate Progressiste</i> – Progressive Democratic Party
PK	<i>Partai Keadilan</i> – Justice Party
PKB	<i>Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa</i> – National Awakening Party
PKK	<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê</i> – Kurdistan Workers' Party
PKS	<i>Partai Keadilan Sejahtera</i> – Prosperous Justice Party
PPP	<i>Partai Persatuan Pembangunan</i> – United Development Party
PPSH	<i>Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë</i> – Party of Labor of Albania
PS	<i>Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë</i> – Socialist Party of Albania
RCD	<i>Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique</i> – Democratic Constitutional Rally
RND	<i>Rassemblement National Démocratique</i> – National Rally for Democracy
RP	<i>Refah Partisi</i> – Welfare Party
QIM	<i>Qafqazya Müsülmanlar İdarəsi</i> - Administration of the Caucasian Muslims

SHP	<i>Sosyaldemokrat Halk Partisi</i> – Social Democrat People’s
SP	<i>Saadet Partisi</i> – Felicity Party
UGTT	<i>Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail</i> – Tunisian General Labor Union
UPL	<i>Union Patriotique Libre</i> – Free Patriotic Union
UTICA	<i>Union Tunisienne de l’Industrie, du Commerce et de l’Artisanat</i> – Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts
YAP	<i>Yeni Azərbaycan Partiyası</i> – New Azerbaijan Party

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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The literature on the relationship between Islam and democracy explains the rarity of democratic occurrences in predominantly Muslim countries either through the destructive role of religion or the incompatibility of Islam and democracy. Arguing against this sweeping "Islamic democratic deficit" idea and taking a "dynamic" approach instead, this study looks at this diversity of democratic outcomes in Muslim-majority countries and asks what exactly leads to these differences. In this process, it focuses on party system religiosity as the key explanatory factor. Instead of combining all religiously oriented political parties under the same category and making a blanket assessment of some negative impact of their participation in politics, it argues that there are different degrees of party religiosity, ranging from religious extremism to hostile secularism, and that each type has different effects on the democratic quality of their countries. Through a statistical analysis of an original dataset on party system religiosity, it demonstrates that the parties with a more fundamentalist understanding of Islam usually have a negative impact on democratic quality, whereas parties that highlight inclusive and tolerant aspects of Islam contribute to the deepening of democracy in their respective countries. It then adds analytical depth to the findings with more qualitative and thickly

descriptive research conducted in Turkey and Tunisia. By tracing the processes of democratization in several Muslim majority countries and using a large number of data sources (including information from field research, elite interviews, party statements and official documents), it constructs a causal story that showed how exactly these different types of religious parties interacted with the state, society and other parties, and how the constraints and political opportunity structures in which they worked affected their attitudes towards democracy, liberal values and plurality within their political systems. Overall, the study challenges the common assumptions about Islamic parties, secularism and democracy in the Muslim world, and changes the focus of debates on these issues from essentialist and neo-Orientalist arguments to actual practices on the ground and the day-to-day politics in predominantly Muslim countries.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Rise of Islamist Parties

(Zeus): Ah how shameless – the way these mortals blame the gods. / From us alone, they say, come all their miseries, yes, / but they themselves, with their own reckless ways, / compound their pains beyond their proper share.

—Homer
The Odyssey (1.37-40)

The (re)emergence of Islam as a political force in Muslim majority countries¹ since the 1970s had important implications for political developments, regime outcomes and security debates not just locally but all over the world. ² Well-publicized events like the Iranian Revolution and Algerian Civil War shaped the understanding of Islam in world politics and created fears and suspicions about the role of religion itself.

Throughout these debates, Islam has been “imagined [both] as inferior (to Jewish and Christian traditions), unchanging, and militant by the West; and superior, dynamic and peace loving by Muslims” (Arkoun, 2003, p.18), leaving scholars of Islam and politics perpetually divided on the issue.

¹ While the term “Muslim majority country” is pretty self-explanatory (i.e. countries with more than fifty percent of Muslims), it must be noted here that different data sources give different percentages for Muslim populations in each country, making the issue way more complicated than it looks on paper. The primary data source used for this purpose, the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA), for instance, classifies Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Kazakhstan as countries with large Muslim populations, but not predominantly Muslim countries. CIA Factbook, on the other hand, categorizes both Burkina Faso and Nigeria as Muslim majority countries. To deal with this inconsistency, this research follows Steven Fish’s strategy (2011) and takes 55 percent Muslim population as the threshold for Muslim predominance, yielding 44 Muslim majority countries as a result.

² Before getting into the details of this discussion, it is necessary to start with a definition and operationalization of the concept of democracy on the ground. This research uses a mainstream definition, suggested by Juan Linz, that refers to “legal freedom to formulate and advocate political alternatives with the concomitant rights to free association, free speech, and other basic freedoms of the person; free and nonviolent competition among leaders with periodic validation of their claim to rule; inclusion of all effective political offices in the democratic process; and provision for the participation of all members of the political community, whatever their political preferences” (Linz, 1978, p. 5).

Even though the post-Cold War era brought some degree of political openness, and the new wave of democratization seemed to affect some Muslim majority countries, the brief period of optimism and hopes of democracy in the Muslim world did not last long. As new regimes opened the political arena to a large number of competitors, and religious groups started to seek power through free and fair elections, these hopes gave way to the fears about Islamist takeovers of democratic politics, leading many to believe that democracy would be a “one man, one vote, one time” experience in Muslim countries (Djerejian, 1992). Confusion about who Islamic parties represented, what they really stood for and the means through which they tried to achieve their goals, the prominent members of the international community usually condemned them for harboring radical tendencies and engaging in violent acts in the name of Islam. They also claimed that religious groups’ presence in political life constituted a social and political powder keg in many parts of the world, which must be countered by any means necessary. In return, supporters of such parties accused “the West” of not respecting their “national will” and democratic institutions, and argued that Islamic doctrines and the piety of politicians would solve the long-standing problems of their countries and save them from the yoke of secular-minded authoritarian regimes. Secularists in Muslim majority countries, on the other hand, sided with the Western powers and emphasized the necessity of separating religion and politics for a well-functioning democracy. At the same time, they encouraged everyone to question the democratic commitments of Islamists, who had been denouncing democracy just a few years ago. Not surprisingly, all these viewpoints created intense debates on the place of Islam in modern politics, the compatibility of religion and democracy, and the impact of religious party

participation in political processes, not just among scholars but among the laypeople as well.

For observers that expected the significance of religion to decline as Muslim majority countries modernized, the enormous popularity of parties that represented religious interests presented a puzzle. Why did a primordial identity –religion- not disappear from public scene altogether with modernization, but made a comeback in the form of faith-based parties, which then proved themselves exceptionally successful in elections? What did the Islamists offer the citizens secular parties could not? Why could secular parties not ensure further democratization in their countries, and how did religious actors become champions of political openings in the end? After all, just a few decades ago, the idea of an “Islamic political party” sounded like an oxymoron, simply because most religious authorities denounced all Western political institutions, including parties, as degenerate and anti-Islamic. Religious groups’ enthusiastic participation in the elections, let alone statements about advancing democracy, was similarly unthinkable in many countries; but then, barring a small minority who argued that sovereignty (*hakimiyyah*) rested solely with God, most came to accept and respect democratic ideals. What prompted these changes, and how should we, as scholars of democratization conducting research on Muslim majority countries, account for these changes?

Islamists’ decision to take a part in politics is rather curious for these reasons, but there is an even more important question to be asked: What does this Islamic party identity stand for? Can we talk about a single and unified Islamic party ideology in this regard, or do different Islamic parties have different goals and different means to

achieve them? If they are different, what distinguishes one Islamic party from others? What happens once they participate in politics? Does the spread of political Islam necessarily bring an end to the hopes for democracy in these countries? Do they really have a hidden agenda, as their opponents suspect, aiming to undermine the democratic institutions from within and replace them with Sharia-based ones? Or, having suffered a great deal under authoritarian regimes, are they now genuinely interested in democratic reforms? Once they come to power, does it matter whether or not they were only strategically committed to the idea of democracy? What role do they play in their countries' political scenes? Do they promote a "civic culture" among citizens and use religious texts to encourage pluralism, tolerance and social justice; or do they increase tensions between believers and non-believers and use religious dogmas and institutions to justify their authoritarian rule? What is their understanding of democracy, and are they able to translate their democratic rhetoric into meaningful action?³ And finally, does their inclusion in a political system decrease the quality of democracy? Is secularization (or, privatization of religion) the only way to achieve higher democratic quality in the Muslim world?

Understanding the Role of Islam in Politics

Through its focus on the religiosity in party systems, this dissertation project seeks answers to these questions. As both the religious and secular groups use the

³ This aspect raises important questions about the concept of democracy as well. If we accept a majoritarian definition of democracy, for instance, political systems where religious parties are dominant can be nothing but democracies in the truest form, since democracy means translating grassroots demands into political outcomes and the large majorities in predominantly Muslim countries want religion to play a bigger role in political affairs. If we accept that democratic regimes by nature include liberal characteristics, however, these systems cannot be considered democratic unless the parties adopt certain liberal principles and respect the rights and liberties of the groups that do not share their religious ideology. Case studies will discuss these aspects in some detail, and the conclusion chapter will expand this discussion further.

rhetoric of democracy in seeking representation and support for their political goals, it takes the literature on regime transitions and democratic deepening as the main framework for this study. Despite a great deal of research done on Islam and democracy, however, political scientists have yet to reach a conclusion on the issue of compatibility of these two. The recent rise of the “Islamic state” and increasing Islamophobia in the West lead some scholars to argue that religion, in whatever form, is detrimental to democratic processes. Inspired by secularization theories (Beckford, 1992; Rawls, 1993; Rorty, 1994), these scholars criticize religious groups’ tendency to turn some issues into taboos, create an intolerant environment and prevent public debate on these topics. Others do not see a problem with religion per se, but attribute the lack of consolidated democracies in the Muslim world to Islam -particularly to its fusion of religious and political authority, which violates the liberal democratic doctrine of separating the church and the state (Lewis, 1993; Sadowski, 1993). Going against this tide, however, some believers and practitioners argue that Islam has intrinsic characteristics (such as *ijma*, *ijtihad* and *shura*) conducive to democracy and claim that religion by itself does not stand in the way of further democratization in the Muslim world. No matter what side one takes, however, the debates remain theoretical, lacking a basis in solid evidence and empirical analysis. Conclusions are drawn from anecdotes or single-case studies, and priority is given to theological explanations, freezing disagreement on the prospect for democratization in the Muslim world.⁴

⁴ Only a few scholars pose the questions on Islam and democracy in a systematic way to be tested through qualitative and quantitative analyses, and their findings lead them to believe that religion itself has no bearing on the regime type of a country. They defend the idea that Islam should not be held responsible for the authoritarian resilience in the Islamic world, as the religious texts can be used to bolster the legitimacy of any political system, from imperialism to social democracy (Barkey, 2008; Ayoob, 2008; Driessen 2012). Rather, it is the external (e.g. colonial legacies, constant warfare in the Middle East, ill-fated attempts to promote democracy) and internal (e.g. stalled modernization processes,

This study, on the other hand, argues that even if it is done properly, it is a futile attempt to figure out what Islam or Islamic figures say and not say about democracy. As multivocal entities, religions have a number of ways to interpret different contemporary concepts, and there is no true Islam, or a religious authority, which can give democracy a seal of approval or condemn it once and for all. For this reason, the question of whether Islam is compatible or incompatible with democracy is a misleading to a large extent (Villalón, 2010), which means the discussion on these issues needs to be shifted from polemics against and apologetics for Islam to a systematic search for regularities within the complexity of religion and nuanced understanding of religiosity in political contexts. Surely, this means more systemic analyses, more empirical evidence, and comparative research that takes a look at the broad sample of countries –that is, cases that go beyond the Middle East and/or North Africa.

The investigation of more cases also necessitates the recognition of the diversity of regime outcomes in the Muslim majority countries. Acknowledging this diversity de-exceptionalizes the democratic experiences of some countries, and demonstrates that countries that share Islam as their belief system can differ vastly in their democratic qualities.

Explaining the Diversity of Democratic Outcomes in Muslim Majority Countries

The main purpose of this research project is to explain the reasons for this diversity in regime outcomes without engaging in essentialist or monolithic explanations about the relationship between Islam and democracy. Because parties act as “the central institution through which mass representative democracies now work” and

resource wealth, tribal alliances, authoritarian family structure and gender inequality) factors that led to lower quality of democracies in Muslim majority countries.

because their structure, positions and preferences should “be viewed as among the most, if not the most, significant part of the road to democratic consolidation” (Hofferbert, 1998, p. 423), this dissertation singles out party systems as the main explanatory factor behind different paths Muslim-majority countries take in this process.⁵ Through its analysis of the practical implications of party system religiosity, it demonstrates that Islamic parties have been playing important (be it positive or negative) role in their countries’ democratization efforts. Then, it moves on to examine the conditions under which these roles turn out to be hindrances or contributions to democracy in their countries. In this sense, by looking at the actual practices and political opportunity structures these groups face, this research examines whether political parties, especially the religiously oriented ones, create additional challenges for the already difficult democratization processes, or instead support their countries’ democratization efforts with their acts and statements.

With this goal, this project presents a comparative analysis of religiosity in Muslim majority countries’ party systems, without disregarding the historical and country-specific factors that led to differences in these levels. Even though this is not the first study that examines party religiosity from this perspective, it differs from the existing research on several ways. First of all, the previous research on the issue usually conflates Islam as religion and Islamism as political ideology, or focuses primarily on the extremist forms of political Islam. Ignoring the multivocality in religion

⁵ Note that militant Islamism is beyond the scope of this paper. There is an important distinction between radical Islam/religious extremism and militant Islam that is often overlooked in the literature. Whereas radical Islam favors the overthrow of the existent regime to restore Caliphate or establish a new Sharia-based state, militant Islam distinguishes itself through its excessive use of violence to achieve even simpler goals. Furthermore, unlike radical Islamists, whose aims to impose Sharia are usually limited to the confines of their own countries, militant Islamists have a larger vision that encompasses the whole *ummah* (Islamic community).

and dynamic understanding of governance, it assumes that all Islamists act with some ideological rigidity and will not rest until theocracy is installed. This study, on the other hand, accepts that religious extremists, despite the overemphasis on them in the media and scholarly works, constitute a minor group among religiously motivated political actors. The key political actors consist of more mainstream Islamic parties, which respond to the existing constraints and political opportunity structures in very different ways. As a shared religion does not dictate a political roadmap to all religious groups involved, it is not very unusual for Islamic parties to disagree on everything except for a core set of ambiguously defined ideals. Not all religious parties choose to moderate their stances on religion as they start to take part in electoral politics (Schwedler, 2006; Ozanno & Cavatorta, 2013), and not all of them harbor secret plans to hijack the state apparatus once they gain political power through elections (Tibi, 2008). Other than presenting Islam as the best response to the political and social demands of the Muslim citizenry, they often disagree on ways to use “Islam as a way of life” against the contemporary challenges and the meanings of the re-invented concepts from the religious tradition.

In this regard, parties that represent political Islam constitute a modern phenomenon, the aims of which range from the establishment of a Sharia-based state to restoration of religious values in an otherwise secular society. Even among the groups who want to restore as the sole source of legislation in their countries, there is no consensus over what exactly Sharia is and how it is supposed to be implemented with the institutions and mechanisms of a modern state. Under these circumstances, there can be no single Islamic party identity to speak of, and the term “Islamist,” loosely

used in the literature and in the media to describe the widely different groups, obscures more information than it reveals about the aims and actions of many parties in the Muslim world.⁶ Unfortunately, studies looking at party systems in the Muslim majority countries are surprisingly similar in their narratives of fundamentalist religious parties versus repressive/authoritarian secular parties, not paying enough attention to the different types, statements and actions within party systems. Barring some notable exceptions (Cavatorta & Ozzano, 2013; Mecham & Hwang 2014), there has been no systematic study to differentiate types of party religiosity and examine their impact on the country's political regime.

The complexity of this relationship, however, requires a thorough understanding of these political parties, their discourse on religion and politics, their actions and relations with the state, with their social bases and rival political parties. This research aims to fill this gap by investigating almost all parties in democratic or partly democratic Muslim majority countries and using both qualitative and quantitative data. Accordingly, it asks whether parties with different types of religiosity lead to different qualities of democracy, and investigates if the changes in parties' expressions of religiosity over time accompanies the changes in the country's democratic quality across different stages of this process.

⁶ Two main Islamic parties that came to power in their respective countries after the Uprisings of 2011, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Tunisia's Ennahda, followed such different paths throughout their tenures in government that they required a more nuanced understanding of the terms "Islamic party" and "political Islam" to analyze their positions, policies and implications for the democratic government in Muslim majority countries. Whereas Egypt's Ikhwan used the protest votes and its relatively narrow political base to create a majoritarian form of democracy, in which the demands and needs of the minorities were not respected, Tunisian Ennahda built its political career on consensus-building and insisted on the inclusion of its political rivals in the political decision-making processes to prevent public uprisings and ensure further democratization. In the end, Ikhwan's uncompromising political stances drove the regime opponents to the streets and led to a military intervention to restore order, which created an even more repressive junta regime; and Ennahda's willingness to engage in give-and-take nature of democratic processes and acceptance of secularist victory in the parliamentary elections of 2014 made the country the only Arab state classified as a "free" country in Freedom in the World indices.

Party System Religiosity and Democratic Quality: A General Framework

The dissertation creates a new typology of Islamic parties based on the differences in their political agendas, motivations and methods, which helps to distinguish Islamic party elites from other religious actors, as well as from their more moderate and more extremist counterparts - all of which are currently subsumed under an all-encompassing “Islamist” label in the literature. By creating a six-point religiosity scale, it refines the characteristics of parties in each category and labels them as “religious extremist”, “conservative”, “tolerant religious”, “civil-confessional”, “secular–areligious” or “hostile secularist” political parties, depending on their stance on religious issues.

While the details of this classification are explained in Chapter 3, this scheme categorizes the parties that use the literal interpretation of the religious texts and call for the implementation of Sharia as *the* source of law as “religious extremists,” whose religious message entails a more top-down imposition of Islamic rules on everyone within the state, regardless of their belief systems or political agenda. On the opposite end stands the hostile secularists, who completely reject any involvement of religion to the country’s political affairs. Labeled as the proponents of “assertive secularism” by Kuru (2007), the parties in this category differ from their secular/areligious counterparts with their strict opposition to religion in the public sphere. The latter also favors the separation of religion and state but does not share the hostile secularists’ views on restricting public religiosity. The parties in the civil confessional category are closer to being a religious party, as they do not insist on state neutrality on the matters of religion and are actually comfortable enough with religious norms to incorporate some of them to their party programs. Yet, by not exclusively catering to the interests of specific

religious groups, they also embody the characteristics of a catchall party. On the other hand, conservative religious parties are less accommodating of groups and views outside their established understanding of Islam, and they show more resistance towards the inclusion of non-Muslim or secular interests in the party politics. They are also less likely to form alliances with non-Islamic parties or have people with different belief systems in their higher-ranking party positions. In contrast, the parties in moderate religiosities category show more commitment to democratic ideals, as well as more flexibility in the political arena, as they constitute a centrist group that accepts the main principles of secularism and democracy but still takes Islam as the main point of reference. While their upper echelons almost exclusively come from their religious base, rank-and-file members are more diverse.

This typology, briefly explained here, is then used as a dynamic framework to evaluate religious parties and, as an overarching theoretical scheme, to make a sense of their actions on the political scene. Yet, the theory behind this typology does not assume that all these categories are set on stone. On the contrary, it acknowledges that these ideologies and parties are not static entities, but they define their identity and political position based on their options and systemic constraints, and then continue to evolve over time by responding to changes in their political environments. Thus, the theory presented here takes these changes into account. The discussions in Chapter 4 also demonstrate how political developments, various institutional constraints and different opportunity structures shape the choices and strategies of these parties.

Data, Method, and Hypotheses

Rather than getting bogged down in the specific details of religious groups in each country, this typology helps us to take a broad view of the Muslim majority

countries and find parallels between cases that help or hinder democratic processes. Then I use this typology to frame four hypotheses that will explain the link between the party system religiosity and democratic quality: (1) Countries whose party systems are dominated by inclusive (i.e. secular or civil-confessional) parties are more likely to have higher quality of democracy; (2) Democratic quality decreases as the share of extremist parties in a party system increases; (3) Polarization between the secular and Islamic parties in the system will lead to lower qualities of democracy; and (4) The closer the party system is to the civil-confessional party type, the greater the likelihood of having a better quality of democracy.

Drawing from the key insights of Kalyvas on the development of Christian Democrats in Europe, these hypotheses imply that the question of whether Islamic parties genuinely embrace democracy or use the system to their advantage is irrelevant here. Democracy may very well be “expanded and consolidated by its enemies” (1996, p. 264), and the actions and policies of religious parties become more important than their public praise of democracy or presumed hidden agendas to establish a totalitarian theocracy. Therefore, the abovementioned hypotheses are based on the logic that the inclusion of religious groups in party systems creates more legitimacy for the regime and “facilitate adaptation and compromise between competing groups” (Lai & Melkonian-Hoover, 2005, p. 558). For this reason, civil-confessional parties can best serve to democratic ends, because they can move beyond a pure majoritarian understanding of democracy and accept the need for a plurality of views in a political system. The more the parties disregard these aspects of democracy, the more harmful their views will be to the democratic development of their societies. Accordingly, both

religious extremist and hostile secularist party types exclude large segments of the society from political debates by leaving hardly any room for civil rights and liberties, and trying to impose their view of an idealized past or some future vision on each and every citizen, regardless of their belief system (Powell, 1986, p. 358). This typology, in this sense, answers the question of why some Muslim-majority countries have managed to establish well-functioning democratic regimes and others are stuck in resilient authoritarian regimes, despite sharing a common belief system of Islam.

After describing these ideal types and laying out the groundwork for this theory, the research project tests these hypotheses through statistical analyses of a sample of Muslim-majority countries that meet the minimum criteria for democracy (at the time of the coding, the number of cases was 36) in the post-Cold War period (NELDA dataset, Hyde & Marinov, 2012). As explained in more detail in the fifth chapter, it first gathers information on the party systems, policies and programs, and then classifies every “relevant” political party, i.e. the parties have gained at least one seat in the parliament, within this sample of countries, according to their type of religiosity. However, in order to assess these parties’ impact on the regime types without falling into ecological fallacy, it examines the overall religiosity of the party system by calculating a religiosity score for every country-election year. As a result, each relevant party receives a score from 1 to 6, which is then multiplied by the seat percentages, and the sum of these scores for each party gives the aggregate score of the party system religiosity. It then measures the extent to which extremist parties dominate the party system, and how far the each party system is from the civil-confessional party type, which is deemed most conducive to democratic development of a country. With all these variables to test the suggested

hypotheses, it creates an original time-series dataset that both accounts for the changes the parties may go through over time, and the other factors that may influence the democratic quality of the country in one way or another. In this regard, the aforementioned hypotheses put the theoretical claims on religious parties into rigorous qualitative and quantitative tests.

Although the literature emphasizes different aspects of democracy in its operationalization and measurements, this study adopts Linz's definition⁷ and measures the level of democratic quality through scores from Freedom in the World index, Polity IV dataset and Unified Democracy Scores (Pemstein, Meserve & Melton, 2010). Statistical models also include several control variables, such as the level of economic development, colonial history and resource dependence; and uses either ordinary least squares (for UDS) or ordinal logistic regression (for Polity and Freedom House scores) to test the hypotheses. The results of these tests indicate that the countries whose party systems are dominated by inclusive and tolerant parties tend to fare better in terms of democratic quality, while others with influential extremist parties in their party systems tend to be less democratic, as expected by Hypothesis 2. However, the latter effect seems only statistically and substantially significant for the religious extremist parties; because, while having a slight negative impact, the dominance of hostile secularist parties do not seem to pose the same level of threat party systems to the quality of democracy. A different model also shows that the further away a party system is from the civil-confessional political party type (which represents religious voters but includes other groups as well while not dividing its constituency along religious lines), the lower

⁷ See Footnote 2.

the quality of democracy is, proving not all religiously oriented parties constitute a threat to democratic development or decrease the chances of having democratic outcomes. Thus, the main problem of Muslim majority countries seems to be the uncompromising attitude of fundamentalist Islam, rather than the representation of religion in the political scene.

Case Studies on Different Religiosities

Despite the success of quantitative methods in demonstrating the link between the dependent and independent variables, the dissertation still needs to answer an important question, that is, *how exactly* and *why* the type of religiosity in a party system lead to a variation in democratic quality. Having introduced the theory and tested hypotheses, the research then moves on to understand the causal mechanism at play “by the workings of what structures the phenomenon is produced” (George & Bennett, 1997). Through the process-tracing method, the qualitative chapters of the dissertation analyze the democratization processes in two Muslim majority countries, Turkey and Tunisia, in the light of information collected through field research in both states. Deriving evidence from a number of data sources (including elite interviews, news sources, informal conversations with voters, secondary sources and historical documents), these sections conduct case studies that investigate which norms and practices through which religious parties promote democracy in their countries. Process tracing these developments, as well as the evolution of the parties, help us to understand to what extent the successes or failures of democratic experiences can be attributed the behavior of Islamic parties in political life. The evidence from Turkey and Tunisia indicate that the effects of religious party participation manifested themselves in accordance with the expectations of the theory presented here.

As expected by the hypotheses, the integration of the religious segments of society into political process through non-extremist and inclusive parties (e.g. civil-confessional party type) gives them a healthy outlet to express their demands without exacerbating the religious divisions in the country and creates shared interest and solidarity among different groups. By empowering religious groups and individuals, as well as by reassuring their role in the country's decision-making mechanisms, religious parties can play an important role in democratization processes of Muslim majority countries. Even if these groups oppose the idea of sharing power and negotiating religious issues with their secularist rivals in the beginning, the very simple act of taking part in political debates can make them more open to democratic principles and values. The same effect can be observed at the more grassroots level, as well. As Driessen (2014) points out, the inclusion of religious groups in political processes has a potential to reduce the saliency of religious identity and turn religion into a less controversial subject, especially if this inclusion removes threats to religious identities and increases the legitimacy of the regime in the eyes of citizens.

One might ask at this point why all this matters if Islamic parties in the Muslim world are already accepting secular norms and practices. Nevertheless, the transition (and to some extent, consolidation) processes in both countries also serve as cautionary tales about extremist tendencies within these parties, especially when they are used to consolidate voter bases, offer anti-system alternatives to existing problems and impose religious values on everyone in the country regardless of their agreement with those beliefs. This level of repression and rejection usually leads to the anticipation of polarization in the system, making it almost impossible to find a common ground for

the coexistence of different groups. Not surprisingly, this threatens social peace and unity in addition to decreasing chances of compromise and meaningful collaboration between them. The backsliding of Turkish democracy in recent years testifies to this phenomenon, and it is not a far-fetched possibility for Tunisia either. After all, in spite of their relatively successful experiences, both countries still struggle to define the place of religion in political sphere, with no consensus in sight. If anything, the Turkish and Tunisian public debates shows that religion is, and has been, a point of contestation, and that participation of Islamic parties is not going to change that or make religion less relevant in the eyes of the citizens. Considering the high levels of religiosity in many Muslim majority countries, it is also doubtful whether these parties are going to drop their religious stances and advocate the privatization of religion in near future, like the Tunisian Ennahda did recently.

Although this project takes a closer look at the Turkish and Tunisian cases to unravel the causal mechanisms, the last chapter with four additional cases (Albania, Azerbaijan, Indonesia and Algeria) demonstrates that the theory provides insights to other countries with Muslim majorities, whether they have a Communist legacy and a religion-friendly democratization process, or a polarizing history of a civil war and an overwhelmingly secularist party system. The analysis of these four countries not only highlights the diversity of regime outcomes and differences in the types of religiosity in the Muslim world, but also pinpoints the ways in which different party religiosity hinder or promote democracy in different regional settings, where different understandings of religion (i.e. not necessarily Sunni Orthodox) prevail. It indicates, for instance, many religious parties contribute to the democratic processes by challenging dogmatic views

on Islam and politics and opening up public discussion about what it means to represent Islam on the political sphere. Against religious scholars who insist on presenting outdated, illiberal and antidemocratic religious traditions as the “solution,” they offer an alternative Islamic vision, which is more flexible, accommodating and more in tune with the citizens’ needs as well as the demands of contemporary politics.

Similarly, the negative cases, Azerbaijan and Algeria, demonstrate how extremists on both sides (secular or religious) have been holding back these countries from developing their democratic regimes further. The main problem these countries face has been a problem of participation and inclusion, as Stepan’s “twin tolerations” thesis noted. As the founding elites believed secularism was the primary principle to be protected, and democracy could wait until religion was entirely privatized or rejected in the society, secular but authoritarian parties dominated the political systems. Referring to the “green peril” or an imminent “Islamist takeover,” they blocked democratization and consolidated an authoritarian rule when they come to power. While trying to protect “democracy” as a concept, in other words, they created a system that violated the basic norms and values of democratic regimes. Within this overly simplified political environment, the masses did not get a chance to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of secular or religious ideologies, as secularism represented itself as the “only way” to order, stability and development, and the system did not allow a true test of their claims. Therefore, democratization remained an elite-driven process and did not reach serious levels of grassroots support or commitment. Regrettably, many Western powers that shared their fears about an Islamist presence in government supported

these authoritarian regimes and give them resources and legitimacy to stay in power, opening the door for the “robust authoritarian regimes” of the Muslim world.

Implications

Taken together, these findings have the potential to change our way of thinking about the impact of Islam on regime types and the role of religious parties in political systems. While the events of the last century, such as the Islamic Revolution in Iran or Algerian Civil War, shaped our understanding of political Islam as something negative, other cases demonstrated over and over again that rule by Islamic parties did not necessarily lead to a theocratic state or result in irreconcilable differences that culminated into conflict and violence. More often than not, these parties mediated between pious voters and the state institutions, and became the main factors behind their incorporation in the political system. This observation also makes us rethink the essentiality or indispensability of secularism for democratic processes, as religiously friendly democratization seems to be a viable option for Muslim majority countries. So far, many scholars have looked at the development of European democracies to understand the dynamic relationship between religiously political parties and democratic quality in predominantly Muslim countries. While Western democratic development might be a golden standard here, it must be remembered that there are a number of advanced democracies that successfully combine religious and political identities and give a role to prominent religious institutions in their political systems (Grim and Finke, 2006; Fox, 2015; Grzymala-Busse, 2015).

The policy implications of this topic aside, the ongoing regime transitions in the Muslim world (both in the form of democratization and de-democratization) also call for a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand. The unprecedented

rise of Islamic parties in a broader Muslim world, as well as the Arab uprisings of 2011, generated a lot of interest in the question of what religious parties really are, in addition to what role they play in these processes and what kind of a regime (secular democracy? theocracy? religiously-friendly authoritarianism?) they can bring to their countries.

Outline of the Study

Throughout these debates, the oft-cited incompatibility of Islam and democracy thesis failed to reflect the reality or complexity of politics in these countries. That is why the next chapter gives an overview of the literature on these issues, by engaging in a dialogue with three different research programs. The first one derives mostly from the modernization and secularization theories, which refers to the negative effects of religion in the political sphere. The second one focuses specifically on Islam and its alleged incompatibility with democracy, and the third one deals with the effects of including religious parties in these processes. By examining the existing body of knowledge carefully and evaluating its strengths as well as weaknesses, the chapter demonstrates how there is little, if any, evidence to support the assertions on Islam's inability to coexist with democracy. In addition, by showing the multivocality of Islam instead, it aims to set the stage for further theoretical debates about Islamic parties in the following chapters.

The third chapter takes a closer look at the democratization theories and focuses on the Islamic political parties to investigate the causes underlying the hitherto neglected divergence of democratic outcomes in Muslim majority countries. As opposed to most country-specific studies that investigated the role of Islamic parties through leadership qualities or the defining historical moments, it seeks answers to broader

questions on Islam and politics in a comparative setting. Rather than asking endless questions about whether Muslim leaders can truly be democratic without jeopardizing their religious authority, then, it shifts the focus of debate to how secular and religious leaders have been strategically playing the democratic game and the implications of these strategies for the regimes and regime transitions. Thus, it introduces the religiosity scale that is used throughout this research project to classify religious parties into different, ranging from religious extremism to hostile secularism.

Acknowledging that the parties may evolve over time and shift from one category to another, the fourth chapter examines parties' incentives and the conditions under which such a change can occur. As vague political programs and overall prejudices against Islamists often complicate the picture and do not giving a clear indication of how the party may act once it comes to power, this chapter looks at the constraints parties face and political opportunity structures they encounter. By reviewing these trajectories across different political contexts and different patterns of organization, it creates a framework through which it becomes possible to understand the capacity of some Muslim-majority countries to establish and sustain democratic regimes.

Having laid out the theoretical framework to be used throughout this research project, the fifth chapter moves onto the application of this model to the major Islamic parties of the Muslim world through large-N analysis. After all, to search for the link between party system religiosity and democratic quality and to test the abovementioned hypotheses, quantitative analysis of the 36 Muslim majority of countries over time is indispensable. As a first step in the nested-analysis model of this research, the fifth chapter also raises several hypotheses to be tested through an ordered logistic model

of religiosity in the party system and its impact on democratic quality. On the basis of the preliminary findings of this large-N analysis, the sixth chapter describes the plan for the small-N model-testing stage and designates the factors that will be used a comparative study of the selected cases – Turkey and Tunisia. Process tracing the development of democracy and evolution of religious parties in these countries help uncover the causal mechanisms behind the suggested theory, and develop better measurements for the “further nesting” to test the theoretical validity of the study (Liebermann, 2005).

Chapters 7 and 8 uses the insights gained from the fifth chapter to reveal the causal mechanisms and present the substantive case studies on Turkey and Tunisia, respectively. Whereas the Turkish democratic experience indicates clearly that religious parties remain relevant in the political processes even in countries where they had been suppressed to a large degree, it also shows that there is always a risk of democratic backsliding even in relatively successful democracies. Then, the next chapter takes a closer look at the Tunisian party system with its secular-nationalist parties on the one hand, and Islamic parties on the other. As it discusses the process through which secular parties struggle to differentiate themselves from the secular parties of the authoritarian past, it also traces the political evolution of Ennahda, the largest and most organized Islamic party of the Tunisian political scene, from its foundation to its role in the post-Ben Ali period.

Chapter 9 expands the breadth of the analysis to show how the theory travels across cases. In addition to showing different types of religiosity at work in various contexts, this chapter adds nuance to the theories presented in third and fourth

chapters. It suggests, for instance, that given the appeal of a religious ideology (at least, vis-à-vis the failures of secular ideas) and their roots in the society, it is not likely that these parties will disappear any time soon. Neither the brutally anti-religious regimes of the Communist era, nor the civic and religiously-friendly regimes of the Southeast Asia, was able to stop their rise, rendering Islamic parties “a force to be reckoned with” (Bokhari & Senzai, 2013, p. 6) everywhere they took root. Yet, the analyses of the ninth chapter also make it clear that it is too early to draw the conclusion that Islamic parties will bring about higher levels of democratic quality everywhere they participate. As suggested above, there are many factors that are shaping the regime outcomes in these countries that it would be naïve to expect a smooth and uneventful transition.

These events and analyses described throughout the dissertation are becoming even more vital in understanding the politics in Muslim majority countries. As Islam continues to color political debates, ideologies, opposition movements and even terrorist activities, Islamic parties become even more relevant actors in political processes. It is important to acknowledge the politics on the ground is far more complex than a struggle between competing worldviews of Islam and secularism, and this research project aims to shed at least some light on this complexity through its focus on different types of party religiosity.

CHAPTER 2 RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY IN MUSLIM MAJORITY COUNTRIES

What Would a Muslim Democracy Look Like?

During one of the first sessions of the Egyptian People's Assembly after the country's 2012 Elections, a Salafi representative from Asala party, Mamdouh Ismail, stood up from his bench and started to recite the call to prayer, seemingly out of nowhere. Speaker of parliament, Saad al-Katany of the Muslim Brotherhood, tried to shut him down by saying that there was a mosque close by if he wanted to pray. "This room is for discussion only," said al-Katany, "you are not more religious than us nor are you more vigilant over prayer than us" (El-Shenawi, 2012). Yet, neither his remarks nor further protest from other members of the parliament stopped Ismail, who kept announcing *adhan* for at least another minute, until his microphone was silenced.

Those who watched the events unfold questioned if the Parliament needed to organize its sessions around prayer times. Others struggled to understand why the country needed to discuss the Salafi representative's demand to adjust the parliamentary schedule when the country had more pressing issues. And some others asked themselves whether democracy in a Muslim country was going to look like this or if it was doomed to fail even from the start. "Instead of being proud of [Egypt's] first democratically elected parliament, [most of the people] felt embarrassed" (Hamidi, 2014, p. 150) and disappointed.

Is There a Muslim Democratic Deficit?

While Ismail's remark "[Egypt] is a Muslim country and the Parliament should respect that" summarizes the dilemmas most Muslim majority countries are facing today, it also demonstrates that even the most extremist groups now prefer to compete

for the seats in the parliament, join the political process and represent their views in the political arena. It then answers the question of if democracy was doomed in the Muslim world, why do the Muslims talk so much about democracy: it constitutes the focus of most debates in politics of these countries, and it holds the promise of a better future in the eyes of their citizens and the majority of their political elite. As Mazrui aptly points out, “in [this] state of disarray and confrontation between extremist religious movements that see themselves as the ‘defenders of Islam’ and authoritarian political regimes that claim to be ‘defenders of modernity’ . . . democracy offers a practical solution, and possibly, the only way out of this dangerous situation” (Mazrui, 1999, p. 4).

Despite this widespread desire to establish well-functioning democracies across the region, however, many countries with overwhelmingly Muslim populations seem resistant to the regime changes that the Third Wave of democratization brought to other parts of the world. Moreover, the spread of political Islam and rise of religious groups in the political scene appear to perpetuate the long-standing authoritarian regimes in these countries (Medani, 2013, p. 222). The data from various sources consistently show that “Muslim countries are democratic underachievers” compared to their non-Muslim counterparts (Fish, 2002, p. 4). Looking at the Freedom House scores of Muslim-majority countries, for instance, Karatnycky observes a pattern between Islam and democracy in the form of “a dramatic gap in the state of freedom and democracy between majority-Muslim countries and the rest of the world” (Karatnycky, 2002, p. 99). “Voice and Accountability” indicators demonstrate only a few countries scoring lower than Muslim countries, and indicate that both mean and median value of VA scores is “about 20 points higher in non-Muslim countries” (Fish, 2011, p. 231). This democracy

gap is, according to some scholars, so big that it trumps regional characteristics and persists in every region in which there are Muslim-majority countries. More importantly, not only has this gap been prevalent, but also it is likely to persist in the future: “Among Islamic countries, particularly those in the Middle East”, says Huntington, “the prospects of democratic development seem low” (1984). The evidence presented by these analyses suggests that the link between Islam and authoritarianism is too robust to be ignored or dismissed, and this observation eventually comes to shape the policies within (and with regard to) predominantly Muslim countries.

At the same time, authoritarian leaders of Muslim majority countries are more than happy to perpetuate this image of Islamic democratic deficit and promulgate their own version of “resilient authoritarianism” in their countries. Most of the time, they do so by playing on the Western fears of a democracy paradox, expressed as “If Muslims are allowed to control their own political fates at the ballot box, most of them will favor candidates who, once in power, will reject pluralism and propound an exclusionary form of rule based on the assertion of the absolute truths of their religion” (Fish, 2011, p. 262). This excuse takes the pressure off from these leaders to democratize their regimes and creates a permissive condition for the endurance of authoritarian regimes in those countries instead. Unfortunately, their removal from power in recent years did not lead to a successful path to democratization either. Despite the initial surge of hope that came with the so-called Arab Spring protests, the reality of democratic experiences, and the rise of Islamic political parties following democratic openings have shattered this optimistic discourse and led to another surge of pessimism about the incompatibility of Islam and a democratic political system. Now, many scholars and laypeople alike

expect the Arab Spring give way to a dangerous “Islamist Winter” and “creeping Shari’ah-ization” when religious parties finally obtain power through democratic means, only to destroy democratic institutions and free elections as soon as they reach their goal of establishing theocracy in their respective countries.

This section of the study, however, argues that this degree of pessimism is largely unwarranted. In fact, the way politics works in the ground and the way Islamist groups and Muslim-majority states relate to one another are much more complex and nuanced than these negative images imply. Although the literature on the subject so far has showed a tendency to compare the long-standing democratic institutions of the Western Europe with the ongoing democratic experiments in Muslim majority countries and come to the conclusion that the latter lacks the cultural or institutional characteristics necessary for Western-type democracy (Huntington, 1993), this type of essentialization and reliance on simple explanations like incompatibility of Islam and democracy inevitably “deflect attention from their internal and historical variations and from the vigorous internal debate among their adherents” (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996, p. 162). It is the main purpose of this discussion, then, to draw attention to the diversity of regime outcomes in predominantly Muslim countries, many of which include subtypes with additional characteristics that are not necessarily at odds with democratic forms of government, and to de-exceptionalize the democratic experiences of these countries by revealing the reasons for this diversity in regime outcomes without engaging in essentialist and monolithic explanations about the relationship between Islam and democracy.

Islam and Democracy: Incompatible, or Complementary?

Looking at the aforementioned empirical findings and concluding that “Islamic democracy” is a contradiction in terms, many scholars have embarked on a search for the key factor that hinders establishing and sustaining democratic regimes and makes Muslim-majority countries less amenable to democratic rules and norms. Throughout this process, some of them have blamed the overwhelming influence of religious authorities in politics, or the authoritarian tendencies of hostile secularist regimes for this scarcity of consolidated democracies in Muslim majority countries (Entelis, 2005; Lewis, 1993; Stepan, 2000), some have explained it through the geography and Arab culture in general (Huntington, 1993; Stepan & Robertson, 2003). Some others have attributed the democracy gap to the economic factors, be it in the form of notorious resource curse (Ross, 2012) or failure to modernize (Jamal, 2006). Before building its theoretical framework and discussing the contributions of this research to the discussion, this chapter goes through these arguments made on the basis of secularization theories, public religion, Islam and democracy and the political development of Christian Democratic parties, and evaluates their merits and drawbacks in some detail.

Myths and Religion in Democratic Sphere

The first, and probably the most cited, paradigm of the “Islamic democratic deficit” relies on an outright opposition to the religious involvement in politics. Proponents of this argument advance various reasons on what role religion does (and should not) play in politics, most of which stem from the Enlightenment ideals and secularization theories, and argue that the inability (or reluctance) of Muslim-majority countries to separate religion from their political affairs constitute the biggest obstacle to achieve successful democracies in these areas. According to this line of thinking,

minimizing, if not completely eliminating, the influence of religion on politics is almost impossible in Muslim-majority countries because “church and state are not separate or separable institutions” and the dualism between God and Caesar, which is an important part of Western tradition, simply does not exist in Islam (Lewis, 1993). Rather, “God is Caesar” in Muslim tradition, and this doctrine merges the religious and the political and “contaminate” liberal political regimes (Huntington, 1984, p. 70). This “general bias of Muslim thinking” stands “against the individualism, pluralism and secularism characteristic of modern democracies” (Lakoff, 2004, p. 162). Therefore, they assert that the only way to establish and consolidate democratic regimes is to eliminate the ideological and highly intolerant nature of religious politics by enforcing a strict separation of religion and politics and confining the influence of religious authorities, organizations and values to the private sphere.

In this literature, religion, as a concept, is seen as either “a direct threat to the prevailing order, an indirect challenge to its constitutive values, or a declining source of social integration”—either way, something risky for the day-to-day politics of a country (Beckford, 1992, p. 12; Rawls, 1993). Most of these arguments draw on the liberal political tradition, according to which religion is –and should be- a private affair,¹ as politicization of religion necessarily endangers individuals’ freedom of conscience, leads to intolerance and chaos and contaminates neutral political debates by bringing up unchallengeable religious doctrines (Eberle, 2002; Locke, Abrams, & Abrams, 1967). Liberal reasoning upholds that a state can only act as a neutral arbiter in public discussions, since its role is limited to facilitate the transformation of collective opinion

¹ Locke, for instance, argued that “The care of souls is not the responsibility of any man. Individuals are responsible for their own salvation and their own souls” (Locke et al., 1967, p. 172).

into laws to govern the society. Following this logic, political authority cannot lend its support to any religious group, or guide the societal interactions in accordance with religious goals and values, simply because religious arguments cannot constitute the basis of legitimacy or reasonableness of laws. Societal consensus requires an appeal to the rational and discursive logic to which any individual can agree, regardless of their belief system (or lack thereof). For that reason, “one must take the truths of religion off the political agenda” in order to have a healthy relationship between religion and democracy (Rawls, 1993, p. 151).

Likewise in the secularization literature, religion as a concept, no matter in what form, is seen as an ally of authoritarian regimes. For some (Lewis, 1993; Karatnycky, 2002), a strict adherence to religious rules and doctrines, regardless of their theological origins, is detrimental to democracy due to their ideological and highly intolerant natures and inability to compromise. Reichley, to illustrate, argues that “the injection of religion into political controversies tends to hamper working out the pragmatic accommodations needed by a functioning democracy” (1986, p. 801). Religious moral boundaries, in this sense, restrict individuals’ moral agency to “interact with others who contradict divine understandings of right and wrong”, eventually decreasing the possibility of high-quality democracy (Kopelowitz & Diamond, 1998, p. 671). On the other hand, separation of religion and politics brings peace and tranquility to the society, as the constraints placed on them would prevent the dominant sects from trying to impose their beliefs on others and control the whole society in that manner (Casanova, 1994; Grim & Finke, 2006). The proponents of this argument point out to the separation of church and state,

embodied in the Constitution of the United States, or *laïcité*, as described in the French Constitution, as the ideal form of relationship between religion and politics.

There is almost no doubt that this understanding relies on the historical development of democracy in the West, which, over time, combined democratic norms and institutions with liberal values and traditions. Rawls's famous dictum to "take the truths of religion off the political agenda" has resonated with those who believe that secularism is not just a side-product of Western democratization process, but in fact a core characteristic of the democracy itself. The Christian theological distinction between the Church and the state has reinforced this conflation, leading to the beliefs like "empowering religious authority can only serve to open the path to dangerous theological politics along the lines of the Ayatollahs in Iran and the Taliban in Afghanistan" (Driessen, 2010, p. 56). Under the influence of the secularization theories, many scholars who examine democratic development in non-Western contexts now "assume that the separation of Church and state are core features not only of Western democracy, but of democracy itself" (Stepan, 2000, p. 40). Following the prescriptions of liberal tradition, then, they impose the depoliticization of religion as a *sine qua non* condition of successful democracies on Muslim majority countries, blurring the lines between democratization and secularization in the process.

Even though the isolation of religion in the private sphere has been a part of the Western state building and democratization processes, however, it has never been a necessary precondition of all democratic states. In fact, it has never been more than a "historical option" in political development of many states –maybe a preferred option in today's advanced democracies, but an option nonetheless (Casanova, 1994, p. 215).

Empirically, there has been a great variety of arrangements for the role of religion in public life, ranging from complete separation of religion and state to the larger role of the religious elites in public policy making (Casanova, 1994; Fox & Tabory, 2008; Grim & Finke, 2011). The degree to which states place religion into the private, rather than public, sphere varies from one democracy to another, as well as within and between the countries with same religious background (Fox, 2006). Most democracies with perfect Freedom House or Polity scores have established churches and religiously oriented political parties, such as Christian Democrats, which hold significant power to negotiate issues that they deem important such as abortion, divorce and war, showing that a high-quality democracy does not require total marginalization of religion into the private sphere (Grzymała-Busse, 2015). The success of democratic forms of government in these countries proves that “it is possible for democracies to violate the principle of a strict ideological neutrality of state with respect to religion while still successfully instituting and protecting high levels of democratic rights and privileges” (Driessen, 2014, p. 26).

Moreover, far from being detrimental to democratic prospects, some scholars actually find certain aspects of religion actually useful and beneficial for the healthy development of democratic norms and practices. To illustrate, the civil religion thesis defends the idea that religion has a constructive and integrative role in society, and that it is “of fundamental importance to a society because it integrates an entire people, drawing them into a common circle of identity, giving them a shared language about a common heritage, and defining certain absolutes about which they all agree” (Bellah, 2005; Wuthnow, 1994, p. 131). Looking at the issue from a somewhat different

perspective, Driessen also argues that religious institutionalization and a democratic Church-state relationship make the consolidation of democracy possible especially in countries with weak democratic institutions (2010). The interesting finding of this line of research is not only that countries with strong religious institutions eventually democratized, but also they did so largely due to religious groups' participation in electoral politics.² In addition to providing much-needed political support and legitimacy for liberal elites, these alliances also paved the way for the greater participation of religious leaders and their constituencies in politics, which made them less hostile to the idea of democracy and consolidated the regime in the long run (Driessen, 2010; Gill, 2008). Besides, a religious group may enter into politics in order to protect itself from an oppressive authoritarian regime, and then extend this protection to other oppressed groups. Under these circumstances, we can expect to see an active role of religion in promoting democracy and democratic ideals, as the case of Poland would illustrate. Religious leaders can be the key actors in bringing about the overthrow of authoritarian regimes, as they had been in Latin America (Gaskill, 1997), and religious ideas can be influential in advancing democratic development, as the impact of black liberationist theology on the Civil Rights Movement demonstrated in the United States (Clardy, 2011; C. Smith, 1996).

While these scholars successfully show that religion acts as a double-edged sword when it comes to democratization, Stepan's "Twin Tolerations" thesis puts new twist on these discussions by claiming that most of the anti-democratic practices in

² Political necessities of the time led liberal/democratic elites of Western Europe to form alliances with clerical forces and their followers by compromising some of their political agenda and framing the project of democratization as useful to the Church and the community of believers (Gould 1999; Gill 2008).

contemporary Muslim-majority countries actually result not from the overwhelming influence of religion in public life, but from repressive policies of secular forces which actively block the entrance of religious groups into politics. Democracies by definition, argues Stepan, allow all groups (that is, all the groups that refrain from using violence, respect all citizens' rights and abide by the rules of the game) to participate in politics and protect their rights to do so. Yet, an "authoritarian *laïcité*", in the form of the a priori prohibition of religious groups to organize politically, inevitably clashes with this definition of democracy (Stepan, 2000). The threat to democracy, in this sense, does not come from the public role religion plays, but from the attempts of state to hold the total control of the religious institutions and dictate the powers and limits of religious authority. In his studies, Driessen supports this thesis, and finds that any oppressive ruling against religious institutions tends to decrease the legitimacy of the political system and restrict the number and breadth of issues that are discussed in the public sphere. Moreover, by making religious identities much more salient than it would otherwise be, this kind of control mechanisms create backlash and counterproductive outcomes from the repressed religious groups, possibly giving way to a full-scale anti-democratic religious fundamentalism in many cases (Driessen, 2010).

In the light of these arguments, this research advances the argument that the relationship between "secular" and "religious" is actually more complex than the secularization literature posits it to be. There are many different forms of public religion, not all of which inhibit democratic progress, and religion can play a positive role that is not restricted to social integration. In fact, there are a number of successful examples where the arrangements between the state and religious institutions made it possible to

reach both a well-functioning democracy and significant public role of religion, showing that religion can assume a public role without endangering democratic prospects of a country under certain circumstances. In order to understand this complex process and account for these possibilities, though, one needs to detach the concept of democracy from liberal prejudices against religion and acknowledge the “reflexive nature of modern religions” (Casanova, 1994). The question to be asked, in other words, is not whether or not religion is harmful to political life. Instead, the task ahead is to differentiate various forms of religious participation and to evaluate the effects of these different forms on regime outcomes in the form of democratic quality.

Religion and Political Modernization

Before moving to the discussion of different forms of political participation, it is necessary to examine the arguments made on the ‘demand side’ of secularization theories as well. In explaining the Islamic democratic deficit thesis, some authors argue that democratization is a by-product of a successful modernization period, which is bound to remain unattainable in Muslim majority countries due to the opposition of political and religious leaders to “all forms of modernization and secularization” (Lakoff, 2004). In other parts of the world, modernization theorists argue, there has been a serious decline in religious values, rituals and groups once the *ancien régime* fell and political liberties were introduced on a larger scale. The emerging political and economic order did not need a sacred legitimation, the ecclesiastical control of institutions, or a community bound and organized exclusively by churches (D. E. Smith, 1974). As the source of legitimacy was transferred from sacred (e.g. the principle of divine right, or the power of the Church to anoint kings) to secular (e.g. constitutions and elections) in a Weberian sense, the differentiation (and eventual removal) of religious authority from

political realm became a norm, and religion eventually lost its ability to influence public opinion the way it used to (Pals, 2006). Similarly, as Durkheim argued, the public demand for religious goods declined as the modernization brings a diversified set of non-religious goods (Pals, 2006). In the presence of these new non-religious goods, “individuals in the modern world have realized, among other things, that movie theaters are more interesting places to gather on evenings than churches, mosques or synagogues, that hospitals are more reliable for curing people than miracles, and that advances in technology does more for farmers than prayers and fasting” (Driessen, 2014, p. 21).³

As mentioned above, this paradigm asserts that the same modernization process did not take place in the Muslim world, delaying the twilight of idols and leaving religion free to determine the political destiny of these countries for the most part. Furthermore, it posits that when the concepts of modernization and democratic forms of government came to Muslim majority countries, they came mostly as a result of colonization and conquest, i.e. from *without*, and they had been hastily labeled as “foreign” in most cases. Due to their harsh treatment at the hands of modern democracies of the West, the political elites of Muslim majority countries were able to denounce both modernity and democracy, and call for “democracy’s purification through religion” (Driessen, 2014, p. 50). In this sense, the literature on the topic attributes the seeming lack of democratic progress in predominantly Muslim countries to a joint fundamentalist backlash against modernization and Western imperialism. Even when there is no backlash, some scholars argue, the inability of the citizens of these countries to “afford to embrace

³ Norris and Inglehart’s work, for instance, finds a connection between the loss of religious belief and increasing levels of “existential security”, resulting from increasing levels of education and income (2004).

democracy” in their dire living conditions makes it impossible for these countries to make a successful transition to democracy, even if they are sophisticated enough to do so in the first place (Jamal, 2006).

Not surprisingly, though, this static and rigid description of religion fails to explain the resurgence of religion in the 21st century, just like secularization theories fails to account for the wide variety of mechanisms through which religion and state relationships are arranged. After all, the prominence of religion is not something specific to the Muslim majority countries; and in spite of all the structural forces, legitimate or illegitimate pressures and various ideologies that desire to confine religion in the private sphere, religion still seems to be alive and well in all parts of the world. Instead of dissolving into irrelevance as expected, religion has abandoned the private and marginalized role imposed by the Enlightenment thinking and secularization theories through a period of “deprivatization” (Casanova, 1994), and asserted its importance in public sphere once again with almost full force. The state-imposed decline of religion, as in the case of Communist regimes, did not last long either and religious groups reemerged on the public scene as soon as the state capacity and desire to repress religion disappeared. Along the same lines, there has been an increase in the levels of religiosity all around the world (with the possible exception of Western Europe) since the World War II. Furthermore, the levels of industrialization, urbanization and education do not necessarily make any significant difference in these levels.⁴ In this process, religious institutions also proved themselves capable of adapting to the changing conditions and

⁴ Norris and Inglehart’s research on secularization similarly indicates that the levels of religious participation and belief defy the expectations of the Enlightenment thinkers as well as the predictions of secularization theories (2004).

expectations of their societies reinvented themselves as public religions and maintained their authority to challenge certain policies, steer political debates into certain directions and shape public opinion in certain ways. More importantly, this advent of religion or its importance in politics is not only real, but also does not seem likely to wane in the near future.

What this line of thinking also fails to recognize in its idea of “Muslim countries’ inability to modernize” is how modernity itself shapes the religious goals, rituals and newly emerging forms of religious participation. While the religious revival and rise of political Islam may indeed be “defensive reactions to what was rightly perceived as hostile, modern and secular environment”; they simultaneously are “immanent critiques of particular forms of modernity from a modern religious point of view” (Casanova, 1994, pp. 62, 222). The fact that these groups abandoned their traditional identities and forms of interaction in this process and adopted modern characters and practices should illustrate this mutually reinforcing dynamic. The evidence also suggests that Muslim countries do not face an unpalatable choice between “Mecca or mechanization” as leaders of Islamic communities seem to devise ways in which they can combine modernizing trends with their religion (Eickelman, 2000, p. 119). In the process of entering (or re-entering) public life, the only option for Islam as a religion might have been confronting the modern structures and possibly coming to terms with them; but this obligation seems to have paved the way for the modern institutionalization of religious groups, reflexive rationalization of their purposes and goals and their participation in modern forms of governance, as the following chapters will elaborate more.

Is Islam Necessarily Anti-Democratic?

While recognizing the increasing –and sometimes positive- role of religion in politics, the third approach in the literature argues that it is not religion per se but certain characteristics of Islam that is particularly problematic for the democratic prospects of Muslim majority countries. While countries with Judeo-Christian belief systems, including the predominantly Catholic and Orthodox states, seem to make successful transitions to democracy, Muslim countries lag behind because of the Islamic values they adhere to.

Referring to the aforementioned marginalization of religion to the private sphere, the first line of argument on incompatibility of Islam and democracy claims that that Islam unavoidably infuses political and religious authority, as the idea of keeping political responsibilities apart from religious ones is foreign to its followers. According to the adherents of this belief, Christianity can easily endorse democratic norms (which are, as discussed above, inseparably tied to the idea of secularism in their eyes), as the possibility of separation of religion and politics is already embedded in Catholic doctrines; while the command of “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” does not appear anywhere in Islamic texts and scholarly interpretations of religious texts do not support such this kind of separation in the way St. Augustine distinguishes the “city of man” from “city of God” (Kramer & Brumberg, 1997; Lewis, 1993). On the contrary, they argue further, as the first Islamic state under Mohammed derived its legitimacy from the divine authority, rather than the people through a constitutional contract, it became almost impossible to imagine a legitimate political authority that is fully distinct from the authority of God in the Muslim world (Huntington, 1993). In the long run, this overwhelming reliance on divine authority proves to be

incompatible with democracy, as the full application of *Sharia* law leaves little or no room for freedom of conscience and expression when it comes to less religious citizens and members of other religious groups, gives too much power to the unelected bodies of religious leaders and requires the criminalization of non-Islamic conduct regardless of the religious beliefs of the culprit (Kramer & Brumberg, 1997). Along these lines, Islam implicitly but inherently endorses despotism and presents itself as a total way of life, i.e. more than simply a religion, allowing only authoritarian states to accommodate this lifestyle and meet the needs and demands of believers (Huntington, 1993; Lewis, 1993). From this perspective, Islam looks like “a family curse that lives on, crippling the lives of innocent generations after the original sin that created it” (Sadowski, 1993, p. 20).

Nonetheless, the supporters of this thesis exaggerate “the extent to which ‘God is Caesar’ in the Muslim world” (Fish, 2002, p. 22). Out of 47 predominantly Muslim countries today, only Islamic Republic of Iran fuses clerical leadership of the country with its political leadership in practice. In contrast to the beliefs of aforementioned scholars, moreover, there has been a de facto separation of religion and state in Islamic world throughout the history, as Caliphs rarely made any statements concerning theology or ethics, despite their status as the ultimate authority and the defender of the faith, and instead left those matters to the *Ulama*, i.e. the interpreters and scholars of religious law (Eisenstadt, Hoexter, & Levtzion, 2002).⁵ What those scholars miss in their simplistic portrayal of the infusion of religion and politics in Islam is also the fact that even in Christianity, these two realms are undeniably interconnected and ultimately

⁵ Although the power and influence of the *Ulama* class varied greatly, and was reduced to a rubber stamp role at certain ages, the source of this power always provided them with legitimacy, support and even potential to revolt against unjust acts and policies of Caliphs.

united under the idea of one sovereign deity. Augustine might talk about “a city of God in contradistinction to a city of man, but the city of man was meant to draw on the city of God, imitate it, approach it and submit it to its moral ordering as best it could in a fallen world of sin” (Driessen, 2014, p. 53). Likewise, the Qur’an may make constant references to the sovereignty of God on everyone and everything, but the same argument had been embedded in the Christian doctrine even before Islam started to promote a political order maintained through sacred texts and divine authority.

More importantly, far from endorsing an authoritarian regime, “Qur’an knows no such concept of an Islamic state, least of all one with the coercive powers of a modern leviathan” (Hefner, 2000, p. 12). The dissimilarity of the political systems of two self-proclaimed Islamic states, Iran and Saudi Arabia, demonstrate this lack of consensus in Islamic form of governance, even when both systems claim to rely on the same principles, the same legal precedents and the same Holy Scripture. In Ayoob’s words, any familiarity with the diversity in Islam necessitates the realization that “the political manifestation of Islam, like the practice of Islam itself, is to a great extent context specific and is the result of the interpenetration of religious precepts and local culture, including political culture” (Ayoob, 2008, p. 15). Thus, any discussion of Islam’s compatibility with democracy must acknowledge that Islam as a religion contains a vast number of communities, codes, doctrines and religious traditions that change from one local context to another -and sometimes change even within the same local context. In this sense, the religious law may take the Qur’an and hadiths as its main sources, but the problem of interpretation persists in every decision, as “the meaning and relevance of any written or oral text for any given context still requires interpretation” (Casanova,

1994, p. 55). On almost no matter can clerics say God has spoken loud and clearly, and the Muslim version of the dictum "*Roma locuta est, causa finita est*" rarely settles the matter, particularly because Islam does not have a central authority as in the case of Catholicism. Many religious groups' claims that they are representing the true Islam or embody the real principles of the religion actually do not go beyond the attempts to legitimize their own rule and gain political support. On these grounds, the political activities and goals of religious groups mostly depend on the context in which they operate, rather than on agreed-upon Islamic principles or theological arguments.

Yet, the acknowledgement of this fact does not end the debate on Islam and its alleged incompatibility with democracy. Another hypothesis along these lines suggests that "the Mohammedan religion, which speaks only with a sword, continues to act on men with the destructive spirit that founded it", creating "bloody borders and innards" of Islam and the inherently violence in political Islam that poses serious threats to popular rule (Montesquieu et al., 1989). Such views gained notoriety through Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis and sustained through preexisting prejudices and anecdotal evidence. This particular perspective continues to dominate the Islam and democracy literature to a great extent. Continuous media coverage on radical Islamists' rejection of democracy, as well as fundamentalist leaders' claim that democracy-promotion is a form of Western imperialism in disguise, perpetuates the view that Muslims consider democracy foreign to their cultures and prefer nondemocratic alternatives instead.

In contrast to these portrayals of violence and political Islam, however, Steven Fish's empirical analysis of the connection between Islam and authoritarianism reveals

that Muslim-majority countries are not necessarily more prone to violence. Fish demonstrates through Kaufmann's "governance indicators" (particularly through the "lack of violence/political stability" indicator) that Muslim countries "constitute a large and extremely diverse group" in terms of their experiences with political violence and that "when one controls for economic development, the evidence for a link between Islam and violence is weak at best" (Fish, 2002, p. 18). Other studies on religious groups in predominantly Muslim countries also indicate that most religiously oriented and motivated groups are actually willing to work within the system through constitutional methods even when these systems are against their favor (Ayoob, 2008; Ibrahim et al., 2010; Mecham & Hwang, 2014). More often than not, they choose to exist and remain within the parameters set by authoritarian regimes, or form political parties and participate in elections when the opportunity arises. Either way, they rarely resort violence to obtain what they desire. The extremist parties that capture the Western attention through their violent acts more often are actually "marginal to the large majority of Islamist movements and irrelevant to day-to-day political struggles within Muslim countries" (Ayoob, 2008, p. 17). Contrary to the common belief, these groups do not necessarily garner a lot of support from their fellow citizens, either. The World Values Survey, for instance, shows that majority of Muslims actually do support democratic governance and institutions, at least in the abstract; and in fact, their averages in the democracy support index are not so different from an average Christians' "support for democracy" score. Fish's analysis reports that the score for the support for democratic regimes for a Muslim man of average age and education is 2.83 (in a scale from 1 to 4), whereas the mean score for Christians is 3.02 and is 3.01 for all

other denominations (Fish, 2011, p. 244). Even in Arab countries, where the alleged democratic gap seems to be the severest, the vast majority of citizens refrain from supporting a political rule “based on a worldview of Islamic laws and doctrines” and express their preference for democratic regimes instead (Arab Barometer 2006-2007).

On these grounds, even though the literature on the subject tends to focus exclusively on Islamic doctrines that seem hostile to democracy, this research emphasizes the multivocality of religions, as discussed by Stepan, as the rich internal plurality of Islamic tradition shows that Islam does not need to be at odds with democracy under all circumstances. In fact, certain doctrines and traditions in Islam, including but not limited to *shura*, *ijma* and *ijtihad*- can actually facilitate democratic transitions and ensure their consolidation in the long run, as they are consistent with the basic principles of modern democracy. Hence, there is no historical affinity between Islam and authoritarianism; and “if the first thirty years of Islam were excepted, the historical conduct of Muslim states could hardly be distinguished from that of other states in world history” (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996, p. 53). The explanations offered by the abovementioned perspectives rely on the monolithic understanding of political culture and a fallacious understanding of the “essence” of Islamic tradition. They present a single and unified version of Islam, disregarding the fact that religious doctrines consist of a multiplicity of interpretations and can be used to justify all kinds of political arrangements from an empire to a socialist system (Barkey, 2010; Qutb, 2000). In reality, none of the religious systems that exist today univocally or strictly supports democratic or nondemocratic values: While extremists and fundamentalists engage in human rights violations citing verses from Qur’an, some others support their tolerant

points of view through specific traditions in Islam and provide basis for the implementation of democratic norms in Muslim countries. In this regard, Islam can be said to support a wide variety of political institutions thanks to its huge repertoire of theological and cultural resources and their complex interpretations. Moreover, the ever-changing nature of these traditions and interpretations allow both clerics and politicians to support very different political institutions by making references to sacred texts and theological arguments. In their attempts to reach their sacred goals and maintain their vitality, religious leaders also prove to be quite flexible, adopting different strategies, entering into alliances, reframing goals and shifting the goalposts when necessary.⁶ Their longevity and survival in the face of the rise and fall of many political ideologies testify to this flexibility.

This point becomes even more obvious considering that the same incompatibility argument was made in 1950s for the Catholic-majority countries and in 1980s for Orthodox states.⁷ Until the Second Vatican Council (and a large-scale theological

⁶ Until the Iranian Revolution of 1979, for instance, most scholars thought Twelver Shi'ism was the main obstacle getting in the way of a strong civil society; but then reversed this idea after the revolution and started to portray Iranian society as traditionally very strong to the point of being influential and powerful enough to topple the state itself (Sadowski, 1993). As theology has particularly elastic and shifting ideological dimensions, Khomeini successfully reversed the traditional Shi'ite political thinking, brought the ulamas into political arena, and created a hierarchy of clerics –a practice that used to be an anathema to the Islamic doctrine. Similarly, as Islamist movements started to challenge their state institutions, the idea of “radical Islam”, according to which the religion breeds militancy and cult of martyrs, became prominent. The scholars then argued the problem in the Islamic societies was further weakening of the state, which hindered democratization indirectly, which goes against their former argument that states in the Muslim world were too powerful and too influential in controlling both sacred and secular lives of their citizens.

⁷ Believing that “it is all determined in advance that some societies will become democratic and others will not”; these scholars argued that the high correlation between democracy and Protestantism could not be achieved with other denominations and religions and that there was actually “a natural opposition” between democracy and these belief systems (Huntington, 1984, p. 203, 208). According to, only some Christian and Hebrew belief systems were able to provide basic prerequisites for a well-functioning democracy,⁷ whereas Confucian cultural traditions, for instance, were detrimental to democratic prospects due to their “resistance” to change, “hostility” toward civil society and understanding of culture as a “total entity” (Griffith, 1956).

reform it brought), Catholicism was deemed incompatible with democratic institutions, as well as with the universally acknowledged principles of pluralism and freedom of conscience.⁸ In fact, Huntington once claimed that “Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures” (Huntington, 1993, p. 40). Despite the expectations of these social predestinarians, however, democracy flourished in Japan, India, Latin America and Eastern Europe, as the importance of certain religious beliefs and the religious practices themselves changed over time and “spiritual and political activists of all these faiths found and mobilized doctrinal elements within their own religions to help them craft new practices supportive of tolerance and democracy” (Stepan, 2000, p. 44). This success of Catholic and Orthodox countries, despite presumably being even less likely than Islamic ones to have democratic governments before 1980s, creates some skepticism about the incompatibility of Islam and democracy and raises the question why Muslim-majority countries cannot do the same (Donno & Russett, 2004, p. 583). As Driessen aptly point out, the evidence on this issue shows that “theological incompatibilities will not become the determining factor in the failure of democratizing regimes” (2014, p. 48).

An Arab, Rather Than Islamic, Democratic Deficit?

As demonstrated by the discussions and analyses above, the literature so far, with a few notable exceptions, has limited itself to comparing the advanced

⁸ The Second Vatican Council gave its first official support to democratic institutions in the 1960s, and Pope John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus* explicitly declared the value of democracy to protect human rights and provide justice.

democracies of the West and their long-standing democratic institutions to the ongoing democratic experiments of predominantly Muslim countries, and declaring the incompatibility of Islam on various grounds, without paying sufficient attention to the diversity of regime outcomes within the Muslim world. No matter from which perspective they look at the question, these monolithic models of political Islam could not provide the answers political scientists looking for, or present compelling arguments to account for the diversity of ideological standpoints and even the greater diversity of practical outcomes in Muslim-majority states. Instead, they perpetuated the presumption of unity on the basis of a largely unfounded idea of Muslim exceptionalism, even though only six (out of 47) Muslim majority countries adopted Islam as the basis of their state, only 14 of them endorsed Islam as their state religion, and more than half of the Muslim majority countries are classified as “free” and “partly free” in Freedom House democracy scores. Fortunately, though, this issue of divergent regime outcomes has attracted the attention of some scholars, who assert that “if two subsets of countries share the predominance of Islam in common, but differ sharply on so crucial a political measure as electoral competitiveness, then Islam cannot, by itself, explain the exceptionally low performance of one of them” (Stepan & Robertson, 2003, p. 39).

Refraining from ascribing the democracy gap of the Muslim world to the arguments on the intrinsic incompatibility of Islam and democracy, these alternate explanations attributed the democratic diversity in predominantly Muslim countries to the variance in socioeconomic conditions (Donno & Russett, 2004; Fish, 2011), to gender inequality (Fish, 2002) and to the cultural influence of “Arab” or “desert Islam” (Stepan & Robertson, 2003). In his analysis, Fish finds a robust link between Islam and

authoritarianism even after controlling for many other factors that may affect the regime type, and explains this connection through the problem of female subordination in predominantly Muslim countries. According to his theory, the patriarchal structure, produced and reproduced through the unquestioned authority of the father in the family, creates “a culture of domination, intolerance and dependency” in political life, where men “stayed down” with women in order to hold them down (Fish, 2002, p. 30).

However intuitive this thesis may sound, though, Donno and Russett’s further analysis on this subject, as supported by Fish’s later study on the same topic, reveals that the treatment of women in Muslim-majority countries does not necessarily explain the roots of authoritarian regimes in these polities.⁹ Likewise, the thesis on socioeconomic conditions’ creating insurmountable barriers to democracy fails to explain the diversity in regime outcomes as well, because the states with worse conditions seem to have managed to establish successful democracies. In the end, empirical analyses and case studies conducted by Fish and Donno and Russett indicate that “these factors may explain part of the correlation [between Islam and authoritarianism]”, but they “do not account for all of it,” simply because taking these conditions into account do not decrease the statistical significance of the variable for Muslim-majority countries (Donno & Russett, 2004, p. 599; Fish, 2011, p. 236).

At this point, another possible explanation for this diversity of regime outcomes in the Muslim world comes from Stepan and Robertson, in the form of “an Arab, more than a Muslim democracy gap” (2003). Having noticed that there are “no true democracies, or Free countries within the Arab world” and that “all Islamic-majority

⁹ “The measures for women’s rights almost always exert insignificant effects and add little or nothing to the explanatory power of the equations” (Donno & Russett, 2004, p. 592).

electoral democracies are found on the geographic and cultural edges of the Islamic world”¹⁰; Stepan and Robertson argue that historical legacies, ethnic compositions, cultural and political traditions or Arab states can explain the perceived scarcity of successful democratic regimes in the Muslim world, as well as lower scores of Muslim majority countries on democracy indices. Diamond’s qualitative analysis also supports this theory and shows some big “freedom gap” between the Arab and non-Arab Muslim-majority countries: “At the end of 2008”, he points out, “the sixteen Arab states of the Middle East had an average score across the two Freedom House scales of 5.53. The other thirty Muslim-majority states had an average freedom score of 4.7” (Diamond, 2011, p. 94).

Even though Stepan and Robertson’s theory on Arab democratic deficit appears quite persuasive in the light of post-World War I developments in these countries and considering the strength of their political traditions, it inevitably runs into the problem of multicollinearity when it is tested statistically and empirically. Because there is no Arab country with predominantly non-Muslim population, it becomes impossible to test and decide whether the real reason is ‘Arab’ effect or ‘Muslim effect’ in general. Moreover, recent political developments following the Arab uprisings of 2011 may undermine the basis of the ‘durable authoritarian regimes’ thesis in Arab countries. After all, these protests signal Arab population’s weariness with, and disapproval of, authoritarian governments in power, and display their demands for more open political systems. “With the sudden opening of new vistas of the possible, people’s political interests may quickly spring to life” and make democratic forms of government more likely in these

¹⁰ i.e. in Albania, Bangladesh, Djibouti, the Gambia, Indonesia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Turkey (Karatnycky, 2002, p. 102, 104).

countries (Griffith, Plamenatz, & Pennock, 1956, p. 131). In fact, some experts already have labeled these protests as significant steps taken in the Arab world toward democratization, however erratic and inconsistent they may seem at this point.

These developments and arguments made on these issues also bring out the possibility that the explanation to this alleged democracy gap could lay in the relatively short history of democratic institutions in these countries. After all, democratic norms and institutions have been imported to these countries as a result of prolonged interactions with the West, instead of taking roots in the society and creating a bottom-up demand for democratization. Therefore, democracy building became a theme in these countries only in the second half the twentieth century, so much so that they “did not have the luxury of centuries of time (as was the case in Western Europe) to build” their democratic institutions or autonomy to fashion them according to their citizens’ needs or demands (Ayoob, 2008, p. 92). Yet, their latecomer status does not mean that democratization is impossible in these countries. After all, “most societies have lived under authoritarian rule for some time, often for a long time” in Europe and Asia, this situation did not hinder their transition to a well-functioning democracy later on (Ottaway & Carothers, 2004). Neither can this current lack of success in some countries justify essentialist views on the subject, or change the fact that there are actually observable differences in democratic qualities of Muslim-majority countries. In this sense, as Donno and Russett suggest, the “most fruitful direction for future research is not to focus on the intractability of religious and cultural traditions, but instead to continue to identify potential paths of change in Arab and Islamic societies” (Donno & Russett, 2004, p. 602).

Islamic Political Parties: “Wolves in Sheep’s (electoral) Clothing?”

Finally, the last relevant approach in the literature concentrates on the role of religiously oriented political parties in democratic development of their countries. Having witnessed to the surge of political power of Islamic parties in many Muslim majority countries¹¹, researchers have begun to investigate the democratic credentials of these parties, as well as the impact of their participation in political regimes. Most of the time, however, these political parties with Islamic ties have created concerns and doubts about their credibility due to their “reputation for pious passions, strong beliefs, and inflexible values” and supposed (or apparent) lack of commitment to liberal democratic values (Kalyvas, 2000, p. 380). Thus, most scholars have questioned “how much of the original Islamist perspective and legacy has been sincerely modified or abandoned by these parties and to what extent has pluralism been fully embraced? Or are we merely witnessing a phase of tactical retreat and camouflage that Islamists will abandon once they calculate that conditions are more favorable?” (Haqqani & Fradkin, 2008, p. 16). Consistent with the arguments on the alleged incompatibility of Islam and democracy, however, many of them have refused to see them as moderate forces and insisted that they were “wolves in sheep’s (electoral) clothing” (Driessen, 2014, p. 55), i.e. hard-liners devoted to an antidemocratic Islamist political force, pretending to respect democratic norms and institutions. Their participation in politics, in this sense, has generated fears about democracies’ being “one person, one vote, one time” experience (Diamond, 2011,

¹¹ In fact, the scholarly interest in Islamic groups and organizations started with the Iranian Revolution, as the revolutionary spirit diffused across cases and sparked controversy about radical Islam and its fundamentalist ideas. Thanks to the unfavorable events carried out directly by these parties or their allies in the name of Islam, Islamist groups attracted an immense, and mostly negative, attention in the past few decades. Over time, however, political Islam has evolved drastically, and most religiously based movements and Islamic groups have moderated themselves. Recently, they started to integrate into the legal party structures and adhere to the norms and rules of democracy as well as to the political frameworks of their respective countries.

p. 96), as secular democratic forces expect them to hijack democracy and turn the country a theocracy as soon as they come to power, adhering only to an “instrumental liberalism” (Kopelowitz & Diamond, 1998, p. 674) and using democratic institutions only to justify and solidify their position in power. Defying most expectations, though, Islamic movements have “come to power not through bullets but through ballots, not by violent revolution but by working within the system” (Esposito & Voll, 1996, p. 150). Thus, despite the revolutionary ideas and violent methods of the past, most Islamic groups and organizations today “have not failed to recognize that pluralism and interdependence are the catchwords of the present day” and abandon their radical stances accordingly (Abootalebi, 2003, p. 161).

Surely, this change of emphasis does not guarantee their genuine commitment to democracy, nor does it necessarily entail the claim that they will never disrupt the democratic development of their countries or contribute to the consolidation of democracies once they take part in elections. After all, democratization literature identifies many other factors that may make or break transition and consolidation processes. At the same time, however, it does show that the abovementioned degree of pessimism in the literature is largely unwarranted. This research suggests that there are several reasons why the skepticism about these political parties and their hidden agendas should not cloud our judgments on the impacts of their political participation, as explained in the following paragraphs.

First of all, whereas a sincere commitment to democratic norms and institutions “helps to make democracy work more smoothly”, “democracy can emerge even in its absence” (Griffith et al., 1956, p. 127; Kalyvas, 1998; Przeworski, 1991). Rustow’s

seminal article reveals that democracy has not been the original or primary goal for most democratization processes, but “sought as a means to some other end or it came as a fortuitous byproduct of the struggle” (Rustow, 1970, p. 353). In fact, in most cases, the strategic use of democratic means precedes the participation out of an actual commitment to democracy; and the genuine commitment emerges only after a prolonged period of playing the game by its rules. The history of European democratization process shows that liberal democratic values gained prominence only after a long period of violence and exclusion, rather than having started as a precondition for the regime transition.¹² Once they engage in democratization efforts, political groups eventually come to accept both the procedures and the principles of democracy no matter how hostile (or how well disguised) their initial positions may be.¹³ Just like there are different actors or contents for the democratization process, in other words, there can also be different motives, ranging from expectations of electoral gains to exhaustion from a prolonged resistance against democracy. In this sense, “commitments to democracy are more often born of environmental constraints than of true belief” and there is no reason predominantly Muslim countries should be an exception to this rule (Masoud, 2008, p. 19; Villalón, 2010). Under these circumstances,

¹² For instance, Italian Catholics changed their political strategy following the democratic opening, as they found themselves in a position where they had to negotiate and compromise with other forces in Italian political arena so as to express their opinions and maintain their voice within the system. Likewise, “in Britain, for example, it may be argued that [the advent of democracy] began before 1640 and was not accomplished until 1918” (Rustow, 1970, p. 347). Villalón’s study of the Muslim Sahel also supports the points made by Driessen and Kalyvas in their respective articles. Especially after the religious organizations of Sahelian countries realized their demographic power and influence over public opinion, they shifted their stance on the issue and abandoned their initial opposition to the change in the regime type.

¹³ “Muslim Democracy”, in other words, “rests not on abstract, carefully thought out theological and ideological accommodation between Islam and democracy, but rather on a practical synthesis that is emerging in much of the Muslim world in response to the opportunities and demands created by the ballot box” (Nasr, 2005, p. 15).

“the logical response to Islamism, if it indeed constitutes a danger to democracy, can only be allowing for more democracy” (Ibrahim et al., 2010, p. 82).

Furthermore, even when the political elite of these parties are “genius liars” about their true intentions and democratic inclinations, their entrance in political arena with such promises may force a change in both their attitudes and structures of the party systems of their countries. The famous “moderation-through-inclusion” thesis, for instance, suggests that the repeated participation of religious groups in democratic institutions changes not only the behavior of the extremist groups and make them more tolerant and amenable to compromise, but also has a positive effect on the whole political and religious structure of the society itself (Berman, 2008; Schwedler, 2011). Their taking part in in mundane political tasks (raising funds to fix pot holes, for instance) can also divert their attention from the religiously exclusive politics (such as “preaching jihad or subjugating women”). Over time, the inclusion of religious extremists in the system also moderates the self-appointed religious leaders, who are not normally accountable to their followers whom they purport to represent (Rosenblum, 2003). Once they take part in political institutions and see that their religious rhetoric does not suffice to deliver the promise of an effective governance, even the most extremist parties can feel obligated to accept the logic of denominationalism and deliver their promises by coming up with concrete policies that appeal to wider groups of voters, especially if they do not get the support of the large segments of the population. In that way, electoral pressures require them to adjust their party identities and programs, downplay their emphasis on the role of religion in society and appeal to the groups outside of their ideological convictions, making both the party and its

constituents more democratic-minded and expanding their democratic prospects in the long run. In the end, it is possible to argue that whether it's their genuine interest to advocate the notions of democracy and human rights or just another strategy to come to power and create an Islamic state in stages, this shift in rhetoric and this desire to participate in electoral competition tend to create two important effects in politics: for one thing, it eliminates the reasoning for fear mongering tactics most states use to marginalize religious political parties; and second, it makes it possible for religiously-oriented political parties to actually take a part in the decision-making mechanisms or at least present their dissenting arguments to a larger electorate.

Thus, this study argues that neither pessimists, nor optimists are fully correct in their predictions and expectations, as it will be explained in later chapters. Depending on the institutional context they operate in, religiously oriented political parties can either contribute to the increase in democratic quality in a country and help sustain democratic rules and norms in a society, or decrease the quality of democracy by deepening divisions between groups and creating sectarian conflicts or exacerbating the existing conflicts (Horowitz, 1985; Rosenblum, 2003).

Concluding Remarks

On these grounds, this chapter has made the argument that it is long past time to abandon Islamic democratic deficit arguments and turn to the explanation of the forces that promote democracy in certain countries but retard it in others instead. Because the question of whether or not Islam is compatible with democracy is "misframed and indeed can be misleading" (Villalón, 2010, p. 376), the aim of this research project has not been comparing predominantly Muslim countries to the advanced democracies of the West once again and identifying the variables that block or facilitate the

establishment and consolidation of democracy in the former set of countries. Rather, the purpose here is to compare Muslim-majority countries to one another, and explain the factors that create these differences in democratic quality of these countries. Instead of making a blanket assumption that democracy requires secular institutions which Muslim-majority countries seem to lack, and instead of attributing the alleged democracy gap to the theological doctrines of Islam, the study at hand intends to investigate the role religious institutions and ideas play in determining different levels of democratic quality in these contexts, believing that what matters the most is how religious groups and institutions choose to play the game of democratization. Therefore, the next chapter considers the limits of comparison between the different types of religiously oriented political parties and investigates how their political identities, programs and strategies might shape the democratic prospects of their countries.

CHAPTER 3
THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC PARTIES IN DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND
CONSOLIDATION PROCESSES

Religious Identities and Political Calculations

As the previous chapter illustrates, the discussions on religion and politics mostly revolve around the issues of toleration, exercise of rights, separation of church and state and the constraints that can be imposed on the expression of religious identities (Kymlicka, 1995; Parekh, 2000). If Therborn is right in claiming that there are two ways “in which religions affect the world –by what they say and what they do,” however, focusing solely on the former (i.e. the doctrine and theology) leaves the other side of the coin (i.e. the actors and practices) largely unexplored (Therborn, 1994). Perhaps more problematically, this tendency in the literature shifts “our attention away from political and religious actors and institutions toward endless and confusing argumentation about the content of theologies”, even though religious experience by itself is not political, and ideology, especially in the form of theology, is a “flawed predictor of political action...and even worse indicator of future intentions” (Kalyvas, 2003, pp. 295–296).

However, if this debate on philosophical underpinnings of democracy in Islam is useless, and if we need to move beyond the theological explanations, references to divine origin, and implications of religious history; what explains the reasons why political Islam contributes to the establishment and consolidation of democracies in some political contexts but acts as a source of authoritarianism, exclusion and theocracy in others? Who exactly are these actors and institutions that we need to turn our attention to; and what role do these political and religious actors play a role in the democratization processes of Muslim-majority countries?

Religiosity as an Explanatory Variable

Because this study is not interested in theological controversies and debates but interested in “the way religion is translated into political action,” it focuses at the link between religiosity and regime type, rather than the impact of religion in political life, in its attempt to answer the first question posed above (Wilcox, Wald, & Jelen, 2008). In this context, religion refers to the “group affiliation based on a belief system” and the “ideas about the divine, morality and justice”, whereas religiosity refers to the depth of the practice and commitment to these ideas and values that cannot be reduced to the dormant identities from which they originate (Collins & Owen, 2012, p. 503; Kalyvas, 2003, p. 303). As such, religious affiliation or identity is expected to have only an indirect link to political preferences and regime type, as the previous chapter has discussed in detail. Religion affects political behavior only by acting as a source of inspiration, justification and legitimacy for believers in their day-to-day experiences with social and political issues. Therefore, it is ultimately religiosity, i.e. the degree of commitment, devotion and desire to take action on the basis of religious values, which redefines Islam and turns it into political action. Greater religiosity, for instance, entails the support for greater role for religion in political life, either in the form of an Islamic state or religiously oriented political regime (e.g. Islamic democracy); while lower levels of religiosity means Muslims will be more likely to find the dominance of Islam in public life invasive, inappropriate or illiberal. Yet, this explanation inevitably brings back the second part of the puzzle regarding relevant actors and institutions and raises the question of who transforms religion into religiosity, and what factor shapes the type of religiosity if religion by itself cannot create a political meaning. The following section, in this sense, tries to describe these political actors that mobilize believers along religious

lines, and interpret and translate “the experience of the divine” into political action in this manner.

Islamic Parties as Political Actors

The democratization literature identifies political parties as one of the most prominent actors whose preferences, activism and interaction influence the direction of regime change and outcome to a great extent (Bernhard, Nordstrom, & Reenock, 2001; Linz, 1978; Powell, 1982; Schmitter & Karl, 1991). Through their analytical and empirical studies, many scholars have shown that “the institution of political parties plays a fundamental role in democratization” both in terms of facilitating the transitions to democracy and consolidating the existing democracies (Lai & Melkonian-Hoover, 2005, p. 552). More importantly, political parties have been at the center of political life in many political systems, even in authoritarian ones, all over the world. No matter what the regime type or cultural background is, political parties “serve vital functions” by acting as the main vehicles through which citizens participate in politics, help them express their identities and voice their demands, “structure electoral choice”, provide legitimacy for the alterations of power through electoral means, and finally, “provide a legislative agenda in the government” (Chandra, 2011; Lovenduski & Norris, 1993, p. 308; Pye, 1990). Effective political parties also play very important roles in democracies by reconciling competing interests in the society and by providing mechanisms through which citizens can exercise oversight and dissent vis-à-vis the existing regime (Ibrahim et al., 2010, p. 4). Finally, political parties contribute directly to the construction and mobilization of identities through the “transform[ation of] group identity to identity group” (Kalyvas, 1998; Rosenblum, 2003) and come to shape the democratic processes of their countries through these identity dynamics.

Because “democracy requires a balance between conflict and consensus” and “parties are ultimately the institutions that influence the democratic compromise most” (Bermeo, 1990, p. 369; Lipset, 1960), the role of religiously oriented political parties in democratization processes has created some intense debates among political scientists in the past couple of years. Even though Islamic parties have been on political scientists’ radar since their emergence in 1970s, their rise to prominence in recent years has sparked more interest, mainly due to their role in breaking down the “authoritarian resilience” in Muslim majority countries. Consequently, a large number of studies that deal with religiously oriented parties and the role they play in political systems have appeared in the literature. Unfortunately, however, these scholarly works have so far failed to create a unified understanding of how exactly Islamic parties influence the democratic prospects of the Muslim majority countries in general. As noted above, when scholars have paid attention to Islamic political parties, they have mostly focused on religious radicalization and terrorism associated with some of these parties, rather than looking at the enormous diversity within self-declared Islamic political parties or the political framework and social bases in which they operate. The literature has displayed a tendency to see them as “not real parties” but as “opportunistic and not committed to electoral democracy, intransigently ideological, uncompromising, militant, extremist [. . .] aim[ing] at conforming public policy to the imperatives of a single faith [. . .] authoritarian in their organization and goals [. . .] culturally conservative, even anti-modern [. . .] resist[ing] progressive social policies necessary for democratic stability” and therefore creators of “potentially radical political instability” (Rosenblum, 2003, p. 42). Very few studies have tried to systematically compare and assess thoroughly the impact of

religiously oriented political parties on the overall quality of democracy so far; and research in this area mostly remained restricted to case studies. As these studies rarely speak to one another, “a general theory accounting for the role of religion in parties’ contribution to democratization is still missing from the literature” (Ozzano, 2013, p. 821).

This study aims to overcome these normative and conceptual problems by deriving a typology of Islamic political parties from the literature on political parties and thereby analyzing a wider range of possibilities associated with Islamic parties’ participation in democratization processes. Arguing that certain types of Islamic political parties contribute to the establishment and consolidation of democratic regimes while others hinder this development, this chapter aims to fill the lacunae in the literature that arises from disregarding the diversity of attitudes, goals and strategies of Islamic parties. While elaborating on these different types of religiously oriented political parties and shedding some light on different trajectories they create in their respective political systems, it also explores the cases in which parties switch from one type to another over time and evaluates the impact of these changes on the quality of democracy in general.

Before delving into this typological discussion and exploring the impact of different party types on regime outcomes, however, it must be noted that political parties are a relatively recent phenomenon in some Muslim-majority countries, especially in the Muslim countries of the Middle East, and that most of them are not as institutionalized, organized or effective as their counterparts in Western democracies. For this reason, several scholars claim that political parties cannot act as essential actors for political

change in predominantly Muslim countries (see Ibrahim et al., 2010). They argue that party systems have been historically weak in that region and political parties have lacked the institutional capacity and strength and grassroots support Western parties enjoy. Parties have been mostly elite-driven or artificially constructed to support the authoritarian regimes. Restrictions on the media and free debate have a negative impact on citizens' trust in them. And further, party membership in most Muslim-majority countries has been notoriously low for many reasons.

While these scholars raise legitimate questions about the key role this project attributes to political parties in these countries, I believe none of these explanations actually decreases the importance of political party systems in shaping the democratic outcomes -and this is especially true for Muslim majority countries. For one thing, Islamic political parties have generally been the only nongovernmental political organizations in most predominantly Muslim countries with large constituencies, considerable support and popular legitimacy. As the citizens generally regard Islamist ideology as something positive (Arab Barometer 2006-2007) and as Islamic parties take advantage of religious gatherings, Friday sermons and influence of religious leaders; they have obtained crucial opportunities, which are not granted to their secularist counterparts, to organize and shape the public opinion in their respective countries (Wald, Silverman, & Fridy, 2005). While both secularists and Islamists face similar challenges in their quests for political power, Islamists have proven themselves more successful in overcoming these hurdles, especially through their evolution into the dissident (rather than disruptive and revolutionary) forces in the system and provision of state-like services and public goods through charity organizations. Liberal democrats in

these countries, on the other hand, have “talk[ed] to Western organizations and each other more than to their fellow citizens” and remained “unable to build broad constituencies” in the end (Ottaway & Carothers, 2004, p. 27). This makes Islamic political parties the strongest (and most credible) opposition to the incumbents in authoritarian regimes of Muslim-majority countries, and possibly the only likely candidates to break the tutelage of authoritarian leaders and single party regimes, and transform abstract ideals of democratic regimes into concrete policies through the mass support and appeal. In this regard, their embrace of democracy and what it entails, in Ayoob’s words, “augurs well both for the future of democracy in the Muslim world and for further socialization of Islamic parties into the democratic ethos” (2008, p. 94).

Defining Islamic Parties

As this research problematizes both narrow and conceptually stretched use of “Islamic parties” in the literature, this section starts with a proper definition of the term. Throughout this research project, religiously oriented (or religious) political parties refer to the parties that incorporate religious goals and values into their party programs. Along these lines, the term “Islamic party” refers to the parties that make references to Islamic doctrines and values in their programs and policies, and appeal to the religious constituencies, even though these parties refrain from labeling themselves as Islamists for legal or electoral reasons. Moreover, rather than investigating in depth whether or not a group should be called a political party, this research looks at the collectivities and sociopolitical formations that define themselves as political parties (or recognized as such by others)¹ and have gained at least a seat in any of the parliamentary elections

¹ Even though the grassroots religious organizations constitute an important part of these political parties, and the literature tends to use this “associational nexus” as the defining criteria; “religious parties cannot

since the Third Wave of democratization (or democratic opening, for that matter). By this definition, Islamic parties do not seem so different from all other political parties: They are still “organizations that compete within political system with the goal of winning votes” (Robbins, 2010, p. 3), they operate under the same institutional and societal constraints as their non-Islamist counterparts. Yet, they differ from them in one significant aspect: in their decision to articulate their goals and policies within an Islamic framework. The social and political changes that they envision for their countries, in this sense, mainly consist of transforming their societies along Islamic lines by encouraging people to be more pious and conduct their daily affairs in a way that is consistent with Islamic doctrine. Accordingly, they also want the political authorities to support these efforts with necessary means (“including intervening in society . . . if it fails to achieve them on its own”) and reflect this transformation in its governing mechanisms (Mecham & Hwang, 2014, p. 24). Finally, these parties’ confidence in the divine origin of these goals makes them believe that they maintain a unique position to carry out God’s will and bring about the changes that they want to see in their societies. In those respects, Islamic parties are “unique in the symbolic and institutional reference points that provide commonalities between these parties across vast geographies and large variation in political systems” (Mecham & Hwang, 2014, p. 17). At the same time, though, the broad nature of this definition, as well as the ever-increasing number of self-claimed Islamic political parties, conceals significant differences in the structures and organizational mechanisms of religious parties.

be regarded as mere extension of religious organizations in politics” (Ozzano & Cavatorta 2014, p. 801). These parties, once established, take a life of their own and eventually become independent from these groups and organization; so the religious organizations that parties originate from rarely hold the power and authority to shape the parties or their policies as they wish.

As the further classification will make it clear, Islamic parties share little else in common. While they have the defining characteristics described above, and use Islam in their party programs as their guiding principle, they vary to a great degree in terms of how prominent Islam is for their political agenda and how far they are willing to go to implement its doctrines in the political sphere. For instance, not all Islamic parties share the fundamentalist interpretation of sacred texts or join the efforts to prescribe action in every sphere of people's lives. In fact, some of them harshly criticize these practices and their "principled rigidity" as something "self-aggrandizing" and harmful to the individual liberties and Islamic doctrine itself. For them, each Muslim has a direct access to the Holy Scripture and her own ability to interpret it without any priestly intermediaries, as established by the Quranic phrase that "God is closer to man than his jugular vein" (50:16). Similarly, far from calling for a strict implementation of Islamic law or control of daily interactions through religious norms, some Islamic parties regard Islam as a civic notion that serves mainly to bring people together, and emphasize the cultural and social aspects of the religion instead. And finally, in some cases, seemingly secularist parties act as Islamic political parties when they choose to highlight their religious orientations instrumentally in order to address the needs and demands of religious voters. Those parties either self-identify as Islamists eventually, or are recognized as Islamists by the domestic and international community as they represent more Islamic positions vis-à-vis other parties in the system. In the light of this description, not only explicitly religious parties like the Hizbullah of Lebanon, but also the parties like Nationalist Action Party of Turkey are classified as Islamic political

parties as both of them highlight religious norms and values in their identity and policies and cater to the demands of religious voters thereby.

By defining Islamic parties in this way, this project aims to go against the taken-for-granted commonalities and assumptions of uniformity in a large number of scholarly works. In the absence of a differentiated understanding of religious parties, it prefers not to cram fundamentalist parties like HAMAS and denominational mass parties like Justice and Development Party into the same conceptually stretched category, but to create a typology of Islamic parties that will accommodate all these nuances. In doing so, it also breaks away from the dominant view in the literature that associate the existence of Islamic parties with political extremism and authoritarian tendencies, and focuses on the cases where participation of religious parties in the system does not necessarily lead to the establishment of theocratic governments (Moustafa, 2000). In this regard, the typology of political parties that will be presented in this chapter extends from the emblematic religious extremist parties to the secular political parties –whether the latter parties have nothing to do with religion, or actively resist the influence of religion in politics. In the end, this study makes the claim that party religiosity is not something static and binary, but varies along a continuum; and that these varying intensities make a difference in parties' contribution to the democratic quality in a given country.

Especially in authoritarian settings, even the mere existence of religiously oriented political parties challenges the state repression of religious groups and provides an alternative to the hostile secularism that state endorses. As even the most secular authoritarian regimes cannot control or ban religious organizations completely,

religiously oriented political parties sometimes emerge as the only alternatives to authoritarian regimes in certain political contexts, as mentioned above. However, the inclusion of religious political parties in the political system does not guarantee the cooperation between the religious and secular segments of the society; nor does it promise any kind of increase in the democratic prospects of the country automatically. The democratic prospects of a Muslim majority country are, in this sense, still based on the actual structure of the party systems and the level of religious fundamentalism they contain.

Islamic Party Typologies

Although the literature on party typologies follows very distinct criteria to distinguish various forms of political parties whether they are cadre parties or catchall parties (Ozzano, 2013), there has not yet been a consensus among scholars on how to classify religiously oriented political parties. In fact, with a few notable exceptions (Mecham & Hwang, 2014; Ozzano & Cavatorta, 2013), the tendency in the literature has been to use the concept of religious parties as a residual category and treat them as a unified block. This tendency may be reflecting the aforementioned expectations of secularization theory by not giving enough attention or importance to these political parties under the assumption that they are bound to disappear. Yet, the rise of Islamic parties, as well as the growing importance of religious values and norms all over the world, has demonstrated that these parties are here to stay. This growing importance and these parties' relevance to democratization processes of their countries have also indicated the need to look at their identities, goals and policies (i.e. both behavioral and ideological indicators) more closely in order to classify them into relevant categories,

even though they exist in very different contexts and operate within diverse political systems.

In this process, Gunther and Diamond made the first effort to differentiate “denominational-mass parties” and “religious fundamentalist parties” in their party typology, which was applied to the Islamic parties later on as well (Gunther & Diamond, 2003). Unfortunately, this distinction did not go further from creating “moderates, soft-liners, or reformers, on the one hand, and radicals, hard-liners or stand-patters (those unwilling to undertake reforms)” on the other (Schwedler, 2006, p. 8). No matter how useful for analytic procedures and conceptual clarity, this binary distinction hardly reflected the reality on the ground, as party systems do not consist of strictly Islamist and strictly secular political parties. In fact, “of all social phenomena none is perhaps as protean and, consequently, as unsusceptible to binary classification as religion” (Casanova, 1994, p. 40). Using a dichotomous variable to classify religiously oriented parties, in this sense, resulted in either clustering all the parties on both extremes, or leaving a huge residual category, or a gray area, in the middle.

As an effort to create more nuanced approach to the study of religiously oriented political parties in Muslim majority countries, the analysis intends to show that the political ideas and goals of these parties (both formal and informal), their political positions vis-à-vis other parties, their stance on the implementation of Sharia and the inclusion of social groups that do not share their beliefs in the political system define their role in shaping the quality of democracy. This idea is based on the axiom that when the internal characteristics and influences of these parties in the system are different, their influence on democracy will also be different.

Criteria for the Classification Islamic Parties

Throughout this classification effort, this research benefits greatly from Swidler's approach to the study of religion, which sees religious doctrines as a "tool kit" from which political actors choose their discourse or strategy of action (Swidler, 1986). Thus, instead of looking at "the 'hereditary' voting patterns of the citizens, which takes indicators like church membership as a proxy for religious mobilization", the codification and classification processes examine the intensity of religiosity in party platforms –i.e. to the extent to which "religious goals and components penetrate political agendas" (Kassem, 2011; Rosenblum, 2003, p. 27). In the end, it is based on Kassem's assertion that "such a spectrum of religiosities and secularisms in party platforms produces party variation in religiosity and offers a working basis for classifying, labeling and coding parties to capture variation" (Kassem, 2011).²

As a first step in this process, this analysis takes the initial list of relevant religious parties from the "Party Variation in Religiosity" dataset compiled by Fatima Kassem for her 2011 study. Kassem's dataset looks at the ways in which political parties portray themselves to their electoral bases and to the electorate they intend to exclude, and then classifies them with regards to their religiosity through a 5-point scale. Yet, the data provided by Kassem's study do not go beyond presenting a "snapshot" of these political parties and their ideological stances at a certain period of time, whereas it is usually the transformation and evolution of these parties that makes this question so

² Surely, this research project is very well aware of the challenges of examining Islamic parties across different settings as well as in different political and cultural backgrounds, and the fact that there seems to be an enormous difference between, say, Malaysian Islamic parties and their counterparts in Tunis when it comes to their political perspectives, positions and means to achieve their goals. However, despite these differences, these parties share the same ideological (i.e. the need to bring Islam to public sphere, albeit through different means) and institutional (e.g. connections to religious organizations) heritage, which distinguishes them from non-Islamic parties and makes them comparable across cases.

interesting. Therefore, the study at hand creates new measures, as shown in the chart below, and broadens this dataset by going back to the list of all relevant political parties in the sample of Muslim-majority countries, tracing their development over time since their establishment and thus turning the snapshot into a “moving picture” (Pierson, 2000). In this regard, coding political parties on the basis of their religiosity is a continuous process throughout this research project, which requires the measurement of parties’ ideological standpoints (e.g. their stance on the legitimacy of opposition parties vis-à-vis that of religious authorities) as well as their attitudes and political behavior (e.g. whether or not they are willing to take part in elections and transfer power when they lose the election) as well as changes in these factors over time.

Although this classification is intended to be “both exhaustive and mutually exclusive” and “minimize within-group variance and maximize out-group variance” as much as possible (Bailey, 1994, p. 3), it must be kept in mind that these categories are created on the basis of parties’ *dominant* political strategies and ideological statements, not on the basis of every single religious reference they make. Surely a secular party may use religious rhetoric as effectively as a conservative party to gain the support of the religious segments of society, but this religious rhetoric may not be the crucial part of its identity and political agenda. In this sense, it may be hard to find political parties that would fit neatly into these boxes, as the “ideal type” parties described in this analysis may not correspond to the reality of political parties on the ground. Moreover, it is important to remember that this classification is made with the understanding that even when parties are placed in these boxes, their places are not set in stone. Once in a certain category, parties may also change their demands and strategies over time and

move to other categories depending on the extent and content of this change.³ The party evolution from one category to another is always an option, and parties shift their positions towards more moderation or radicalization depending on the circumstances in which they find themselves. Thus, the task of the next chapter will be to trace the political positions of these parties over time and determine if (or to what extent) they display a shift towards moderation or fundamentalism in their political stances.

On these grounds, Figure 3-1 (see p. 99) shows the criteria according to which political parties in Muslim majority countries are classified.

Types of Islamic Parties Based on Their Religiosity

Religious Extremists

Religious extremist parties differentiate themselves from other Islamic parties through their desire to change the society on the basis of their own, and often literal, interpretation of sacred texts. By definition, they are anti-system parties, which are never satisfied with simply expanding the role of religion in public life. Their main purpose is to replace the existing social order with one that is based on a specific understanding of Islam and to radically transform all its institutions in the process. As such, these parties demand “an unquestioning obedience” and “full commitment” from all segments of the society (Neumann, 1956) and they act upon the idea that when they come to power, they will impose their religious identities and beliefs “on all citizens within the polity, irrespective of their own personal religious beliefs” (Gunther & Diamond, 2003, p. 183). As their objectives are this far reaching, to the extent of having

³ Jaffrelot's analysis of the Bharatiya Janata Party's moderation process, for instance, shows that the party “adopted a moderate agenda first and then became radical before becoming more moderate once again, at least at the national level, following an inverted U-curve which was on a par with its election results” (2013, p. 882).

totalitarian inclinations, the scope of their activities and the intensity of their members' involvement tend to be very different from those of other political parties. In terms of their organizational characteristics, they use highly selective criteria and intense levels of indoctrination; and require active commitment and loyalty of their members. As they value ideological purity more than electoral success, they seek to build small but hierarchical organizations with very low levels of dissent. They also tend to be quite exclusivist, as they criminalize their non-Islamic behavior and marginalize non-believers, less religious citizens, and those who subscribe to different religions. Rarely, if ever, do they form alliances with other parties that do not share their goals due to their inability and unwillingness to compromise on what they deem to be the core values of religion.

Religious extremist parties are also the one party type that creates most suspicions about the sincerity of its commitments to democracy. More often than not, their commitment⁴ is tactical and strategic, if it exists at all. Even in the cases where they appear to accept the pure mechanics of electoral competition, they do not refrain from curtailing basic rights and liberties when such constraints help them achieve their ultimate goals of transforming the society. Furthermore, while their anti-system rhetoric in authoritarian settings helps to delegitimize the existing regimes, it never goes so far as to advocate the introduction of liberal democracy. Democracy rhetoric, in this sense, acts a means, or a stepping-stone, for a more religiously oriented regime, rather than an end in itself for these parties.

⁴ Surely, this argument opens up an endless -and rather cliché- debate on whether or not religiously oriented parties can actually and sincerely commit to democratic norms and institutions; but this chapter will not make any assumptions on their true beliefs or investigate the real nature of these commitments. As mentioned before, Both Przeworski and Kalyvas demonstrate in their studies that a genuine commitment to democracy is not necessary for the establishment of a democratic regime, as “democratic ideologies are often not the ingredient but rather a by-product of democratic electoral competition” (Tepe, 2012, p. 467).

Although the problem of “double speak” is not really relevant for the purposes of research –as the discussions on Rustow (1970), Przeworski (1991) and Kalyvas (1998) have already illustrated, the praxis aspect of the question also leads to the hypothesis that party systems dominated by religious extremist parties become less likely to attain a high quality democracy. These parties’ uncompromising attitude and disregard of basic principles of democratic system means the electoral competition is, even at its best, nothing more than a form of majoritarianism. Such an identity-based strategy promotes confrontation and conflict (“a negative feedback on democratization processes”) and creates false divisions within the society, which makes dialogue, compromise and consensus far more difficult to achieve (Ozzano, 2013). Similarly, since a well-functioning democracy requires the protection of rights and liberties of all its citizens, frequent violations of minority rights inevitably hinder the development of democracy in any setting, regardless of the nature of religious belief. Finally, the instrumentalization of religion by such extremist parties eventually create religious vote banks, instill fear, insecurity and distrust in political system among the members of other groups and, thus, erode the legitimacy of the system in the long run.

Conservative Parties

Just like religious extremist parties, conservative political parties defend the idea that religion needs to play a larger role in public life. They offer Islam as “the solution” for social and political problems of their countries, but at the same time, do not (or cannot afford to) go so far as to adopt fundamentalist and radical positions of the extremist parties described above. Their use of abstract religious concepts gives party members more leeway, more flexibility and greater autonomy throughout the political process (Kopelowitz & Diamond, 1998, p. 675), yet does not necessarily mean that they

show any interest in putting forward generalist programs that will appeal to all segments of their societies. Instead, they choose to mobilize support for their parties by relying on concomitant focus on economic and social issues and wide use of selective incentives, such as the provision of social welfare benefits (Gunther & Diamond, 2003; Kalyvas, 2000).

Either through these organized activities and services, or mobilization of existing religious organizations, these parties create their own social bases and come to represent the interests of these groups instead of trying to gain the support (and votes) of outside members. Through the establishment and mobilization of these organizations, conservative parties create one condition that has been deemed “necessary for democratization, namely, the rise in the civil society of a counter elite” (Kalyvas, 2003, p. 306). Yet, under these circumstances, the nature of these ties between conservative parties and religious organizations determines these parties’ role in democratization processes. When these ties are not that strong, legal and electoral constraints may encourage these parties to moderate their stances and appeal to other groups as well at the risk of losing the support of their consolidated voter bases. When the ties are too strong for these parties to sever, though, their desire to “preserve the identity of and the separation from the rest of the society of the group [they] represent” (Ozzano, 2013, p. 819) may make their organizations and policies as exclusivist as religious extremists. Especially if these social bases are already polarized and more sectarian than their party elites, parties in this category may feel the pressure to turn to radical positions in order to remain politically relevant. In these cases, parties on the more radical side of the spectrum turn out to be detrimental to democratic quality of a

country, as favoring one group over others cannot be conducive to democratic practices like dialogue, compromise and respect for everyone's rights and liberties.

Inclusive—Tolerant Islamic Parties

In contrast to the first two types, inclusive-tolerant Islamic parties reject the practice of dividing the society along religious lines. Even though their programs and proposed policies are still informed by Islamic values and religious goals, they generally reframe religious values within a discourse of civic culture and hope to unite all religiously oriented people in their parties. Since they are more “adept at making compromises and working within the national frameworks and the constitutional constraints imposed on them” (Ayoob, 2008, p. 34), they try to make their religious party program more acceptable and appealing to a larger electorate, either for electoral benefits or constraints placed upon them. In their quest to attain or maintain political power, they may choose to enter into alliances with parties that do not share their worldview.

Nonetheless, this open and tolerant stance of this type of parties becomes a bane of their existence under certain conditions. As they try to walk a fine line between expanding the voter base by appealing non-religious segments of the society and maintaining their original religiously motivated voters at the same time, such positions lead to intra-party conflicts, tensions and power struggles to redefine party identity and policies. Sometimes these tensions are resolved through a purge of the radicals from the upper echelons of the party, and through the gradual moderation of the party identity and policies. On the other hand, if they are convinced that there is more to gain from taking extremist stances and radicalizing further, these parties choose to become more contentious over time, mobilize the electorate along religious lines and create a

polarized political system, which is more conducive to the rise of authoritarian tendencies. Depending on the opportunity structures and political pressures, then, they end up emphasizing Islam as a savior or downplaying its significance in politics

Civil Confessional Parties

In terms of their ideology, these parties appear to have accepted the basic principles of democracy and pluralism despite their determination to protect the basic values of religion. Since they operate under the assumption that the democratic system will prevail, they prefer not to concern themselves with the ways in which they bring the fundamentals of Islam into the social system or the state foundations. Instead, they acknowledge the need to function within the accepted rules of the game. Especially in secular societies, or in countries where the explicit involvement of religion in political affairs is banned through legislation, these parties become more pragmatic and more cooperative. They try not to adopt an imposing or dominant role for religion in their party programs; and therefore, their statements made on religious issues never include references to the subordination of social and political life to the religious authorities or texts.

In general, parties in this category also refrain from relying solely on religious groups or organizations for political support, even though they benefit, especially financially, from such organizational structures and networks from time to time. Rather, they aim to appeal to all voters, and emphasize the cultural aspects of religion and broaden the role of these in public life. As their main desire is to implement policies that bring Islamic teachings into state policies without alienating secular voters in the process, civil confessional parties express their religiosity through a symbolic language

that is utilized by political actors. Instead of including religious references in their names or statements, for instance, they involve in what Calfano and Djupe calls “the God talk,” which targets specifically certain communities through implicit religious messages (2009). Thus, they define themselves as “parties of religious people,” as opposed to identifying themselves as “religious parties.” “Their greatest strength”, in other words, “lies in their ability to combine their ideal with a vision that is considered by a substantial number of citizens as relevant to the contemporary situation” (Ayoob, 2008, p. 34).

When it comes to their impact on their countries’ democracy record, it can be said that civil confessional parties category increase the likelihood of a better quality of democracy by mobilizing once-apolitical masses and bringing them into the political arena (Ozzano, 2013). Their efforts to establish internal party democracy also indicate their ability to tolerate a variety of views and include dissident opinions within their party strata. In a similar vein, their efforts to balance different demands from their social bases also create an ideal medium for peace and social harmony where democracy can further flourish.

Secular—Areligious Parties

Parties in this category act as mass or catch-all parties in the political contexts they operate in. By definition, they are more inclusive and more tolerant of other views, since they do not represent one single religious identity and try to appeal to the masses instead. Thus, the parties in this group either regard religion as a private matter, or hold a genuinely neutral stance when it comes to the role of religion in public sphere. While their declarations and party programs may include direct or indirect references to religious doctrines, these references never constitute the basis of party identity and

policy preferences. In this sense, they differ from other religiously-based political parties in one important aspect: They have more control over their party programs, because their ideologies on issues that may be tied to religious values (such as abortion or sexual preference) do not have to be strictly determined by religious principles or disputed by the interpretations of clerics (Gunther & Diamond, 2003, p. 182).

Because they do not limit their voter base to a specific religious group, they can appeal to the masses, bridge the gap between members of different religious groups and reduce polarization along religious lines or along a religious-secular cleavage. In the end, the emphasis of these parties on dialogue and peaceful solutions has a potentially positive impact on democratic quality of a country.

Hostile Secularist Parties

While sharing the certain common characteristics with the abovementioned secular/areligious parties, parties in this category take a harsher stance towards religion in public sphere. They oppose its representation in the country's political life, and they defend the restrictions of religious organizations' and religious groups' participation in political decision mechanisms. This extreme negativity does not necessarily manifest itself in these parties' attitudes towards different ethnicities, linguistic groups, or minorities at all times, so they are not strictly authoritarian parties that try to control or repress all identities and organizations. These parties do not target or single out Islam as particularly bad, either. Rather, inspired extensively by the secularization and modernization theories, they see all religions as backward, and as institutions that needs to be weeded out from political arena, and if possible, from social life. They differ from the abovementioned secular/areligious parties that advocate the idea of having an equal distance to all religions (i.e. remaining neutral) in this regard, and they adopt a

controlling approach to religious groups if they think religion cannot be limited to the private sphere, coming close to what Kuru (2007) calls “assertive secularism.” By limiting religious groups’ access to political arena, turning the issue of religion into a taboo (just like their religious extremist counterparts) and imposing a “religion-free” lifestyle on everyone –even when there are high levels of public religiosity, they do not serve the ideas of plurality, tolerance and higher democratic quality once they come to power.

The Varieties of Party Religiosity and Their Impact on Democracy

As discussed in the previous chapter, Islamic parties have overwhelmingly adopted the rhetoric of democracy and liberal government in recent years. They abandoned their once-extremist positions, participated in elections and formed cross-ideological alliances where democratic openings took place, and became (or seemed to become) “normalized” in their political settings, despite domestic and international skepticism regarding their goals and strategies. In this process, most of them have maintained their allegiance to core Islamic principles and continued to support the idea that Islam needs to play a larger role in social and political life - although what they mean by this “larger role” varied considerably.

This allegiance to both Islamic values and democracy has created some concerns among scholars about the future of democratization in Muslim majority countries. A large number of them have argued that democracy rests on the capacity and desire of all involved parties to get together, discuss the merits and drawbacks of each point of view, and reach a decision on the basis of these discussions, negotiations and compromises –a process, which, some assume, religiously oriented parties cannot (or will not) accept. Others, like Kalyvas (1998), Schwedler (2006) and Kassem (2011),

have taken a different position, and asserted that religiously oriented political parties can contribute to the democratization and democratic consolidation when they accept to play the electoral game according to the rules of democratic plurality.

This chapter sides with the latter camp, and argues that the impact of Islamic parties on democratization processes does not have to be negative under all circumstances. For instance, although the conclusions of skeptics may be valid for extremist political parties, the chapter demonstrates, depending on their type, religiously oriented political parties have different influences on democratic quality of the systems in which they form and function. Thus, convinced that the practice of cramming all Islamic parties under one category actually creates more confusion on the impact of religious political parties on democratic quality and does not do justice to all the differences in identity, strategy and policies; this chapter devises a method of categorization for Islamic parties. Rather than investigating the sincerity of their commitment to democracy, this typology looks at how parties define themselves and conducts their affairs in political sphere, and classified them along a 6-point religiosity continuum on that basis. Throughout this analysis, it maintains the idea that it is not the existence of Islamic political parties in the system, but their type of religiosity that shapes their countries' quality of democracy. Accordingly, it identifies different types of party religiosity, and specifies the conditions under which Islamic parties contribute to the development of democracy, or hinder this process. The following chapters will test the validity of this theory through statistical analysis and take a closer look at the mechanisms through which these effects come into play.

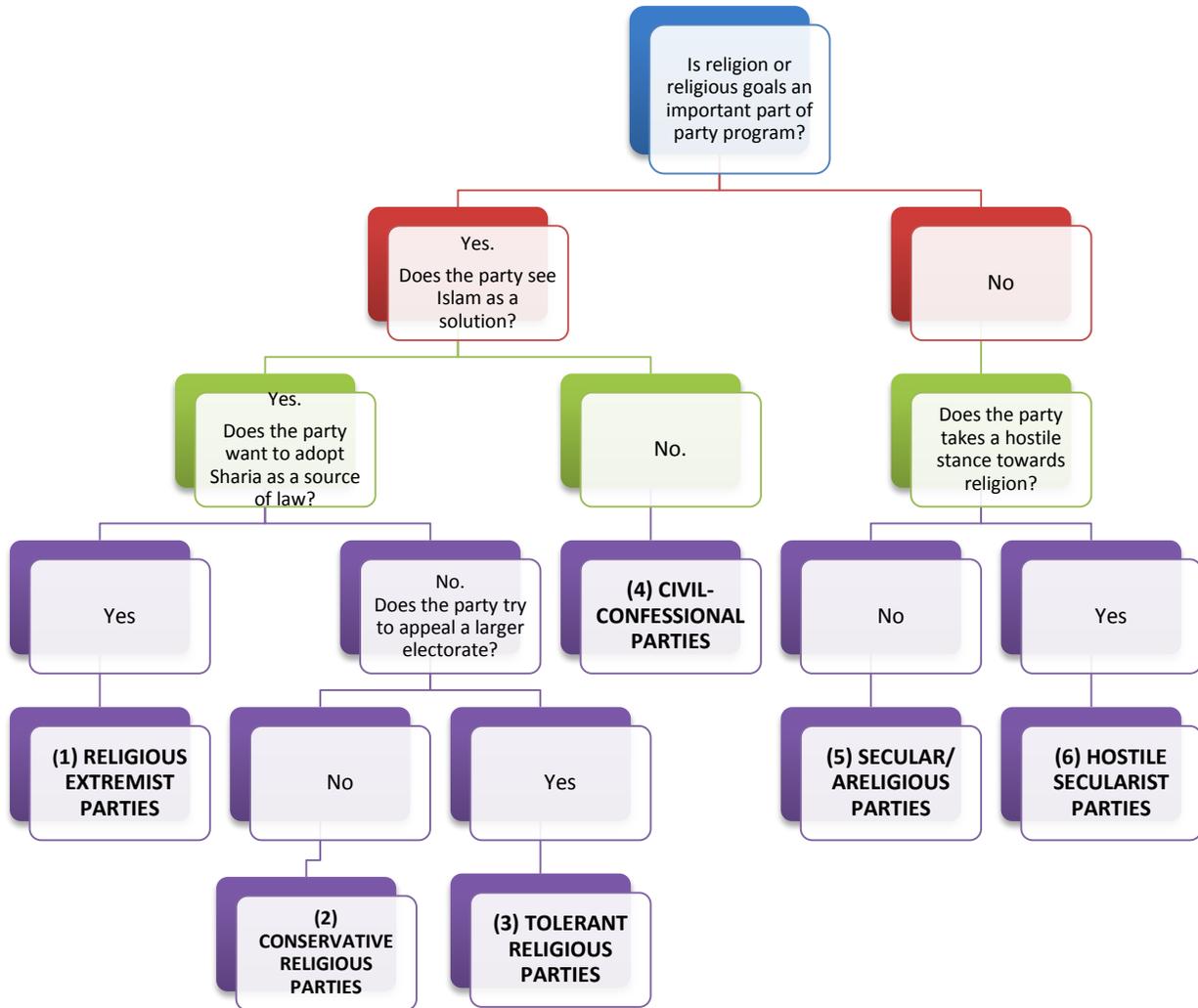


Figure 3-1. Classification of Political Parties according to Their Religiosities

CHAPTER 4 EVOLUTION OF ISLAMIC PARTIES AND CHANGES IN RELIGIOSITY

Strategies and Outcomes

As Islamic political parties have become major political actors in democratization efforts in many countries, their decision to adopt democratic rules of the game and marginalize the extremists, or maintain radical views and try to outbid other parties in terms of their religiosity, makes a big difference in the regime outcomes. Reflecting these changes, a better approach to the question of democracy in Muslim majority countries would be investigating democratic sentiments of political actors and looking at actions or events that help –deliberately or as a side effect- the establishment and consolidation of democracy in these political contexts. ¹ Thus, this chapter makes the argument that where wariness concerning Islamic parties coming to power does not bring any fresh perspective or solution to the long-standing problems of these countries, examining the these parties participation in political arena, whether with genuine commitments to democracy or purely tactical political flexibility, will help us understand what kind of political behaviors will make or break the democratization processes in Muslim majority countries.

Islamic Parties and Political Participation

As explained in the previous chapter, the prominent view in the literature assumes that Islamic parties are closed systems, completely out of touch with the contemporary trends, demands or expectations, and determined to implement their

¹ As Kalyvas convincingly argues elsewhere (2000, 2003), whether the party decides to adopt the democratic rhetoric and change its attitudes out of sheer commitment to democratic institutions or as a result of a purely tactical reasoning does not make a big difference in the regime outcome. “The problem of ‘double speak’”, in this sense, is somewhat irrelevant to the concrete outcome of party’s decision to accept the rules of the game. Thus, this entire project will be concentrating on the praxis aspect of the question and looking at instead.

goals of Islamizing the society at all costs and by all means necessary. In reality, however, Islamic parties manifest a wide range of political behavior and strategic choices depending on their goals and on the constraints they face in their political systems. Despite widespread sentiments of skepticism towards political Islam, such parties have shown a remarkable capacity to adapt to changing political environments and circumstances. For this reason, while the world has witnessed “more –not fewer- primarily religious or religiously connected movements that were intense, impassioned, separatist, absolutist, authoritarian and militant” in the last century, it has also seen a drastic change in some of these religious movements towards “moderation” or “normalization” (Marty, 1996).

Contemporary Islamic parties are still divided among and within themselves on the means through which Islamist goals should be pursued in the political sphere; but even the ones that are fully committed to the idea of establishing an Islamist state do not reject the possibility of acquiring political power through democratic means and electoral competition. In this sense, “Islamists have changed, or at least they have understood that the world has changed” (Fradkin, 2014, p. 30). Now they are very well aware of global trends, societal demands and political necessities, and they can see that democracy is slowly but surely becoming the “only game in town”, with or without their participation. Likewise, they understand that their rejection of this fact would only hold them back in political race, but participating in political system comes with a lot access and visibility benefits for the party and Islamist political agenda. By entering officially into the political arena, they gain a chance to discuss and challenge the state positions on religious issues directly, have more access to media sources and funds,

and even get some immunity from prosecution as formal and legitimate political actors (Mecham, 2014). With this understanding, they alter the political sphere by inviting the pious to take their place in polls, change traditional norms and expectations in politics through the “return of the sacred” and modernize Islamic religiosity in this manner.

Yet, Islamic parties’ participation in their countries’ political system does not create the same regime outcomes everywhere. Although the idea of capturing power through electoral means change parties’ identity, goals and policies to a large extent; participation and electoral competition moderate their political behavior in some cases, but lead to more extremist positions in others. Understanding these dynamics, as well as identifying the discursive and practical shifts Islamic parties go through, is necessary to shed some light on political trajectory and interplay between Islam and democracy in predominantly Muslim countries.

With this goal in mind, this chapter asks if Islamic political parties are really Janus-faced agents of democratization, and then examines how they affect –and get affected by- the democratic processes in their respective countries. The analysis presented here intends to challenge the linear expectations of moderation-through-inclusion thesis, highlight the different directions of change and describe several patterns and frameworks that seem to be in play generally. It starts with the question of what explains the political actors’ decisions on their parties’ type of religiosity, and investigates the conditions under which electoral incentives, combined with nonelectoral constraints and authoritarian interventions from other political actors, come to shape the strategies Islamic parties adopt to survive and function in their countries’ political systems. In this sense, it looks at the issues of when, how, why and in which direction

Islamic parties evolve over time; and analyzes the party platforms and approaches to democracy and political Islam within these contexts.

Does Inclusion Necessarily Bring Moderation?

In the democratization literature, the most famous answer to the aforementioned questions comes from moderation-through inclusion thesis, which asserts that the inclusion of even the most fundamentalist and radical political parties in the political party system forces a change of attitude within these parties. According to this theory, the mere act of participating in political system signifies the party's implicit recognition of the rules of the game and commitment to political diversity. This commitment then obliges parties to compromise their ideological purity for its practical benefits, abandon the extremist viewpoints and appeal to the median voter in order to survive in their political environments.² Cognizant of the fears and suspicions of non-Islamists, they may distance themselves from the purely Islamic agenda, or simply decide not to raise issues that can create tensions within society, with the purpose of retaining political power and getting re-elected in subsequent parliamentary races. In this process, Islamic parties also engage in institution building and professionalization by developing their own party programs and organizational networks. Instead of recruiting militants, therefore, they work to recruit bureaucrats and party members, which eventually drains the revolutionary energies of extremist parties in line with Michels's organizational theory (Berman, 2008). Perhaps more importantly, this institutionalization process and competition over votes create Downsian electoral incentives in the long run; and the

² Having said that, it is also necessary to acknowledge the impact of different electoral systems on moderation at this point. Whereas majoritarian electoral systems may encourage political parties to appeal to the median voter, proportional representation may carry extremist political parties to the system with the help of a narrow but consolidated voter base without giving up fundamentalist positions or toning down Islamist aspects to appeal to the non-Islamist segments.

sheer competitive nature of open politics may force Islamists to adopt more moderate stances over time or face marginalization in the system.

Along similar lines, some scholars also offer a “pothole theory” of moderation and suggest that being in a position of power enforces some shift in party rhetoric and policies, as the party leaders learn the rhetoric of “Islam is the solution” cannot actually solve the persisting problems of the country. Since calling for jihad in every occasion will not increase the support for the party in any significant matter, Islamic parties will have to prove that they can actually deliver goods and services, and devote their time to “fix potholes” rather than to “subjugate women” (Berman, 2008).³ “Normalization” of Islamic political parties, in this manner, becomes a “rational but unexpected outcome of pursuing their objectives in democratic politics” (Mecham, 2014, p. 38). Even though it does not mean that today’s extremists inevitably turn into tomorrow’s mainstream politicians, it demonstrates that Islamic parties can also attenuate their ideology, or bring new forms of religiosity into the public sphere through their participation into politics.⁴ Such a process may also stop violent state repression of religious groups and encourage other parties in the system to make alliances with religiously oriented parties to gain political power, and thus contribute to democratic consolidation in the long run, consistent with Stepan’s “twin tolerations” thesis.

In this regard, the moderation-through-inclusion thesis provides useful analytical tools and compelling arguments for scholars who want to examine the track record of

³ On the other hand, these scholars do not discuss how in certain cases, “Islamists have become so good at fixing potholes that a grateful and weary public might stand by while they enact the parts of their agenda that have more to do with Islamic law than with asphalt” (Masoud, 2008, p. 22).

⁴ After all, “in all countries all over the world, former extremists and militants have become democratic leaders – examples include former Portuguese prime minister Jose Manuel Barosso (now president of the European Commission), Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff, and Northern Ireland’s Deputy Prime Minister Martin McGuinness, to name only three” (Roy, 2014, p. 42).

Islamic parties and understand their choices in democratization processes. Its implications also defy the Muslim exceptionalism thesis, and show that Muslim majority countries can establish well-functioning democratic institutions, where even the most radical segments of the society can be integrated into the system and express their demands and grievances through peaceful methods. At the same time, however, “moderation-through-inclusion” thesis offers a rather deterministic account; and that its one-dimensional application does not work as predicted under all circumstances. First of all, inspiration for this thesis has come from European political experience following World War II, and majority of the explanations have been based on the inclusion processes of extreme left wing and religious parties of Europe in their countries’ democratic institutions. However, these radical leftist parties did not engage in identity politics; and European religious parties operated within more institutionalized settings “where strong states [were] able to enforce the democratic rules of the game and punish extremist forces” (Jaffrelot, 2013; Berman, 2008, p.15). This difference in scope conditions means that when this thesis travels across cases and contexts, the complexities of this process and nuances become more visible. Indeed, these parties’ participation in politics rarely produces a continuous process towards moderation, and it is generally riddled with interruptions and reversals as party acts upon political opportunities and constraints through different strategies.

Lessons learned from non-European cases prove that the “moderation process” described through this theory is neither automatic nor inevitable in all cases, as the mechanisms through which parties become more moderate do not exist in other political contexts, or parties respond to institutional constraints differently when they work under

different structures. “In spite of the fact that the major Islamic parties operate within the constitutional framework of the country and regularly participate in elections”, for instance, Bangladeshi political parties keep prioritizing Islamic aspects of their political platforms, and show no signs of moderating their religious stances changing their political behavior towards a more inclusive one (Riaz, 2014, p. 168). Their roles as “the kingmaker” of Bangladeshi political scene⁵ rendered Islamic parties of Bangladesh less inclined to moderate their identity and policies. Neither *Islami Oikya Jote* (IOJ –the United Islamic Front), nor Jamaat-e-Islami has made any attempts to win the approval and support of new segments of their society, as they do not need to increase their vote share in order to shape the political agenda and pursue their goals. The advent of political Islam in Turkey offers a similar story, as the entry of Islamic parties into political sphere “generated progress in some dimensions while producing regression in others” and the Justice and Development Party’s rise to power curtailed personal freedoms and rights and disrupted the existing religious pluralism to some extent (Somer, 2014, p. 41). In contrast to the expectations of the theory, the inclusion of these parties has polarized the country between believers and nonbelievers as they tried to outbid each other in terms of their religiosity and commitment to Islamic ideas.

This and similar cases show that inclusion in the political system does not always follow a linear path towards moderation and democratization; and that the inclusion of radical groups in politics may result in anything but moderation. In such situations, the increased participation of radical parties in the government or opposition may cause more violence, less respect for rights and liberties and it may eventually lead to the

⁵ Fazlul Huq Amini, IOJ leader, asserted “no one can attain power without the support of the Islamic forces” (qtd. in Riaz, 201, p. 168).

breakdown of existing democratic institutions due to growing resentment, escalating tensions and general distrust in political institutions. Far from introducing moderate stances into the party system, it may legitimize anti-systemic bias in political system and perpetuate authoritarian regimes in these contexts (Jaffrelot, 2013).

Under these circumstances, it may not be the inclusion in the party system, but actually the exclusion of religiously oriented political parties, which creates more moderate stances in their party platforms and policies. In their article on this subject, Cavatorta and Merone argue through the example of Tunisian Ennahda that the exclusion of less-moderate versions of an Islamic party from the political and social scenes can force the party elites to reevaluate their goals and policies. Accordingly, they can realize their political existence, relevance and legitimacy as political actors depend very much on their acceptance of the dominant discourse of democracy and liberalism, and eventually decide on a less fundamentalist path for the party itself (Cavatorta & Merone, 2013).⁶ Surely this observation does not entail the argument that state repression and societal disapproval will always lead to the moderation -as such factors seem to bring about even more radical activism and perpetuate the alienation of Islamist groups and organizations in other contexts. Nevertheless, it indicates that state repression and rejection from the society can also lead to moderation if these factors create internal debate about the necessity of a revision of initial goals and strategies within party and force a change of attitude in that direction. More importantly, it

⁶ In the case of Tunisian political system, between state repression of extremist Islamic movements and social rejection of party goals and strategies, the elites realized their Islamist rhetoric had only a little, if any, relevance to the problems Tunisian people were facing and they needed to address the hard-pressing issues of economic development and liberalization in order to survive in this newly-created competitive political arena. Thus, instead of choosing a more radical attitude and becoming more and more of a fringe party, the party acknowledged the legitimacy of electoral politics and necessity of fundamental rights and liberties, and made significant changes in their ideology and policies.

demonstrates that there are complex dynamics at play that are not considered within the moderation-through-inclusion framework and that the hypotheses generated through this framework may differ depending on the political context in question. Acknowledging this possibility is important to understand the future trajectories of Islamic parties and make sense of political paths they eventually choose for themselves and democratic prospects of their countries.

Thus, the rest of this chapter makes the argument that in order to understand why and under which conditions Islamic parties shift the type of their religiosity –either towards moderation or radicalization, it is necessary to look at if and to what extent these parties are willing and able to change themselves. Only by looking at the combination of factors that include pragmatism, self interest as well as institutional and electoral constraints, will it be possible to understand why an Islamic party chooses to emphasize or deemphasize its religious character and come to identify itself as an extremist political party or a civil/confessional one, for instance.

Party Strategies: Option to Moderate and Option to Radicalize

Although one may think that parties' position on democracy, pluralism, tolerance and inclusiveness make a great difference in terms of strategies adopted to implement their political agenda, electoral processes also shape the Islamic parties to a great extent. Depending on the strategic choices they make, parties continuously reevaluate and revise their objectives and political strategies to achieve these objectives, and adjust their identities, goals, party platforms and political agenda accordingly. For this reason, even the parties that operate within the same political context sometimes respond to the institutional constraints in different ways. In their attempts to adapt to the circumstances and political opportunities granted to them, they may choose to moderate

their political agenda and marginalize the radicals among them; or actively claim an Islamic identity, highlight their piety and use religious discourse more frequently and more effectively. Accordingly, they can tone up or down their use of Islamic references in their political statements; make concessions on issues that are not strictly Islamic when such concessions are deemed necessary, and balance their ideology and political pragmatism in this manner.

On these grounds, the strategies of Islamic parties to come to power and stay in office constitute the most crucial aspect of this question, as understanding and anticipating the role of these parties in their countries' democratization processes require knowing how much of its core ideals the party is willing to sacrifice (or maintain at all costs) in order to obtain political power. Some Islamic parties enter into elections with the full knowledge that their chances of winning are actually very slim, but they still run for office in order to "normalize their presence in the political scene and introduce themselves to both the people and the institutions of the state" (Hamzawy & Brown, 2008, p. 53). Especially when the party does not entertain the goal of radically transforming the society once they come to power, party elites can adopt more pragmatic positions and have fewer problems with straying away from their Islamist distinctiveness. In this process, they may learn that good governance, rather than an uncompromising Islamist rhetoric and self-righteousness, is the key to staying in power. Consistent with this political learning process, they may start to avoid negative and divisive rhetoric in their statements and policies, and put an emphasis on shared characteristics instead. In their efforts to come to power, in other words, they may prefer let go of their legitimacy, identity and distinctiveness in politics (Roy, 2014, p. 40).

At this point, while it is possible to assume that some Islamic parties are founded with a clear and irrevocable purpose of establishing an Islamist state –either through an Islamic revolution or a gradual Islamization of the society- and they prefer to remain true to this ideal despite all the pressures, we do not see this very often in real world politics. In spite of having catchy slogans and religious mottos, a large number of Islamic parties in Muslim-majority countries lack coherent and consistent party programs that foresee the long-term solution to social and political problems in their countries.⁷ Most of the time, “political pragmatism carries the day over a clear definition of an ideology”, as these parties base their political strategies on “Islamic morality” and play on the concepts like piety and tradition instead of developing a thoroughgoing political program that will reflect an Islamist theory of politics (Nasr, 2005).⁸ This moralizing discourse and the strategy of having flexible, intentionally vague and sometimes internally contradictory party programs serve two main purposes: First of all, it aligns their rhetoric with the existing conservative ideas and traditionalist points of views in the system without any significant commitment and wins the support of the masses in most elections thereby. Secondly, it does not “stand in the way of more complex strategies of forming alliances with the state or other parties” when it comes to other complex issues and important public policies (Boubekeur & Amghar, 2006). Consequently, this “provisional and experimental character...may be one of the reasons for their success: Free of heavy intellectual baggage, they can move nimbly with the changing tides of

⁷ As the previous chapter discussed at length, they all stress the need for a state and society founded on Islamic values, but there has been a little else that they agree on.

⁸ It must be noted at this point that this pull of strategic adjustment by no means decreases the importance of Islamic parties in Muslim majority countries. At the end of the day, “despite the absence of any comprehensive program that can be said to distinguish them in any significant way from their secular competitors, the Islamists nonetheless project and image of bearers of radical change” (2011, p. 102).

electoral circumstance” (Nasr, 2005, p. 17). Through this flexibility and pragmatism, in other words, Islamic parties have been able to survive politically even in the harshest political climates and under all the restraints placed upon them.

Yet, the lack of complete and coherent policy platform can backfire on religious parties as well, especially when economic concerns dominate the politics and Islamic parties choose to speak about social issues instead. In fact, Robbins believe that “bringing Islamic parties into the political system can actually decrease their support”, by revealing their weaknesses and inability to solve the existing problems with their religious rhetoric or policy programs (2010, p. 28). As this abstract ideology and religious references cannot bring any solution to palpable problems of their societies, the gap between Islamic rhetoric and real work practices widens over time. “This gap,” asserts Roy, “will be unsustainable unless the [party] manages to recast its ideology in nontheological terms” (2014, p. 41), obliging the parties to change themselves in one way or another in the end.

Moderation

As Kalyvas points out in his article, “the main incentive for moderation is the possibility of access to power” and Islamic parties do not differ from their non-Islamist counterparts in that regard (2003, p. 309). However, participation in political system does not always entail an increase in political power. Most of the time, these parties cannot win a parliamentary majority and obtain meaningful political power to implement their goals and transform the state and/or society in the direction they envisioned. Thus, when the political system they operate in allows the acquisition of political power through elections but Islamists do not dominate the political scene, access to power means going after non-Islamist support in elections and working with other political

parties through compromise and coalition. In order to attain that support, though, these parties emphasize the aspects of their party programs which would be shared by both Islamists and non-Islamists, because they know that this strategy would pay off better than concentrating on the distinctiveness of their Islamic character.⁹ If their potential allies come from non-religious segments of the society, then, they have no option but to put less emphasis on their religious goals in order to appease their new allies and their supporters. For this reason, Islamic parties that make alliances with their non-Islamist counterparts and take a part in coalitions shift towards a more moderate position, as the compromises that they have to make restrain their religious zeal and make them act as mainstream political parties in the long run. “After negotiating democratic opportunities and confronting constraints”, as Mecham argues, “the parties emerge at least partly normalized into their political systems” (2014, p. 30).

Considering this moderation process, it becomes possible to argue that Islamic parties’ bid for political power and aspiration to govern sometimes require them to dilute their political ideology and adopt more moderate policy positions. In fact, “the majority of Islamic parties” today, as Hwang underlines, “realize that, if they wish to gain a measure of support, they must play it ideologically safe, emphasizing universalist themes and downplaying *Sharia*-based ones in election campaigns to appeal to as many segments of the voting public as possible” (2014, p. 74). The use of democratic rhetoric, especially against their rivals in electoral competition, pays off handsomely and creates a protective shield for Islamic parties against secularist skepticism and fears. This process also renders the Islamist agenda more visible and more attainable as Islamic parties’

⁹ “Cross-ideological alliances are believed to be a moderating factor on extremist parties and indication that pragmatism is winning out over ideological purity” (Jaffrelot, 2013, p. 881).

relevance in political sphere increases. In the end, even when these parties do not start with the clear purpose of moderating their political agenda or becoming more like the mainstream parties, moderation comes as a side effect of the policies that they adopt in the face of political opportunities and electoral constraints.

Having said that, it must be noted that this moderation process is by no means a panacea for all Islamic political parties or a magic formula for their political success. Some parties indeed come up with very effective ways to downplay the salience of religious goals in their political programs, while retaining their loyalty to their more pious core constituency. More often than not, however, an outreach like this tends to create fluctuating loyalties within the party and among its allies. Even when the party manages to capture non-Islamist votes, partly because non-Islamists are seeking an alternative or protesting against incumbent parties; maintaining that support level and vote share in subsequent elections is a whole another matter. In order to do that, the party needs to turn these one-time voters (or protest voters) into solidified supporters of the Islamic party by representing their interests, channeling their grievances and making them vote for the Islamic party “because of what it is, rather than what it is not” (Mecham, 2014, p. 32). Not surprisingly, this process of changing strategy and adopting a conciliatory approach towards non-Islamist constituencies generally comes with a high price to the parties in question. In fact, having multiple constituencies and broadening the voter base almost always lead to problems with unity and coherence of the party identity and its dedication to initial goals. When an Islamic party deprioritizes its Islamist characteristics and religious content in party platforms, this pragmatic stance opens the party to charges of being opportunistic or not Islamic enough. Decisions made to woo

potential allies carry the risk of alienating existing supporters; and incessant internal debates on these issues make it difficult to reach a consensus on what kind of strategy best suits to the demands and needs of the party. As parties' need to walk this fine line makes it hard to balance the growing needs of expanding the voter base with the ideal of remaining true to their original ideological stances, ongoing discussions on identity and policies escalate tensions further, and even lead to splits when differences in opinion become irreconcilable.¹⁰ As a result, addressing these non-Islamist issues and making them a part of their policy platforms narrow the political gap between Islamists and other political parties, and, in a way, represent both the success and failure of political Islam.

Is Moderation Inevitable?

So far, these discussions have concentrated on the extent to which Islamic parties able to transform and moderate their political agenda as they get involved in their countries' political systems. Yet, the fact that "the Islamists' idea of democracy usually consists of majority rule, which is easy for them to accept when they are in the majority" raises the question of whether they will be able to abide by the rules of "twin tolerations" when they gain too much power, or when they are voted out of power (Haqqani, 2013, p. 45). Once these parties become confident in their electoral victories and cease to need the support of non-Islamists to sustain their political power, their use of Islamic discourse may intensify to the point of alienating all groups but consolidated Islamist supporters of the party. Thus, before getting too optimistic about the prospects

¹⁰ Political experiences of the Indonesian Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) illustrate this point. Their efforts to satisfy both existing voter bases and potential supporters at the same time brought about severe criticism, accusations of inconsistency and loss of its legitimate representative character.

of moderation and making predictions about the trajectory of Islamic political parties, it is necessary to find answers to the questions like whether their domination of the legislative arena mean that they will have no need to change themselves and refrain from being more radical, whether they still respect the rights and liberties of those who do not share their worldview and belief system, or whether they “fix potholes in the morning, legislate *Sharia* in the afternoon, ban blasphemous books in the evening and boycott the United States after dinner” when there are left to their own devices (Masoud, 2008, p. 22). The real test of their democratic commitments, in this sense, will be their acceptance of moderation, pluralism and tolerance in the event of an electoral defeat, and in the event of guaranteed electoral victory.

Radicalization

Establishing crosscutting alliances and addressing the concerns of non-Islamists are not the only strategies Islamic parties adopt when they are presented with political opportunities in the form of elections. In situations where parties do not find moderation strategies useful to deal with new challenges and adapt to new circumstances, or when these strategies do not live up to the expectations of the party elites and members, they can -and probably will- be dispensed with. Under these conditions, parties change the focus of their platforms. Instead of concentrating on conventional political issues and coming up with policies that would appeal to the median voter, for instance, they may choose to intervene in the private sphere and turn these matters into public issues. In these situations, “concern for the zones of life closest to self –worldview, identity, sexuality, gender differentiation, family, education, communication- tend to take priority over macroeconomic concerns” (Marty, 1996, p. 37).

Particularly in political contexts where Islamic parties compete against one another and claim to represent “one true Islam,” parties soon find out that they gain more power and relevance by trying to outbid each other in terms of their Islamist characteristics. This Islamization race forces parties to constantly act upon their religious credentials and instigate others for not being Islamist enough, leading to further radicalization in the long run. In Mecham’s words, where a number of Islamic parties compete “for the ‘Islamist’ label, a label that is important if the party is to carry an identity-based constituency, Islamic parties have to work harder to convince voters that they are ‘the Islamist choice.’ This . . . led to a pattern of competitive outflanking, in which Islamic parties move increasingly toward Islamist rhetoric to demonstrate that they are the best representatives of their identity group” (2014, p. 166). If the party chooses this path, declining pluralism, polarization of the political arena and climate of distrust and mutual suspicion among political actors inevitably undermine all the efforts made to establish and consolidate democratic regimes. After all, as already discussed in the previous chapter, exclusionary, discriminatory and divisive rhetoric of extremist religious movements pose a threat to democracy and democratization efforts in any political context.

Despite that, however, an Islamic party’s choice of this radicalization strategy does not mean that all other institutions and social groups will immediately take a step aside and let the party implement any reforms that they had promised before coming to power. In fact, although this decision to increase the saliency of religiosity in party programs clearly makes a difference in political strategies, to what extent they are able to carry out this decision will vary depending on the strength and determination of other

political actors and institutions. Parties' ideology and changes within this ideology can only explain a part of the picture. Because each opportunity comes with constraints in other aspects, choosing one option and acting upon it may limit the chances of the party to pursue its goals in other areas or even become counterproductive in the long run. Under these circumstances, these parties may be even forced to stop emphasizing their religious goals and accept coexistence within a competitive political structure.

Along these lines, it is imperative to acknowledge at this point that Islamic parties' entry into political system usually puts even more constraints on these political parties, simply because the political learning as well as organizational changes within the party makes old structures and strategies harder to sustain over time. To fully understand these dynamics better, it is now necessary to turn out attention to the constraints placed on these parties by their social bases and political opportunity structures (i.e. religious and political institutions) as well.

Political Constraints and Ability to Change

While party strategies provide an important source of change within Islamic parties, neither their evolution, nor their future trajectory can be understood without looking at the political scene in which they operate. After all, many Islamic parties face similar incentives to moderate their stances, but not all of them have been able to do it to the same extent or with the same zeal. This variance in strategies and political flexibility can be attributed to the constraints they face from their social bases, other parties in the system, and perhaps more importantly, from the state. Because "identity in an Islamic party is often defined as much by party's relationships and political context as by platforms and policy positioning" (Hwang & Mecham, 2014, p. 178), its ability to

change in the face of nonelectoral constraints is actually as important as their strategy or willingness to change due to electoral constraints.

Constraints Imposed by the State

As indicated by Lipset and Rokkan's seminal article (1967), the state-church cleavage is one of the most important factors that shape party systems and opportunities granted to political parties in general. The state, as the primary political authority, retains its ability to define the political position of religion, set up the rules of political participation and contestation, and create opportunities for political parties. As such, it outlines and regulates religious parties' role in political system in distinctive ways. To illustrate, a state's decision to co-opt or integrate these parties directly or indirectly influences the electoral success of these Islamic parties greatly; and the constitutional rules on the existence of religious political parties determine, to a large extent, how much a party can reflect its religiously motivated ideals in its party platform. This process of integration or cooptation also affects the behavior of non-religious parties vis-à-vis Islamic parties in the system, and controls, albeit indirectly, the relationships between these groups to some extent. Therefore, the behavior and strategies that Islamic parties choose in order to exist and compete in their political environments cannot be separated from the opportunities and political space granted to them by the state.

In many Muslim-majority countries, especially in the ones in the Middle East, religion is a public issue. Yet, the states' attitudes towards Islamic political parties range from outright hostility (e.g. Azerbaijan, Tajikistan) and repression (e.g. Syria, Algeria) to cooperation (e.g. Morocco, Pakistan) or formal support (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Iran). In most

cases, though, the aforementioned lack of coherent ideology and consistent party programs, combined with religious leaders' ability to mobilize popular support, create uncertainty, suspicions and fear among the state elites of these countries. Unable to incorporate these religious parties into the political system with meaningful institutions and participatory mechanisms, the powers-that-be sometimes purposely change electoral rules (through gerrymandering or distribution of seats) or cut resources (such as campaign financing, broadcasting on national television, access to meeting venues or public squares) for certain parties in an attempt to put them in disadvantage vis-à-vis other parties (especially the incumbent party) that have the access to the financial resources.

In some cases, a state can go so far as to actively ban public displays of religiosity and refuse to give Islamic parties any opportunity to exist, due to the fear that Islamic parties only seek to establish "a dictatorship of the pious" (Haqqani, 2013). Fortunately, in recent years a growing number of states have seen that the suppression of Islamists through fear mongering tactics is unsustainable and unjustifiable in the long run.¹¹ Yet, even in those cases, if the state was forced into a democratic opening but not willing to share power, it may choose to co-opt or domesticate the Islamic parties by taking "refuge in a sort of political precautionary principle, keeping unsavory oppositionists at arm's length for fear of the possible consequences of accepting them as legitimate political actors" (Berman, 2008, p. 16).¹² No matter in what form, then,

¹¹ They have seen that their repressive policies generally backfire, as the exclusion of Islamic parties from political sphere pushes them to underground, increases their isolation, alienates them and eventually gives them more reasons to radicalize.

¹² The existence of democratic institutions means that no religious tradition has a right to claim an absolute authority over all citizens and no religious group has the power to regulate the society according to their own particular religious/political agenda. Whereas no democracy can enforce a certain religious

state authority and its institutions carry an enormous potential to limit the choices granted to Islamic political parties, and shape their strategic flexibility in this manner. The case studies discussed in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 illustrate these dynamics in greater detail within various contexts.

Constraints Imposed by Parties' Social Bases

Because political parties, whether they are Islamists or not, are supposed to represent the interests of their voters, who votes for these parties make a great difference in parties' political choices and behavior. As Islamic parties weigh the costs and benefits of the strategies they adopt, they will be looking at how willing people are to cast their votes along religious lines, how much they demand the inclusion of Islamic values in their political systems and how much "secularization as disenchantment" plays a role in the country's politics. Thus, examining the religious cleavages in a country, the role of religion in people's daily lives and people's desire to have religious groups as a part of democratization process provides important clues about the agendas and methods of political parties in a given country.

While certain voter groups regard compromises and collaborations that their parties make as necessary and inevitable steps to reach the ultimate goals of the party; some groups insist their political party resist the pressures from the system and the temptations of greater electoral success and not compromise on any issue. These

belief on its citizens, it is still possible to imagine situations where democratic states impose indistinctly religious norms on their citizens and enforce these norms by law. The Swiss ban on the construction of minarets, accepted through a democratic referendum, or the French ban of Islamic veil in public schools, protected through the Constitutional guarantee of laïcité, does not seem to spark too much controversy on the democratic quality of these countries. Mazie explains this phenomenon by referring to the exit options and protections for citizens who do not share the same belief system, and by citing the inviolability of their freedom of assembly and expression when they are not content with the religious policies of their countries (Mazie, 2004).

internal debates, as argued above, are almost inevitable in all political contexts. Nonetheless, although all parties pay the price of changing their political stances and policies to some extent, some parties receive even harsher punishments for their deterioration from their initial objectives and ideals. Especially where the state and overall political system are hostile towards Islamists and prevent their entry into politics, Islamic parties emerge out of, or ally closely with, religious movements and their organizations (such as mosques) to spread their messages, mobilize groups for collective action and garner support for their political projects. This dependence on religious movements and organizations makes party platforms very closely tied to the ideologies of these movements, which comes to severely restrict the range of options Islamic parties can use to achieve their goals. Their shift towards moderation often alienates their electorate, creates backlash in their consolidated voter base, and the members and supporters of the party may punish any divergence from their ideological core at the polls. Thus, the constraints placed on Islamic parties by these movements and organizations may make it difficult for the party to shift its ideology to the center even when it is electorally more beneficial to do so. Considering all these aspects of the issue, it would be unrealistic to expect an Islamic party to shape its political agenda solely on the basis of possible electoral gains without giving any thought to the demands and expectations of its social base.

Constraints Imposed by the Political Party System

Whereas many Islamist groups rely on a wide variety of social groups to get the support in achieving Islamist goals, they cannot completely disregard the role and viewpoints of other parties within the political system, either. Just like Islamic parties

alter the dynamics of political party systems with their entrance in politics, party systems also affect (sometimes effectively shape) the mode and behavior of Islamic parties in return. Thus, despite the tendency in the literature to study Islamic parties in isolation (or at best, with respect to their relations with the state), this chapter argues that the characteristics and attitudes of their political interlocutors and rivals matters a great deal for these parties' identity and policies.

If Islamic parties find themselves in party systems where they are going to compete against other religiously oriented political parties, for instance, their first response becomes emphasizing their Islamic credentials and trying to outflank their rivals by appearing more pious and more dedicated to the implementation of a religious agenda. In these political contexts, the existence and appeal of non-Islamist or secularist parties gains enormous importance in counterbalancing the Islamist tendencies in the system.¹³ On the other hand, in party systems where non-Islamic parties compete against one dominant Islamic party, the range of political choices Islamic party can choose from will depend on the willingness of non-Islamist, or secularist, parties to act according to the "twin tolerations" ideal.¹⁴ When secularist parties see the Islamic party as a 'boogeyman' and indicate no interest in forming alliances, the party gets no incentives to deprioritize religious goals and usually ends up

¹³ As it will be discussed in more detail in next chapter, the effectiveness of secularist political parties is important not because they represent the true democratic forces in their political systems, but because "in their absence the political arena will exhibit only a strong bi-polarity between the Islamists and the regime", which is not really conducive to a well-functioning democratic regime.

¹⁴ Islamic parties' eagerness to form alliances with non-Islamist or secularist political parties may contribute to democratization efforts by creating a religious debate and political dialogue between religious groups and seculars, by building trust for political inclusiveness, by forging coalitions between these groups in overthrowing long-standing authoritarian regimes and by enabling cooperation and common struggle towards a better future for their countries.

responding to this marginalization by taking refuge in religious society. Yet, when they give the Islamic party a chance to be a part of the coalition or alliance, the party gains at least an incentive to compromise on some of its religious objectives, and negotiate the rules of democratic contestation.¹⁵ In this regard, the political behavior and preferences of Islamic parties also depend on the institutional structures that govern the relations within the party system, and the balance of power and influence between various alliances and coalitions which religious political parties find themselves in.

What Determines Political Behavior: Actor or Structure?

So far, this chapter has argued, and demonstrated with various examples, that Islamic parties “can take advantage of multiple political opportunities to achieve their objectives, but are faced with associated constraints that set some limits on how far these opportunities will take them” (Mecham, 2014, p.30). Yet, before concluding this section, it must be noted that during certain instances, where democratic openings take place and the political scene changes rapidly as a result, these structural constraints have less effect and parties’ goals and strategies become more important than the structural constraints they are subject to. In fact, analyzing shows that political parties’ strategy and behavior cannot be reduced to the expectations of their electorate or to mere effects of political structures in which they operate. Further chapters that

¹⁵ To illustrate, Stepan attributes the superior record of Tunisia, especially in comparison to Egypt, in democratization efforts to the “Islamic and secular leaders, who have worked to overcome their mutual fears and distrust by crafting agreements and credible guarantees in political society” (Stepan, 2014, p. 223). While secularist segments of society still were frightened by the idea of creeping Islamization, religious party elites kept emphasizing their respect for rights, liberties and democratically constituted political authorities. The Ennahda officials downplayed their party’s religious goals and ties, and instead declared that “We are a civic party emanating from the reality of Tunisia, not a religious party. A religious party believes it has legitimacy not from the people but from God. A religious party believes it has the truth and no one can oppose it because it has the truth” (Ghannouchi qtd. in Stepan, 2014, p. 225). The Tunisian democratization efforts show that in times of political crisis and reform, political actors and their decisions gain even more importance and structural constraints play less of a role in bringing about regime outcomes.

investigate particular cases of democratization processes will clarify these points through specific examples from Turkey, Tunisia, Albania, Azerbaijan, Indonesia and Algeria.

A Theory of Party Goals and Changes in Religiosity

Having answered the question of whether “religiously oriented parties [can] become acquainted with democratic values and institutions, as suggested by the moderation thesis, and even switch party type, towards models fully accepting of democratic rules as well as social and political pluralism” (Ozzano & Cavatorta, 2014, p. 6) in the affirmative, this chapter focuses on the questions that are left unanswered in the previous sections. Even though it acknowledges that while their real political power is debatable and context-dependent for the most part, it also asserts that Islamic parties play a very significant role virtually everywhere in the Muslim world, and that it would be unrealistic to expect a single political trajectory for their political participation. In contrast to their portrayal in the literature, only a small number of them carry anti-systemic tendencies or prejudices against democracy. Most of the time, they willingly take part in democratic processes of their countries, compete regularly in elections and find ways to expand their voter bases. When they participate in democratic institutions and processes, moreover, they do not necessarily do so because they are strictly opportunistic, harboring hidden agendas to overthrow democracy to replace it with a theocratic system as soon as they come to power. Deliberately or as a side effect of the electoral constraints they face, they moderate the goals and strategies in order to attain more political power, relevance or legitimacy. Where this strategy does not seem to pay off, though, they prioritize their Islamic goals and characteristics and radicalize their positions to consolidate their voter bases. In those cases, depending on the intensity of

controversy on religion's role in public sphere and debate on who has the right to represent "true" Islam in politics, the nature of relationships changes dramatically from one context to another. Throughout these processes, both strategic choices they make and nonelectoral constraints they face shape their political behavior. The following chapters will explain the implications of these choices and their role in democratization processes at length; however, it should suffice to say at this point that no matter what strategies they adopt, for what reason and under which pressures, many of them parties have started to see elections as "the only game in town". As Stepan argues convincingly, "attitudes such as these are key if democracy is to take root" (Stepan, 2014, p. 220).

CHAPTER 5
ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF PARTY SYSTEM RELIGIOSITY ON DEMOCRATIC
QUALITY

A Cross-Country Analysis of Party System Religiosity

Even though religious parties and their impact on regime outcomes have been on political scientists' agenda since they emerged as popular alternatives in Muslim majority countries in 1990s, the attempts to conduct systematic and cross-national analyses of them have been regrettably rare. Most of the research has relied on single-case studies and anecdotal evidence about a few Islamic parties, generating, in Norris and Inglehart's words, "more heat than light" (2004, p. 33). To go beyond this tradition, this chapter compares all Muslim-majority countries that held competitive elections over the course of last twenty-five years, and collects empirical evidence on the effects of religious parties and party system religiosity on democratic quality. On the basis of this framework, it first derives testable hypotheses from the arguments advanced in previous chapters. After selecting relevant cases for large-N analysis, the next section develops some measures of party system religiosity and describes the other variables used in the analysis at some length. Finally, the last section tests some via statistical regressions and reports their results.

Because this research investigates the influence of party system religiosity on different levels of democratic quality, though, the first question it asks in this chapter closely resembles that of chicken-and-egg: Does a higher quality of democracy create more moderate or inclusive party systems, or do certain characteristics of party systems lead to a higher quality of democracy?

Party System Religiosity: Cause or Effect?

Many scholarly writings on this topic assume that all “good things go together, and that more democracy makes for more ‘moderate’ Islamists” whereas “when political opportunities close, the risk of Islamist radicalization increases” (Hamid, 2014, p. 4). In that sense, the prominent position in the literature assumes that parties’ distinct characteristics, and eventually the ‘type’ (see Chapter 3) of parties they become, depend on the constraints and political opportunities to which they have been subject. Where they are allowed to participate, according to this logic, they will moderate; and where they are not, they will radicalize.

As the discussion on “moderation-through-inclusion” versus “moderation-through-exclusion” theses made it clear in previous chapters, however, the political context or constraints placed upon parties do not determine the strategies of political parties altogether. *Ennahda*’s rise to power, for instance, does not constitute a form of Tunisian exceptionalism in the sea of repressive authoritarian regimes producing radical Islamist movements. Similarly, the fact that the Yemeni *Islah* Party took an extremist position as the regime became more authoritarian does not explain why the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt did not end up in the same radical camp of Salafis despite having been exposed to the hostile and repressive Mubarek regime. Indeed, the different experiences of similarly organized religious parties illustrate that even under harsh political conditions and repression, parties still can make the choice to adopt contentious strategies and redefine themselves as extremists, or democratize their internal structures and enter into peaceful dialogue with other parties. Even when these decisions are taken for purely pragmatic reasons, “pragmatism can cut both ways” (Hamid, 2014, p. 171), either inspiring parties to take more moderate stances

when religion ceases to be a contentious issue, or pushing them towards the extremes when “piety-trumping” appears to be an electorally advantageous alternative (Chinyong Liow, 2009, p. 222).

Thus, as opposed to the consequential approach the literature seems to have adopted, this research project makes the contrary argument, and posits that party system religiosity is the cause for the variety of regime outcomes. This means that the causal arrow is actually in a reverse direction: rather than democratic regimes’ inspiring certain religious parties to accept the rules of the game, or authoritarian regimes’ forcing them to find alternate –and often violent- means, it is the characteristics of the parties and party systems that can alter the political atmosphere and, ultimately, regime types. Along these lines, I assert that the importance of these parties does not just lie in their ephemeral electoral victories, or their possibly permanent roles in government, but lies more substantively in their characteristics, patterns of competition and interactions with other political parties. Religious parties, whether mainstream or radical, are important mainly because their choices can make or break regimes.¹ “As they change”, in Hamid’s words, political arena can “change with them, for better and worse” (2014, p. 22).

¹ Surely, there is an underlying assumption in this argument, according to which all political parties in countries in question act with the purpose of holding an office and influencing policy-making procedures thereby. The literature, however, refers to a few cases (e.g. Bahrain and Morocco) where political parties are co-opted by the regime and do not even field more than a number of allowed candidates to run in elections (Boubekeur in Salih, 2009; Kay & Ibrahim, 2010). Still, these electoral arrangements exist almost everywhere in the world, and previous experience show that they cannot permanently limit the number of seats parties contest. Institutionalist also logic tells us that once established, these parties tend to take a life of their own (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004), and refuse to fulfill their end of these co-optation agreements. These explanations show how ‘sticky’ party structures and their relations with states may be: as the parties and regimes start to make promises and commitments on several issues, it will be harder for either side to renege on them publicly (Hamid, 2014, p. 137).

In this respect, this analysis constitutes the first step in a research project that tries to determine “whether and how religious and political leaders in ‘electorally overachieving’ states . . . draw upon democratically beneficial concepts” in Islam and contribute to the democratic development of their countries (Stepan & Robertson, 2003, p. 40).

Deriving Theoretical Hypotheses From Previous Chapters

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, then, this project does not start the analyses with the assumption that all religious parties, be it in their programs or demands, are inherently contentious, irredeemably inflexible or inescapably undemocratic. In fact, earlier sections have already discussed why an absolute separation of religion and politics is not a sine-qua-non condition for democratic regimes. While doing so, however, these chapters have made some distinctions among religiously oriented political parties on the basis of their inclusiveness or stances towards the implementation of religious doctrines. These differentiations necessarily entail certain hypotheses on the effects of these party types on democratic quality. This chapter seeks to understand the differential effects of the dominance of certain party types in a party system, and asks which types are more likely to generate higher quality of democracy, and which others can be detrimental to democratization efforts possibly by restricting the access of certain groups to the political system, or limiting the choices, liberties and rights associated with citizens’ participation in public life.

As religiously oriented parties channel public grievances and dissatisfaction with existing regimes into demands for Islamic governance, for example, there is a reason to believe that they exacerbate religious cleavages and create potentially

dangerous divisions. On the other hand, religious parties that can accommodate different worldviews (e.g. civil-confessional party type), and areligious parties that do not stand for the exclusion of religious groups from political arena, discourage these confrontations and encourage cooperation and compromise instead. These and similar arguments have been discussed at length in previous chapters; so in the light of them, it is possible to state the expectations of this research in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Countries whose party systems are dominated by inclusive, (i.e. secular or civil-confessional) parties are more likely to have higher quality of democracy.

While the implications of this hypothesis may suggest that party systems with low levels or no religiosity can be more conducive to better quality of democracy, it is important to remember that this research distinguishes extremist, conservative and tolerant varieties of religious parties and expects to find different impacts of these parties on the democratic qualities of their countries. More specifically, the literature has long associated the presence of (and support for) extremist parties with lower levels of democratic quality. Potential problems associated with extremist party support include weak party systems (Duverger, 1954; Huntington, 1968; Sartori, 1976), cabinet instability (Dodd, 1976; Powell, 1981), turmoil and citizen discontent (Powell, 1986) and deeper societal divisions (Huntington, 1996). In fact, considering the very essence of democratic politics, which requires even the most unlikely partners to make compromises and work together towards a common goal, it is easy to see why the absolutism of extremists (and their insistence on ideological purity, for that matter) could be problematic for the day-to-day affairs of a polity. Religious

extremists, for whom the main pillar of governance is the full application of Shari'a in each and every aspect of daily lives of citizens, leave little, if any, room for individual freedom and civil rights. Similarly, hostile secularists, for whom the main goal is the strict separation of religion and state, violate the principle of "twin tolerations" (Stepan, 2000) and exclude religious groups from public debates and policy negotiations, allegedly to modernize their society. Both types, in this sense, share a common trait, which is "a demand for major transformation of the society, either towards some future vision or back to an idealized past" (Powell, 1986, p. 358). When the question is primarily about the political consequences of the two extreme positions, then, the overall impact of religious extremist political parties may not be very different from that of hostile secularist parties. Based on this, it is reasonable to expect a lower likelihood of a high quality democratic regime in political systems dominated by extremist political parties, and this leads to two more hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: Democratic quality decreases as the share of extremist parties in a party system increases.

Hypothesis 2b: Party systems dominated by either type of extremism have lower quality of democracy.

Nonetheless, relative size and party platforms are not the only factors that shape a party system and influence its effect on democratic quality. The literature also refers to the distance between parties in key issues, as well as to their willingness to work with others in electoral alliances and coalitions, as widely accepted (and arguably, more important) determinants of regime outcomes (Dahl, 1971; Sartori, 1976; Dalton, 2008). According to this line of arguments, when incompatible parties constitute a large bloc of seats in the parliament, it "means that the policy distance

between parties is high and compromises accordingly costly” (Strom, 1984, p. 221). Such polarized political settings can lead to low levels of institutional trust (Linz, 1978), systemic gridlocks (Powell, 1982), citizen dissatisfaction (Ezrow & Xezonakis, 2011) and even the breakdown of democracy (Valenzuela, 1978; Sani & Sartori, 1983). In party systems where religion is a divisive and salient issue, the propensity for polarization is even more profound, as religious preferences “are intense and not negotiable” (Rhabushka & Shepsle, 1972, p. 66), which means that polarization constitutes a bigger threat to the democratic development in countries where religious parties play a role. In the end, this reasoning yields the third hypothesis as the following:

Hypothesis 3: Party systems with lower levels of polarization will be more likely to have higher quality of democracy.

In some party systems where religion is a salient issue, however, the most heated debates do not take place between these hostile secularist parties and their extremist religious counterparts, but occur between different types of religious parties, each trying to create their own niche, either by “outbidding” the other in terms of their dedication to the religiosity. Similar to the effects of irreconcilable differences, however, such cases of “piety-trumping” in a party system makes parties less likely to compromise with others or moderate themselves to appeal to a broader constituency. As parties diverge from the center through competition, they adopt more intolerant, inflexible and impractical positions. In contrast, party systems in which center parties have a bigger role generate higher qualities of democracy.

Hypothesis 4: The closer the party system is to the civil-confessional party type, the greater the likelihood of having a better quality of democracy.

The underlying logic for this hypothesis is also found in the argument that inclusion of religious groups in party systems creates more legitimacy for the regime and “facilitate adaptation and compromise between competing groups” (Lai & Melkonian-Hoover, 2005, p. 558).

Data and Research Design

This research project uses Lieberman’s nested analysis model to understand and explain the effects of religiosity on democratic quality in Muslim majority countries. As an initial step of this research design, this chapter compiles empirical evidence and offers a large-N analysis of party system religiosity in post-Cold War era. Thus, statistical models developed in this chapter test the hypotheses suggested above before delving into a more-nuanced studies on why and how these processes present themselves in the politics of a few selected cases in next chapters.

Even though democratic regimes existed in predominantly Muslim countries well before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the post-Cold War period sets the temporal framework of this study, as that is when “democracy ceased being a mostly Western phenomenon and went global” (Huntington, 1992; Diamond, 2010, p. 93). As the Soviet Union was dismantled, the model of “authoritarian modernization”, which inspired many anti-colonial, nationalist, socialist or Marxist rulers of Muslim countries, ceased to be a viable alternative to the Western model that prioritizes democratic norms and institutions (Salame, 1994). The termination of Soviet subsidies also led to severe economic crises in many countries that relied on the Soviet Union for support, the aftermath of which either created the impetus to oust authoritarian leaders, or invited Western economic influence that came with political conditionality to hold elections (Levitsky & Way, 2010). For one reason or another, many democratic

openings in the Muslim world took place following the fall of the Soviets, allegedly starting the “Fourth-Wave” of democratization in the process (McFaul, 2002; Doorenspleet, 2005; Diamond, 2011; Howard & Hussain, 2013).

It is also important to note that throughout this research, the terms ‘Muslim-majority states’, or ‘predominantly Muslim countries’ (used interchangeably), refer to independent countries in which at least fifty percent of the population is affiliated with the Islamic religious tradition. According to current population estimates, there are 47 Arab and non-Arab countries that fulfill these criteria; and the list of these countries is based on several sources, including CIA Factbook, PEW Research Center’s *The Future of the Global Muslim Population* report and the religious fractionalization index by Alesina et al. (2003). Yet, not all 47 of these countries are examined in this research with respect to their political systems. Given the project’s focus on democratic quality, countries that do not hold competitive elections are excluded from the country sample, simply because competitive elections are considered a significant, and perhaps most-telling, sign of democratic openings (Dahl, 1971; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Stepan, 2000).² Although electoral competitiveness is by no means sufficient to declare any country democratic, competitive elections are always “a necessary

² Admittedly, an earlier version of this research used different selection criteria, in which the countries included in the sample would need to meet at least the minimum criteria for democratic governance by allowing parties to form and function, holding regular elections and giving political parties a chance to compete in elections. In other words, it defined the universe of relevant country-election years in terms of free and partly free countries along Freedom House criteria. Yet, this selection was problematic, as Freedom House scores were later introduced as the dependent variable, and such a selection-on-the-dependent variable would be ill-considered for the reasons discussed below.

condition” and thus, “always central” to the evaluations of future democratic prospects (Stepan & Robertson, 2003, p. 31).³

Data on election events come from the “National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy” (NELDA) dataset, collected by Hyde and Marinov (2012). According to NELDA’s minimalist measure of electoral competition, the following criteria are used to select the subset of elections that are included in the analysis: (1) “The opposition was allowed” to run in the elections, (2) More than one “party was legal”, and (3) There was “a choice of candidates on the ballot” (Hyde & Marinov, 2012).⁴ Given the scope and purposes of this research, NELDA’s minimalist criteria seem more useful than “free and fair elections” criteria used in other datasets, such as CSAE’s “Free and Fair Elections” (Bishop & Hoeffler, 2014) for several reasons. First of all, an outcome-based approach introduces a selection bias in which only the countries with good election records could be analyzed in the end, creating further problems on biased estimates and unreliable inferences. Moreover, elections come in all shapes and sizes in Muslim-majority countries. Not all of them are free, certainly a number of them are not fair; but even the fact that the elections are being held (Lindberg, 2006) and that the opposition is allowed to run (Bunce & Wolchik, 2010) may be enough to give hope for further democratization. A higher threshold of “free and fair elections” criteria disregards this possibility and significantly decreases the number of observations that could be used for hypothesis testing. Finally, the limited time frame election datasets

³ This also means that, although the question of why some countries start establishing these democratic procedures and institutions (while others do not) in and of itself is important, the research only tries to identify the variables that lead to a variance in regime outcomes “once democracy is established procedurally” (Birbir, 2011, p. 7).

⁴ NELDA dubs these variables as “Nelda3”, “Nelda4” and “Nelda5”, respectively. For a detailed explanation on coding rules for these variables, please see Hyde and Marinov, 2012.

provide information for makes selection and coding of recent election events quite difficult and possibly less reliable.⁵ In such cases, the competitiveness criteria become a better alternative, as “whether elections are competitive could be determined ex ante, whereas assessing whether elections were ‘free and fair’ required ex post information and thus is much more difficult to [gauge] in an objective fashion” (Cederman, Gleditsch & Hug, 2012, p. 396).⁶

In the end, this competitive elections criteria exclude nine countries altogether (namely, Afghanistan, Brunei, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan) for not holding competitive elections and, Kosovo and Maldives for the lack of relevant data. In the remaining countries, it also omits several elections for not allowing parties to form and function.⁷ The data on the elections that fail to fulfill NELDA criteria are also compared to Jonathan Fox’s “Religion and State” dataset, in which repressive mechanisms like “restrictions on religious political parties” and “restrictions on clergy and/or religious organizations engaging in public political speech (other than sermons) or propaganda on political activity in or by religious institutions” are coded extensively (Fox, 2012).

This selection procedure yields 156 observations in 36 Muslim-majority countries that held competitive elections over the past 25 years (i.e. from 1990 to

⁵ This includes NELDA as well, as its temporal coverage does not extend beyond 2006.

⁶ While one may object to this criterion with the argument that free and fair elections criteria is necessary to control for the possibility that incumbent parties restrict the chances of other parties to gain any seats in elections, this objection becomes less relevant when one thinks all regimes, even the most democratic ones, do not refrain from electoral engineering. Electoral systems are, as Sartori once said, “the most specific manipulable instrument of politics” and unfair electoral systems “can be altered through opposition pressure and popular mobilization” (Hamid, 2014, p.118).

⁷ After all, the concept of “democracy necessarily implies that no group in civil society--including religious groups--can *a priori* be prohibited from forming a political party” (Stepan, 2000, p. 40).

2014). The unit of analysis is the country-election year. The number of country-year observations for each country ranges from 1 (Syria) to 8 (Albania), thus producing an unbalanced panel for the regression analysis. The appendix includes the full list of countries and elections used in this research project (See Appendix A-1).

Measuring Party System Religiosity

Creating a 'party system religiosity' variable is the first, and arguably the most important, task in order to make meaningful comparisons across cases. To capture the effects of these different religiosities in systemic variables, I use the religiosity type chart developed in the second chapter with regard to parties' positions on various issues, such as implementation of Sharia and relations with other groups. On that basis, I divide the politically relevant parties⁸ in each country into six categories, ranging from extremely religious to hostile secular political parties, with moderate parties occupying middle positions. While the scores each party gets for different election years come to reflect the evolution of parties and regimes over time, the coding procedure does not involve any attempt to adjust for differences in political opportunities or constraints in various settings. Parties in more authoritarian political settings are not judged more leniently (or severely, for that matter) when it comes to evaluating their issue positions or interactions with other parties. The same is true for the parties in more democratic contexts.

The sources used to code these political parties are numerous, including, but not limited to, country constitutions, party manifestoes and programs, elections data

⁸ Here "politically relevant parties" refer to any group that define themselves as a political party and win representation at the national level. The starting point for coding any party in any of the given categories is, in this sense, the election in which they won at least one seat in the parliament.

handbooks (e.g. Nohlen et al. 1999, 2001, 2010), Inter-Parliamentary Union archives on parliamentary election records, as well as books on religious parties (e.g. Sagar, 2009; Schlager & Weisblatt, 2006; Lawson & Ibrahim, 2010), and large number of journal articles on relevant countries.⁹ As an additional test of reliability and objectivity of this coding, parties' religiosity scores are compared with those of the "Party Variation in Religiosity and Women's Leadership" dataset, even though it is spatially and temporally more restricted and covers 25 Muslim and non-Muslim countries for a single point in time.¹⁰ In the end, this cross-validation effort produces only a few discrepancies, most of which result from the minor differences in party categories each dataset employs and are resolved through further review of party-relevant material (e.g. manifestos, party programs and statements by party leaders).¹¹

That being said, because the research question is interested in party system religiosity, rather than each party's positions on religion or religious issues, relying simply on individual scores of each party would constitute an ecological fallacy through which party-level data is used to evaluate a national-level outcome (Schwartz, 1994). Thus, an aggregated score of party system religiosity is constructed for every country-election year in the following way: First, to control for the parties' ability to

⁹ Too often, though, parties changed names, merged or disintegrated from one election to another, making the coding process lengthy and difficult. Especially on the countries where information was not readily available or potentially controversial, I consulted foreign language sources and country experts to get specific details and well-documented facts, rather than opinions, to resolve contradictions. On this note, I'd like to give my special thanks to Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim, Lena Benabdallah and Dan Eizinga for their help in data-verification and blind coding of parties in Africa.

¹⁰ Fatima Kassem's dataset looks at 25 countries for a single election (between 2008-2010) and also uses a five-point scale to measure religiosity and secularism of political parties in these settings. These scores are available at the Association of Religion Data Archives.

¹¹ While none of these cross-checks can absolutely guarantee that coding contains no errors, they at least make the coding more transparent and the dataset more replicable.

enact policies their supporters care about, I calculate the proportions of each party's parliamentary seats following the referent election in every country. Then, these proportions are multiplied with the religiosity scores (on a six-point scale, 1 being religiously extremist, 6 being hostile secularist) assigned to each party during the aforementioned coding procedure.¹² Finally, the results of these calculations are added up to obtain the religiosity score of the party system, which ranges from 100 to 600.¹³ Put simply, the contribution of every relevant political party to this aggregate score becomes proportional to its individual religiosity score and share of seats in the parliament.¹⁴

As a second measure of religiosity of the party system, I follow Siaroff's operationalization, and create a set of variables with the parliamentary seat shares of extremist party types, taking the size and strength of these parties into account (Siaroff, 2000).¹⁵ Accordingly, a party is categorized as an extremist one if gets the score of 1 or 6; or in practice, if it aims to exclude a certain group from political arena.

¹² Because it is very difficult (and sometimes impossible) to determine the positions of independents in the parliament, they are not included in the calculations. A score is assigned to a number of independents only in cases where they act as a political group in the parliament (e.g. Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt under Mubarak regime).

¹³ Note that higher religiosity scores does not mean that religious parties dominate the system; and actually it is quite the opposite: Because religious parties are scored 1,2 or 3, party systems in which they play an important role necessarily have lower religiosity scores.

¹⁴ To illustrate, following the 2002 elections in Turkey, JDP –a civil/confessional party with a score of 4 in religiosity score- emerged as the largest party in the parliament, gaining 363 of 550 seats. While JDP's proportion of parliamentary seats (66 percent) multiplied by their religiosity score (4) results in a weighted score of 264, RPP's 178 seats (i.e. 32.36 percent) multiplied by their religiosity score of 6 produces the score of 194.182. As nine independent members of the parliament did not form a parliamentary group or alliance (unlike their socialist and Kurdish nationalist counterparts in 2007 elections), they are not included in the calculations, and which gives the party system religiosity score as $264 + 194.182 = 458.182$.

¹⁵ These variables were coded as zero when there are no religious extremist/hostile secular parties in the party system of a country. I also re-run the tests for these hypotheses after excluding these countries with no extremist parties, but the coefficients and statistical significances do not change dramatically.

The first component of this variable, i.e. 'Religious extremist', calculates the simple sum¹⁶ of each religious extremist party's seat share for every country-election year; and 'hostile secularist' variable does the same for the seat shares of hostile secularist parties. These sums are then added together to create "extremist" party variable, again for each country-election year.

Finally, following Sartori's (1976) definition of polarization, (i.e. "overall ideological distance within the party system"), I measure the distribution of political parties along this religiosity scale, weighed by their seat shares, and construct a polarization variable. This variable is "comparable to a measure of the [weighted] standard deviation of a distribution and is similar to the statistics used by other scholars" (Alvarez & Nagler, 2004; Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006; Dalton, 2008, p. 906). Consequently, a low score implies that political parties offer more or less similar policy positions on religion, whereas a high score means that the positions of parties on religious issues are significantly different from one another.

In the end, the independent variables of this analysis include aggregate religiosity scores, proportion of extremist parties (and its disaggregated versions, in the form of religious extremist and hostile secularists), polarization index, and variance from the civil-confessional party type. The latter variable intends to test the final hypothesis on the role of civil-confessional parties in political system and gauges the extent to which parties in political system center around this type of parties -or

¹⁶ This method of calculation is chosen over the party concentration indices (that is, the inverse of the effective number of parties, created "to weigh individual parties more heavily as their seat share rises"), as unlike the former method, this one does "not discount small parties by squaring seat shares" (Horowitz & Browne, 2008, p. 25). After all, coalition theory suggests (Axelrod, 1970; Dodd, 1976; Sartori 1976) that "even very small groups in legislatures that are elected proportionally have a reasonable expectation of getting into a coalition government and having their policy and/or particularistic preferences advocated and enacted by their own representatives", especially if they hold what Sartori calls "coalition potential" or "blackmail potential" (Birnie, 2007, p. 53; Sartori, 1976).

conversely, the degree to which they are dispersed. The variable is constructed on the basis of Alvarez and Nagler's "Weighted Party System Dispersion" equation (2004), through which parties' relative deviances from the 'civil confessional party' type is weighed by their seat shares for all country election years. Thus, the equation used to calculate these values becomes:

$$= \sqrt{\sum_{j=1} SS_j (P_{jk} - P_k)^2}, \text{ where } P_k \text{ refers to the position of civil confessional}$$

parties in the scale (i.e., the score of 4), P_{jk} to the position of party j in country k , and SS_j to the seat share for the party j . Higher values of party system dispersion means that the parties are far from civil confessional type, the predominance of which is hypothesized to create more democratic outcomes.

Variables

Surely, though, the indicator used for the dependent variable is as important as the independent variables described above. So far, there has been no consensus in the literature about the most appropriate indicator for quality of democracy, and almost all indicators have been identified with several problems (details of which are too lengthy to discuss in this project). To circumvent the problem of choosing one imperfect measure over another, this research uses the Unified Democracy Scores (UDS), generated through the combination of the ten existing scales of democracy (Pemstein, Meserve & Melton, 2010).¹⁷ In addition to exhibiting relatively higher degree of validity and reliability, the UDS fit the purposes of this research better than

¹⁷ These measures include "Arat (1991), Bowman, Lehoucq & Mahoney (2005), Bollen (2001), Freedom House (2007), Hadenius (1992), Przeworski et al. (2000), Polity scores by Marshall, Jaggers & Gurr (2006), Polyarchy scale by Coppedge and Reinicke (1991), Gasiorowski's (1996) Political Regime Change measure and Vanhenen (2003)" (Pemstein et al. 2010, p.3).

any other measure at the moment. After all, the research question's focus on the quality of democracy assumes degrees of democracy and eliminates the possibility of using a binary scale; and the time frame it covers render other measures that do not provide any data for recent years practically useless. The UDS, on the other hand, present continuous scores, which are more suitable for regression analysis, and provide a measurement of democratic quality for almost all the countries between the years 1946 and 2012. These scores are also updated annually, which allows the assessment of the direction of change in democratic systems across countries.¹⁸ Thus, even though future versions of these analyses will also update the measures of democracy with the help of the Varieties of Democracy Project, all the models in this chapter are tested against Unified Democracy Scores.¹⁹

As a robustness check, statistical models of this chapter also use Polity²⁰ and Freedom House scales of democratic quality.²¹ For the sake of clarity and readability, both scores are altered so that Polity2 scores range from 0 to 21, instead of from -10 to 10. Likewise, the combined Freedom House scores are reversed, so higher scores

¹⁸ To create the Unified Democracy Scores, Pemstein and colleagues use a Bayesian latent variable approach and estimate and incorporate the measurement error of democracy in different scales. The webpage of the project, www.unified-democracy-scores.com, contains more detailed information on the methods to synthesize these scores and their comparisons with existing measures of democracy. The data are also available online.

¹⁹ Because the UDS do not cover the years 2013 and 2014, they yield fewer (i.e. 144, vis-à-vis Freedom House's 155) observations.

²⁰ Polity index grades democracies on 21-point scale, ranging from the strongly autocratic (-10) to strongly democratic (10), on the basis of competitiveness of political participation, openness of executive recruitment and constraints on the chief executive (Marshall, Gurr & Jaggers, 2015).

²¹ Freedom in the World Survey follows an electoral-procedural definition of democracy and ranks countries through a scale that runs from 1 (most free) to 7 (least free) based on their proximity to the ideal type in "civil liberties" and "political rights" categories. Due to the nature of the research question, the dependent variable combines the scores for civil liberties and political rights together, instead of focusing on them individually.

indicate greater democratic quality, and 2 becomes the lowest score while 14 becomes the highest.²²

In addition to the variables described above, the analysis controls for other factors that have been frequently used in the literature to explain the quality of democracy. Ever since Lipset's famous declaration that "the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy", for instance, almost social science research on this topic has found a significant relationship between economic development and regime type (Lipset, 1967; Przeworski et al., 2000). Thus, regressions control for the effects of economic development on the quality of democracy through the World Bank data on the GDP per capita of each country-election year. Since these numbers show a very high variability, they are logarithmically transformed in order to deal with their skewedness.

Apart from the level of economic development, scholars have shown that economic performance has an impact over regime stability, with economic contraction creating dissatisfaction with political regimes, and economic growth and moderate inflation promoting regime survival (Gasirowski, 1995; Bernhard, Nordstrom & Reenock, 2001). Thus, my analyses also include an economic performance variable by using the World Bank data on the GDP annual growth rate of election years for all countries.

²² This rescaling also makes it possible to use both scores in ordinary least squares regressions. Even though earlier versions of this project have used ordered logit models, I noticed a substantial agreement in the literature to use Freedom House scores and Polity as continuous variables, rather than ordinal scales, in panel data analyses (Beck & Katz, 1995; Acemoglu et al., 2004; Marshall, Gurr & Jagers, 2015; Back & Hadenius, 2008; Ross, 2012). Despite being not optimal, "OLS estimates of TSCS model parameters . . . often perform well in practical research situations." (Beck & Katz, 1995, p. 634).

However, not only the performance, but also the structure of the economy is thought to affect democratic quality, especially for countries that heavily rely on natural resource wealth. In line with the famous “oil-impedes-democracy” thesis, the literature on this subject considers oil dependency especially harmful to democratization efforts for a number of reasons (Ross, 2006; Collier, 2007; Kuru, 2014); and even blames the “authoritarian resilience” of Muslim majority countries on this type of “resource curse” (Kuru, 2014). Such an impact is controlled in this analysis through Ross’ data on the total value of oil and gas production, divided by country’s population.²³ The relevant data is available in both nominal and constant (2000 and 2009) US dollars; but, because there is a highly skewed distribution of values (with some countries producing no oil and others gaining an enormous income from it), the regressions use the natural log of this variable (Ross, 2012, p. 16).

Finally, there are several historical factors that previous research has found to either hinder, or contribute to, the overall democratic quality in a country. Having a constitutional monarchy is one such factor. Depending on the circumstances, monarchies can sustain their authoritarian status for a long time by appealing to people’s respect for tradition and nationalism, or provide legitimacy to a democracy in transition and an overarching loyalty for all citizens –as in the case of the traditional monarchies of Europe (Goldstone, 2011). Thus, a dummy variable for monarchy is included in the analysis to see if it plays a role in bringing about lower quality

²³ . Compared to alternative measures of natural resources effect, this variable of oil/gas income per capita captures the effects of countries’ resource production on their political developments better. Alternate measures of natural resource effect are associated with a number of problems as well. For instance, measuring “exports of fuel or non-fuel minerals as a fraction of GDP is probably biased upwards in poorer and more conflict-prone countries” and many alternative measures run into the problem of obtaining data on “government revenues from extractive sector” (Ross, 2012, p. 14).

democracies. As far as other historical factors are concerned, the literature usually underlines the influence of British colonialism by referring to positive correlation between the British colonial history and democratic stability and survival after independence. Even when this effect seems to be overstated in the literature, the relations between the state and civil society under British rule do seem to have contributed to the post-colonial democratic success, making democratic transitions more likely to endure in former British colonies vis-à-vis the ones in former French or Dutch colonies (Bernhard, Reenock, & Nordstrom, 2004). Based on this idea, cross-sectional analyses capture the impact of the British colonial history through a dummy variable, which gives the score 0 to the countries with no previous British colonial status and gives the score of 1 to former British colonies. In a similar manner, it includes a dummy variable for the countries with a Communist past. This practice tallies with the previous research, which posits that, the ideology, shared past, and “Communist legacy” (whether it is in the form of a socioeconomic legacy, or rather a political/institutional one) are better predictors of resilient nondemocratic regimes than religion in post-Communist countries (Mingui-Pippidi & Mindruta, 2000; Linz & Stepan 1996, p. 247).

Time-Series Cross-Sectional Models and Results

As stated in the model development section of this chapter, the primary purpose of this analysis is to capture the pattern between the party system religiosity and the quality of democracy, while checking the effects of other factors such as economic development and resource curse. To explore this relationship, I use panel

data with country effects²⁴ and test the hypotheses on the effects of certain types of religiosity by using different measures of democratic quality. A panel data structure is useful for this kind of research, as there are enough grounds to “suspect that the outcome variable depends on explanatory variables which are not observable but correlated with the observed explanatory variables” (Schmidheiny, 2014).

The first estimation, shown in Table 4.1, looks at the impact of all independent variables described above, including the effect of the religiosity score²⁵ as the main explanatory variable (see p. 155). Even though it reports the results for both fixed and random effects models, which are created to overcome the problem of “unobserved heterogeneity”, the results of the Hausman test²⁶ shows that regression models should be estimated with random effects, taking the weighted average of between- and within- estimates rather than with fixed effects (Hausman, 1978; Wooldridge, 2013). Thus, all the interpretations below are made on the basis of the estimations of random effects model.

All standard errors in the model are clustered at the country level, so they are “robust against arbitrary heteroskedasticity and serial correlation at the country level” (Wooldridge, 2002). This clustering approach, adjusts for the differences in the number of election-years for each country within the dataset, and makes sure that the

²⁴ Having identified the observations through their V-Dem Country Codes, the resulting dataset consists of an unbalanced panel with gaps, the time dimension of which was set through the variable “electionyear.”

²⁵ Party system religiosity variable is labeled as “secularism score” here, so higher scores in this variable will mean lower levels of religiosity.

²⁶ That the null hypothesis “the individual effects are uncorrelated with the other regressors in the model” cannot be rejected on any standard level of significance (Prob>chi2 = 0.3419).

observations are “independent across countries but not within them” (Davenport, 2004).

In this first set of models, only economic development variable exerts any significant effect, even though the coefficients of other control variables are mostly in expected directions (with the exception of the “history of British colonialism” in random effects and curvilinear models). In both fixed effects and random effect models, I find a positive coefficient for secularism score (which ranges from 100 to 600, 100 being most religious) on quality of democracy, suggesting lower levels of religiosity may indeed be associated with higher levels of democratic quality. That being said, it is important to notice that the size of this effect may be negligible, as the coefficient is too small to be substantively significant, and the p-value is not quite at the accepted level of statistical significance. For these reasons, these results do not seem to provide a conclusive, or convincing, evidence for the first hypothesis that expects to see lower religiosity levels’ increasing democracy levels.

Suspecting that the relationship between aggregate religiosity scores and democratic quality could be curvilinear, I run another regression by incorporating its quadratic version into the model. Table 4 -1 (see p. 155) reports the results of a possible curvilinear relationship between secularism scores and democratic quality as well. In the end, the positive coefficient of secularism score and negative coefficient of its squared value implies an increase in democratic quality with increasing levels of secularism score and a decline in democratic quality after a certain threshold of secularism score is passed. However, both main and squared terms fail to reach

accepted levels of statistical or substantial significance, and the coefficient on quadratic term indicates that the effect is rather negligible.

Nevertheless, it is possible that these weak findings come up because the aggregate score of religiosity reflect mixed effects of secular and hostile secular parties, failing to distinguish between these two. After all, they both yield lower religiosity scores and a linear model may mask the effect of different party types in a party system, even though they tend to be vastly different. Therefore, the next set of models use a different proxy for the effect of party system religiosity and test whether the quality of democracy decreases as an extremist party's seat share increases.

Together, the findings of Table 4-2 support the *Hypothesis 2* that extremist parties tend to decrease the quality of democracy in their countries (see p. 156). As far as these control variables are concerned, economic development and monarchy are the most powerful predictors, and their coefficients are in expected directions. More substantively, however, parameter estimates show that one unit increase in the share of extremist parties results in 6.3% unit decrease in the Polity Scores, while holding everything else constant. This effect is also significant at .05 level for the Unified Democracy Scores model. Furthermore, the p-values of the independent variables in each model suggest that we can safely reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between extremist party share and the quality of democracy. This finding also provides support for the second hypothesis, as it shows that the effect of extremist party shares is negative and statistically significant, even after controlling for other variables.

To further evaluate this effect, individual effects model looks at these types of parties more closely by disaggregating extremist parties into two groups, as religious extremist parties and hostile secularist parties. Even though the explanatory variable seems statistically significant in expected direction when considering both types of extremism together (Combined Effects Models), however, Individual Effects models find confirmation for only religious extremist parties. As seen on the Table 4-2 (see p. 156), the coefficient for “religious extremist parties” is negative, and the variable seems both statistically and substantively significant. On the contrary, the p-value of “hostile secularist parties” variable does not even reach the level of marginal statistical significance, implying that *Hypothesis 2b* gets only mixed support. The coefficient of extremist parties in the combined effects model appears to be lower than the coefficient of religious extremist parties, showing that it gets slightly reduced when religious extremist party shares is combined with hostile secularist party shares. These findings suggest that it can actually be the dominance of religious extremist parties in the system that drives the shown effect of the extremist parties in a party system on democracy. Hostile secularist parties may not even create the adverse impact on democratic quality *Hypothesis 2b* expected to find.

When it comes to testing the hypothesized relationship between higher polarization levels and lower democratic quality (*Hypothesis 3*), the regression results (shown in Table 4-3) do not seem to provide much support. The coefficients of the main independent variable have negative signs, as expected by the hypothesis (see p. 157). However, polarization variable only exerts significant impact when the model is run with Polity2 scores, and its p-values in other two models are above the accepted

levels of statistical significance. Despite the plausibility of the arguments on adverse effects of polarization, then, regression analyses cannot reject the null hypothesis of no relationship with any certainty.

Therefore, the following model tests an alternative explanation, which suggests that the main explanatory variable may not necessarily be the polarization of the party system, but may be the extent to which it is dispersed from the civil confessional party type (which is hypothesized to be most conducive for democratic quality). I test this possibility through *Hypothesis 4* suggesting that the increased divergence from civil confessional party type leads to lower quality of democracy. The results of this analysis is shown in the Table 4-4, on page 158. Across all models, the coefficient for this variable seems negative and significant, meaning that any increase in the divergence from this civil-confessional party type decreases the likelihood of higher democracy score, as *Hypothesis 4* expects to see. They also demonstrate that the control variables used here do not always do a good job of explaining the variations in democratic quality.

Robustness Checks

As a final step in panel data analysis, post-estimation diagnostics run a number of tests in order to ensure the robustness of these results. To be certain of these findings, for instance, all regressions presented above are run with different measures of democratic quality and the same variables. As shown in the tables, though, they produce nearly identical results, confirming the robustness of these findings and offering further evidence that the type of religiosity significantly influence the quality of democracy in a country.

Moreover, democratic quality is measured as a continuous variable in all models due to numerous precedents that use Freedom House and Polity scores for OLS regressions (Burkhart & Lewis-Beck, 1994; Barro, 1997; Knack, 2004). Nonetheless, because they are technically ordinal scales with adjacent categories and no interval scores, the analyses also employ an ordered logit models in regressions. The Tables A -2, A-3 and A-4 in the appendix report the results of these regressions in detail, but it is safe to say that there is a high level of consistency between all these models.

Lastly, even though scholars who use panel data structures frequently warn against the potential problems associated with serial correlation (Baltagi, 2001; Wooldridge, 2002; Drukker, 2003), it is hardly a concern for this project. Serial correlation occurs when the error terms are correlated across time and observations in macro-panels; but this dataset is a micro-panel where the largest number of observations for one country is merely eight, where the probability of having serial correlation is very low. Similarly, while unbalanced panels are also potentially problematic due to panel attrition (Winer, 1981; Das, Toepoel & van Soest, 2011); the cases in which countries did not hold elections on time does not constitute a huge bias here, because the estimations show that number of elections held between the years 1990 and 2014 is selective with regard to general democratic procedures. Seen from this perspective, this selectivity for attriting “corrects some of the bias that was introduced during the panel recruitment process” through minimal competitiveness criteria (Lugtig, 2014, p. 19).

Potential Drawbacks and Further Research: Unraveling Causal Mechanisms

As discussed before, this research project is important for its revelation that there is a significant amount of variation –both within and across countries- in the alleged rise of political Islam. Whereas some findings of this large-N analysis reinforce the previous arguments on harmful aspects of extremist parties, particularly those of religious extremists; most of them go against the prevailing conclusions of the literature on the role of religious political parties, illustrating many faces of political Islam and implying that democracy may actually thrive in contexts where inclusive political parties are able to form, function and compete in elections.

Now that the findings this empirical analysis seem to support the argument on causal direction, however, it becomes necessary to explain the causal mechanism behind this phenomenon. Results shown above, in this sense, raise further questions on why, and under which conditions, these parties end up making the strategic choices that they make, and how they see themselves and their policies within the context of their political opportunities and constraints.²⁷ As different national contexts produced different agendas and methods for Islamic groups even when they have the same founding father –whether he is Hasan al-Banna or Mawlana Mawdudi of the Jamat, “the socioeconomic and political context needs to be a part of any study that investigates particular aspects of any society, including its religious and political

²⁷ While scholars have tried to answer the first question without necessarily paying attention to the second part (i.e. how they perceive themselves), I believe rational-choice theories or instrumentalist explanations fall short of understanding the real choices these parties have faced, and describing the changes these parties went through over time. As Hamid aptly noted, those who constitute the party or decide on its strategies “are not just ‘rational actors’ or ‘mere ideologues’ . . . they are real people who are shaped by their experiences and those of the movements to which they have pledged allegiance” (Hamid, 2014, p. 8).

dimensions” (Abootalebi, 2000, p. 119).²⁸ Therefore, any result this analysis produces will not be complete until it is supported by qualitative analyses applied to specific contexts in order to deal with this complexity and to reveal the exact causal mechanisms in this process.

In line with this assertion, then, the factors described above, as well as the interactions among them, have a potential to shed more light on these complex and multifaceted causal mechanisms behind these hypotheses. Those qualitative studies, supported with case-sensitive analyses and interviews of key officers,²⁹ will further our understanding of why and how parties decide on their policy priorities in the light of party strategies, citizen demands, and –in some cases- state restrictions. In the end, combining the results of these cross-sectional models with more context-specific data, then, will make it easier to see the bigger picture and understand the characteristics and interactions of religiously oriented political parties under different incentives and within different constraints.

Identifying Trends

Although some details may be –admittedly- lost or overlooked in this cross-sectional time series analysis, even this broad-brush approach depicts a number of different religious identities adopted (be it for strategic reasons or not) by political parties, whose political consequences differ enormously. By using a multivocal lens, this large-N analysis demonstrates that not all religiously oriented parties constitute a

²⁸ After all, these parties did not choose their religious rhetoric or goals on a whim; they saw some kind of an interest and decided to mobilize these interests along certain political goals through their parties. As long as there is a demand for Islamist doctrines and policy efforts from society, then, we can expect someone to fill this void sooner or later, be it in the form of Party A or Party B.

²⁹ Surely, one simple way to figure out how and why these parties do what they do is to go and ask those who have been in decision-making mechanisms (meaning both the party elites and activists).

threat to democratic development or decrease the chances of having democratic outcomes. If anything, the repression of these parties and their exclusion from political arena creates negative effects on democratic quality, violating key democratic principles. While the large role played by religious extremist parties do decrease the democratic quality, the results demonstrate that “more authoritarian interpretations of Islam” are not the only possible outcome in elections held in Muslim majority countries (Fox & Sandler, 2005, p. 330). Thus, the problem of Muslim majority countries becomes not a problem of religion’s representation in political arena, but a problem of fundamentalist Islam (Nasr, 1995).

These findings, in this sense, are bound to generate some important changes in our understanding of Islamic parties, secularism and democracy in Muslim-majority countries in general. Their policy implications are rather obvious as well: these results indicate “Islamist free elections trap”, according to which “allowing free elections in Islamic countries would bring to power governments that would use these democratic freedoms to destroy democracy itself” (Stepan, 2000, p. 48), simply relies on a false assumption. The discussion on these areas can finally alter the focus of conversation from incompatibility of Islam and democracy to the independent effects of parties in such a process (Lai & Melkonian-Hoover, 2005), generating more interesting and lively debates on roles and functions of parties in the democratization of the Muslim world.

Table 4-1. Aggregate Secularism Score and Other Predictors of Democratic Quality: Generalized Least Squares Regressions with Fixed Effects, Random Effects Models and Quadratic Term.

Dependent Variable: Unified Democracy Scores	Model 1		Model 2
	Fixed Effects	Random Effects	Curvilinear Relationship
	b/se	b/se	b/se
GDP Growth	0.0010 (0.0026)	0.0026 (0.0022)	0.0029 (0.0024)
GDP per Capita (log)	0.1264** (0.0464)	0.0851* (0.0385)	0.0834* (0.0383)
Oil/Gas per capita (log)	0.0166* (0.0070)	-0.0128 (0.0179)	-0.0132 (0.0181)
Party System Secularism Score	0.0002 (0.0005)	0.0005 (0.0004)	0.0007 (0.0004)
Communist Legacy		-0.0819 (0.1661)	-0.0806 (0.1674)
History of British Colonialism		-0.0048 (0.1114)	-0.004 (0.1120)
Monarchy		-0.2717 (0.1667)	-0.1651 (0.2640)
Secularism Score ²			-0.0000 (0.0000)
Constant	-1.1823*** (0.2642)	-0.9195*** (0.2601)	-0.9292*** (0.2601)
N	144	144	144

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses)

Table 4-2. Explaining the Effects of Extremist Parties on Democratic Quality:
Generalized Least Squares Regression of UDS and Polity2 Scores on
Hypothesized Determinants

	Combined Effects Model		Individual Effects Model	
	Unified Democracy Scores b/se	Polity2 Scores b/se	Unified Democracy Scores b/se	Polity2 Scores b/se
Extremist Party Seat Proportion	-0.0043* (0.0018)	-0.0662** (0.0239)		
Communist Legacy	-0.0342 (0.1527)	-1.0389 (1.6822)	-0.0616 (0.1577)	-1.4014 (1.7937)
History of British Colonialism	-0.0458 (0.1010)	0.1793 (1.3035)	-0.0099 (0.1059)	0.6061 (1.4696)
Monarchy	-0.3120* (0.1225)	-5.0192* (2.0922)	-0.2949** (0.1119)	-4.8719* (1.9929)
Oil/Gas per Capita (log)	-0.0122 (0.0175)	-0.1655 (0.2330)	-0.0107 (0.0167)	-0.1351 (0.2254)
GDP per Capita (log)	0.0859* (0.0373)	0.9101 (0.5014)	0.0872* (0.0355)	0.9247 (0.4886)
GDP Growth	0.0044* (0.0022)	0.0439 (0.0367)	(0.0039) -0.0021	0.0371 (0.0342)
Religious Extremist Party Seat Proportion			-0.0069** (0.0025)	-0.0960** -0.0320
Hostile Secularist Party Seat Proportion			-0.0029 (0.0021)	(0.0487) -0.0281
Constant	-0.6679** (0.2512)	-4.2428 (3.3364)	-0.6844** (0.2409)	-4.4852 (3.2645)
N	144	149	144	149

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses)

Table 4-3. Party System Polarization and Other Predictors of Democratic Quality:
Random Effects GLS Regressions on Panel Data with UDS, Polity2 and
Freedom House Scores

	Unified Democracy Scores	Polity2 Scores	Freedom House Scores
	b/se	b/se	b/se
Party System Polarization	-0.0271 (0.0190)	-0.5002* (0.2484)	-0.1857 (0.1495)
Communist Legacy	0.0052 (0.1612)	-0.1100 (1.8020)	0.0241 (0.8541)
History of British Colonialism	-0.0298 (0.1184)	0.4552 (1.3789)	-0.0673 (0.7400)
Monarchy	-0.3277* (0.1442)	-5.1078* (2.3111)	-0.1123 (0.7196)
Oil/Gas per Capita (log)	-0.0158 (0.0191)	-0.2504 (0.2570)	-0.0456 (0.0898)
GDP per Capita (log)	0.0835* (0.0404)	0.8809 (0.5716)	0.1331 (0.2291)
GDP Growth	0.0031 (0.0025)	0.0260 (0.0389)	0.0222 (0.0148)
Constant	-0.6791* (0.2643)	-4.3500 (3.6655)	5.9110*** (1.5241)
N	144	149	155

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses)

Table 4-4. Random Effects Generalized Least Squares Regression of Weighted Party System Dispersion and Other Determinants of Democratic Quality

	Unified Democracy Scores	Polity2 Scores	Freedom House Scores
	b/se	b/se	b/se
Weighted Party System Dispersion	-0.0008* (0.0004)	-0.0097* (0.0039)	-0.0046** (0.0016)
Communist Legacy	-0.0600 (0.1520)	-1.4836 (1.8430)	-0.4503 (0.7645)
History of British Colonialism	-0.0015 (0.0978)	0.6802 (1.3408)	0.0613 (0.5728)
Monarchy	-0.2979** (0.0979)	-4.8772** (1.8570)	0.0824 (0.5107)
GDP Growth	0.0045 (0.0026)	0.0452 (0.0397)	0.0307 (0.0179)
GDP per capita (log)	0.0869* (0.0375)	0.9102 (0.5097)	0.1298 (0.2197)
Oil/gas per Capita (log)	-0.0115 (0.0174)	-0.1557 (0.2372)	-0.0076 (0.0816)
Constant	-0.6346* (0.2475)	-3.9597 (3.3646)	6.2685*** (1.4069)
N	144	149	155

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (Robust Standard Errors in Parentheses)

CHAPTER 6
PARTY RELIGIOSITY AND DEMOCRACY: THE QUESTION OF CAUSAL
RELATIONSHIPS

A Mixed-Methods Approach to the Question

As the final paragraphs of the last chapter already illustrated, the quantitative analyses presented above have eliminated many important rival explanations by “providing strong grounds for believing that the initial theoretical model explained the phenomenon being studied” (Lieberman, 2005, p. 439). They showed, for instance, the participation of religiously oriented parties in political system did not necessarily create problems for the democratic prospects of the country, contrary to the arguments advanced by secularization theorists. They also indicated, however, religious parties did not automatically become more moderate as they kept participating in elections regularly –again, going against the claims of the “moderation-through-inclusion” scholars. In fact, the data and statistical models suggested that rather than adopting more moderate approaches to politics, some parties ended up switching to a more extremist side as the time passed, even when they had started with more moderate claims and policies. In this regard, the large-N analysis of previous chapter falsified a number of well-accepted arguments on the role of religious parties in democratic outcomes of Muslim majority countries; but at the same time, established new links between the type of religiosity and democratic quality by showing the correlations between the dominance of civil-confessional parties in a party system and higher quality of democracy in one side, and the prominence of extremist parties and lower quality of democracy on the other. While relying mostly on cross-national multivariate analysis, in other words, it also checked whether or not the findings achieved through statistical

methods reflect the complexity of “politics on the ground” or “politics in real life” (Ragin, 2014).

The Limits of Quantitative Analysis

Nevertheless, by eliminating alternative explanations, the results of quantitative analysis raised more questions, which could not be explained by simply looking at the regressions and deriving inferences from the statistical models. Even after showing how high levels of extremism can lead to lower quality of democracy, for instance, the analysis presented above was still unable to explain why religious extremism, but not secular extremism, seemed to be more harmful for the democratic prospects of a Muslim majority country. In fact, based solely on these results, it was quite difficult to pinpoint what exactly distinguished these two forms of extremism: For instance, did we see these results because religious extremists were more willing to impose their ideals of social and political life on others, thus leading to more conflicts in a polity? If so, could they provide evidence to the claim that religious parties play the democratic game only until they amass enough power to change the regime from within, i.e. by using democratic rules and procedures for their non-democratic goals? Or, did these results imply that states and religious institutions work better together when it is the secularists, no matter how extremist, are in charge? Could hostile secularists be more tolerant of other views compared to their religious extremist counterparts? These and similar questions demonstrate that the quantitative approach of the last chapter, regardless of how enlightening it may be, requires more nuanced and empirically-grounded understanding of issues and events in order to discover the patterns of interaction and unearth the causal mechanisms of democratic transition and consolidation in Muslim majority countries.

Perhaps more importantly, the statistical analyses conducted for this research project do not allow us to go beyond speculation about the ways in which religiously oriented political parties contribute to, or hinder, the democratic development of a country, as they inevitably fell short of presenting the full story. For one thing, although the research topic deals with the motivations of political actors and processes through which they make their decisions, the models used in the previous chapter cannot be used to answer the question of why parties choose these particular patterns of behavior, or offer any explanations as to why religiously oriented parties would decide to adopt democratic practices in the first place. As such, they cannot fully verify any of the theories on party system evolution proposed in the third chapter. Lacking a within-case analysis, they are also not able to take the characteristics of party systems into account, and distinguish -for instance- the role of religious parties in limited pluralist systems from their role in polarized party systems. Although these aspects of the research question may seem of secondary importance, it is important to remember that these gaps of information potentially weaken my argument, as without knowing how other political actors react to the presence of religious parties in a political system, or without understanding under which conditions the state institutions decide to give religious parties a chance in the democratic game, it is difficult to assess the actual impact of the religiosity (i.e. not religion as a belief system and rituals, but religiosity as a relationship between a religion and its followers) and its impact on a country's political system. After all, the themes around which the religion and politics debate coalesce tend to differ from one country to another and there is always a risk of an omitted variable bias in this kind of analysis. Only through a careful reading of the events does it become possible to

discern these potential problems, and thankfully, alternative approaches to the question at hand can provide this check on the validity of hypothesized link between variables.

An Alternative Method of Analysis: Theory-Building Process-Tracing

Given the limitations of conventional statistical analysis,¹ the results presented in the last chapter call for a complementary analysis relying on evidence from other research strategies that provide additional confirmatory evidence. As George and Bennett remind us, “an adequate scientific explanation include[s] *both* arguments and measures on the causal effect of an independent variable and the hypothesized and observed causal mechanisms through which it achieves this effect” (1997, emphasis in original). By starting from where the statistical models left off, qualitative approaches can shed a new light on the questions that remain unanswered by the quantitative analysis shown above. This means these alternative sources of data should do much more than simply providing a storyline for the statistical analysis and giving concrete examples for the conclusions that had been already drawn from its models. This integration of different sources of data, combined with different insights and procedures derived from these two distinct but still compatible methodologies, need to provide a fuller and better picture of the relationship between the religiosity of party systems and regime outcomes in countries of interest and ultimately, “add inferential leverage that is often lacking in quantitative analysis” (Collier, 2011, p. 823).

¹ None of the pitfalls of statistical models mentioned here should be taken to mean that this method (and consequently, the analysis conducted in the previous chapter) is completely useless and needs to be replaced by alternative methods. At the end of the day, “we can define a causal effect without understanding all of the causal mechanisms involved, but we cannot identify causal mechanisms without defining the concept of causal effect” (King et al., 1994, p. 86). In this sense, the new (or, alternative) methods discussed in this chapter supplement the existing findings by showing how these mechanisms work, giving them a new dimension and checking whether or not the correlation found between the dependent and independent variables is in fact spurious.

Of all the tools qualitative approach provides for researchers, this project chooses the process-tracing method to this end to conduct in depth studies of these cases that were well-predicted by the statistical models. Process tracing seems to be the most appropriate method for this research, mainly due to its ability to “take into account the complexities of the multilevel dynamic of relations between political actors and institutions over time” (Silvestri, 2009, p. 1215). Compared to other methods of quantitative origin, such as most-similar-systems design, process tracing does not stop at the question of *whether* the party system religiosity has any effect on the quality of democracy. It further asks *how exactly* and *under which circumstances* the complex relations involving the level and type of religiosity in a party system affect the overall quality of democracy in a predominantly Muslim country. This choice of methods allows for the uncovering of the causal processes that connect the variables of interest to the research question. It not only measures the proximal characteristics of party system religiosity (see Chapter 3) but also observes their transformation *over time* (see Chapter 4). In this sense, this method of analysis not only complements the time-series analysis of the previous chapter but also improves it through the study of the relative power and choices made by political actors, the institutional constraints on them and their influences on these institutional constraints (George & Bennett, 2005; Silvestri, 2009). Thus, by tracing the process of democratization in selected countries, it becomes possible to uncover the causal mechanisms behind the correlation between the party system religiosity and democratic quality that was shown in the previous chapter.

Case Selection

The use of process tracing has some important implications for the case selection strategies of this research project. Since “the technique of process tracing

works back from the outcome . . . step by step, looking to identify what led to what” (Varshney, 2001, p. 380), it does not allow the selection of cases through random or convenience sampling. ² As opposed to the logic of case selection logic in studies that try to answer “whether” questions, this method does not seek variation in outcome, or discourage the practice of “selecting on dependent variable” (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994). Instead, it requires the identification of positive cases where it is possible to track the causal process of the independent variable leading to changes in the dependent variable by holding the systemic effects constant. Investigating negative cases through process-tracing methods, on the other hand, cannot tell us anything about the causal mechanisms, simply because any type (or level) of religiosity in a party system does *not* produce a lower or higher quality democracy in these cases. Thus, this research project deliberately selects typical cases with a positive outcome, meaning the cases that “represent the cross-case relationship well” (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 299). Later on, however, another chapter will take a look at the negative (or, “deviant”) cases to understand what went wrong there and test the theories suggested throughout this analysis further. ³

² This means both sampling methods carry the risk of excluding important (“typical”) cases from the study, and do not fit the purposes of the process tracing analysis for that reason.

³ By this definition, the case selection criteria only take the values of “party system religiosity” into account, as other variables become less relevant to the discovery of the causal mechanism between this particular variable and the level of democratic quality. Having said that, all the following analyses remain faithful to the method of analyzing the impact of religious parties *ceteris paribus*, without downplaying the role of socioeconomic factors or international actors in the democratization processes of these selected cases. In this sense, while acknowledging the importance of these other factors, the aim of the next chapters is to evaluate the independent effect of the party religiosities, rather than to attribute the very success story in Muslim democracies to the “right” type of party religiosity. Even though the hypotheses predicted that the countries with party systems that are dominated by the civil-confessional type have a higher likelihood of having a better quality of democracy, for instance, this does not mean that the existence of this party type is one and only factor that influences the success of the democratic regime in a country.

Within this framework, the next chapters investigate the democratic transitions (and arguably, a certain level of democratic consolidation) in Turkey and Tunisia, two relatively successful cases of democratization in the Muslim world, and compare the roles of political parties played in these processes. Because discovering the causal relationship between these two variables in one case does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the same causal process will work in the same way in another case, the analysis does not stop at one case study. Instead, it engages in a second case analysis by selecting another typical case to examine. In addition to bolstering the confidence in findings, this practice can help in dealing with the issues of equifinality and omitted variable bias, and increase the validity of the analysis thereby. That is to say, by studying both countries and asking if the insights we gain from a single case study is also relevant in some other context, it becomes possible to compare their patterns of democratization, and see how far the proposed theory can travel. By doing that, this research strategy provides “a dialogue between cross-case and within-case analysis” (Schneider & Rohlfing, 2013, p. 221).

Thanks to the large-N data and the statistical analysis presented in the previous chapter, it is relatively easy not to “choose cases blindly” but to determine the typical cases and “make informed choices” for the next step of analysis (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). At the end of this exercise, Turkey and Tunisia emerge as “possible candidates for in-depth analysis”, and not just because they seem to appear “on, or close to the 45-degree line (plotting actual dependent variable scores against regression-predicted scores)” (Lieberman, 2005, p. 444). The Turkish experience of democratization under a religiously oriented party also makes the country “a typical case,” and its process of

including the religious parties within a constitutionally secular political system carry the potential of revealing important insights into the relationship between religiosity and democratic quality in a larger Muslim community. Likewise, Tunisia shares a similar secular system and the same type of restrictions on the public displays of religion, as well as a religious party with growing popularity during its democratization period; and on those grounds, makes an ideal case to be analyzed in the second round of testing. This second round aims to see if the proposed causal mechanism derived from the Turkish example also works in an additional context. Such a set of finds would provide support for the theory, but would then proceed to identify the case-specific causes and check to see if there were multiple causal pathways. Even though the conclusions drawn from two cases in this way may not produce generalizable theories of democratization that would be universally applicable at all times, they can at least generate a middle-range theory that is “expected to be present in a population of cases when the causal conditions that trigger them are present, and they are within the proper scope conditions” (Beach & Pedersen, 2013) by “open[ing] up the black box of causality” (Gerring, 2007, p. 45).

After this elaboration of the causal process, a third chapter will further specify the theories by looking at the broader set of cases, including cases where independent variables take the values foreseen by the hypotheses but does not produce expected outcomes. As the last step in the analysis, then, this last chapter can devote most of its content to the explanation of the missing links between variables, and to the definitions of relevant conditions (either in the form of necessary scope conditions or causal conditions) for the proposed theory.

Selected Cases for Analysis

Turkey is an important case to examine in this process, and it is not just because it is one of the oldest and –arguably- the most stable democracies in the Muslim world. Despite the fact that the democratization process in Turkey started with “the second wave” and continued since then, there has been a number of interruptions over the course of the last fifty years. Interestingly, however, the country was able (and willing) to re-establish its democratic institutions after each interruption and has had a more or less open polity since its adoption of the multiparty system in late 1940s. Amidst the separationist crises in the East and military interventions in politics –sometimes in the name of protecting the Republican values from what they see as the “Islamist threat,” the country has witnessed in recent years the rise of political Islam as well. This rise was so swift and so successful that the incumbent party (Justice and Development Party, AKP) started to be seen as a role model for “moderate Islam” and “Muslim democracy” around the world –even after the party promptly denied having Islamist ties or goals in their party programs. Under the leadership of this party, Turkish democratization ceased to be an elite- or state-driven process and large segments of society “with all its colors, its points of commonality and difference” began to participate in democratic process (Insel, 2003, p. 304). Yet, this fairy tale did not last long: almost to the point of confirming the suspicions of secularist Turks, the JDP abandoned its efforts for further democratization as it got stronger in three consecutive elections and consolidated its religious voter base, and amassed the power in the hands of its political leader, President Erdoğan instead. While these developments led to a certain decline in the quality of Turkish democracy in the last few years, and thus it is still being disputed whether or not the country has reached the level of democratic consolidation that exist

in Western democracies, the country still presents an interesting story. Today, Turkish democracy is characterized by the conflicts between hostile secularists, who still resent the loss of their control over most state institutions, and more religious segments of the society, who do not hesitate to use these state institutions to impose their religious beliefs on others.

Tunisia, on the other hand, boasts about being the first (and according to some, the best) case of democratization in the Arab world, following protests and events that came to be known as the Arab Spring. As a country with a French system of *laïcité*, highly religious society, and conflicts similar to those in Turkey, Tunisia experienced limited democratic opening under the authoritarian rule of President Ben Ali. Following the footsteps of the staunch “laicist” founder of modern Tunisia, Habib Bourgiba, Ben Ali did everything in his power to put all the Islamic organizations under state control, or repress them with force when this first strategy failed. Under these conditions, Islamist opponents of the regime were either jailed or sent into exile, only to come back after the fall of Ben Ali regime in 2011. This was the case for many members of the Ennahda (Renaissance) Party, which won the majority of votes in the first free and fair elections the country held in late 2011 and played a major role in the democratic transition. By transforming the party to a more open and inclusive form and adopting the language of democracy and human rights, Ennahda became one of the most important political actors in the Tunisian political scene. While secularists retained their doubts about Ennahda’s commitment to democracy, they still formed pacts and alliances with them, which helped both groups to fight against their common enemy, i.e. the authoritarian regime of Ben Ali, in the end. Eventually, post dictatorial Tunisia became the first Arab

country in the last four decades that received a score of 3 (meaning, “Free”) in Freedom House Index. Whereas “transitions toward democracy are always filled with uncertainty, and Tunisia’s is no exception” (Stepan, 2014, p. 89), these trends gave hope for further democratization (and maybe even consolidation) in the country, and set Tunisia apart from other Arab countries in the region, making the country an ideal case for further analysis in this project.

Though the democratization processes of these countries are interesting in and of themselves, it is more important for my purposes of this research that both countries offer enough variation when it comes to the type of religiosity of their political party systems. Turkey and Tunisia have a large number of registered political parties and the relevant political parties in their systems (i.e. the parties that hold at least one seat in the parliament) range from hostile secularist parties to conservative religious parties with arguably some extremist tendencies. In both countries, the main religious party has undergone some serious transformation, leading the country towards a higher or lower quality of democracy in the end. In addition to creating these interesting comparisons, religiously oriented political parties in Turkey and Tunisia also demonstrate that neither the “moderation-through-inclusion” nor the “moderation-through-exclusion” theses by themselves explains the transformations these parties have gone through over time. A large volume of in-depth research on both countries make it clear that moderation is by no means an easy, straightforward and guaranteed outcome. In reality, parties constantly reevaluate their internal and external constraints and decide to move towards a more extremist or more inclusive path depending on the results of these evaluations. The next two chapters give a step-by-step analysis of this process by referring to actors’

preferences, choices and decisions as well as institutional constraints and political opportunity structures. All things considered, not only the democratization processes, but also the changes in party religiosities in Turkey and Tunisia present empirical grounds to trace this process, compare its outcomes and assess the impact of those changes over the quality of democracy, without making any essentialist arguments or attributing all these developments to the unique mindset and policies of political Islam.

Research Design

As explained above, the process-tracing method is quite useful in dealing with the complexity of political systems, where the interaction of multiple factors create the differences in the outcomes. In its attempt to find the way causal processes work in selected cases, process tracing systematically “uncover[s] what stimuli the actors attend to; the decision process that makes use of these stimuli to arrive at decisions; the actual behavior that then occurs; the effect of various institutional arrangements on attention, processing, and behavior; and the effect of other variables of interest on attention, processing, and behavior” (George & McKeown, 1985, p. 35). Along these lines, this research intends not to give a detailed account of the entire process of democratization in any country so as to explain the exclusive role of the party system religiosity in this process, but to construct an analytical causal explanation that also considers the effects of such factors as sequence instead (George & Bennett, 2005).

Because the first step in process-tracing is an adequate and careful description of the case at hand (Collier, 2011), the next two chapters start with a brief narrative of the trends in democratization process and the background conditions that come to shape political actors' actions and preferences. Even though this narrative makes no theoretical claim on its own, it still constitutes an indispensable part of the analysis,

which lays the foundation for the causal inference and “throw[s] light on how an event came about” (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 210). Similarly, the fact that these background conditions are not the main foci of this analysis does not diminish their importance, as their potential to affect the way the later events and situations unfold can make a country more or less susceptible to democratic breakdowns in the end. As these conditions change over time, they create new equilibria in political system, and shape political actors’ options, preferences and strategies once more. Thus, this first step in process tracing incorporates these changes and “feedback loops,” “contextualize different steps of the process” and “compare the consequences of different sequence patterns” (Falleti, 2006) to establish a link between the dependent and independent variables. After all, only against this backdrop does it become possible to understand the defining moments, key steps and changes over time, whether these factors come in the form of decisions made by political actors, or the contributions made by parties to the democratic process of a country.

Having laid the foundation for the analysis through this description, the next step in the analysis becomes the identification of “entities that engage in activities”, that is, the actors that have “a capacity to produce a certain kind of outcome in the presence of appropriate antecedent conditions” (Little, 1998, p. 205). Within the framework of this research, political parties – particularly the religiously oriented ones – turn out to be the *main* actors, even though there is a great variation in their attitudes towards the existing political institutions and their acceptance of the rules of the democratic game. Yet, the fact that political parties are the explanatory actors does not mean that they are the *only* relevant actors. After all, both the state (such as constitutional courts) and other social

actors (e.g. civil society organizations and political activists) play similarly important roles in determining how political parties act with respect to these actors' expectations and demands, simply because "the specific role attributed to religion at a given time and place depends primarily upon the status of religion in the constitutional framework and the social meaning attached to it" (Mitra, 1991, p. 758).⁴ For this reason, the involvement of these actors in political processes necessitates the study of party systems in their entirety, as well as through the consideration of the institutional structures that govern the relations within a party system, and the balance of power and influence between different alliances and coalitions within the same system. In this respect, this analysis breaks away from the tradition of looking at the religious political parties in isolation (or at best, with respect to their relations with the state) in the literature. Rather, it examines how institutional settings and societal pressures influence the party positions, attitudes towards democracy and their role in these processes, in order to understand how these parties choose their actions and collectively create the type of religiosity within their party systems.

To uncover the causal mechanisms, then, the third step of the analysis examines historical data to trace the evolution of actors' preferences and actions that shape their decisions in the end. The data come from various sources, both primary and secondary, including party and policy documents (such as party programs, press releases, statements made by key party officials), and interviews with key actors in the process. The wealth of information provided by these sources makes it relatively easy to detect

⁴ As indicated by Lipset and Rokkan's seminal article (1967), the state-church cleavage has been one of the most important factors that shaped Western European party systems and their structure in general. Political position of religion as defined by the state, rules of political participation and competition, and opportunities state creates for political parties in general can shape the political party system and religious parties' role in it in distinctive ways.

“recurring empirical regularities” and patterns in the “observable manifestations” of the underlying mechanisms (Waltz, 1979). Where these observable manifestations do not allow easy inference, however, the “puzzles that are unaccountable for in existing work” can set the basis for a “secondary inferential leap” through some further systematic analysis (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Finally, using these inferences, this empirical inquiry constructs a causal story, which then reveals how these preferences and decisions concerning the role of religion in public sphere get transformed into actions to produce different outcomes in democratic quality of Muslim majority countries.

As the task of this final step is to show change over time and determine at which point the process starts to differ and leads to a variation in democratic quality, this causal story takes a step by step approach and uses the evidence from political party behavior and ideological discourse to demonstrate the long term (and sometimes unanticipated) consequences of party decisions, together with the effects of new opportunity structures and constraints on political actors. Throughout this stage, the analysis carefully considers the sequence of events and complex interactions, distinguishes systematic mechanisms from the non-systematic and case-specific ones, and step-by-step uncovers the transformational mechanisms. While doing so, it differentiates the causal processes from the case narratives, by emphasizing the theory-guided mechanisms and making them more explicit in the description of the events. This means the next chapters do not present the collected evidence in chronological order, as their purpose is, first and foremost, to explain the causal processes at work, rather than to describe the events within the framework of historical continuity. “Rather than wasting resources and space on a full, uninterrupted narrative from cause to

outcome”, in other words, they choose to simply “focus on a small number of crucial steps in the process that are worth digging deep” (Schimmelfennig, 2013, p. 9).

Data Collection

While theory-guided process-tracing methods do not require variation in the dependent variable to make inferences, they largely depend on the accuracy and relevance of the evidence gathered for the analysis to generate them. Accordingly, Bennett and Elman (2006) put great emphasis on the importance of looking at all observable implications of alternative theories, giving them a “fair shake vis-à-vis the evidence” and developing “sufficiently diverse, detailed and probative evidence to elevate one explanation” over others. In its efforts to gather this kind of reliable evidence, this research utilizes a large number of sources, including books and pamphlets compiled by parties, official publications of states, formal and informal statements of party leaders and key officials, newspaper and magazine articles about political parties and democracy in the countries of interest, conversations with civil society organizations and university professors, documents on formal party positions, memoirs of key actors in these processes, videotaped campaign speeches of party leaders, and informal discussions of the research topic with political activists in said countries.

A substantial part of this data collection process took between June 2013 and August 2015, during which I took several research trips to Turkey and Tunisia, and conducted fieldwork during some politically tense periods of time.⁵ In addition to the

⁵ In the last three years, these tensions arise out of presidential (2014) and parliamentary (2015) elections and Gezi Protests (2013) in Turkey, and emerged in the aftermath of assassination of political figures (2014) and terrorist attacks (2015) in Tunisia.

insights gained through these research trips and experience of living in the country and following its political events on a day-to-day basis, these periods of fieldwork experience provided an “insider” point of view on mobilization and organization procedures, internal group structures and leadership roles. The information culled throughout these trips has also been verified through other sources and regularly updated to present day.

Since the analysis proposed here sets out to discover the causal mechanisms behind political parties’ decisions and actions, as well as the effects of these preferences and actions on the events of democratization, elite interviewing offers a good source of data for the purposes of this research and in the context of process tracing method. As such, it constitutes the backbone of the data collection efforts. As the most powerful, influential and well-informed actors with regard to the critical decision-making processes of political parties, party elites⁶ hold the potential to affect the quality of democracy directly through their actions. Therefore, interviews with these elites provide unique observations and judgments from key participants. With the help of otherwise inaccessible information from preliminary debates, political negotiations and behind-the-doors conversations, they thereby enable the reconstruction of events from the elites’ points of view. Furthermore, by bringing new perspectives to old questions about parties goals’ and procedures in matters of religion, these interviews help to gather information on the beliefs and ideas of other party members and officials on

⁶ Because of the research question that links the nature of political party systems to the regime outcome in the form of democratic quality; the pre-interview process first identified the key political actors who played a significant part in their parties’ identity-formation and policies, either as members of the parliament or top-level party officials. Since the sampling technique used this type of positional criteria, these actors were publicly known and easily identifiable for the most part. Moreover, reading secondary sources and historical accounts contributed to the inclusion of lesser-known actors who were deemed important for the political processes. At the end of each interview, those elites were further asked to supply names of other potential respondents with similar experience and work backgrounds that they presumed relevant to the research at hand. This process of snowball sampling produced a second set of respondents to whom could not have been accessed otherwise.

some controversial issues even when they were not interviewed. The open ended questions⁷ gave the elites the flexibility to construct their responses in the way that they see fit,⁸ and the semi-structured nature of the actual interviews elicited enlightening responses that helped to overcome the potential omitted variable bias, crosschecked historical accounts and filled the gaps in knowledge through first-hand testimonies.

Despite their merits, however, elite interviews are not enough to establish a causal story and needed to be carefully examined and supplemented with additional sources of data. As George and Bennett emphasize throughout their book (2005), no single data source is immune to all errors and pitfalls, and therefore, they have to be evaluated critically. In this particular set of elite interviews, there was a considerable variation in response rates across political parties, even though the initial selection process had no apparent bias in favor of one party or another. In both Turkey and Tunisia, the response rates of the incumbent party officials was lower than those of any other party, as it was extremely difficult to reach the governing party officials during the times of crisis, and almost half of the incumbent party elites who have been contacted did not respond, or declined the interview requests politely by mentioning their busy

⁷ In the end, all interviews asked more or less the same questions, and certain questions were so essential that they were asked to every elite in the same manner, but the emphasis of the conversation differed for each elite. This strategy seemed more sensible considering the expertise, knowledge and experience of the interviewed elites. For instance, a particular member of the RPP in Turkey held a PhD. degree in political science, so the conversation with her focused more on the conceptual development and refinement of the labels for “parties’ degrees of religiosity”, as well as on the application of these labels to Turkish political parties. The full list of the questions asked in each interview can be found in the Appendix B.

⁸ The questions asked throughout the interview were designed to maximize the amount of information that could be culled from those conversations: They were worded neutrally, so as not to direct the respondents towards one particular answer or another.

schedules.⁹ Moreover, even when the interviews were granted, there was no guarantee that the elites would not misrepresent political events or their role in them, either in the form of deliberate exaggeration (or minimization, depending on the situation), or simple memory lapses (Tansey, 2007).

Whereas it was not possible to read the minds of party officials or know their preferences and true intentions when they made their decisions, these intentions and preferences leave their mark on other sources of data, to which this research turns at times to supplement the interviewee accounts. Due to the nature of the research question and the method used in answering that question, this data collection process involves both the examination of the party discourse (i.e. whether or not official documents reflect a commitment to democratic practices that go beyond voting in elections) as well as the study of party behavior (e.g. participating in elections and coalitions, accepting the legitimacy of the opponents and election results –even when the results are not favorable to them, and respecting rights and liberties, especially of those who do not share their ideas). Together with the official statements and documents that outline the party policies, in other words, the analysis took into account parties interactions with their social bases, as well as with other parties within the political system, in order to assess these parties' democratic credentials and their

⁹ While they preferred the strategy of nonresponse more than an outright refusal in Turkey, a junior party official for the JDP admitted that any party member or member of the parliament with ties to the JDP would be reluctant to talk on the topic under investigation, especially on the eve of the presidential elections, fearing that she might say something to offend Erdoğan, reveal his strategies for the election or damage his campaign in any way. Off the record, I was also told that Erdoğan himself placed an informal ban on any political statement made outside of his knowledge. The elites of opposition parties, on the other hand, were quite willing to talk about the democracy, secularism and alleged rise of political Islam in Turkey; eager to discuss the current affairs and more than happy to share their perceptions on the development of Turkish democracy, creating this drastic variation in the response rates in the first set of interviews.

potential role in further democratization of their countries. After all, the statements and policies of a party can indicate, for instance, whether the party have adopted the democratic norms just on the surface for electoral purposes, or these norms deeply engrained in the parties' positions and preferences. If a party takes actions such as strengthening its intraparty democracy, or forming alliances with non-religious parties that go beyond "the numbers game", that could signal their true commitments to democratic process that go beyond the mere lip service to democracy

Comparing Islamic Party Religiosities across Cases

No matter how successful they are in demonstrating the link between the dependent and independent variables, quantitative methods on their own cannot provide answers to the full range of questions I address. Specifically, it leaves unanswered *how* and *why* the type of religiosity in a party system lead to a variation in democratic quality. Having verified that different types of religiosity correlates with different levels of democratic quality through my statistical tests, the purpose of the next chapters becomes to construct a causal story to understand and explain, "by the workings of what structures the phenomenon is produced" (Dessler qtd. in George & Bennett, 1997). For the analysis of complex phenomena that involve a large number of actors and multifaceted interactions among them, the method of process tracing seems to provide just the right tools. While showing how the hypothesized relations work under real world circumstances, it goes beyond the elimination of alternative explanations and identifies the sequence of events through which the decisions taken by political parties, their preferences and ultimate actions produce differences in regime outcomes. In this process, it takes into account the possibility of equifinality, omitted variables and effects of critical junctures and path dependencies; and examine how intended and unintended

consequences of party decisions lead to long term changes in the quality of democracy in predominantly Muslim countries.

By deriving evidence from a number of data sources (including field research, elite interviews, secondary sources and historical documents), the next two chapters follow a theory-guided process tracing method and conduct case studies of Turkey and Tunisia, which aims to offer valid and reliable theoretical reasons why certain interactions between political actors and institutions -within the limits of their (perceived) constraints and opportunity structures- create differences in party positions, their patterns of party development and overall role in shaping the regime outcomes.

CHAPTER 7 RELIGIOSITY, SECULARISM, AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN TURKEY

The Politics of Adaptation

Having introduced and tested the main hypotheses about the relationship between the religiosity of party systems and democratic quality in previous chapters, the objective of the next two chapters is to present a richer and more nuanced understanding of how religiosity, political parties and regime types interact in Turkey and Tunisia - two Muslim majority countries with secularist state institutions and dominant religious parties. To this end, case studies on these countries illustrate the dynamics of party systems and causal mechanisms through which these parties influence democratic quality, by using process-tracing analysis. They establish a dynamic and systematic relation between the quality of democracy in the two countries over time and 1) the type of religiosity that is dominant within their party systems, and 2) the changes within these religiosity types as a result of the calculations and decisions of parties in the system. Therefore, these analyses give an account of the democratic developments in both countries by carefully examining the interactions of political parties with each other, long-standing secular traditions and state organizations. Despite their similarities in secularist state institutions and religious party dominance in party systems, Turkey and Tunisia show important differences in how their dominant religious parties have fused their electoral and moral goals in pragmatic ways and used their religious identities in politics. Turkey's incumbent Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* –AKP) started as a moderate political party and normalized the religious presence in political life after years of hostile-secularist repression in the system. By integrating religious groups in the system, the party helped the country

improve the quality of democracy. Yet, when it drifted away from its civil-confessional religiosity, it created a polarized system between the same secularists and religious groups by emphasizing a religious agenda. With this polarization and distrust between the groups, the country's democratic quality suffered. In contrast, the Tunisian Ennahda moderated itself due to its decades-long exclusion from politics, engaged in consensus-seeking behavior when it finally came to power and relied on coalitions to provide legitimacy for its political status. Other parties in the system responded to these developments positively, which made the country's transition to democracy relatively smooth and sustainable. In the end, these two examples further illustrate that there is nothing inherently negative (or positive) about the religiously oriented political parties when it comes to their effects on a country's democratic processes. Rather, these effect changes over time, according to how they express that religiosity in politics and their strength in the party system.

This chapter on Turkey looks at the country's democratization process and multiparty system through the lens of religiosity, and consists of three main sections: The first one summarizes the country's democratic development in order to contextualize how religious parties broke the dominance of secularist parties in the system and entered into the political scene. This part describes the state's efforts to "privatize" religion, as a result of which many institutions (including the military and the judiciary) grew hostile to the idea of religious representation in politics and religious groups sought representation through right wing-conservative political parties. Then, the next section examines the Turkish political scene after the 1980 coup, introduces the idea of "Turkish-Islamic synthesis," which boosted the support for religious parties in

1990s and briefly discusses political parties and types of religiosity that existed in the system using the scale described in Chapter 3. By evaluating the changing significance of religion in the political scene, they also give an account of the main religious “triggers” and secularist responses, which led to change in the democratic quality of the country over time. Finally, the third section takes a closer look at the political ideology, goals and decisions of the Islamist and secularist parties in Turkey in the post-Cold War period, focusing mainly on the transformation of the decidedly Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* -RP) into its moderate successor Justice and Development Party (AKP), despite (or perhaps, because of) the secularist pressure and repression. In order to understand if this new outlook contributed to the democratic consolidation in the country, this chapter explores changing party behavior in the context of increasing religious participation and the declining role of secularist veto players in the system.

Because the analysis examines at the changes in democratic quality in the light of the developments in party system religiosity, with changing expressions of religiosity over time, it takes a close look at Turkey’s democracy scores in the post-Cold War period.¹ To illustrate this relationship, Figure 7-1 (see p. 260) presents the democracy scores for Turkey by using the Unified Democracy Scores. As Chapter 5 introduced, Unified Democracy Scores run roughly between -2.1 and 2.1 and a higher score indicate a higher democratic quality. With that, it becomes possible to see the changes in the quality of democracy Turkey went through in its last two decades.

On the basis of this graph, we can say that the country has been fairly democratic, even though certain years (1991 and 2002) have witnessed a better quality

¹ The first section briefly records the democratization efforts and democratic breakdowns in the country, but the chapter does not delve into a detailed analysis of such developments. As the dissertation research covers the post-Cold War period, they remain outside the scope of this project.

of democracy and the democracy scores plummeted in 1995. Because large-N analyses conducted in the previous chapters show that other determinants of democratic quality (including economic development and growth) talks about the aggregate effects of religiosity on democratic quality, explaining fluctuation in one country require a mode of explanation to the decline in 1995 and its subsequent increase in 2002, we turn our attention to our explanatory variable, i.e. the party system religiosity so as to see if the changes in democratic quality have anything to do with the changes in the religiosities of ruling parties. Figure 7-2 introduces the seat shares of every relevant party in the system for each country election year,² which foreshadows the positive and negative influence of parties in the Turkish political scene (see p. 261).

Even before introducing the parties and discussing their religiosity types, one can see the parallels between these two graphs: For instance, the high democracy scores of 1991 largely corresponds to the dominance of secular (rather than conservative religious or hostile secular) parties, while the dominance of Welfare Party (RP) conspicuously overlaps with the decline of democratic quality. On the other hand, the rise of Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the rise in Turkey's democracy scores go hand in hand, whereas the recent decline tallies with the party system's shift towards a different form of religiosity. Accordingly, this chapter argues that the country's democratic quality suffered under the rigid, narrow and intolerant religiosity of the

² The reason why the percentages do not add up to a hundred in 2002, 2007 and 2011 is due to the fact that pro-Kurdish groups run as independents in these years, lacking a consistent party identity and platform. While it was possible to include them in the analysis as members of pro-Kurdish HDP, the existence of conservative Kurdish MPs in the parliament (who supported AKP policies more than they supported HDP positions) made the issue more complicated. Since coding each independent MP's level of religiosity and aggregating them for this scale would not be a viable research strategy, this analysis did not include the independents in its calculations.

Welfare Party and its successor Virtue Party (FP),³ as their official statements and policies led the secularists in the system to believe that their ultimate aim was an Islamist takeover. Due to these fears, the hostile secularists, who opposed the representation of religious interests at all costs, used their electoral power and urged the non-elected veto players in the system to take action against these parties. In the end, the secularists in the Judiciary banned the religiously oriented parties one after another⁴ for “violating the principle of *laïcité* in the Constitution,” in spite of the wide support these parties enjoyed. The last closure case against AKP took place in 2008, threatening the stability of the system once again as the party was in power with almost sixty percent of the seats in the parliament, but the Court did not reach the majority to ban the party. Reaffirming its self-proclaimed role as the “defender of *laïcité*,” the military also intervened in the political processes indirectly (e.g. by steering the electoral processes) and directly, overthrowing a democratically elected government in 1997 through its notorious February 28 decisions and openly threatening the AKP elite because of their religious roots and increasing popularity right before the Presidential Elections of 2007. As the following sections illustrate, the state and military authorities’ efforts to eliminate the Islamists from political scene took different forms, but brought the country on the verge of a democratic breakdown at least three times.

While the earlier religious parties’ presence had negative effects on the quality of democracy, this chapter also demonstrates that AKP’s civil-confessional religiosity had a positive impact, as shown in the Figure 7-3 (see p.262). By eliminating the

³ Even though Welfare Party was banned by a Constitutional Court decision and replaced by Virtue Party in 1998, both parties are shown under the same name here to make the graph more comparable.

⁴ Welfare Party in 1998, Virtue Party in 2001, with Felicity Party and Justice and Development Party surviving their closure cases in 2003 and 2008, respectively.

contradictions between the secular state and religious voter bases and giving the long-repressed religious groups an access to political power, both normalizing their presence in political life and making the regime (and their participation in it) legitimate in their eyes, AKP contributed the democratic development and increased the democratic quality. As the party extended its appeal to the groups outside of its core constituency to expand its vote share, its religious message got diluted. Yet, either because of this retreat from ideological purity, or decreasing salience of religion as a political mobilizer as a result (Kalyvas & van Keesbergen, 2010), the party's broad-based appeal became a victim of its own success. Within the growing intensity of electoral competition, AKP sought ways to retain the loyalty of its voter base by placing religion in the political agenda again and stressing the religious characteristics of the party elite, sacrificing the integrative capacity of its religiosity for a more exclusive religious identity that would consolidate its core supporters. Against this intensified religiosity, the secularists in the system lashed out, bringing back the tensions between these groups and leading to the steady decline in democratic quality after 2007. Because the AKP's narrow religious group identity did not give any incentive for parties in the system to negotiate and cooperate with their political rivals, neither side made an effort to set their differences aside and work towards a common goal. Slowly but surely, religion became the focal point of political debates. As the party system started to revolve around the divisive issues of religion, seemingly irreconcilable party positions polarized the system and made negotiations and compromises among rival parties increasingly rare. The consequence of this deterioration was a decrease in democratic quality, and what was lost in this process was AKP's "art of mediation, . . . moderate outlook and avoid[ance]

of sweeping reforms and policies” (Kalyvas, 1996, p. 263), which had been the key to the positive impact of the party on democratic quality in the early period of its rule.

Figure 7-4 shows this relationship, as hypothesized in Chapter 5 (see p.263): The further the Turkish party system moved away from the civil confessional party type, the lower its quality of democracy got. In this sense, AKP’s changing religiosity, rather than its decreasing role in the system, explains the drop in the democratic quality in its third term (shown below on p. 262, in Figure 7-3). Before going into the details of these changes, however, it is imperative to give some background information on the main issues concerning religion and politics in Turkey. After all, understanding the role of religious parties in the system requires starting the analysis with a brief description of Kemalist reforms, secularist dominance in the system, and the rise of conservative-right wing political parties through which religious groups represented their interests within a hostile secularist political environment.

Turkish Democratic Development: A Historical Overview

In the long history of secularist-religious rivalry that came to shape the country’s political life, the 1920s had the most formative role. With the fall of the Ottoman Empire following World War I, the new Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 as a “democratic, *secular* and social state governed by rule of law” (Constitution, Article 2, emphasis added), fulfilling the Young Turks’ dreams of a modern –and a decidedly Comtian- country that would replace the Ottoman *ancién regime*.⁵ Although this new state

⁵ Not surprisingly, the way the modernization process was handled had enormous consequences on the relations between the state and religion in the new Turkish Republic. From the beginning, the army spearheaded the political reforms in the country, as it was the first institution in the empire to be exposed to the Westernization and development. Foreshadowing its role and presence in the country’s politics, it was a branch of the Ottoman Army that suppressed the country’s first reactionary and pro-Sharia revolt, initiated by the religious extremists and those who believed in the absolute authority of Sultan Abdulhamit, in the 31 March Incident. Even the military’s secularist tendencies manifested themselves in the Ottoman

effectively eliminated Islamic law and practices from public life, it took several years for the state-builders to abolish the Caliphate amidst intense debates and reorganize the religious institutions of the country. As a part of this reorganization process, the state established the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) in 1924 to promote its own brand of Islam and consolidate its control over religious matters.

In contrast to the way Kemalist reforms are portrayed today, however, Mustafa Kemal did not seek to antagonize religious figures in the country or disavow religion itself in this process (Kanra, 2009). What he opposed was the vast influence religious authorities had over the society and religious institutions' constant meddling in politics. For that reason the Kemalist ideology emphasized the private nature of religious beliefs. Initially, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk hoped that the transition to a multiparty regime would create a political environment in which all groups, including more religious citizens, could be represented within the democratic rules of the game. However, it turned out that the state elite underestimated the strength and breadth the religious underground, which was determined to resist the secularist policies of the country. These underground forces were soon joined by the ordinary religious voters, since neither they, nor the religious authorities that suddenly lost their political power, was ready for the tremendous changes the secularist policies brought about. Reacting to the state-imposed secularism and demanding the restoration of Sharia, these groups first backed the newly established opposition parties, Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*) and Free Republican Party (*Serbest Cumhuriyet Partisi*), against the regime and then turned these parties into radical Islamist/anti-systemic forces. To

Era, because these reformists from the army, also known as the Young Turks (*Jön Türkler*), regarded religiosity as something traditional that would eventually decline in the face of positivism and modernity.

protect the new regime from collapsing under their weight, the courts banned these parties, setting the trend for future party bans for violating the principle of *laïcité* in the constitution. Against this very same threat, the military took the responsibility of protecting Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's legacy after his death, particularly when it came to the promotion of secularism. These developments delayed the country's transition to a multiparty system for almost two decades, leaving the country under Republican People's Party's (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – CHP) sole authority until the end of World War II.

As soon as it gained access to political power in the country's second multiparty elections (1950), the Democratic Party (DP) reversed most of the strictly-secularist policies of the early Republican Era. This shift ended the dominance of hostile secularism in the party system and as a result, the political scene became more open and representative. Political participation reached record levels as well, and all these developments marked significant developments in the democratic processes. However, the party's "civil confessional religiosity" was a calculated move to appeal to the voters easily, as most of them resented the *laïcité* of the Republican state elite and identified themselves as Muslims. Progressively, DP adopted a liberal economic line and integrated Islam into political life, starting with the country's education system. The development of a network of religious school graduates and a burgeoning bourgeoisie under new economic reforms constituted the basis of religious party support later on. Most importantly, DP restored the religious groups as one of the most influential voting blocks in the country, setting the stage for their increasing presence and significance in the country's political scene. Once the party realized the power of religious groups, and

once these groups understood their importance in politics, democracy became a cornerstone of their political and religious rhetoric. While religious groups threw their weight behind further democratization in this way, however, they gradually became nervous about being relegated to the margins of political life once again. To preempt such a possibility, they encouraged DP to adopt the hostile and confrontational political style of the single party era against the secularists in the system. With its departure from an inclusive and tolerant religiosity, the party grew more and more authoritarian within few years, declaring CHP a “Godless party” (Eroglu, 1971) and moving from a broader political vision to a narrow religious group mentality. Even its frequent references to democracy did not prevent the party members from carrying out verbal and physical attacks on CHP and its elite in the name of “national will.” In the end, the DP-led democratization process did not last long: The party’s blatant favoritism of religious groups at the expense of everyone else, combined with the military’s disapproval of their growing success, culminated in the *coup d’état* of 1960. The armed forces intervened in the civilian politics to allegedly “protect democracy from itself” by restoring secularist principles and its own authority as the defender of these principles, setting a precedent for future interventions and derailing the country’s democratic progress for the first time.

Needless to say, the coup did not improve the relations between the secularist and religious groups. Neither did the new constitution designed by the junta (1961) change the Republican privileges on secularism. Instead, it alienated the religious groups further by openly backing CHP in 1961 elections. While the junta banned DP and executed its leaders for “high treason,” though, the party did not disappear from the

political scene, or radicalized over time. Its successor Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi* -AP) followed policies that favored religion but did not exclusively represent the religious groups. The party's "the state must be secular, but not the individuals" (Yavuz, 2003, p. 65) mentality demonstrated its realization of the dangers associated with the extensive use of religious undertones for political agitation, as well as its desire to retain the loyalty of religious voters "and absorb them as individual voters" if possible (Kalyvas, 1996, p. 59). This inclusive party identity eased the country's return to democratic processes, giving no group an incentive to defect unilaterally and making political participation beneficial and desirable for everyone. However, this strategy turned out to be unsustainable in the long run, especially in the context of rising Soviet influence. Different religious groups emphasized different goals under these circumstances, some affiliating themselves with nationalists and their anti-Communism, and others gathering around Necmettin Erbakan's pro-Islamist National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi* – MNP). Attributing the country's social, economic and political ills to the Turkish "imitation of the West" in its secular policies, MNP made its religious identity clear from the beginning and presented an "Islamist" alternative to the electorate for the first time. As AP's all-encompassing party identity shattered, the culturally religious but politically secular elements in the system departed the party for Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* -MHP) and engaged in intense rivalry with the leftist/areligious parties in the system. Both MHP and MNP criticized the CHP's new "left-of-the-center" ideology with an anti-Communist propaganda ("Left of the center is the road to Moscow" [*Ortanın solu, Moskova yolu*] was a popular slogan of the time) and captured a lot of attention and support in a relatively short time. Unfortunately, the widening gap between these

groups led to increasingly violent political scene, which then paved the way for another military intervention in 1971.

Although the MNP was banned as a result of the military memorandum, this move did not delegitimize MNP in the eyes of the electorate, or wipe its ideology out of the political spectrum. In fact, within a couple of years, its successor National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi* –MSP) became one of the ruling parties through its coalition with CHP.⁶ Albeit short lived, this coalition represented the first crack in CHP's rigid secularism and Islamists' first symbolic and factual success in achieving political power. In this regard, the importance of this incident was twofold: First, new party leader Ecevit's denunciation of CHP's hostile secularism facilitated the party's eventual adoption of more friendly approach to the issue of religion (“*laïcité* that is respectful towards religious beliefs”), which Ecevit turned into practice by inviting the country's only openly religious party to be CHP's coalition partner. Second, MSP's seat share in the parliament (approximately 8 percent) indicated the party's potential and influence, and its participation in the coalition government –despite their disagreements on the role of religion- showed its interest in being a legitimate player of the democratic game. As such, this alliance presented a small step in the right direction to consolidate Turkish democracy by bringing together two parties with seemingly irreconcilable political platforms and helping them find ways to iron out these differences once and for all and learn to trust each other. Nevertheless, the old (and stricter) secularist elements in the country became deeply displeased with this alliance, mainly because MSP's political

⁶ Whereas CHP won the 1973 elections with a wide margin thanks to the enormous popularity of its leader Bülent Ecevit, the party failed to gain the majority of the seats in the next election and formed a coalition with MSP

role attracted suspicion and anxiety far out of proportion to its real influence. Similarly, the more radical religious groups displayed their anger with MSP's "betrayal to the cause" by withdrawing their support from the party and returning to the party ranks only when MSP ended its coalition with CHP and took part in a right-wing coalition with AP and MHP in 1977. In terms of showing the wasted potential, the level of distrust within the system and the constraints under which parties had to act, the events of that period was decisive, and their implications extended beyond 1970s.

While both religious and secular groups tried to adjust their political stances to the new demands in the political scene, in the end this escalated tensions further. The country entered into yet another period of violent clashes between other right- and left-wing groups. As social unrest became unbearable, democracy broke down once again and the military took the administrative control of the country in 1980 allegedly to restore peace and order. Nevertheless, by banning all existing political parties in the system for "their roles" in creating these clashes, arresting their leaders and controlling the establishment of new parties (which was an unprecedented move, as the previous juntas did not impose such a blanket ban on civilian politics but returned to their barracks soon after the coups), the military manifested its desire to have the ultimate authority over political life. To ensure that, it needed to boost its legitimacy, so the upper echelons of the military regime co-opted religion for their own advantage. They realized the potentially transformative power of religion in the political scene, and thought a "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" ideology could reinforce national unity and create a bulwark against the leftists in the system and the rising Communist threat in the east, surrounding the Soviet Union with a "Green Crescent" (Kalaycioglu, 2013). In

accordance with this ideology, the military regime lifted the bans on religious education and the Islamists became free to organize and operate with no pressure from the state. Islam as a political ideology gradually became more visible and accepted as a strong alternative to the staunch *laïcité* of the Turkish party scene. After the country's democratic transition, the newly-elected prime minister Turgut Özal initiated a series of economic reforms and introduced an "Islamic banking system", which empowered religious groups even further. A new Islamic bourgeoisie founded large Islamic-oriented companies in cities like Kayseri and Konya, and had an enormous impact on the country's politics through their finances.

The confidence pro-Islamists gained throughout 1980s through Turkish-Islamic Synthesis and Turgut Özal's economic reforms manifested itself in RP's electoral campaigns and success, as well as in its more aggressive political style in 1990s. Confronted with the strength of the party, though, the military dropped its moderate stance towards the Islamists and resumed its authoritarian and hostile secularist stance, arguing that political Islam posed a threat to individual rights and freedoms. Because the 1982 constitution had installed a nonelected National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Konseyi*) as the country's ultimate political authority, the military maintained its influence over civilian politics in the post-coup period and worked to prevent the rise of political Islam further. As they jealously guarded their authority over civilian politics, the military went back to its self-proclaimed role of protecting Kemalist reforms and Republican gains against the "reactionaries" and "separatists", declaring itself as the one and true guardian of the country's long term interests.

In the end, the military did not reach its twin goals of confining religion to the private sphere and keeping its public forms under state control through its behind-the-scenes political role. The main area of contestation in which the military presence was felt the most was the ban on wearing headscarves in “public areas.” Even though the legislation was intentionally vague on what constituted a public area, it was clear even to opponents that it included all educational institutions, preventing university students from attending classes with headscarves. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, right-wing governments tried hard to repeal this law, only to be “officially warned” by the military, vetoed by a secularist president, or struck down by the Constitutional Court for violating the principle of *laïcité* in the constitution.⁷ Despite these clashes and efforts by the military to suppress these religious movements, these parties rarely lost their appeal or following after the Court decisions or military warnings. Instead, they gathered around a new leader most of the time, re-branded their party and removed anti-systemic references from their party programs, without changing their main ideological premises. Especially due to frustration with the existing parties, Turkish voters sometimes cast their votes for small, marginal and anti-system parties, leading to surprising victories, such as RP’s electoral gains in 1991 or AKP’s sweeping victory in 2002.

The Turkish Party System

The parties in the Turkish party scene reflect the institutional constraints, legacy of military interventions and the main fault lines of the Turkish politics. On the one hand, parties’ attitudes towards secularism, rather than their economic policies, tend to define

⁷ In their eyes, neither did this strict understanding of secularization clash with basic rights and liberties; nor did respecting these rights and liberties necessitated a change in the Court’s firm stance or secularist framework of the state. Accordingly, the Constitutional Court consistently banned parties that allegedly favored a regime change or endanger the national unity, and barred their members from politics for a certain amounts of time.

the party spectrum and the country experiences a wide variety of religiosities, from a strict understanding of secularism to an increasing religious extremism. On the other, ethnicity-based nationalism continues to shape the discussions in politics. The electoral system, especially with its unusually high ten percent threshold at the national level, stands as another barrier against parties on the margins. Even though proportional representation ensures a variety of religious parties are represented in the political arena, only a handful of more than fifty political parties in Turkey have a presence in the party system that is significant enough to be mentioned here.⁸

Because this research project examines the parties along a religiosity scale, the following analysis will divide the parties into “secularist” and “Islamist” camps. While Kalaycioglu refers to the term “Islamic parties in Turkey” as an oxymoron due to the constitutional restrictions on the establishment of religiously inspired parties, it cannot be denied that those parties exist, and have existed for a long time, in the system without necessarily branding themselves as “Islamists” (1999). Having said that, these two camps do not assume that this dichotomy represents the Turkish party system as a whole. After all, whereas religious parties in the system cater to the interests of religious groups, they tend to be as different from each other as they are from their secularist counterparts. As they try to create their own niche, the competition among these religious parties has become much more severe and prevent them from acting together against the secularists in the political arena.

⁸ Because this analysis only looks at “relevant” political parties, it excludes those “permanent losers” that do not enter into pre-election coalitions and remain below the electoral thresholds to keep their ideological purity.

“Secularist Parties” in the System

CHP – Republican People’s Party. Founded as Turkey’s first political party in 1923, CHP showed a surprising resilience in the country’s politics despite frequent military interventions, party bans and constant criticism of its secularist policies. This long-standing political role in the country contradicts classical accounts of the Turkish democratic development, which regards the secularization of the party politics as a top-down process carried out by the Kemalist elite that had no resonance with the larger electorate. In this sense, CHP did not share the fate of Arab secular parties (Ottaway & Hamzawy, 2007) that had to fight for their relevance and survival in the face of an authoritarian state and growing Islamist opposition. While the party certainly enjoyed the military’s support for a while, it did not have to give in to the demands of an authoritarian regime to gain access to political power retain its influence. Later on, the rise of religious parties gained CHP new voters by creating shifts among the less-religious voters, most of whom turned away from right wing conservative parties to more secularist alternatives in the system. Yet, CHP’s inability to address the country’s prevalent social and economic ills also created new waves of support for the Islamic parties from time to time, leading to ups and downs in its seat shares in the parliament.

From its early days on, the party used the six Kemalist principles (republicanism, nationalism, statism, revolutionism, populism and *laïcité*) as its foundational ideologies and projected itself as “Atatürk’s party.” With this legacy, it ruled the country under a single-party regime until 1950. The Democrat Party’s electoral victories in 1950s renewed the party’s interest in democratic norms and practices, leading the long-term party leader Ismet İnönü to remove his “National Chief” and “party leader for life” titles and warn the public against the DP’s increasingly authoritarian policies in late 1950s.

After the coup of 1960, the party worked hard to change its image of an “elitist/Kemalist party backed by the military” by distancing itself from the armed forces and seeking lower class and rural support instead. This development pitted the CHP against DP’s successor the AP, which was quick to respond this challenge by linking CHP’s “left of the center” position with the red scare.⁹ Amidst the direct and indirect involvements of the military, these two parties dominated the political scene throughout 1960s and 1970s. Yet, the party was closed down after the 1980 coup along with others, and due to the restrictions on the party formation, former CHP elite established Social Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkci Parti – SHP*) in 1985. Even though the party gained enough votes to become DYP’s coalition partner between 1991 and 1995,¹⁰ it lost most of its voters to the new parties in the system. In particular, lower class support declined enormously throughout 1990s. Yet, this loss of popularity became a blessing for the party later on, as it meant that the Turkish electorate did not have any reason to punish CHP for inept administration, corruption, economic crises, terror attacks and links to illegal organizations. This protected the party from the fate of all others in the system and CHP became the only party that survived the 2002 elections, along with the newcomer to the party scene, Justice and Development Party (AKP).

During its tenure as the main opposition party, CHP defined itself as the party of the secularists, in contrast to AKP’s more religious political identity. Particularly among working women (since CHP defended women’s rights more than any other party in the

⁹ “Left of the center is the way to Moscow” (*Ortanin solu, Moskova yolu*) was the prominent campaign slogan for the party.

¹⁰ In 1993, pre-coup parties were allowed to reopen under their traditional names, so SHP took back the name CHP.

system) and more educated segments of the society, CHP enjoyed huge support. Throughout 2000s, however, CHP failed to increase its vote share, mainly because the party struggled to sustain its version of *laïcité* (which practically equated religion with irrationality and backwardness) within the existing dynamics of the Turkish politics. Never-ending conflicts and power struggles within the party gave the impression that the CHP was a stronghold of secularism, was stuck in the past, unable to deliver new political alternatives, appeal to the electorate with concrete programs or represent any group other than the “white Turks” whose biggest concern was the rise of political Islam. In its electoral campaigns, AKP used these images frequently and blamed what they called the “CHP mentality” for all the social and political ills of the country. The CHP, on the other hand, continued to express its doubts about religion’s “unifying force” in politics and its disapproval of the restrictions and interventions in people’s lives in the name of protecting religious values.

ANAP – Motherland Party. Even though it is grouped under secularist parties in the system due to its decidedly laicist stances in 1990s, ANAP presents an interesting case of party evolution and manifests itself as a party of religious people, rather than a religious party. Emerging from the less-than-competitive elections of 1983 with stellar success, Turgut Özal’s ANAP followed a political strategy that was similar to that of DP in 1950s, by offering the Turkish electorate a clear-cut economic program, and “host[ing] four different and seemingly irreconcilable ideological strands of conservatism [of traditional Sunni Islam], nationalism, economic liberalism, and social democracy within its ranks” (Kalaycioglu, 2002, p. 45). The policies Özal pursued also reflected the demands of these different groups, the most important of which was the creation of

what is known today as the “Anatolian tigers” –a new ‘God-fearing’ bourgeoisie that would be the main pillar of this modern society held together by the conservative values. By representing their interests, the party retained its civil-confessional religiosity until Turgut Özal’s election to the presidency.

Supported initially by both the center-right and center-left groups thanks to its effective policies, ANAP failed to dominate the political scene for long.¹¹ Just like most other Turkish parties, the party’s fate was closely tied to that of its leader; and the succession crisis after Özal almost brought the end of ANAP in the beginning of 1990s. The conservative bourgeoisie that ANAP’s policies previously created shifted their support to RP; center-leftists gradually deserted the party in favor of CHP or Ecevit’s Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti* –DSP), and only those who favored free market capitalism remained within the party ranks. With those changes, ANAP’s ideology and positions on key issues (including its religiosity, as the party became increasingly intolerant of public role of religion) became almost identical to Demirel’s True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi* –DYP), making these two center-right parties the biggest political rivals in the system. The party’s efforts to find a new identity, distinguish itself from DYP (by appealing to the urban voters, while DYP gained most of its votes from rural areas) and create its own niche ultimately failed, and the competition between ANAP and DYP mostly centered on the personalities of their leaders (Yılmaz on the one hand, and Çiller on the other) throughout 1990s.

¹¹ In fact, the elections of 1987 marked the beginning of ANAP’s downward trend. The establishment of new political parties, combined with the difficulty of uniting four different ideological groups in its ranks, diminished the support for the party; and declared his candidacy for the presidential post stating that he would not serve in the opposition.

DYP – True Path Party. With the democratic opening of 1983, DYP was founded as the post-1980 coup successor of the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi* -AP). Yet, as AP lost its religious constituency to MNP (later MSP) and MHP along the way, AP and DYP were quite different from each other. With new parties to represent religious interests, DYP had a more secular identity compared to its predecessor, to the point of declaring itself “the guarantor of laïcité in the system” in 1997 (Çiller qtd. in “*DYP’den Laiklik Bildirisî*”). These differences were visible in their economic programs as well, since DYP, knowing ANAP’s strength on free market approach, built its party program around the re-distribution of the new wealth¹² and populist welfare policies.¹³ The lower middle class constituency these programs targeted was not a traditional AP (or DYP, for that matter) base of support, so the DYP elite reinforced these policies with a rhetoric of democratization and “better representation,” that the ANAP had neglected these areas of development. The party’s idea of democratization included a decreased role for the military in civilian politics, which was pretty revolutionary for that time,¹⁴ increased political participation and the establishment of the rule of law.

To establish this new identity of the party, Tansu Çiller, a young, female and American-educated professor of economics, assumed the party leadership. With

¹² To illustrate, Çiller is known to show and promise “keys” (for new houses and/or cars) to her supporters in her campaign speeches.

¹³ Although these goals of rolling back the state and increasing the capacity of the welfare state seemed contradictory at the first glance, Demirel found a way around it: The economy was going to use the growth-inducing potential of free market to pay for the social services provided to the public (M. F. Cobaner, personal interview, July 2014).

¹⁴ During their coalition government, Yılmaz once offered Çiller to take a particularly thorny issue to National Security Council, to which Çiller responded, “what have issues on domestic politics and policy got to do with the MGK?” On another occasion, Çiller stated, “Turkish people love and trust their army. But this trust is bestowed on them not as politicians, but as soldiers ... for control in democracies is in the hands of parliament. It is not in the hands of those outside the national will” (Cizre, 2002, p. 94).

Demirel's ascent to presidency in 1993, Çiller's "sultanistic rule" (H. Kaleli, personal interview, July 10, 2014) carried the party to political power several times in mid-1990s. During Çiller's tenure, the government initiated reforms to improve Turkey's chances to become a part of the European Union reforms (including the country's entrance into Customs Union, which Çiller considered the crowning achievement of her political tenure), took a tougher and uncompromising stance against PKK in the east, and frequently criticized Erbakan for "exploiting religion." Despite the latter, Çiller formed a coalition with RP in 1997, which "delivered a deadly blow to the secular and modern, Western-oriented image the DYP had been trying to develop for itself since 1991" (Cizre, 2002, p. 94). As the following sections will illustrate further, Erbakan's troubled (and quite controversial) career as the prime minister, corruption charges against Çiller family and Susurluk scandal brought the demise of Çiller's political career and ultimately, the party. Losing its credibility, support and eventually votes and parliamentary seats, DYP disappeared from the political scene after 2002 elections.

DSP – Democratic Leftist Party. Rahsan Ecevit (wife of former PM Bülent Ecevit) founded the *Demokratik Sol Parti* (DSP) in 1985 as a breakaway from CHP. The party also represented the "left of the center" ideology but mainly used Ecevit's charisma and popularity¹⁵ as its greatest asset. Following Ecevit's interpretation of "*laïcité* that is respectful towards religious beliefs and aspirations," the party formed good relations with the country's possibly most influential religious movement, Gülenists. Criticizing CHP's rigid and insensitive approach to religion in political life, the party tried to bridge the gap between political Islam and secularists while emphasizing

¹⁵ After the controversial intervention in Cyprus, and due to his resolve throughout the crisis, Ecevit became a popular hero ("Karaoglan") with his black cap and blue shirt.

dialogue and consensus. Bülent Ecevit used the coalition and compromise discourse a lot in his speeches, as he found “the culture of compromise” a prerequisite for the consolidation of democracy in Turkey (Kiniklioglu, 2002, p. 7). This rhetoric offered a peaceful alternative to the conflicts between the military and Islamic parties in the system as well as to the years of Yılmaz-Çiller feuds (see below) on the right side of the political spectrum. That is why the party emerged as the biggest leftist party in the country in the 1995 elections, and then as a coalition partner for parties on the right and on the left. Ecevit’s successful political career and untarnished image, amidst the country’s constant corruption scandals, helped the party win the plurality of the votes in 1999 elections, gain 128 seats and form the government with its coalition partners, ANAP and MHP. However, because DSP was tied to its leader so much that Ecevit’s deteriorating health (in the context of worsening economic conditions) led to the cracks in the party first and then to the cracks in the government, with MHP demanding early elections in 2002. Lacking an institutionalized party identity, well-defined ideology and grassroots support for anything but the party leader, DSP slowly disappeared from the party scene after the 2002 elections.

HDP – Peoples’ Democratic Party. Though the Kurds of Turkey have been an indispensable part of the country since its establishment, the “Kurdish issue” is a relatively new phenomenon. The first Kurdish political party, the People’s Work Party (*Halkın Emek Partisi* –HEP) established in 1990 by those who preferred “ballots” to Kurdish militant organization PKK’s “bullets” approach, was decidedly secular, following a Marxist/Leninist ideology against more conservative Kurdish groups that supported religious parties. Yet, the Constitutional Court closed the party, and its successors later

on, for engaging in activities that went against “the indivisible unity of the country with its territory and people” (Güney, 2002, p. 125). Even though other pro-Kurdish parties that replaced HEP did not emphasize this anti-religious aspect in their party programs as much as HEP had done but claimed to represent all Kurdish interests in the parliament, it was not until the foundation of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi* – HDP) that pro-Kurdish parties aimed to defend the rights of all minorities, including LGBT communities and long-suppressed religious minorities, such as Alavis. For that reason, it did not approve AKP’s policies on religion, claiming that the government discriminated certain religions and sects and that the state should withdraw from the religious scene altogether. In this sense, the party emphasized the pluralist nature of the country and adopted a secular (but not necessarily laicist) approach to the issue of religion and politics. Other than that, throughout this alphabet soup of pro-Kurdish political parties (HEP, ÖZDEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, DTP and BDP), the ideology and political demands remained more or less the same: decentralization, local autonomy, a new constitution that will reflect the Kurdish presence in the country, a peace process that will remove the Turkish military from the eastern provinces, and – while not supported by all members- a general amnesty that will include imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan as well.

“Islamic parties” of the Turkish Political Party System

Felicity Party –SP. Arguably the least moderate party of the Turkish political scene, SP comes from Necmettin Erbakan’s National Vision tradition, although the elite circle of the party has changed along with the basic tenets of the party ideology. In this sense, the history of Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi* - SP) resembles that of HDP, and demonstrates the resilience and determination of political Islamists in the face of the

decidedly secularist institutions of the country. Yet, unlike their counterparts in Muslim-majority countries, political Islamists of Turkey did not try to overthrow the democratic system or make the Sharia ultimate legal authority in the country. From the beginning, “their goal was to foster moral development based on religious values, not to establish a state based on Islam” (Heper, 2002, p. 143). Moreover, the National Vision (*Milli Görüş* –henceforth, MG) parties emphasized Turkish nationalism as much as the country’s Islamic identity. As mentioned above, the first party founded with this ideology in 1970 was the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi* –MNP), even though military intervention of 1971 made its political career very brief. The MNP elite then formed National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi* – MSP) and gained more than eleven percent of the votes in 1973 elections. With these results, MSP became CHP’s coalition partner, and used this newly acquired political power to institutionalize itself, expand its grassroots organizations and voter bases and place its members in public administration. Eventually, though, differences of opinion vis-à-vis this coalition, power struggles and intense rivalries among religious groups that supported MSP led to splits within the party, and MSP’s vote share diminished gradually. As a result of the coup of 1980, the MSP experiment ended abruptly as well, and the party elite was barred from political life for the next five years. Until Erbakan re-entered political life under the banner of Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* – RP), ANAP’s catchall rhetoric appealed to the former MSP supporters. From 1991 on, RP began to reach record levels of success, attracting not only the bloc votes of religious groups but also anti-secularist and anti-Kemalists from all sides of the political spectrum. Yet, the party failed to distinguish itself from these anti-secularists and to control (or suppress) more radical voices within RP.

For these reasons, first RP, and then its predecessor Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi* –FP, again, established by Erbakan’s close ally Recai Kutan) were closed down.¹⁶

Similar to, albeit not as drastic as, Ennahda’s political evolution (see Chapter 8), MG parties underwent an ideological transformation to accommodate new groups in their ranks and to avoid clashes with the secularist state institutions. MNP and MSP came closest to the “Islam is the solution” rhetoric, while RP and FP were compelled to define the party stance vis-à-vis Islamic systems of government and the necessities of electoral politics due to their consistent participation in the electoral process. Rather than engaging in these debates, however, the MG parties focused on the hostile secularism of the state institutions and the marginalization of the religious segments in the social, political and economic spheres. When the Constitutional Court outlawed RP activities and closed down the party, for instance, the FP came back with a less antagonizing political program. When it encountered RP’s fate, its successor SP avoided the limelight and advanced with more caution in the political arena. Finally, compared to more traditionalist and less flexible SP, AKP appeared even more system-oriented and moderate, actually holding the promise of consolidating Turkish democracy. These constant changes in the party name and program, however, meant that these long line of parties had at least two different party programs; one that reflected their real interests, goals and preferences and the other that showed a more toned-down version of those goals and preferences prepared for the “public consumption” (Tepe, 2013, p. 473).

¹⁶ This process is described in detail in the following section.

Justice and Development Party –AKP. Originally founded by the “modernist wing” of SP in 2001 (as discussed more in detail below), *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* refrained from affiliating itself with the MG’s policies and programs but still adopted a religious outlook, as the party’s first official program that ends with the sentence “May Allah be the beloved and assistant of our nation” (AKP Party Program 2002). The first important change from the SP ideology came with AKP elite’s de-emphasis of the party’s religious identity in favor of what they called a “conservative democracy”, and the second change came with their understanding that their hostility towards secular institutions of the state was no longer a winning strategy. While these transformations brought new actors to the political scene, altered the nature of the debate and introduced new issues to be addressed, they did not create a lasting solution to the existing problem of accommodating religious demands in the public sphere. After all, AKP retained this religious status albeit with a broader appeal, in which a relatively small number of dedicated party members were appointed to important positions by an even smaller party elite that makes all the important decisions (Tepe, 2013). Since the following sections of this chapter give a detailed account of the AKP ideology and policies, it is sufficient to say at this point that it avoided the label Islamist and worked, at least initially, to use its conservative values to push for further democratization and liberal market reforms. When AKP started to instrumentalize these issues for their parties’ interests, highlight their religious roots and brought their “Islamist agenda” back to the table, the religiosity of the party system shifted again, but at the expense of inclusiveness this time.

Nationalist Action Party –MHP. Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, or MHP) is primarily a nationalist party that also commits itself to the protection of Islamic values. Founded by¹⁷ one of the junior-ranking officials of 1960 coup, Alparslan Türkeş, against the rising “threat” of Communism in the country, the party favored a strong state with all its existing institutions to protect the ethnic and religious communities in the country. For this reason, it did not criticize the secularist outlook of the state, but embraced the “Turkish-Islamic synthesis”,¹⁸ in which Islamic values did not contradict with the state’s secularist framework. Presenting a form of tolerant religiosity, the party argued that religion acted as “the cement” that kept the Turkish society together, especially against foreign threats and separatist movements (K. Yılmaz, personal interview, July 9, 2014). This ambiguity left MHP enough room to present itself as a far-right nationalist party against the Kurdish demands, for instance, or as a party of more religious groups that also happen to emphasize the territorial and linguistic unity of the country depending on the situation. Throughout 1970s, MHP attracted the marginalized voters from other right wing parties but ultimately remained as a single-issue party, defining itself as the anti-Communist force of the Turkish politics. Conflicts between leftists and the ultranationalist (sometimes militant) MHP members (known as the “idealists” [*ülküçüler*] or Grey Wolves [*bozkurtlar*]) and set the

¹⁷ MHP’s predecessor was Republican Peasant’s Nation Party (Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi -CKMP), which was established by Field Marshal Fevzi Çakmak as the country’s first far-right party in 1948. Yet, the party remained insignificant until Alparslan Türkeş was elected to the leadership in 1965. Under his guidance, the party adopted what was called Nine Lights Doctrine (*Dokuz Işık Doktrini*) and became today’s MHP having changed its name in 1969.

¹⁸ Türkeş introduced this synthesis with the following statement: “We are as Turkish as the Tengri mountain [in Central Asia, from which Turkish ancestors are believed to have migrated], and as Muslim as the Hira mountain [in Saudi Arabia, believed to be the place where first verses of the Quran were revealed to the Prophet]. Both philosophies are our principles.”

stage for the 1980 coup d'état. As a result of the intervention, however, the party was banned and its elite was arrested. Yet, because the military junta also favored the "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" ideology against the rising influence of Russia and its "atheist" policies, the party's former minister Agah Oktay Güner proudly declared, "we are in prison, but our ideology is in government" (Cinar & Arıkan, 2002, p. 28).

After its re-establishment in the post-coup era, MHP responded to the apparent rise of political Islam in its own way: by purging radical Islamists from the party but making electoral promises that would be attractive to urban-religious groups. Accordingly, it entered into a pre-election coalition with RP in 1991 and managed to pass the high electoral threshold, while losing the support of rural conservative/religious groups to Erbakan's party in the following elections. Türkeş's death in 1997 opened up a new chapter for the party, as the party elite supported Devlet Bahçeli, rather than Türkeş's son Tugrul Türkeş, as party leader. Under Bahçeli, the party severed its ties with the militant nationalists, reunited the party around its core ideals, founded branches in rural areas and listened to the demands of electorate one by one to ensure their support in the upcoming elections. Along the way, MHP went through a significant political evolution and shifted its political position from far right to a center right party, which was willing to enter into coalitions with other centrist parties both on the right and left of the political spectrum. This strategy, along with Bahçeli's image as a man of integrity, paid off in the 1999 elections, as the party emerged as the third biggest party in the parliament and became a coalition partner in government with the DSP and ANAP. While in power, MHP distinguished itself from the religious parties in the system in a number of ways, such as by requesting the party's female MP Nesrin Ünal to

remove her headscarf before taking her oath in the parliament,¹⁹ while the FP's Merve Kavakci entered into the parliament with her headscarf and created a big "scandal" (see below) during the same session. Even though the electorate punished MHP for its inability to manage the economic crisis of 2001 in the 2002 elections, the party managed to have a consistent and important presence in the parliament as an opposition party since the 2007 elections due to the rise of Kurdish nationalism. While it is still struggling to define its official position vis-à-vis political Islam (as the party frequently criticizes AKP but does not refrain from supporting AKP policies and even helping them in difficult positions), MHP's main identity nowadays revolves around the Kurdish question and the territorial unity. A firm opponent of almost all Kurdish demands (to the point that Bahçeli refused to acknowledge the presence of HDP in the parliament after June 2015 elections and declared MHP would not support any coalition that somehow involved HDP, leading to a political impasse and "renewed" elections in November 2015), MHP gains most of its votes from nationalist sentiments and anti-PKK (which tends to equate all Kurds with PKK supporters) rhetoric.

Patterns of Religious Representation and Change: Turkish Party System in the Post-Cold War Period

As the brief discussion of these political parties suggested, the nineties witnessed a steady increase in religious party votes as well as a growing importance and relevance of religious parties in the party system, which peaked in the parliamentary elections of 1995 with the 21.38 percent of votes captured by RP.

Eventually, RP became a remarkably successful actor within Turkish politics and took

¹⁹ Even though it was supposed to show the party's compliance with the state rules and its secularist institutions, this move was criticized heavily by the party members and their political members alike. Seeing this as MHP hypocrisy, RP (then FP) built their campaigns around the slogan "the headscarf issue will be solved not by cowards but by the real men" (K. Yılmaz, personal interview, July 9, 2014).

part in several governments as a junior partner. In contrast to the expectations of the “moderation-through-inclusion” thesis, however, this political inclusion did not necessarily change the RP party program, nor did it make the party more mainstream or more moderate. On the contrary, as the party gained more power, several members of the party talked about a more assertive stance against *laïcité*, actively called for a more Islamist form of government (O. Hazer, personal interview, July 10, 2014), and some of them went so far as to suggest “the elimination of all opponents of this policy, if necessary by force” (Refah Partisi and Others v. Turkey, Eur. Ct. H. R. Feb 13, 2003). The infamous oath to wage a jihad against “capitalism, *laïcité* and other demons of Thessaloniki”²⁰ MP Sevki Yılmaz took in a pilgrimage raised eyebrows for this reason. Erbakan’s similarly provocative statements, such as “if you do not serve the party, none of your prayers will be accepted. We, the entire community of believers, shall obey the orders of Refah and join this army. Those who do not join [are not Muslim, but they] belong to the potato religion” (Hale & Ozbudun, 2009, p. 162) also angered the secularists and religious groups that did not support the party, and raised suspicions about the party’s true intentions. It was in this context that the party emerged as the winner of 1995 Parliamentary Elections, making Necmettin Erbakan the first prime minister (through a coalition government with the right wing True Path Party –DYP) in the history of the Republic who openly challenged the principle of *laïcité* in the constitution.

Even though this development effectively ended the decades-old secularist dominance in politics and bolstered religious representation and legitimacy of the state

²⁰ A reference to the founder of Turkish Republic, as Thessaloniki was the birthplace of Atatürk.

institutions, only a few could see Refah's electoral victory as an important step in the path of democratization. Non-RP supporters considered Refah's willingness to enter into coalition with DYP not as a principled compromise and determination to play the democratic rule according to its games, but as an insincere and opportunistic decision motivated by the party's desire to acquire political power (B. A. Guler, personal interview, July 9, 2014). Moreover, whereas this access to state authority and decision-making mechanisms empowered the religious segments to a great extent, it did not create the effect Driessen expects to find at the end of such empowerment process, either it is in the form of ensuring the loyalty of the religious groups to the state, its institutions and democratic practices, or making the rank-and-file members of the party more open to democratic ideals like plurality and tolerance (2012). On the contrary, RP's power led to its radicalization, making the already-struggling Turkish democratic progress even more fragile by deeply alienating all non-Refah supporters.

Educated in the ideals of the French system of anti-clericalism and strict separation of religion and politics under Kemalist reforms, most pro-secularist elements of the Turkish society already found it hard to trust those parties that appealed to religious identities. Instead of accepting them as legitimate players of the democratic game, they regarded these religious parties as plain and simple radicals who were looking for ways to put the country under some religious yoke as soon as they got the chance at worst; or as a group of irresponsible and self-interested opportunists instrumentalizing Islam for political purposes at best. The policies RP pursued through its tenure did not help assuage their fears and re-establish a political environment based on trust and mutual respect, either. Erbakan's references to the European Union as a

“Christian Club” of which Turkey should never be a member, his much publicized trip to Libya,²¹ plans to construct a mosque at the heart of Taksim Square in Istanbul, and a RP-sponsored “Jerusalem Nights” event in Ankara to which the representatives of HAMAS and Hezbollah were invited were enough to polarize the country and escalate the tensions between secular and religious segments of the society. The party closed down the political discussion on the most divisive issues of religion, referring to them as religious obligations that did not necessitate any deliberation. Many saw Refah’s statements as publicity stunts that aimed to please its constituency and guarantee their continued support (M. Oney, personal interview, June 20, 2014) as opposed to signals for an impending regime change or an Islamic Revolution. Yet, secularists’ concerns were not entirely unfounded, either (B. A. Guler, H. Kaleli, M. F. Cobaner, personal interview, July 2014), because at the time RP seemed willing and able to impose its religious ideas on the society even if it was with a bona fide attempt to solve the long-standing problems of the country, prioritize “Islamic community” over the nation or pluralistic forms of government and change the orientation of the Turkish foreign policy through institutional and noninstitutional reforms. As a response to these developments, two-center right parties (DYP and ANAP) formed an “anti-Islamist coalition” and organized protests to condemn “fundamentalism and creeping Islamization,” by waving Turkish flags all over the country and marching to Anitkabir (Atatürk’s mausoleum) on

²¹ According to the interviewees, this trip led to one of the biggest diplomatic scandals and “foreign policy nightmare” in the recent history of Turkey: After many unannounced changes in the schedule, Qaddafi welcomed the Turkish prime minister and his delegation in a tent, did not offer Erdogan any pleasantries or even a chair, and he started his talk by demanding an independent Kurdish state on Turkish territories. Erdogan listened to Qaddafi silently, did not make any statements that would directly challenge Qaddafi’s remarks and did not react to the closing sentence of Qaddafi’s tirade “Turkey has lost its will”, leaving the tent with him at the end of the press conference. Some saw this as Erdogan’s weakness against Qaddafi’s humiliation; others regarded as an example showing how much Erdogan was willing to risk getting closer to the Muslim world (M. Oney, V. Halefoglu, personal interview, July 2014).

Republic Day and two weeks later, on the anniversary of Atatürk's death. Interpreting these protests as a clear provocation and "a show of force", the RP elite told the party's provincial executives to "keep alive the resentment, rancor and hatred [they] feel in [their] hearts" and "not give concessions for [their] beliefs" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 161).

By the end of 1996, the decline in the country's democratic quality (See Figure 6.1) already reflected this level of radicalization and polarization in the system.²² Yet, it was the "post-modern coup" of February 28, 1997 that delivered the coup de grâce to democratization efforts in the country. Claiming to protect the secular institutions of the country from a democratically elected "Islamic threat", the military-dominated National Security Council intervened in the civilian politics and demanded a series of reforms that would reverse Refah's "religious reactionism" and "Islamization process" to restore the hostile secularism of the past instead (Cizre-Sakallioglu & Cinar, 2003). Signed by Erbakan himself, this declaration initiated another authoritarian phase in the country and introduced a number of pro-secular policy measures, including a stricter ban on headscarves, a change in the elementary and secondary school curricula that would control the religious education classes and discourage students from attending religious schools, and a crackdown of Islamist (be it actual or perceived) leaders in the process. The party elite tried to assure the military that they respected secular democracy and that as a guarantor of secularist principles, the party "would not harbor any radicals or provide a sanctuary to radical groups" (O. Hazer, personal interview, July 10, 2014), yet a public campaign against the party eventually and effectively eroded RP's legitimacy

²² Admittedly, chronic corruption scandals and alleged links between state officials and organized crime revealed through a car crash near Susurluk (known as the Susurluk case) did not help these scores, either.

as well as its ability to govern. Erbakan stepped down in June 1997; and the antagonism between the RP supporters and members of pro-secularist parties, who are backed by the military, set the stage for the Constitutional Court decision to outlaw the party and ban the political activities of its key figures (including Necmettin Erbakan, Sevki Yilmaz, former minister of Justice Sevket Kazan) in 1998.

Although the party elites soon formed the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi* –FP) under the leadership of Recai Kutan and participated in elections in order to continue representing religious interests; both pro-secular forces' paranoia of an "Islamist takeover" and FP's uncompromising attitude on its religious demands made FP relatively short-lived. While Kutan announced that "we know what it is like to be threatened, blackmailed and silenced; therefore, no one could value democracy better than us" (Cizre-Sakallioglu & Cinar, 2003, p. 325), his attempts to integrate secularism and democracy with religious norms seemed to contradict the party supporters' conviction that it was the party's responsibility, dictated by the holy texts and Islamic tradition, to take the necessary measures to ensure the implementation of religious norms in the society (M.F. Cobaner, personal interview, July 21, 2014). The efforts of the party elite to distance themselves from RP and reduce Erbakan's influence on the party similarly failed when Erbakan encouraged (or approved) newly-elected member of the parliament Merve Kavakci's decision to wear a headscarf in the Turkish National Assembly and take her loyalty oath without taking off her headscarf following the elections of 1999. Led by the noisy protests of secularist parties, Prime Minister Ecevit (of DSP) forced Kavakci to leave the ceremony without swearing-in as a member of the parliament; and the so-called democrats of the country swiftly branded Kavakci as an

“agent provocateur”, “a representative of Iranian/American interests”²³ and a pawn of the Islamic parties “which resembled vampires feeding only on blood” (Jung & Piccoli, 2001, p. 93).

In this regard, the importance of Kavakci affair was twofold. First of all, the controversy surrounding a simple piece of clothing manifested the degree of hostility and intolerance of pro-secular parties to any form of religious expression, because they refused to see her decision to wear headscarf as anything but a challenge to the Republic and the values it represented. This perception also revealed the main inconsistency in secularist reasoning, according to which the practice of democracy was not (and should not be) permitted unless the political actors proved their willingness to defend the secularist institutions. Framing their positions through the “public tolerance to diversity” perspective, these secularist elites endorsed even the most restrictive measures the state took in order to ensure both the freedom *of* religion and the freedom *from* religion, essentially turning their rhetoric of tolerance, diversity and plurality into mere lip service. Secondly, it indicated that the new FP elite as a whole did not have the power, means, or consensus on the ways to change the course of events or implement their policy platform and avoid RP’s fate at the same time. This realization led to the famous split within the party. The conservative wing, still somewhat controlled by Erbakan, kept the policy priorities of RP but made some symbolic and practical compromises. Having learned their lesson from the Refah experience, for instance, they toned down the criticism of the EU, declared their loyalty to the secularist principles of

²³ These accusations are particularly interesting, given the fact that Iranian and American interests hardly coalesce on these issues –but for most secular-minded Turks of that time, the reality of international politics did not matter. The demonstrations in Iran to show support for Kavakci’s decision not to take off her headscarf made her an Iranian agent in their eyes, and the fact that she had an American citizens made her serve the American interests as a member of the Turkish Parliament.

the Constitution, incorporated the rhetoric of democracy and human rights to their party programs and tried to rectify their image as a backward, misogynist and intolerant party by recruiting more female members with and without headscarves, ending the practice of gender-segregated meetings and serving both alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages in party events. On the other hand, the reformist wing led by the younger members of the party wanted to follow a different strategy, which entailed more substantive discursive and behavioral changes in the party. Forming an opposition movement within the party, they challenged Kutan's leadership in the congress, but failed to capture the leadership of the party in spite of getting almost half of the delegates' votes.

Ultimately, time proved the reformists right. The secularists of the Turkish political system did not find the process of moderation undertaken by FP convincing, or its cooperation with other parties and state authorities sufficient, leading to another "authoritarian" intervention in democratization process. This time, though, the intervention came from the judiciary, as the Public Prosecutor Vural Savas brought FP to the Constitutional Court for being the continuation of the banned RP and violating the principle of secularism through the party's provocative actions and speeches. A rapporteur in the court attested later (O. Oyan, personal interview, July 11, 2014) that many FP members from the reformist wing (including the current Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arinç and former president Abdullah Gül) testified against the party during the closed part of the trial, helped the prosecution collect evidence for these anti-secular activities and statements and essentially supported Savas's case against the FP. After all, a court decision to outlaw the party would justify the reformists' desire to break away from the MG tradition and give the much-needed legitimacy for a fresh start and a new

party that was independent of Erbakan and other RP/FP politicians. Either due to these strategic choices of FP's reformist wing, or due to the blanket hostility of pro-secular Justices to Islamic parties, the Court decided to ban the party and barred the political activities of five members of the party for five years, Kavakci being one of them. In its ruling, the Constitutional Court rejected the claim that FP was essentially the new flag bearer of RP, but still declared it became the focus of anti-secular activities in the country.

All in all, the Turkish party system had been divided throughout 1990s between the conservative-religious parties on one side and staunch supporters of the principle of *laïcité* on the other. By the end of the decade, the Constitutional Court banned the Refah Partisi, and then its de facto successor FP, for violating the constitutional principle of secularism. The bans on these religious parties made the system very volatile, as the religious party with the same party elite and the support base had to enter almost every election under a different name. At the same time, the continuation in terms of the ideology and voter bases meant that the system was stable despite these successive parties. The parties on the religious side did not back down and change their ideology or goal of transforming the state and society along religious principles. Instead, they established new parties and kept participating in competitive elections, while trying to broaden their appeals, and working under the existing constraints of the system. Yet, when this strategy did not deliver the expected policy outcomes and change the minority status of the religious groups, the successor parties found the solution in going directly to the electorate and gaining the support of mainstream voters to be the majority in the parliament.

Moderation-through-Exclusion: AKP's New Inclusive Strategy

The democratic breakdown through the military intervention of 1997 and the short political career of FP led the Islamist political leaders to seek more creative solutions and use the political circumstances in their favor so as to “normalize” their presence on the political scene. The years-long battle between the MG and hostile secularist parties de-legitimized the type of religiosity Erbakan's parties advocated, which was essentially based on the abolition of secular elements in state institutions and their replacement with more conservative norms, practices and officials. This loss of legitimacy, as well as Erbakan's political ban, not only opened the doors for new political parties that “moderated-through-exclusion”, but also gave the former members of FP more leeway to distance themselves from the legacy and policy positions of this charismatic leader. Thus, the conservative wing convened under the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi* –SP) banner, but retained the primacy of Islamic ideals in its new party program. On the other hand, realizing that this type of single-issue Islamism was a viable strategy neither for the survival of the party, or its electoral success in general, the reformist wing parted ways with the National Vision once and for all and established the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* –AKP) in 2001.²⁴

Determined not to make the same mistakes again, AKP elite first abandoned the party's direct affiliation with political Islam, decided to take more inclusive stances on different issues and embarked on a campaign program that projected the party as the champion of democratic and liberal ideas (*AKP Parti Programi ve Tuzugu* 2001). Either

²⁴ In this regard, AKP's adoption of civil-confessional religiosity in 2001 cannot be explained with “moderation-through-inclusion” thesis, demographic shifts or cultural changes – as it reflects a strategic choice on the part of the party, which responds both to the international support for more moderate forms of Islam and the domestic constraints and political opportunities.

acting as a pragmatic political actor and responding to the existing institutional constraints, or genuinely changing their attitude to hold positions of greater openness, these elites made some important compromises on the party's public piety and eliminated all the references to religion from its party rhetoric. Having rejected being "Islamists" "Muslim democrats" or "successors of MG" (Hale, 2005), these elites enthusiastically presented themselves as liberal democratic politicians who happened to come from more religious backgrounds. Moreover, careful not to overstep any institutional boundaries this time, the party embraced democracy with all its aspects, especially by strengthening the intraparty democracy, building constant communication mechanisms between the upper echelons of the party and its grassroots organizations, and adopting a consensus seeking approach. By doing this, it initiated important discussions in Islamic circles on the value of democratic institutions and salience of economic liberalism as well. The devout bourgeoisie Özal's reforms created in 1980s and the rest of the "Anatolian Tigers" favored this form of economic liberalization over Erbakan's "Just Order" economic policies that involved heavy state intervention and redistribution of wealth, and thus lent their support to AKP rather than SP. In the end, "many Islamists had concluded that they needed liberal democratic rights and standards as an instrument to protect themselves from secularist interventions" (Somer, 2014, p. 50).²⁵ This realization also improved the image of the West in the eyes of many religious groups, and entailed a more positive view of the European Union. Thus, the interests

²⁵ This stance was particularly appealing to the most dynamic force that supports the party most vehemently: this new class of capitalists, or "Anatolian tigers", who also happen to be socially conservative. Both this group of supporters and the party elite knew that these compromises were necessary, because otherwise the party would lose elections, be seen as ineffective or be banned by the Constitutional Court without achieving any of its primary goals.

and aspirations of pro-Islamist and pro-secular groups coalesced, perhaps for the first time in years.

Although the downplaying of the party's religious identity and adoption of a "conservative democratic" one instead may seem like a trivial change in party rhetoric, this made it possible for AKP to present itself as the party of democratic demands, which effectively represented the interests of everyone, regardless of their religious affiliation. Because almost everyone in the country suffered from the semi-authoritarian practices of the Republic in one way or another, this message had the potential to appeal to a large number of voters, especially those who were marginalized in the past, and gain their support for the party. While the other religious party in the system, the SP, appealed to a more narrowly defined segment of "religious" voters, the AKP cast a wider net. With these changes in the parties' religiosity, the question became whether the religious voters pulled in different directions would continue to support the "tolerant religiosity" of the SP, or prefer its more moderate version, the AKP's "civil-confessional religiosity" in electoral competition.

Yet, even within this context, it was not that easy for AKP to use this political opportunity to recast the party image and turn religious parties into a viable political alternative again. The history of polarization and the existing atmosphere of distrust made it difficult for the AKP elite to convince others of their sincerity and commitment to democratic norms and institutions. Their previous statements, such as Erdoğan's analogy between democracy and the "train you get off when you reach your destination" (Heper & Toktaş, 2003) , evoked suspicions and prompted especially pro-secularist segments to question whether AKP treated democracy simply as a means to gradually

implement their Islamist agenda, rather than as an end in itself. Claiming that the party's steps for political liberalization signified nothing more than the party's desire to hide its true intentions, maximize its powers for an Islamist takeover (*takiyye*) as well as its determination to achieve this goal at any cost, they continued to react emotionally to AKP's bid for political power.

Any accusations of dissimulation aside, the party's de-emphasis of its religious identity is actually not surprising from a rational actor perspective. Even though the early literature on religious parties assumed that these parties had little or no flexibility in adjusting their party discourses and programs due to their sources of legitimacy and otherworldly aspirations, later studies demonstrated that religious parties were not that different from other party types when it came to their strategic choices. As Przeworski and Sprague (1986) pointed out, elections create pressures on all parties, regardless of their source of legitimacy, to expand their voter bases and at least try to mobilize groups that are out of their narrow ideological bases. Driven by these electoral dynamics and a need to ensure its survival, AKP's winning strategy was to project itself as a responsible and reliable player of the democratic game by reshaping the main tenets of its ideology (both in context and practice) and adopting a more moderate civil-confessional religious identity. At the party level, therefore, it is easier to understand how these dynamics worked, and the testimonies of the party elites supported this point. It is harder, however, to figure out how exactly this process played out from the perspective of voters. Thankfully, informal interviews with the voters, news sources, and public opinion polls help us to understand why Turkish voters withdrew their support from the dominant

secularist parties of 1990s and elected a party with religious orientation in the first parliamentary election it contested.

Religious Parties Can Win Free and Fair Elections

The parliamentary elections of 2002 had all the characteristics of a “watershed election”, due to the significant changes it brought to the political scene. As a result of the elections, none of the dominant parties of 1990s made it to the parliament because of their failure to reach the 10% threshold for representation. The AKP won a remarkable victory by gaining the majority of the seats in the Turkish National Assembly, despite the abovementioned doubts and “ambiguities concerning Erdoğan's eligibility to be elected as a member of parliament” (Cizre-Sakallioglu & Cinar, 2003, p. 328).²⁶ In contrast to Kurzman and Naqvi’s expectations that “given the choice, voters tend to go with secular parties” and that “the more free and fair the election is, the worse the Islamic parties do” (2010), the AKP gained 34.28 percent of the votes, and 363 of 550 parliamentary seats²⁷, in a free and fair election conducted in a fiercely secular state.

As many scholars have noted (Heper, 2009; Somer, 2014; Yildirim & Lancaster, 2015), though, this high level of support did not reflect an increasing religiosity among the Turkish electorate. Neither was it a result of “revenge voting” by religious segments

²⁶ Due to his previous conviction for “inciting hatred on the basis of religious differences” by reading a poem that equated mosques with military barracks and the believers with soldiers in [Islamic] army; the Constitutional Court upheld the Chief Public Prosecutor’s charge that Erdoğan could not be the founding member (and hence, the president) of the party. The issue of whether he could compete for office in the parliamentary elections divided lawyers for almost a year, and only through the renewal of elections in the eastern province of Siirt in February 2003 could he win a parliamentary seat and replace Abdullah Gul as the president of the party (and become the prime minister as a result).

²⁷ As discussed above, the high electoral threshold in the system tends to produce such disproportionate distribution of seats. In this case, more than 40 percent of the votes became “wasted”, giving AKP a higher share of seats than it would have otherwise gained.

(Tessler, 1997), as the traditionalist wing of FP, *Saadet* won only 2.5 percent of the votes nationwide. However, this support for the AKP still symbolized people's dissatisfaction with the existing parties in the party system and the economic crisis of 2001, which preceded the AKP victory in 2002. Contrasting the perceived competence of its politicians (most of whom proved themselves successful in municipal elections and politics) with the corrupt policies of the parties that dominated the political scene in 1990s, AKP played its "purity" card effectively²⁸ and gained most of the protest votes. Right after gaining a parliamentary seat, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a charismatic figure and talented orator, took over the party leadership and worked hard to turn these protest votes into genuine support for the party. In the meantime, the party elite cultivated an image of underdogs for themselves, calling the religious segments of the country "black Turks" (as opposed to the educated, wealthy and privileged "white Turks" with secular leanings).²⁹ In the end, although the moderation of religious rhetoric played some role in its overwhelming success in the 2002 elections,³⁰ both protest votes and populist politics skillfully utilized by the AKP elite contributed to the party's rise to power.

Once the elections were won and the political power was gained, though, new pressures to rule the country emerged, obliging the party to come up with concrete solutions to the existing problems to survive in the party system and ensure their re-

²⁸ Even the party's name is used for this purpose, as the initials of Justice (Adalet) and Development (Kalkınma) constitute a word in Turkish that means "white" and "pure" (and that is the reason the party elite prefer to say "AK Parti" instead of AKP), symbolizing AKP's appeal to "pure people" against the "corrupt elite" (Mudde, 2004).

²⁹ Contrasting themselves with the intellectuals of the "old Turkey", the AKP elite embraced Erdoğan's "man of the people" approach and made a considerable effort to shift the blame for all the existing problems to these intellectual circles, who had allegedly become so Westernized in their approach that they had lost touch with people and reality.

³⁰ Yildirim and Lancaster (2015) also argue that moderate party platforms increase the chances of an Islamic party winning the elections and gaining political power, even after controlling for other political and economic factors.

election. The party's recognition of "the heterogeneity of people" (Stanley, 2008, p. 102) and encouragement of their participation in political process shaped the party policies in this sense, giving the message that AKP was there to offer more than a simple populist rhetoric. These steps not only assured the once-neglected minorities in the country, whether they came from the Islamist background or belonged to the Christian and Jewish groups, that the party would represent their interests, but also prevented the party's disappearance into oblivion after its first electoral victory –as it is the case with most new parties that come to power with the help of protest votes (Degan-Krause & Haughton, 2009).

Religious Participation, Normalization, and Democratization Under AKP Rule

As "democracies are tested by their capacity to respond to the claims and needs of new social groups and by their capacity to integrate new elites representing these claims" (Klausen, 2005, p. 7), the party's first few years in power constituted an important test for the political actors and institutions in the Turkish political scene. Under these conditions, the party elite interpreted the election results as a proof that AKP's downplaying of its religious roots and inclusive stance worked well in appealing to both the religious and non-religious segments of the society; and used the same broad message and tolerant party behavior to maintain the support of masses following the elections. Interestingly, AKP, whose democratic credentials had been found somewhat deceptive, emerged as the most democratic political party in this context, openly criticizing the role of the military in the government, pointing out to the flaws of the 1980 Constitution and emphasizing minority rights in their policy agendas. In a stark contrast to the MG parties' stance on democracy and human rights, which prioritized the freedom of religion and rights of religious groups and thus revealed the instrumentalism

in MG ideology; AKP's reforms on democracy and human rights aimed to improve the rights and liberties of all groups (Turkish or Kurdish, Alawi or Sunni, Muslim or non-Muslim)³¹ and reflected EU priorities on democratization. Therefore, the party's legislative agenda in its first term mainly consisted of policies to provide goods and services in a more equitable manner, ensure stability and order to bring economic growth, represent everyone equally in the parliament and address their needs and concerns as much as possible. The party (and its opponents) hoped that all these efforts would result in Turkey's membership in the European Union.

More importantly, the AKP showed an interest and capacity to work with other parties in the system during this reform process. EU conditionality was undoubtedly a big factor behind this cooperation, but this common goal narrowed the political distance between the party and secularists.³² It also helped the secularist actors represented by CHP to accept AKP as a legitimate and responsible political power, instead of resenting the party's success in ending their upper hand in Turkish politics. Accordingly, the optimistic pro-secular elite interpreted this interparty cooperation as a sign of AKP's normalization (Somer, 2014, p. 52) and gave their support to the party's democratization efforts. The presence of secularist veto players, such as the president Ahmet Necdet Sezer, also assuaged the fears of die-hard secularists to some extent, encouraging them to take part in legislative decision-mechanisms with AKP and work in tandem to

³¹ While this issue is beyond the scope of this chapter, the policies of the party can also be examined in the context of the conflict between different groups. After all, the involvement of a religiously rooted political party in the government meant something different for each group, leading to different reactions.

³² On the other hand, some political scientists (Gumuscu & Sert, 2009; Kitfield, 2011; Somer, 2014) suggest that this common goal, the speed with which decisions are made, and concomitantly the lack of parliamentary debates, are responsible for both the success of the AKP policies, and their eventual fall from grace.

consolidate the democracy and fulfill the EU accession criteria –despite their deep mistrust.

Throughout AKP's first term in government, the parliament passed constitutional reforms and five “harmonization packages”. These changes brought about significant legal and practical changes and constituted some of the most important steps in diminishing the power of the military in civilian politics (by changing the composition of National Security Council, abolishing the State Security Courts and redefining the roles of military courts) and improving the country's human rights records (by accepting the supremacy of European Court of Human Rights verdicts, giving citizens a right to take their cases to ECHR and harmonizing the Turkish Criminal Code with the EU standards). In a further attempt to expand basic rights and liberties for everyone, the party repealed the law that prohibited broadcasting in any language other than Turkish (responding to the demands of ethnic Kurds), increased the penalties for patriarchal tradition of “honor killings” (responding the demands of women's organizations), redefined the powers and responsibilities of the police force and adopted a “zero tolerance policy” towards police brutality and mistreatment (responding to the concerns of torture victims), trained all the judges and public prosecutors in European law and its legal standards (responding to the criticisms about judicial inefficiency and re-establishing trust in judicial proceedings) and established a “Council on Minority Problems” (responding to the demands of the Christian and Jewish minorities).³³

Despite the AKP's reformist zeal and a parliamentary majority large enough to change the electoral rules, they did not try to change the system of democratic competition --

³³ The party's decision to tackle minority issues can be regarded as especially bold, considering the MG's legacy of mistrust of non-Muslim elements in the society.

the unusually high electoral threshold firmly remained in place, as did the Political Parties Law that prohibited the establishment of political parties with religious or ethnic identities. Drawing attention to these issues as something that needed to be worked on, the EU finally declared that Turkey had fulfilled the requirements of the Copenhagen Criteria, and initiated the accession negotiations in October 2005. In the end, the inclusive policies of the government restored the image of Turkey as a well-functioning democracy, and got the country closer to EU membership, a long-term policy goal of the country.

Not surprisingly, these path-breaking reforms improved the country's democratic quality. While the country had been stuck in "not free" (Freedom in the World Index) or "anocracy" (Polity IV) categories of famous democracy indices throughout 1990s, it improved its democracy scores consistently throughout the first term of AKP rule (2002-2006) rendering the country "free" in both its political rights and civil liberties for the first time. Prime Minister Erdoğan took pride in this development and declared that the party's new aim was to reach the level of "advanced democracies" (The Economist, March 28, 2011). The international community also started to praise the reforms Turkey was implementing, and present Turkey as a role model to be followed in other Muslim-majority countries. Although this early enthusiasm sat uncomfortably with statements from the party elite that manifested the party's interest in transforming the social life in Turkey and "raising devout generations", both pundits and laypeople found this eclecticism to be a normal part of the transition to an "advanced" democracy at that time. For them, ending the restrictions on religion in the public sphere, which were imposed by both CHP's long reign and the military governments, necessitated some

degree of public religiosity and meant that now everybody, including the party elites, could finally have a real freedom to manifest their religious identities.

This debate on public religiosity revealed another significant aspect of the AKP rule, as the party still needed the support of its religious constituency in order to distinguish itself from other parties in the system and remain relevant in the political scene. Thus, the abovementioned moderation in party programs and behavior, or the expansion of the party's support bases, did not mean that AKP distanced itself from religious issues completely in the political arena. It simply meant that the party dropped the uncompromising, alienating and holier-than-thou approach of the conservative religious parties of the past, and brought up the concerns and demands of religious groups in a less threatening and more conciliatory manner. For example, the party criticized the headscarf ban not in the context of Islamic obligations, but within the framework of basic rights and liberties. Citing the visibility of Islamic symbols in the public sphere as evidence of support for its priorities and policies, in other words, AKP sought ways to reconcile the secularist establishment and religious demands by creating a pluralist democratic regime in the country. Often, the party's references to religion were very subtle, such as its emphasis on morality and family life – themes that resonated well with almost everyone in the country (B. A. Guler, personal interview, July 9, 2014). As in Haughton's description of Slovakian populist parties, the religious rhetoric in pre-2007 AKP "appear[ed] to be little more than a popular ideological relish –not integral to the policy dish served up but added to bring the dish's taste closer into line with the consumer wants" (Haughton, 2001, p. 754). This light version of religious rhetoric fit the demands of Turkish voters better, most of who do not practice on a

regular basis but still have deep respect for religion and religious figures as the cornerstones of a well-functioning society. In this regard, the party normalized the religiosity in politics and did not attract any unnecessary attention to itself by staying out of the specifically Islamic issues –such as criminalizing adultery, banning religious criticism and imposing an Islamic morality on all citizens. By simply toning down the Welfare-Virtue-Felicity line of religious references in the party program and behavior, AKP managed to gain the support of all “culturally religious” citizens, including the liberal and democratic-minded ones, without alienating its core supporters.

For these reasons, the AKP’s ability to create a genuine discussion on the issue of religion in politics as well as its role in banalizing the religious presence in the Turkish party scene served as its most effective tools in the democratic arena. By participating in elections as a moderate actor that seemed both capable and willing to abide by the rules of the game, the party de-dramatized the issue of religious parties in the eyes of many citizens to a great extent. The party’s careful attempts to distance itself from an extremist and anti-secular rhetoric assuaged the fears about the “Islamist threat”, making it easier for the people and other party elites to acknowledge and appreciate their integration in the political system. Furthermore, supporting the “potholes” thesis discussed in the third chapter, AKP’s involvement in the political decision-making mechanisms and contribution to the efforts to fix the existing problems and reform the political system along the European Union accession criteria created a sense of solidarity among the supporters of both religious and the non-religious parties in the system. At the very least, it gave citizens an opportunity to see the once-demonized religious parties under a different light, and observe another interpretation of political

Islam, which was decidedly different from Erbakan's conservative religiosity. This normalization process not only allowed Turkish citizens to judge a religious party on the basis of its political performance rather than its true or alleged Islamist agenda, but also helped the religious electorate to identify –maybe for the first time- with the country and its political system. According to the expectations of the moderation-through-inclusion thesis, this identification with the regime enabled the religious voters to voice their demands in the public sphere through democratic means, preventing the radicalization they would have gone through had it not been for such an opportunity.

However, even without the radicalization prospects suggested by the “moderation-through-inclusion” theory, it is possible to see how this form of competition and exercise of political power had a formidable effect on many Muslim voters. This normalization also decreased the saliency of the religious identities, as the citizens ceased to cast their votes solely on the basis of religiosity of a party. Furthermore, by channeling their energy from the critique of the Kemalist regime and shortcomings of *laïcité* to the actual problem-solving, most of them realized the underlying causes of their problems were more deep-seated than they thought, which in return compelled them to work with their non-religious counterparts in the party system and seek compromise on certain issues. Those who claimed the Republic had alienated them for years through the repression of religious identities finally gained access to the state power, and an opportunity to shape the policies on religious freedoms.

“Unsustainable Democratization” and Secularist Veto Players

Even though AKP continued to appeal to the different segments of Turkish society, and gained the support of a large number of voters from various backgrounds, it had the hardest time convincing die-hard secularists in the system that they did not

have a hidden agenda and overcoming their distrust. According to Somer, this “secular skepticism” inevitably made the democratization process unsustainable in the long run (2014, p. 51) through the interference of nonelected veto players in the political process. President Sezer, former Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court and a staunch supporter of *laïcité*, vetoed all the parliamentary acts that he thought would lead to the implementation of AKP’s alleged Islamist agenda, such as criminalizing adultery or lifting the ban on wearing headscarves in schools. In a similar incident, after the AKP and the MHP introduced an amendment to repeal the headscarf ban on the grounds that no citizen could be denied from her right to higher education under the equality principle of the Constitution, pro-secular parties applied to the Constitutional Court for the cancellation of this amendment. The Court decided that the amendment violated the principle of secularism and revoked it, but Chief Public Prosecutor Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya still went on to file a closure case against AKP for “trying to change the secular and democratic character of the state with such attempts and policies as the removal of the headscarf ban” (Yalçinkaya, *AKP Kapatma Davası İddianamesi*). Although AKP defended itself by arguing that the Public Prosecutor’s definition of secularism was unnecessarily strict and that the party never harbored any intentions to establish a Sharia regime in the country, 10 out of 11 Justices in the Court found Yalçinkaya justified in his accusations. At the same time, however, the Court rejected the demand to ban the party by one vote, and issued “a serious warning” instead by imposing a sanction that cut the party’s public financing in half (*AK Parti Kapatma Davası, Gerekçeli Karar*).

It was not just the Constitutional Court that threatened the party's survival, however. Similarly, the military issued warnings every time they believed the party engaged in an activity that would mean overstepping constitutional boundaries. As a response to AKP's insistence on Abdullah Gül's presidential candidacy towards the end of Sezer's tenure, for instance, the military posted on its website what came to be known as the "e-memorandum". This official statement declared, "the Turkish Armed Forces are a party in those arguments [about the candidacy of Abdullah Gül, whose wife wears the headscarf], and absolute defender of secularism" (BBC News, April 28, 2007). The statement also mentioned the military's "sound determination to carry out their duties stemming from laws to protect the unchangeable characteristics of the Republic of Turkey", threatening the government with another military intervention (reminiscent of the February 28 process) if it continued its "anti-secular" activities. In Somer's view, such interferences by these veto players "weakened democracy, kept religious-secular distrust intact, and undermined the incentives for pro-secular political parties and civil society organizations to reform themselves" (2014, p. 52). They also reinforced the threat perceptions of many secularists at the grassroots levels, making them less tolerant and less eager to acknowledge the rights and liberties of their political opponents (Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1982).

Accordingly, on the eve of the "Republic Rallies" to protest AKP's nomination of Gül to the presidency, CHP abandoned its attempts to be an inclusionary and "secular" (in the Anglo-Saxon understanding of the term) political party and, with the backing of the military, took a highly hostile secularist position in its policies. The party mobilized its supporters and organized these secularist mass rallies, pointing out to the "major shift of

power” and “loss of the country’s Western orientation”, symbolized by the potential of having a headscarf-wearing first lady in the presidential palace. Instead of seeing Gül’s presidency as something that could be changed in the next election, CHP supporters perceived it as a fundamental threat to secularism and an evidence for AKP’s hidden agenda to turn country into an Islamic one. While calling for a “more modern president”, however, CHP supporters sent a clear message to the party and the military during the rallies by persistently shouting “neither Sharia, nor a coup, but a democratic Turkey”, which showed their disapproval of the Armed Forces and its desire to play a role in the country’s politics. Despite the protests, Gül won the elections in the parliament, but CHP took the elections to the Constitutional Court, claiming that the elections violated an electoral procedure, which required two thirds of the members of the parliament to be present during a presidential election. The Court cancelled the elections; and AKP decided to wait for the results of the parliamentary election of 2007 to take further action on the issue.

The party’s second electoral victory in 2007 tipped the balance of power in favor of the AKP, and eventually led to the elimination of all important secularist veto players from the political scene. First of all, after the Constitutional Court ruled not to ban the party due to “the overwhelming economic, political and international costs of dissolving the popular governing party” (Tezcür, 2009, p. 310), the Court essentially ceased to be a serious threat to AKP’s survival. Moreover, the party’s second term, as well as Abdullah Gül’s presidency, gave the party an opportunity to appoint justices who would be more favorable towards AKP, effectively bringing the Court under the party’s control. The constitutional referendum of September 2010 similarly represented an important

step in eliminating the authoritarian vestiges in the judiciary, by changing the composition of High Council of Judges and Prosecutors

Secondly, although AKP was rather careful and balanced in its relations with the military throughout its first term and avoided policy positions that would draw strong criticism from the generals, the e-memorandum incident set the stage for a more resolute response from the party. In its attempt to regulate the relations between the military and civilian politics, the party announced that “The General Staff is an establishment, which is subject to the orders from the government and whose responsibilities are defined in the Constitution and laws” and as such, “it would be inconceivable if the General Staff in a democracy upholding the rule of law made a statement critical of the government about any issue” (Migdalovitz, 2007, p. 4). Having established its institutional and psychological dominance, the party also initiated what came to be known as the “Ergenekon” and “Sledgehammer” Trials, to bring the military personnel (including the high-ranking officials) to justice for contemplating a coup d’état to overthrow the AKP government. Even though both the trials themselves and the evidence presented to the Court created a great deal of controversy and violated the norms of due process severely (Kitfield, 2011), they ultimately led to the arrests of hundreds of senior military officials and helped the politicians tame the Armed Forces once and for all. Since then, a democratic breakdown due to some kind of military intervention (whether in the form of a coup d’état, “a post-modern coup” or an “e-coup”) became highly unlikely, if not impossible.

Nevertheless, the AKP’s success in ending the longstanding military and judiciary tutelage over democratic institutions did not have the expected impact on the country’s

democratic quality. Instead of directly improving democracy scores by ensuring political stability and expanding the autonomy of elected officials, these developments provided the party with the security and legitimacy it longed for, and “made the party more complacent and less tolerant of opposition” (Somer, 2014, p. 53), undermining the party’s inclusive and open-minded stance in the long run. In the meantime, the public support for Turkey’s membership in the EU waned dramatically as the negotiations for the EU membership stalled due to the doubts of European policy-makers over “Turkey’s compatibility with the EU”. This decline brought the pro-EU democratic zeal of the party to an end, and the party, no longer having the EU conditionality as the sword of Damocles hanging over its head, became more vocal in expressing its criticism of the West and its “imperfect morals” and articulating the necessity of raising a “religious youth” to combat the “Western immorality that is incompatible with [Turkish] values” (*Batinin Ahlaksizligini Aldik*, January 24, 2008). In this sense, the elimination of the most undemocratic institutions in the country forced AKP to redefine its identity and determine how wide it wanted to cast its net to sustain its support base. At that point, the fragmentation of the opposition groups, and the appeal of Erdoğan’s charisma, provided an easy answer: the party did not need new followers, the only thing it needed to do was to consolidate its core constituency. The fervor with which they would defend the party against “the enemies of the new Turkey” and the “pious generations” the party would create would be enough to carry the party to the government with each election, at least for a foreseeable future. In the absence of the critiques and a solidified opposition movement that posed a threat to the dominant party regime, AKP positioned itself in a less tolerant and more repressive category of religiosity. Accordingly, the party

adopted a more majoritarian definition of democracy both in theory and in practice, according to which the party represented the true national will. Replacing its democracy and human rights framework with a new rhetoric based on the fundamental distinction between “us” versus “them”, the party started to define every political issue in terms of “good versus evil”. (A. R. Ertemur, personal interview, June 20, 2014).

At the same time, the diminishing roles of the military and the Constitutional Court made the secularist parties even more distrustful of AKP’s increasing religiosity and conservative policy moves. The CHP elite frequently drew attention to the AKP’s close ties to HAMAS parliamentarians, and official meetings with Sudanese leader al-Bashir (an accused war criminal and pariah in the international community) to evoke AKP’s affinity with radical Islamists and authoritarian leaders. At one point, their distrust escalated the tensions between pro- and anti-secularist elements in the country so much that CHP supporters started to dismiss the AKP voters as “rural peasants” whose votes should not be equal to theirs (O. Yurtseven, personal interview, July 8, 2014). A journalist with known secularist leanings described the same electorate consisting of “men scratching [their] bellies” (Coskun, 2007) as opposed to “modern, educated, progressive, enlightened, responsible” secularist elite, while another called them “jar-headed” (Ozdil, 2007), and others boasted about not having voted for AKP as they “had brains” not to do so (qtd. in Kılıçdaroğlu, 2011). By carrying over the years of distrust to contemporary political debates, and responding to the AKP’s strategic choice to employ a religious rhetoric with this kind of bitterness and resentment, the CHP could not help but to create a political scene where citizens found themselves polarized “not simply on ways of settling current problems, but rather by fundamental and opposed

Weltanschauungen. They come to see the political victory of their opponents as a major moral threat; and the total system, as a result, lacks effective value-integration” (Lipset, 1959, p. 409).

In all fairness, it was not the AKP or Erdoğan’s controversial statements that created this gap. As mentioned above, the strict implementation of *laïcité* excluded large segments of population from political participation, alienated them, and made them resentful towards the Republic. When a party that represented these groups came to power, the secularists felt threatened and expressed their disappointment with the conservative turn the country seemed to take. Even then, however, the majority of them came to acknowledge the necessity of adopting a less strict interpretation of secularism and accommodating the demands of religious groups within democratic norms and institutions. What was interesting during these discussions, however, was the fact that even after almost a decade, the AKP governments could not solve the problematic role of religion in public life. Controversies surrounding the secularist-Islamist divide, the ongoing headscarf debate, and the restrictions on religious schools (*imam-hatip liseleri*) continued to dominate the campaigns of the party, even as it was about to start its third term in the government. In reality, both the AKP’s increasingly religious and conservative rhetoric and the opponents’ suspicions also reflected the main issue in the Turkish democratization process regarding the participation of religious groups. No matter what their position on religion and/or politics may be, the majority ended up defending highly intolerant arguments, justifying them with the notion of safeguarding liberties and secularism, or protecting the rights and liberties of religious segments in the country. More worryingly, both sides presented these arguments as “objective”

arguments that aim to “restore normalcy” to the state of things that were disturbed either by AKP’s rise to power, or by its initial decision to downplay its religious identity. In that sense, these views reflected the fragility of the Turkish democracy. After all, the literature on democratic theory suggests that “democracy’s success lies not in avoidance of sharp disagreement but in its capacity to manage such divisions, or to turn antagonistic relations that do not recognize the claims of others to antagonistic ones that embrace value-pluralism” (Tepe, 2013, p. 852). In the beginning of the new decade, the Turkish democracy appeared to have succeeded in none of these.

Electoral Victories and Change of Direction

While the parties that appealed to a broader electorate do not always abandon their constituency when they come to power, the AKP’s four terms in the government shows that such inclusion does not always last forever, either. The parliamentary elections of 2011 brought the third consecutive victory to AKP, and started what Prime Minister Erdoğan’s dubbed as his “master period” (*ustalik donemi*) with the promise of continuing the democratizing reforms AKP had started. The main campaign slogan was “No stopping, push on!” but only a few thought “no stopping” also meant the continuation of the political divisions of the 1990s in contemporary Turkish politics. After the 2011 elections, though, the party appeared to have concluded that it was politically more beneficial to revive its religious roots and conservative religiosity of the 1990s. Far from realizing that an Islamist appearance by itself did not solve the existing problems of the country, the AKP elite saw that increasingly religious rhetoric and aggressive politics helped the party gain more popularity. Through this strategy, the party had not only avoided an expected drop in their vote percentages after their first two terms (as the voters tend to punish the incumbent parties all the time, no matter what their promises

and ideologies may be), but also managed to reach record high levels of party support in all elections it participated in this time frame.

But why did AKP abandon its inclusive stance after winning the elections for the third time in a row, even though this strategy worked really well for the first three elections? Actually, there are some compelling reasons for this shift in religiosity. First of all, the party elite preferred the consolidation of its voter base to an electoral strategy that would appeal to everyone, as they knew it was hard to gain the confidence of CHP voters, or the Kurds in the east, who mostly voted along ethnic lines.³⁴ With these political divides at work, there remained no big significant group from which the party win new support and increase its vote share. Moreover, it became harder and harder for the party to maintain the support of their non-religious voters, whose policy demands do not always overlap with the party ideology or what the religious voters envision for the future of the country. On the other hand, although the AKP's success in deemphasizing its religious platform ensured its political survival and popularity among voters, this appeal to a bigger constituency did not come without a price. The party always knew that this new strategy carried the risk of alienating some loyal members of the party, as it did not restrict their political bargains to the issues these members deemed important and the party did not give a priority to their demands once it came to power. As the third chapter pointed out, when parties dilute their political platforms, they usually run into problems with their core constituencies who want to protect ideological purity at the expense of obtaining political power. Broad appeals divide the party and its social bases, as the core members view the party's attempts to gain more support from people

³⁴ These ethnic Kurds continued to vote for the Kurdish party especially in local elections, even though some preferred to support AKP in national elections as the electoral threshold made it difficult for Kurdish candidates to get elected to the parliament.

outside of their voter base as the betrayal of the party identity and goals. AKP ran into this very problem, as the moderate stance taken by the party when it was in power did not please the staunch supporters of the party's original Islamic ideal, and led to the debates within the party ranks. Increasingly, then, the party found itself in a situation where it tried to balance its attempts to reconnect with its core constituency with its broader message that appealed to all groups in the society. The critical question at that point was how well the party would manage this process, without turning into one of the corrupt and ineffective parties of the past.

Under these conditions, AKP started to build what they termed the “new Turkey” by eradicating all hardline interpretations of secularism and diminishing the power and appeal of the pro-secularist parties in the system. Still supported widely by the conservative (religious conservatives, Turkish and Kurdish nationalists) and “globalist” (the rising Anatolian bourgeoisie as well as the liberals in the system) forces, the party underwent a paradigm shift and became less interested in “pushing the frontiers of liberal democracy beyond a certain threshold” (Onis, 2013, p. 114). Losing interest in further democratization, the party did not make any attempts to change the country's most detestable anti-democratic practices' and as such, the restrictions on political criticism and freedom of associations, as well as the high electoral threshold, remained intact during AKP's third term. Gradually increasing its emphasis on the party's Sunni Islamist ideas and ideals about society, the party moved from democratic reformism towards a more conservative religiosity. It became more assertive and more outspoken about transforming the country along religious lines. In this process, as a part of the party's self-proclaimed goal of raising a “pious youth”, it introduced a new education bill

that completely changed the primary and secondary school curricula and required students to complete at least one mandatory course on the Quranic principles or the life of the Prophet Muhammad before they graduated. Simultaneously, the party increased the budget allocated to the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) so much that it received approximately 2.2 billion dollars in the 2016 budget, on top of the controversial luxury car given to the directorate's president by the party elite. The irony was not lost on the hardline secularists (B. A. Guler, personal interview, July 9, 2014) as the same religious party that had criticized the state involvement in religion through *Diyanet* when it came to power³⁵ now gave massive financial and institutional support to its activities. In addition to this support, AKP helped *Diyanet* expand its already large network of mosques at home and abroad, as a part of the party's policy of invoking moral order in the country (Ustek & Alyanak, 2013). Even though the party justified this goal by arguing that "the religion is the cement of [Turkish] society" (Kuru & Stepan, 2012, p. 26), such a strict and narrow definition (i.e. Sunni Islam) of religious identity ignored the diversity of Turkish society. Moreover, it failed to see even "while all citizens may share a common religious identity, not all profess that faith and any accompanying obedience to religious authorities in the same way" (Driessen, 2014, p. 73).

More alarmingly at this point, AKP's "electoral hegemony" (Keyman, 2010) and the weakness of the opposition, combined with the chronic and widespread distrust of secularists, undermined the secularist parties' ability to criticize this new form of

³⁵ AKP, and its parent parties in the MG tradition, frequently criticized the "Kemalists' attempt to regulate religion" (Keyman, 2010) through state institutions and questioned the *Diyanet*'s funding sources –as the institution is financed by taxpayers' money, which is a privilege given to no other religious community (including Alevis or Christian and Jewish minorities in the country).

religiosity and effectively check AKP in this process. The “creeping Islamization” arguments advanced by the secularists became such a cliché over the last two decades. Election results clearly showed that fear mongering did not appeal to the electorate and that the voters did not trust the parties that cried wolf. As the tide turned, even the most hostile secularist parties grew reluctant to put the *laïcité* at the center of policy agendas, or saw the futility of resisting the participation of religious groups in the political process, recognizing such a stance would actually hurt their chances of getting elected in the next round. Oddly enough, a moderate religious party’s participation in politics made the secularist parties more democratic in the end, normalizing the presence of religious actors in the party system and thereby making the secularist accept the legitimacy of religious demands. However, suffering from factional splits and internal feuds, they failed to produce effective and well thought-out policy alternatives to the larger electorate and communicate with both religious and nonreligious voters. To illustrate, even when the CHP elite understood the importance of offering democratic solutions to the issue of religiosity in the public sphere³⁶ and developed policies to address the concerns and demands of pious voters (which surprisingly led the party to include visibly religious members in its ranks, such as a lady who wore chador), its attempts were seen as too little, too late.³⁷ At the same time, the secularists who really

³⁶ Claiming that an insistence on hostile secularist principles would empower radical segments and strengthen AKP’s hand in elections, CHP embarked on a new strategy to present itself as “the unifying force of Turkey” and appeal to a broader electorate on socioeconomic issues, rather than representing only the secular elite of the country.

³⁷ In the most recent elections of 2015, CHP tried hard to show that the party has moved from its elitist image and hostile-secular party category. The party list included many candidates from different backgrounds; and the electoral campaign stressed the party’s respect for different lifestyles, and called people to cast their votes not along the religious lines, but for “a livable Turkey.” Central to the party programme was an economic prosperity project, called “*Merkez Turkiye*”—something the critics saw as an opportunist change of attitude with no solid basis.

felt threatened by the “pious generation” campaign got frustrated time after time with their inability to have any say over the politics of the country, gradually losing faith in the whole electoral process (K. Anadol, personal interview, June 20, 2014).³⁸ Unrivalled in this respect within the party system, AKP eventually became “unable to resist promoting a deeper and faster Islamisation, not necessarily of government but of society in education and social regulation” (Somer, 2007, p. 1273).

In the end, as the parties on both sides showed no interest (or ability, for that matter) in making long-term compromises or committed to work towards closing the secularist-Islamist gap in politics, Turkey missed a historical opportunity to find democratic solutions to the existing problems of the country and consolidate its democracy thereby. This missed chance, in turn, created a crisis-prone country and generated strong political polarization within the party system.

The Erosion of Intraparty Democracy and AKP’s Shift to Conservative Religiosity

In the same way as the exclusion of religious parties from the political scene (such as the political bans on Welfare and Virtue Parties) did not necessarily radicalize the party elite or the electorate, but on the contrary, led the moderates to split from the MG and embrace a more inclusive party identity, the AKP’s rise to power did not make the party automatically more moderate in the long run. As the party grew more assured of its power and strong voter bases, it adopted a majoritarian (rather than pluralist) approach to democracy and moved towards a more conservative form of religiosity. As a result, religious issues and the government’s stance on Islamic morality mirrored the MG stance on the secularism and criticism of the Turkish secular elite. This time,

³⁸ Accordingly, some party members expressed their concerns about how much longer this hope and disillusionment cycle could do on before exploding into a violent conflict.

however, tensions surrounding these issues extended beyond the usual complaints of the secularists in the system and led to the democratic backsliding under consecutive AKP governments.

There is no denying that AKP's first two terms brought high levels of economic growth and unprecedented levels of stability to the country,³⁹ yet the political debates in AKP's third term mostly revolved around Prime Minister Erdoğan's transformation into a "a divisive love-me-or-hate-me figure" (Haughton, Novotná, & Deegan-Krause, 2011, p. 396). As the party abandoned its inclusive stance in favor of a more narrowly defined group identity, it started to rely on the charismatic authority of Erdoğan as its greatest asset. Unfortunately for the democratic prospects of the country, Erdoğan's ruling style resembled the illiberal leaders of the populist regimes and his overall reluctance to "engage in the give-and-take of democratic process" (Haughton & Rybář, 2008, p. 233) marked this period. This attitude went hand-in-hand with the gradual decline in the intraparty democracy,⁴⁰ which allowed Erdoğan's personal traits and statements to get ahead of the party dynamics, and made the party elite unable to constrain Erdoğan's behavior.⁴¹ Time after time, the party elite ended up expelling the potential dissenters

³⁹ Even though the arguments that link religious party support to poor economic conditions (Tessler, 1997; Masoud, 2014) would predict that the popularity of a religious party would decrease with an upturn in economy; AKP's trajectory proved otherwise. As the economic conditions improved in the country, so did the popularity of the party.

⁴⁰ As almost all interviewees pointed out, the main problem of the Turkish party system is the lack of intraparty democracy. The closed list system in elections gives the party leader the authority to determine the candidates, as well as their district and ranks on the list, according to their performance largely measured by their willingness to follow the party lines. Recently CHP introduced the system of primaries to give the delegates more power, but in all parties, including CHP, important decisions are taken by the high-level party officials and imposed on lower-ranking members, leaving little (if any) room for dissent in the party.

⁴¹ In one incident, after Erdoğan blatantly disregarded a decision on co-ed housing taken by the party's main decision-making organ, AKP's founding member Arinc cried during a live interview and said he had "specific weight ... [he was] someone who represents the party's thoughts, opinions of the past, today and

from the party⁴² or made sure that they would not be challenging Erdoğan's leadership, further strengthening the leader's position. This leader-oriented approach to party politics helped Erdoğan surround himself with yes-men, turned AKP into what Panebianco called a "charismatic party", and rendered "the party little more than a band of [Erdoğan]-loving devotees and the leader as omnipotent" (Haughton, 2001, p. 754).⁴³ Even if the party elite did not necessarily approve of the one-man rule that the party seemed to be sliding into, the strong party discipline and the leader's ability to determine the party lists before the elections rendered them helpless against the rise of a leader-driven AKP.⁴⁴ Party institutions designed to enhance intraparty democracy (such as the Central Decision Making and Executive Committee and Central Executive Committee, which once set AKP apart from the "authoritarian" parties of the country) slowly lost their power and *raison d'être*. In the end, party discipline became so strict and the party system polarization became so intense that on one occasion, AKP members of parliament rejected a bill that they had proposed earlier, simply because

the future. [he] shouldn't be neglected" like that ("Deputy PM admits rift with PM over co-ed housing statements", *Hurriyet Daily News*). Even though Arinc's outcry drew the most attention, this was not an isolated episode by any means.

⁴² At the peak of its political power, eleven members of the party resigned due to "their inability to influence the party's policy stances" (Tepe, 2005, p. 73).

⁴³ While it is important not to classify all AKP electorate as "obedient sheep" in this process (as the hardline secularists of early 2000s used to do), many accounts, including the former supporters of the party, now agree that Erdoğan closed the party ranks to anyone but his devout supporters. Even when Ahmet Davutoglu became the leader of the party, he did not get even half the coverage Erdoğan gets in the media or party publications. Erdoğan kept dominating the political agenda, either through his lavish spending or much publicized controversial statements.

⁴⁴ During the interviews, many MPs admitted that they go to the sessions and vote on individual bills, but they do not know the content of the legislation they are supposed to be discussing. Instead, they simply read the title of the bill and follow the instructions from party elites regarding whether they should vote for or against the bill (personal interviews, June-July 2014). Party organizations outside the parliament sadly mirror this structure, as rank-and-file members do not have much influence over how the party politics is conducted. Party membership is not high in Turkey, and membership fees do not constitute a big portion of party revenues, decreasing the possible impact of members on decision-making mechanisms.

CHP members of the parliament cast their votes with the AKP. This confused many AKP members of parliament and led them to vote against the proposal (“Muhalefet Evet Deyince AKP'liler Kendi Onergelerini Reddeti”, *Radikal*).

“AKP’s increasing tendency to rule through domination” did not manifest itself only in the monopolization of political power at the hands of the party leader, but was also visible in the party’s search for domination in the social realm (Gumuscu & Keyman, 2014, p. 2). More and more, the elites of the party brought issues concerning morality or religiosity to public debate, even when the party had no intentions to follow them up with concrete policy proposals or legislative acts. Understandably, those public debates raised fears once again, especially among the non-practicing Muslims, about the party’s alleged Islamist agenda. A series of unfortunate statements, marked by the party elites’ poor choice of words at best, or reflection of their self-righteous piety and desire to impose their moral standards on everyone⁴⁵ at worst, signaled the party’s deviation from the pluralistic and tolerant forms of religiosity. The party passed a law in 2013 that restricted the sale and consumption of alcoholic drinks and gave government-appointed governors (rather than elected mayors) the authority to issue liquor licenses, because such a regulation was “something that faith orders” (Erdoğan, May 30, 2013). Both the party and the opposition interpreted this ban as a show of force by Erdoğan to prove to the secularists that he had the capacity to regulate their

⁴⁵ The imposition of Muslim morality standards became all too visible when the party elite made statements against co-ed housing in universities, which was presented with a bogus link to terrorism (in former minister of interior Muammer Guler’s words, “terrorist organizations have started to significantly abuse the relationships between the boys and girls, those among the university youth. They use it as a recruitment base”), citizens drinking alcohol (as the deputy prime minister Bülent Arinc warned those “who drink until they wheeze and sneeze”, “life is not just about sex and booze”), and women who dressed too “provocatively” (as party spokesman Huseyin Celik got a TV show hostess fired from her job “for revealing too much cleavage on national TV”).

secularist lifestyles. This could be seen in Erdoğan's statement that "given that a law made by two drunken [people] is respected"(supposedly referring to the founders of the Republic), "why should a law that is commanded by religion be rejected by your side?" (Not Everyone Cheers Turkey's Move To Tighten Alcohol Rules, *NPR*).

Another realm in which the party wanted to establish its authority and dictate its understanding of morality was women's rights. While taking the necessary measures to allow the women to wear their headscarves in school and thereby express their commitment to Islam, the party elite constantly tried to restrict women's role and place in society, in the name of protecting "morality." In addition to Erdoğan's famous having "at least three children" instruction, the party elite echoed the MG parties' criticism of the "moral corruption" of the Turkish youth, and started to tell women to "know [their] place" (Zaman, 2014) and not to "laugh in public" (Dearden, 2014), also "not to be picky, and marry when offered." The party elites' determination to tell the people how to live their lives down to the last detail (ranging from how much salt they should add to their food to under which circumstances a women should get an abortion) has become so prevalent in recent years that it surprised no one when Prime Minister Davutoglu recently declared that the government would assume the responsibility to find suitable partners for young singles "if their parents fail to marry them" ("If your parents fail to marry you, come to us, PM tells Turkish youth", *Hurriyet Daily News*). The irony of the party's constant interference in peoples' lives was especially striking considering the February 28 process, whose legacy brought the party to power, and the party members' unpleasant memories about this type of intervention in their lives under secularist state institutions.

It was within this emotionally charged context the famous Gezi Protests of 2013 started. Already enraged by the party's constant interferences in their life choices, large numbers of people turned a peaceful protest against Erdoğan's insistence on demolishing a public park and building Ottoman-style barracks into an anti-government mass rally. Claiming that the party's policies became so illiberal that they "violated the basic norms that underlie democratic representation, participation and citizenship" (Pepinsky, Liddle, & Mujani, 2010), protesters came together at Gezi Park to defend the trees and targeted Erdoğan in their criticisms. The heavy-handed response of the police force (which included a predawn raid on the peaceful sit-in in the park, use of water cannons, tear gas and plastic bullets to disperse the crowds, clashes with the protesters and arrests of hundreds), as well as Erdoğan's inflammatory statements against the protesters ("looters", "terrorists", "provokers from the marginal groups", "pawns of international actors" and so on) increased the participation in the protests and showed a new (and admittedly ugly) face of the new political reality in the country. As an act of solidarity with the protesters at the Gezi Park, thousands of people gathered all over the country and showed their dissent in spite of the risk of being branded as "looters" by the prime minister and getting injured (or even killed) in their clashes with the police. Coming from different backgrounds and perhaps only united in their opposition to Erdoğan's oppressive policies, these protesters criticized AKP's perceived reluctance to "compromise on the conditions that will enable everyone to live here together" (Ozzano & Cavatorta, 2014, p. 44).⁴⁶ Even though these demonstrations did not spell the end of

⁴⁶ Erdoğan's decision to violently suppress the protests brought a lot of unwanted attention to the government policies and increasingly authoritarian stance the government seemed to be taking, and led to harsh criticisms in the international community. It promoted a very intense anti-Erdoğan campaign, in

AKP rule, it showed both domestic and international community that AKP's public embrace of plurality, tolerance and democratic process were nothing but a façade. After all, the moment the party encountered a challenge, it adopted an authoritarian outlook, complete with the use of police force, and demonstrated its coercive side with its use of heavy-handed tactics to confront the situation. A more significant outcome of these confrontations was, however, the realization that the Turkish democratic process had changed with the changes in the religiosity in the party system, essentially left to the moods and whims of a single person who sit at the top of political hierarchy.

Divisive Politics, Rising Polarization and Declining Democratic Quality

Although one may object to this focus on the AKP, its shift in party religiosity, or its role in the party system polarization, it must be remembered that throughout its entire existence, AKP has played the key role in the Turkish political stage; and as such, Haughton's description for the HDZ applies in the Turkish case: "much of the credit and/or blame for what took place" in Turkey during this period "deserves to laid at [the party's door]" (Haughton, 2001, p. 764). The abovementioned uncompromising attitude, combined with the party's commitment to bring up "pious youth" and impose Islamic moral standards on the country, caused the divisions and led to a backlash and violent protests against the government, culminated famously in the Gezi Protests of Summer 2013.

All these developments also demonstrated the potential of religious parties to provoke anti-democratic sentiments in their countries, especially if they were either unwilling or unable to deepen democratic reforms –as the case of Egypt illustrated in

which a very detailed plan in social media to "hide the country somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean before Erdoğan came back from his trip to North Africa" gained a lot of support from especially young voters.

2013. While the situation in Turkey never reached that level of intensity, it was still hard to deny, even for the supporters of the party, that AKP started to play an increasingly authoritarian role in politics. In Somer's words, "instead of working to construct a state apparatus more respectful of popular dissent and human life, the AKP began to reinforce the 'normal' Turkish state orientation focused on controlling society and suppressing difference" (2014, p. 54) Even though the opacity of high-level party decision-making processes made it harder to say anything on this issue with certainty, it was still evident that such measures would degrade Turkey's less-than-perfect democracy even further.

By increasing the size of its police force by at least seventy percent, giving the law enforcement arbitrary powers to detain and arrest those who engage in any kind of opposition and monitoring citizens' (but especially the suspected opponents') private lives, the government showed that it did not refrain from using any institutions under its authority to suppress criticism, frustrate or intimidate its opponents and reinforce its power and status within the system thereby.⁴⁷ Within this time period, Turkey's score of press freedom also declined dramatically (currently it ranks 149th among 179 countries listed in the World Press Freedom Index), thanks to the government's attempts at censorship and to control of the media. In addition to jailing many journalists under bogus charges, the government explicitly gave orders to media patrons on what to

⁴⁷ Accordingly, the government used the police force and the legal system to effectively criminalize any critical statement by a politician or a citizen as an insult to the regime (or to the president of the republic) under the article 299/1 of the Turkish Penal Code, allowing them to arrest and sue all the critics of the regime as a result. These provisions have been used so excessively that in several occasions the police arrested citizens who shouted "there is a thief" in AKP rallies, or made similar references in their tweets, linking these statements to the corruption allegations against the government. Amidst the challenges of the opposition parties, the parliament also passed an Internal Security Act, which gives the police force powers to arrest all suspects without probable cause, to deal with these types of protests more efficiently in the future.

broadcast on their TV stations or which headline to use in their newspaper articles and had their offices raided when they did not comply with these orders (The Guardian, November 2, 2015). Recently, an angry mob led by the head of the AKP's youth wing attacked a veteran journalist (Ahmet Hakan) in front of his house; just weeks after Erdoğan accused the TV channel he works in of making “terrorist propaganda” (*Hurriyet Daily News*, October 1, 2015).

The government party did not always use “sticks” to ensure its survival and dominance in party politics, though. In some cases, this new strategy came with “carrots”, or subtle ways of steering the electoral outcomes in AKP's favor, such as in the form of loyalty-based (rather than merit-based) appointments to public offices, and the distribution of cash or public relief to the party supporters. Privatization schemes, which gained momentum with AKP's economic liberal reforms, made it easy for the party to access the money required for such patronage, attract the wealthy businessmen to the party, and even take the control of the media, as described above. In addition to exacerbating the already-existing inequality of opportunities and widening the income gap, these policies, by favoring religious groups over others, created resentments among the rest of the population. Under these conditions, any argument that suggested that religious segments should be represented more in the public sphere received negative reactions, since, as one member of the parliament put it, “people think that [the religious] already take far too much” (O. Oyan; K. Anadol; personal interview, June-July 2014). Interestingly enough, then, even when the political debates were not strictly about religion but about inequality, access to power and re-distribution of wealth, the party's favoritism of religious groups continued to divide the Turkish

citizens into two camps, perpetuating the secularist-religious rifts of 1990s despite the fact that the issue frames and policies on which parties differ have changed to some extent.

The height of these debates in AKP's fourth term in government was also the first time when the term "competitive authoritarianism" (Levitsky & Way, 2010) was used to describe the political regime in the country. Due to the nature of the political system, the main opposition party CHP fought an uphill battle. Almost none of its legislative proposals were taken into the parliamentary agenda, its efforts to redefine the party identity as "Turkey's unifying power" was not found sincere by the groups that were marginalized under the CHP rule in the past, and its promises and reform projects were considered unrealistic at best, contradictory at worst. The issues they tried to open to public debate included various aspects of the long-lasting AKP rule: the construction of the notorious 1100-room presidential palace,⁴⁸ a suspicious rise in Erdoğan family's wealth, the president's continued influence on the party which clearly went beyond his constitutional mandate, alleged ties between the government and the "Islamic State", deadly explosions in public meetings that killed hundreds of people, a renewed armed struggle between the state and the Kurdish separatist group PKK, and a notorious corruption scandal⁴⁹ involving four members of the cabinet who accepted bribes in

⁴⁸ Erdoğan himself initiated the project for the construction of his Aksaray (meaning "White Palace") without disclosing the cost of this project to the state authorities or getting an approval from the city planners –hence the name "Kacak Saray" (or, "illegal palace") that is frequently used by the opposition since the Constitutional Court revoked its building permit. The estimates suggest that it cost approximately 615 million dollars.

⁴⁹ Despite their anti-corruption rhetoric and pious lifestyles, which creates the illusion of incorruptible politicians, the AKP elites could not stay too long in power without involving in scandals, proving Lord Acton's dictum right. After all, having completed two successful terms in the government, the party officials could no longer depict themselves as "black Turks" who had been excluded from political sphere by secular elites.

exchange of helping Iranian businessmen smuggle gold to violate the economic sanctions imposed on Iran. Surprisingly, though, neither the municipality elections of 2014, nor the parliamentary elections of November 2015 delivered any kind of serious blow to the party, as though Turkish voters, who had been used to corrupt governments and armed struggle, wanted politics “to operate as usual” (Pepinsky, 2009, p. 90). While the results of June 2015 elections, in which AKP gained only 41% percent of the votes and lost the parliamentary majority, made it look like AKP fell victim to its own strategy of narrowing down its appeals and favoring only its supporters at the expense of larger number of voters; the results of the last election indicated that the polarization in the country effectively put an end to the tradition of issue-based voting, as the party –to even their surprise (O.A. Basayar, personal interview, November 1, 2015) comfortably gained 49 percent of the votes and the majority of seats in the parliament.

Over the years, Erdoğan's leadership style has come to be seen as increasingly aggressive, divisive, conceited and disdainful. Yet, this strategy of aggressive leadership was complemented by campaign speeches that aim to consolidate the party's voter base by polarizing the society and turning people against each other, which had been very effective in the party's electoral campaigns.⁵⁰ Talking excessively about every fault line that divides the society (Alavi vs. Sunni, Kurdish vs. Turkish, religious vs. secularist, pro-government vs. opposition etc.), the party managed to turn the majority of its supporters into enemies, alienating not only former allies in the Islamic community (such as the Gulen movement), but also the liberals, ultra-nationalists and

⁵⁰ Unfortunately, dislike of Alevi population has been widespread among Turks, and Erdoğan never refrained from emphasizing Kılıçdaroğlu's Alevi affiliation in every campaign speech. Talking right before the presidential elections of 2014 in Izmir, a secular stronghold of CHP, he referred to Kılıçdaroğlu by saying that “we know you are an Alevi. Don't be afraid of it. Say it openly, I am Sunni and I say it comfortably. No need to try to mislead people” (Hurriyet Daily News, August 2, 2014).

leftists who carried the party to the government since its inception. “Those who are neutral [in this debate] will be disposed of,” told Erdoğan nonchalantly to the AKP electorate.

While the party elite’s polarizing remarks were already dangerous and concerning on their own (after all, in Fernandes’s words, “good democratic leaders understand the virtue of pragmatism and try to nurture the complementarity of their citizens’ multiple identities, instead of exploiting and polarizing them in the competitive electoral process” [2011, p. 20]), there existed other reasons why this form of divisive politics would harm the democratic prospects of any country. From a political-culture perspective, for instance, declining social trust was one of the consequences of these policies, which might take the form of not trusting fellow citizens, not trusting political institutions or simply, both. This meant that as these divisions deepened, so did the loyalties to parties -making the rival parties completely unacceptable alternatives in the eyes of most voters. In such polarized contexts, supporters of different parties would tend to cling to their party identity and refuse to acknowledge the validity and necessity of other political opinions and negotiations. Consequently, any contact with people outside of their political circles would lead to further convictions that they are corrupt, evil, and ignorant or simply the embodiment of any other negative characteristics (Haughton 2001; Gumuscu and Keyman 2014). By rejecting any view that contradicts their own, polarized voters would close the doors to any negotiation, any compromise, or any cooperation that may help to solve the problems of the country, even when they encountered new evidence that challenge the existing views. In the end, they would start to see all disagreements “as heresies” and as a result, “confrontation replaces

compromise” (Tepe, 2014, p. 835). One does not need to be an oracle to be able to tell how these tendencies pose a great threat to the democratic prospects of a country, by eliminating the citizens’ ability and desire to engage in political debates, work in harmony to reach a common goal and make compromises in order to live together peacefully.

The other unfortunate consequence of these divisions in Turkish political life could be related to political information gathering and processing. Despite all the vibrant political debates that take place in all social gatherings and even in social media platforms, recent studies (Tepe, 2014; Gidengil & Karakoc 2014; Yildirim & Lancaster 2015) found that most individuals in Turkey were unable to identify policies on salient issues, and that their assessments of any policy were largely determined by their party identity and what the key figures of these parties said about the issue. This finding is consistent with Gidengil and Karakoc’s observation that “religiosity has a powerful independent impact on the probability of choosing the party that persists regardless of voters’ evaluations of the party’s leader and its performance in office”, which also shows why it is especially important for religiously oriented political parties to follow inclusive politics as opposed to conflict-ridden ones. Thus, while it is true that any party which adopts a polarizing approach or incites distrust and hatred through its policies would harm the democratic prospects of its country, these risks become greater when it comes to the religiously oriented parties simply because these parties have an “inherent advantage over other parties in attracting voters” (Pepinsky, Liddle, & Mujani 2012, p. 584). First of all, by claiming to represent the correct interpretation of a religion, which is different from the “folk religion” of the grassroots supporters, these parties gain a

chance to play the role of a moral/religious authority in the country, telling people what to do and what not to do. Secondly, either because of their skillful use of people's religious sentiments to mobilize them or make them more docile, or because of the voters' tendency to equate religion with other normatively good outcomes (Pepinsky et al., 2012), religious parties manage to capture votes even when the voters have no clues about their political programmes. While there may be some contexts where voters do not agree with their political program, moreover, they still have an inclination to vote for religious parties simply because these parties share their religious sensitivities: female elites of the party wear the headscarf, male elites go to Friday prayers, they both start their sentences with the phrase "God willing" and so on. These shared sensitivities give informational shortcuts to the voters, and convince them even when they "might be corrupt, at least they're pious" (Gidengil & Karakoc, 2014). Whereas non-religious parties need to prove their worth by delivering their political promises and solving the existing problems of their societies. In other words, the only thing religiously oriented parties need to do to gain the support of devout voters is to show their respect to their religious sensitivities. With that much power and potential to influence voter preference and behavior, religious parties' commitment to democratic norms and institutions can lead to a longer-lasting acceptance of democratic rules of the game.

In this regard, both the AKP's rise to power, and its evolution over time should serve as a cautionary tale. Religious parties can be moderate if the skilled politicians manage to eliminate the radical views in the party and organize the new institution in such a way that it appeals not only to the narrowly-defined interests of a group, but to larger segments of the society. Either due to their pragmatism or real commitment to

democracy, the ascendancy of these political actors can set the stage for a successful democratic transition or consolidation, by involving previously marginalized groups in the democratic process, normalizing their presence in the political arena and assuaging the fears and concerns of hostile secularists. Yet, when they use this political power to intimidate or suppress their opponents, or impose their religious convictions on everyone in their society, their presence in the political system can do more harm than good to the democratic quality of any country. Under present circumstances, it remains to be seen whether Turkey's main religious party will be able (or willing) to return to its former civil-confessional religiosity, and restore its image as an inclusive and tolerant political party. Erdoğan has been unexpectedly assertive since the electoral victory of 2011, especially in advocating the imposition of certain Islamic moral codes on the whole society and claiming that they were the backbone of Turkish culture and, ironically, necessary elements to respect others' lifestyles. While these ideas have always been a part of AKP's appeal to its core constituency, it is less certain whether this message can draw voters from other parties or push them away. It is more likely that they will be perceived as an undesirable Islamist intervention on people's rights and liberties. So far, it looks like these polarizing policies only hinder the democratic development of the country; however, this does not mean that it is an irreversible situation. As Driessen aptly argues, "history is full of surprises and, what is more, theological hostility is not the only variable that might make a transition to democracy more or less likely in a predominantly Muslim country" (2014). Time will show if the religious parties of Turkey can live up to that challenge.

The Unintended Consequences

All the controversy over the accommodation of religious demands in Muslim majority countries led many scholars believe that Islamic parties' rise to power would result in the ultimate demise of democratic norms and institutions, illustrated by Djerejian's famous "one man, one vote, one time" example (Gause, 2005; Nasr, 2005). Yet, neither the Turkish case, nor the Tunisian one (which will be discussed in the next chapter) provides evidence for this statement: in both countries, religious parties' rise to power did not pose any immediate threat to the future of democracy – in fact, in most senses, it contributed to the transition and consolidation processes in a number of ways. As such, this research confronts the "one man, one vote, one time" argument, and contributes to the literature that draws a link between moderation and democratic quality from a different perspective. It highlights the political party strategies in responding to religious demands, making room for religiosity in politics and shaping the democratic institutions accordingly.

By presenting a selective reading of the Turkish democratic history during the "third wave" of democratization, this chapter has described the role of religious parties in the Turkish political scene for the last twenty five years, and demonstrated the varying effects of these parties' religiosities on the increases and decreases in the country's quality of democracy. As the political transformations of parties and the recent decline in Turkey's democratic quality indicated, shifts towards more extremist forms of religiosity carry a potential or real threat to democratic outcomes in a country, mostly because these changes divide people along religious lines and exacerbate the tensions among them.

All things considered, this chapter reaches two important conclusions. First of all, as previous chapters have already shown, neither the existence of religious parties in the system, nor the controversial issues they raise on religion and its role in politics, is inherently problematic for a country's democratic development. By investigating all the groups that participated in democratic process and evaluating their impact on democratic quality, this chapter demonstrates there is more to the relationship between Islam and democracy than the "Islamic democratic deficit" and "authoritarian resilience" of Muslim-majority countries. Rather, a nuanced assessment of different forms of religious parties and an understanding of inner workings of party systems are necessary to explain the relationship between religious participation and its effects on democratic quality. Depending on their emphasis, religious parties can act as agents that promote further democratization in the country, or actors that ultimately lead to the demise of democratic institutions. In this regard, the next chapter will illustrate this point by examining the Tunisian democratic experience and comparing it with the Turkish one, and explain the role of religious parties in democratic transition and consolidation processes from this perspective.

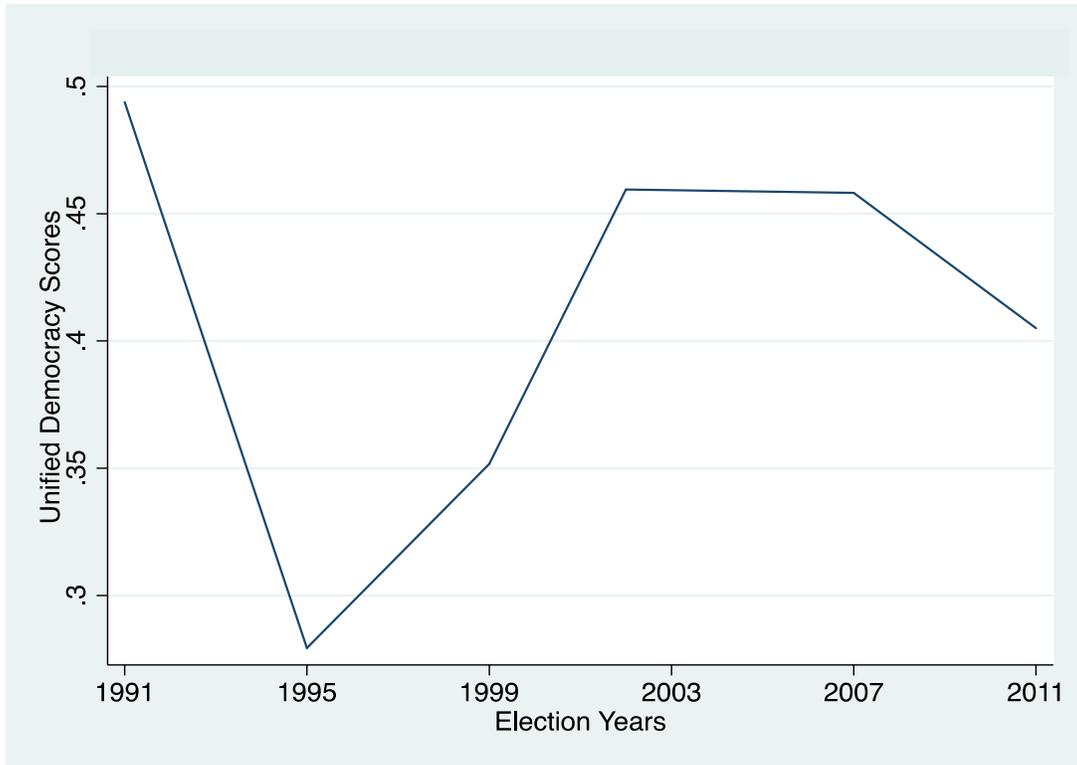


Figure 7-1. Changes in the Turkish Democratic Quality in the post-Cold War Period

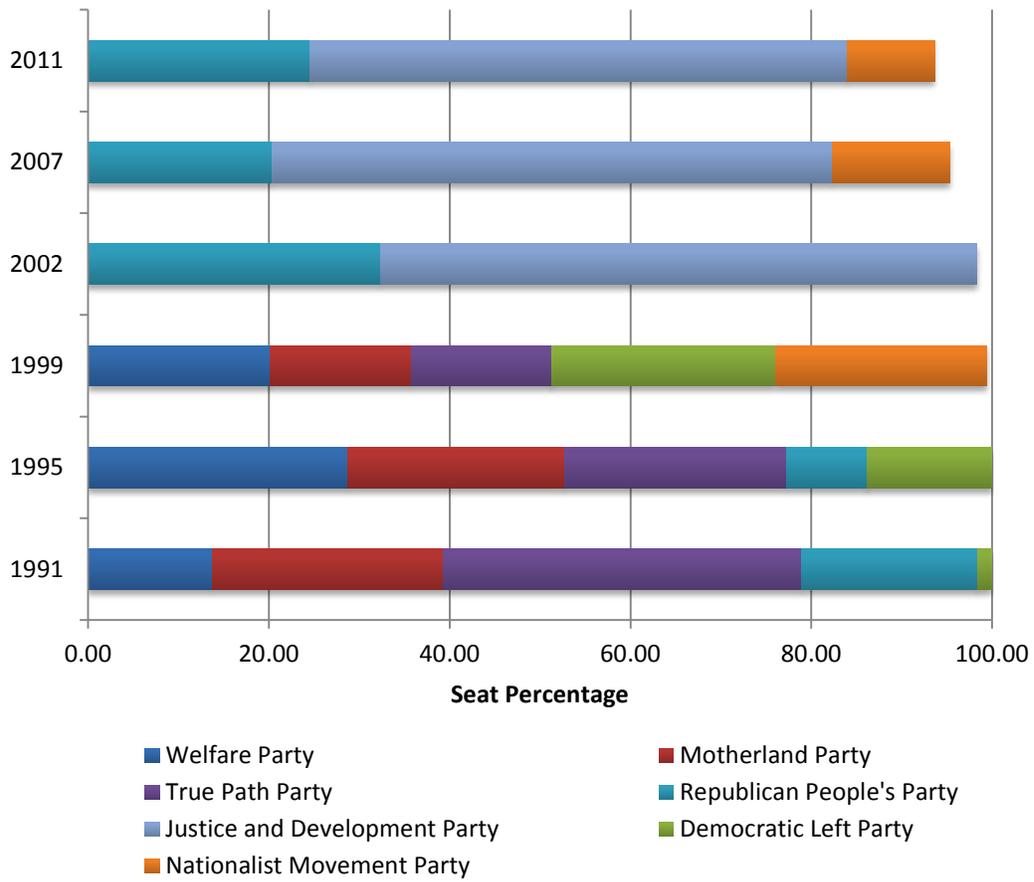


Figure 7-2. Seat Percentages per Country-Election Year

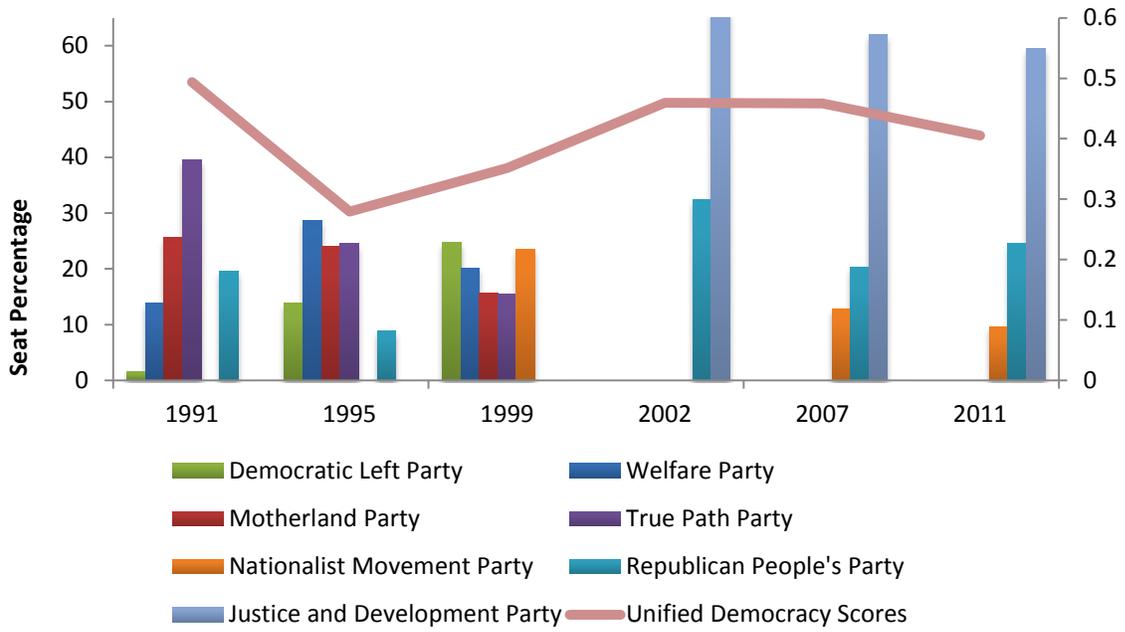


Figure 7-3. Seat Percentages and the Quality of Democracy per Country Election Year

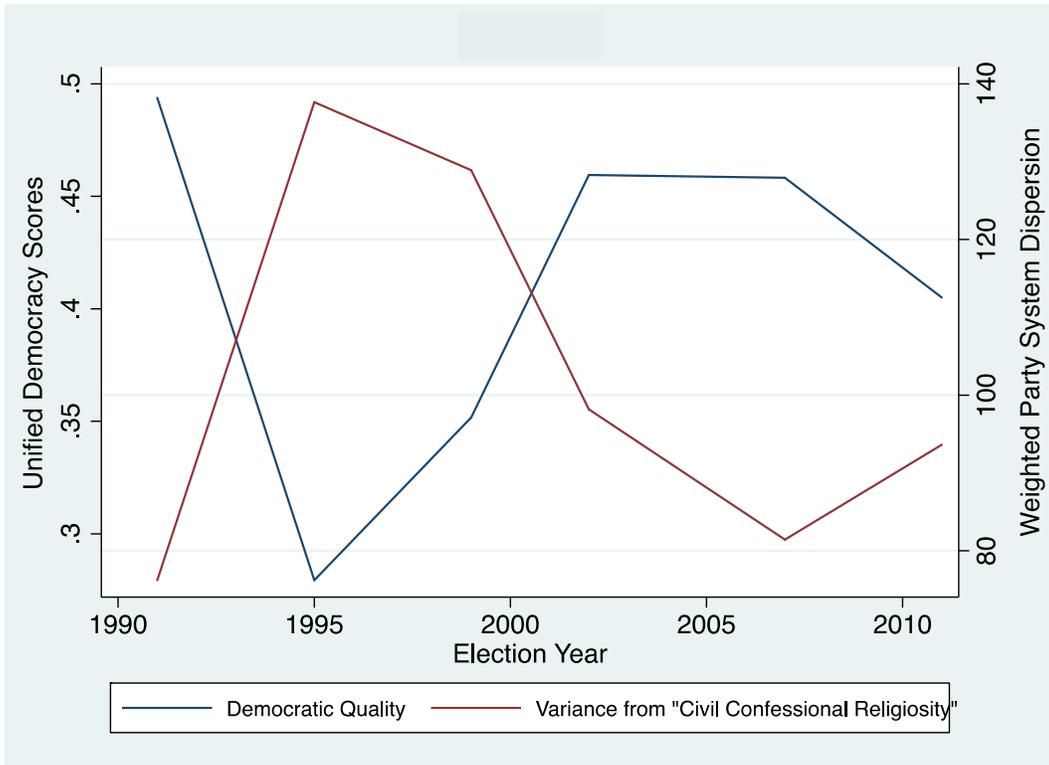


Figure 7-4 Relationship between Civil-Confessional Party Type and the Quality of Democracy in Turkey

CHAPTER 8 TUNISIAN DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE

Democratization and Religiosity: Growth, Change and Challenge

Following the “Arab Spring” revolts of 2011 that toppled the most notorious authoritarian leaders in the region, Tunisia became the Arab world’s best hope for democracy. Even today, it remains as such, despite endemic problems such as unemployment or spillover violence. Some religious scholars, regional experts and even the Tunisians themselves refer to the concept of *al-khulusiyah at-tunisiyah*, the “Tunisian exceptionalism”, to explain the success of the democratic experiment in Tunisia, but it is not the aim of this research project to show that the Tunisian Islam (or secularism, for that matter) is different, more open, more tolerant and more compatible with democracy. As explained in previous chapters, this dissertation adopts a more dynamic approach to religious identity and political culture and does not explain the success or failure of democratic regimes with the (in)compatibility of certain cultural norms with democratic ideals. It does not limit its scope to the social or economic prerequisites of democracy either. In as much as “the structural conditions that can favor democracy in Tunisia¹ are so familiar that enumerating them is practically a cliché” (Bellin, 2013, p. 1), the country did not go through a significant political opening until recently and actually did worse in terms of its democratic development than countries like Mongolia. For these reasons, the chapter does not derive evidence from Tunisian political thought, or the statements of Tunisian religious scholars to make its argument, but instead, follows a similar structure to that of the previous chapter on Turkey by

¹ It is a small country with strong links to many European states, which does not have any significant ethnic or religious divisions or resource wealth, but boasts a large middle class and a highly educated population instead.

looking at the choices and political decisions at the party level in shaping the democratic prospects of the country. After all, it was the political decisions of Habib Bourguiba and Zine el Abidine Ben Ali oriented the country towards authoritarianism, where all regime opponents (including a huge proportion of religious groups) were excluded from the political system. Likewise, it was with the help and commitment of the country's elites in the post-revolutionary process that Tunisia established democratic institutions, made relatively successful transfer of political power and wrote a new and inclusive constitution in the end. Furthermore, the inclusion of religious groups in the Tunisian political scene stands in a stark contrast to the restrictive policies of its Maghrebi neighbors, in which religious groups are mostly co-opted by the state and the selective inclusion of these Islamists provide no credibility or legitimacy for their parties. Belying the expectations of the "one man, one vote, one time" theory on the participation of religious groups in democratic elections, Tunisian Islamists became the biggest contributor to the institution building processes, regime transition and the normalization of political life in the country. In this regard, this chapter takes a closer look at the parties in the Tunisian political scene² to show how their actions shaped the country's democratic prospects.

However, as in the case of the Turkish experience with democratic norms and institutions, it is impossible to analyze the evolution of the political parties in Tunisia without knowing the institutional rules and historical background that came to shape the parties in the first place. At the structural level, the Tunisian political system resembles the Turkish one. Both countries went through a modernization process that brought

² "Political parties are valuable actors or units for examination because they effectively take the pulse of the political system", with well-functioning parties indicating democratic strength, or at least the prospect of it (Brody-Barre, 2013, p. 212).

about the secularization of the state and social institutions. Both countries have institutional rules that prevent the establishment of political parties on the basis of ethnic and religious identities. Despite those rules, however, both countries have moderate Islamic parties that participate in elections, won substantial numbers of seats, and have even come to power. While these moderate Islamic parties have good relations with each other and express solidarity in many occasions (to the point that Ghannouchi talked about how proud he was, as a Muslim, of the democratic developments in Turkey under the AKP rule), they also face strong opposition from secular opponents. When one looks at the roots (and ultimately, the consequences) of these modernization processes, on the other hand, the two cases diverge. While Turkish modernization process can be dated back to the nineteenth century reforms of the Ottoman Empire, the Tunisian experience with modernization started under the European colonial rule. As such, the latter created greater anti-Western sentiment among the Tunisian citizens, who considered the institutions established through the twin processes of modernization and Westernization as something alien to their culture, or something imposed on the country by the colonial powers. For this reason, secularism became a more divisive factor in Tunisian politics, and, to some extent, the source of the “authoritarian resilience” in the country for its first fifty years. On the other hand, the institutional reforms initiated by the Sultan during the Ottoman era, combined with having no colonial power or long-lasting foreign domination in the country, made the Turkish modernization process more organic and more acceptable to the Turkish citizens.

The Colonial Period and the Establishment of an Independent Tunisia

Since the beginning of French colonization in Tunisia (with the Treaty of Bardo in 1881, in which the French declared a protectorate over the *bey* of Tunis), a very strict

form of secularism –or *laïcité*– has been implemented at the state level so as to regulate the relations between political institutions and religious groups. Even the establishment of an independent Tunisia did not change that secular model in practice, though the Constitution of the independent Tunisia recognized the Islamic character of the state.³ In fact, the founder of modern Tunisia and its late president Habib Bourguiba did everything in his power to make Tunisia “a country at the forefront of modernizing and secular reforms within the Islamic world” (Charrad, 2008, p. 119). A French-trained lawyer and a loyal supporter of intellectual left, Habib Bourguiba established his New Constitution (Neo-Destour) Party of Tunisia in early 1930s and became one of the first Arab leaders to stand up to the French influence in the Maghreb. Eventually, the independence movement gave Bourguiba a lot of popularity, credibility and legitimacy, which contributed to his success in carrying out social reforms that were unprecedented in the Arab world. Under his rule, Tunisia rejected both political Islam and Pan-Arabism in favor of a Western-oriented outlook; implemented a social welfare system where the state provided free healthcare and French-style education for all its citizens, and passed the Code of Personal Status that aimed to regulate the family affairs in a more equitable manner, such as by outlawing polygamy and giving women the right to divorce. Seeing religion as the biggest obstacle in the way of these reforms, however, Bourguiba also wanted to restrict the role and practice of religion in the society to the point of eliminating it altogether. Thus, the regime embarked on a project in which it not only marginalized religion in social life, but also monopolized the whole discourse by advancing its own version of Islam for this interim period, offering interpretations and

³ Its first article stated, “Tunisia is a free, independent and sovereign state: its religion is Islam, its language Arabic and its regime a republic” (1959).

speaking on behalf of religious organizations. ⁴ While Bourguiba preferred to use persuasion to coercion in implementing these policies and reforms, his ultra-secularist stance⁵ alienated and antagonized large numbers of people, including the future spiritual leader of Ennahda, Rachid al-Ghannouchi.

Not surprisingly, Ghannouchi's political ideology at that point, inspired by Sayyid Qutb and a *tawhid*-based understanding of Islam, did not sit well with Bourguiba's secularist stance. Unlike Erbakan's National Vision parties that recognized the legitimacy of state institutions and aimed to work within them, Ghannouchi's version of political Islam consisted of more anti-systemic views, which openly criticized Tunisian political institutions and offered an Islamist alternative to this "Westernized" (which stands here as an insult, with all its negative connotations) regime. Precisely because Ghannouchi and his group of followers believed that all social, political and economic problems of the country arose from the "Western values" imposed on Tunisia by the colonial powers, its prominent figures worked hard to undermine the legitimacy of the powers-that-be and reverse the process of Westernization by highlighting the Islamic identity of the country. Their campaigns to discredit Bourguiba and his secularist policies coincided with the first signs of Bourguiba's tightening grip on the country's politics, brought a lot of supporters to the small community that shared Ghannouchi's

⁴ Seeing the Turkish *laïcité* in a more favorable light (as it at least left some room for Islamic institutions to develop independently from the state), MTI members lamented that the President acted like the pope in Tunisia, who had no problem with proclaiming "I am the representative of Islam and no one has the right to speak in the name of Islam but me" (Tamimi, 2001, p. 123).

⁵ He has been known to appear on the state television frequently during the month of Ramadan, eating and drinking in front of the cameras and encouraging the citizens to do the same. Many middle-aged Tunisians remember him clearly stating that hard-working Tunisians could not have the luxury of fasting from sunrise to sunset, when they were supposed to be working and producing for the future of country. While they also say people continued to abstain from food and drinks during Ramadan, Bourguiba's stance on the issue remains significant in a region where political leaders do not openly challenge the religious rules for the most part.

views on Islam and politics and made him popular among those Tunisians who benefitted from the Bourguibist reforms the least.

Ghannouchi's followers were not the only discontented political groups in 1970s' Tunisia, however. The rapid Westernization, as well as Bourguiba's modernization efforts that produced progressive social policies and a highly educated populace, made many believe in the abovementioned "Tunisian exceptionalism" (G. Gherairi, personal interview, May 25, 2015), which was thought to have provided a suitable ground for democratic norms to flourish. However, the political power granted to Bourguiba's corrupt inner circle rather than to Tunisian citizens, combined with the failure of state-controlled economic development strategies, disillusioned most people with the regime and Bourguiba's ability and will to fix the system. Unemployment among young and educated Tunisians was high, as the economic conditions of the country did not match the success of Bourguiba's reforms in educational realm. More importantly, the positive feelings toward him almost completely disappeared once he adopted the "*l'Etat, c'est moi*" mentality, announced the Tunisian people owed everything (including their freedom) to him⁶ and declared himself the president for life on these grounds in 1975. Under these conditions, even though they still revered Habib Bourguiba as the "great liberator" and the founder of the Republic, Tunisians ended up facing the negative qualities associated with Bourguiba regime, such as the repression of opposition movements and the country's slide into a dictatorial rule, and started to look for alternatives.

⁶ He was quoted as saying "Tunisians were nothing but a dust of individuals . . . out of which I created a nation" (Logan, 2012, p. 19).

As the state-guided socialism collapsed and the pressure from the international community increased, however, Bourguiba softened his grasp on the political life, and declared that he would allow new parties (i.e. parties other than his ruling Socialist Destour Party) to form and function in the country. Immediately after this announcement, the Tunisian Islamists, whose informal organizations had been clandestine up to that point, founded what was known as the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) in 1981.⁷ With that, the movement also publicized its plans to register as a political party and compete in the elections. Little did they know that the president's intention had been to incorporate only small, tame and "non-threatening" political parties in the system all along, and that MTI did not fit those criteria. As a result, the regime repeatedly denied MTI legal status under the Tunisian Law on Political Parties,⁸ claiming that the movement needed to remove the religious reference in its name in order to gain recognition and become a legal political party. After much deliberation, intraparty discussion and assessment of different strategies, MTI decided to comply with the legal rules and changed its name to Ennahda (Renaissance) Party in 1989. Instead of depriving the party from a valuable source of votes (in the form of "name recognition"), this move publicized the Islamists and MTI even more, both for their defiance and compliance with rules. Effectively putting them at the epicenter of the opposition politics, the name dispute garnered more interest in their political ideas. In return, the party effectively used its new name and this brand-new popularity to cultivate

⁷ The movement held a referendum with the participation of all members to decide whether to go public or keep the movement underground, and approximately seventy percent voted for going public. This was, to some party members, the first example of Ennahda's respect for intraparty democracy (personal interviews, May 2015).

⁸ The law states that "no party is entitled to make reference, either in its principles, its objectives, its action or its program to religion, to language, to race or to region" (Hermassi, 1991, p. 199).

the image of a new, but big influential, party for Tunisians who sought to reform the system and end the long reign of Habib Bourguiba. It became particularly appealing towards the middle of 1980s, since Bourguiba's rule became increasingly authoritarian and his behavior more erratic, eroding all the legitimacy he had established over the years. As the president aged and the question of succession entered into political discussions, political and economic instability marked the Tunisian politics. The privileged few around Bourguiba did what they could do best to respond the crisis and increased the state scrutiny over Islamists, blaming them for the social ills of the country and repressing them further to deflect people's attention from the president's deteriorating health and the country's deteriorating political mood. Although the majority of Tunisians believed in this propaganda, it turned out be ineffective and insufficient to save the president from what was about to happen.

Ben Ali's Rise to Power and Tunisia's New Authoritarian Regime

In 1987, citing Bourguiba's age, health and "incompetence to rule" the country, Minister of Interior Zine el Abidine Ben Ali organized a bloodless coup to oust Bourguiba from power. A committee of physicians supported Ben Ali's view that the president had become too old and too senile to make important decisions, and people who had lost their respect for Bourguiba in the past decade or suffered under his authoritarian rule did not object the change. Having faced no real opposition to his swift political takeover, Ben Ali ended the decades-long Bourguibism and became the second president of modern Tunisia.

Even though Ben Ali's personality and his background in security services⁹ did not inspire trust in everyone, most Tunisians welcomed this change in the state of affairs and decided to give him a chance. Due to people's concerns about his military-security background and the way he grasped political power, Ben Ali also felt the need to bolster his legitimacy and gave Tunisian people what they wanted. Accordingly, he engaged in democratization efforts and projected himself as an interim leader, who would set the stage for free and fair elections, put the country back on track and leave the political scene to different interest groups.¹⁰ To those who sought alternative voices in the system, Ben Ali sounded very appealing, as he promised a new era of pluralism, an open society and economic liberalization after years of political instability and economic hardships. Having suffered enormously under Bourguiba, Ennahda members and supporters rallied behind these promises as well, and hoped this new regime would bring a "genuine renewal, a comprehensive democratic agenda and a real chance for Tunisia to develop" (R. Ghannouchi, personal interview, May 27, 2015).

While Ben Ali did not immediately legalize Ennahda, his first speech to the nation included Quranic references, which was interpreted as a sign of his solidarity with religious groups. During this reconciliation period, Ben Ali assisted the re-opening of previously banned religious schools and re-legalized theology as a legitimate branch of study again. His amnesty of 1989 abolished the criminalization of political movements,

⁹ Because Ben Ali was a part of the military force which violently suppressed the general strike of January 1978 –known as "Black Thursday," one of the bloodiest events in Tunisia's modern history, sceptics had good reasons to believe that a former general like Ben Ali could not overturn the processes of polarization, de-institutionalization and illiberalization that took place in Bourguiba's last years in power (Sadiki, 2002).

¹⁰ "The times in which we live can no longer admit of life presidency or automatic succession, from which the people [are] excluded. Our people deserve . . . an advanced and institutionalized political life, truly based on the plurality of parties and mass organizations" (qtd. in Borowiec, 1998, p. 142).

freed almost all political prisoners and initiated a “national dialogue” with the Islamists of the country, as Ghannouchi being the primary interlocutor in the process. Writing about this process in 1988,¹¹ Lisa Anderson hailed Ben Ali’s decision to include Islamists in a pacted transition as “an important step on the road to democracy, comparable to the Pact of Moncloa in Spain” (1999, p. 4).¹² The country seemed to be on the verge of a democratic transition; and while not eradicating all the traces of Bourguibist authoritarianism yet, Ben Ali’s initiatives to liberalize the country looked a lot like a reflection of the Third Wave of democratization in the Arab Maghreb.

Accordingly, an interim government was established to rule the country during this transitional period, and the first competitive (but still, far from perfect) election of the country was held in April 1989. Still not officially recognized as a political party, Ennahda members ran as independent candidates and claimed victory in many Tunisian cities, “finishing second to the ruling party and outpolling all the other opposition parties” (Willis, 2014, p. 196). The “winner-take-all” nature of the elections awarded all the parliamentary seats to Ben Ali’s Democratic Constitutional Rally (henceforth, RCD), but Ennahda’s unexpected success, making the party the biggest contender for political power in the country, made Ben Ali understand Bourguiba’s fears about Islamists of the country. As the “best organized” and most influential group in Tunisia, they definitely posed a threat to Ben Ali’s rule and legitimacy in the long run.

¹¹ Signed by sixteen political parties and organizations, the National Pact included clauses on the president’s support for the Code of Personal Status, his respect for human rights and democratic norms, in addition to all parties’ dedication to democratic processes (Alexander, 2010, p. 53).

¹² Ironically, this National Pact formed the basis for the political exclusion of religious groups from the political system, as their signatures below the National Pact indicated their dissent and desire to reform the political system (Logan, 2012)

Paradoxically, this fear of an Islamist takeover created what Brumberg calls “autocracy with democrats,” in which even the most progressive and liberal groups in the society actively supported (or at the very least, tolerated) the authoritarian leaders against an Islamist threat (2002). For a brief period, Ben Ali tried to use this power of political Islam and promoted Islamic values in order to legitimize his rule, but eventually he felt overwhelmed and gave in to the pressures from the secularists who advised him to take an action on these Islamists before it became too late. From that point on, his regime had been as harsh on the religious groups as his predecessor’s. The pluralism he had defended and promised when he first came to power never materialized, since the president started to follow Bourguiba’s footsteps¹³ and monopolize the political power despite keeping up the guise of democratization.

As Ennahda members responded to his less-than-democratic practices with country-wide protests and strikes, Ben Ali relied heavily on the state’s coercive apparatus, which he knew well, to repress them and turned the country into a police state, justifying this securitization as a necessary measure against the Islamist threat. Due to the colonial legacy of *laïcité*, fears about an Islamist takeover and the Bourguibist notion that links modernity with the suppression of religion, Ben Ali had an easier time justifying the repression of Islamists in the domestic sphere and starting a witch-hunt aimed to eliminate all the Ennahda supporters from the political scene. In this

¹³ Both scholarly works on Ben Ali and the interviews conducted in Tunis indicate Ben Ali’s fear and discomfort from the comparisons between him and Habib Bourguiba. For Sadiki, it was because the comparison was a “contest he could never win: The blue-eyed, eloquent, charismatic and hugely popular Bourguiba was larger than life. This Ben Ali knew very well” (2002, p. 74). Ben Ali wanted to erase the traces of Bourguiba in the Tunisian social life so much so that none of the state sources used his name anywhere. The state-controlled media did not even broadcast his funeral when Bourguiba died in 2000, and this paranoia reached to such an extent that people felt the pressure not to say the official name of the main avenue in Downtown Tunis (Avenue Habib Bourguiba) but called it simply “La Rue Principalle” (I. Ghazouiani, personal interview, May 20, 2015).

sense, Ennahda-led protests gave Ben Ali the chance he was looking for in order to shift public attention from this growing authoritarianism to the threat of a “creeping Islamization.” Conveniently the victory of Islamic Salvation Front in neighboring Algeria and the civil war that broke in its aftermath provided him with another excuse to harrass and exclude Islamists. Without further delay, he grasped the opportunity to declare “greater democracy does not lead to greater liberalism, because it leaves the way open to the rule of Islamic fundamentalism” (Chaabane, 1997, p. 90). As a result of his political campaign that included confiscations of property and torture, a large number of Ennahda members ended up in jail for allegedly conspiring to overthrow the Ben Ali regime in order to replace it with an Islamic Republic. The remaining Ennahda supporters and sympathizers, including the prominent figure Rashid al-Ghannouchi, either left the country or excluded themselves from political life. Subsequently, the Ben Ali regime outlawed Ennahda in 1991, and the party lost its social and political presence in the country until the end of the Jasmine Revolution. In this regard, the tensions between the regime and Ennahda resulted in the severe repression of all kinds of religious groups, to the point of their disappearance from the Tunisian political scene altogether. ¹⁴

Even though Ben Ali’s main target had been the Islamists in this process, “the tyranny” eventually “affected everyone” (Logan, 2012, p. 64). By alienating the Islamists that might otherwise favor inclusion and accommodation, Ben Ali regime effectively

¹⁴ More importantly, this political exclusion differed greatly from the political repression Turkish religious parties underwent, mainly because Turkish parties had enough room to maneuver within the institutional framework but Ennahda was deprived of any kind of interaction with state institutions and other political groups. Even if anyone dared to form a “real” opposition party, the state would interfere, made sure that members’ activities were being monitored and de-legitimized, party meetings being disrupted and financial aid being discontinued.

restrained potentially democratic forces and ensured the longevity of the regime. Furthermore, the hegemonic political arena shut out the game to any alternatives and reinforced Ben Ali's personalistic rule. So as to keep the flow of economic and political benefits from the country's international benefactors, though, Ben Ali regime continued to hold regular elections, none of which brought any real change to the political scene. Ben Ali's victory, culminated in his full control of state institutions, brought him a party-state and a loyal opposition, whose candidates were handpicked by the regime itself¹⁵ to legitimize the incumbent party and its heavy-handed policies. Surely, these approved opposition parties or candidates had no real following or resonance across the Tunisian society, but they still helped Ben Ali to hold up the facade of democratic plurality in the eyes of his domestic and international critiques (Schwedler & Chomiak, 2006).¹⁶

By 2000, Ben Ali's RCD had turned itself into a hegemonic, state-party with well-established patronage networks and approximately a million members in a country that had less than ten million people.¹⁷ In practice, the RCD was not very different from Bourguiba's Destour Party, which combined the state and party under the same monolithic machinery. Nevertheless, because the balance of power was heavily tilted in

¹⁵ In 1999 elections, where Ben Ali competed against Muhammad Bilhaj Amor and Abd al-Rahman Talili, for instance, the two candidates did not even volunteer to run for presidency. The ones who did, on the other hand, were prevented from standing in the elections (Sadiki, 2002, p. 67). Interviewees also noted that in more than one occasion, the opposition candidates themselves admitted supporting Ben Ali.

¹⁶ For the post-revolutionary parties of Tunisia, the "puppet" opposition that existed during Ben Ali regime was even more dangerous than the RCD itself, because the latter was at least being honest in its activities and policies whereas the opposition just engaged in "doublespeak" (K. Zaouia, personal interview, June 1, 2015).

¹⁷ Even though the party membership was unusually high, informal interviews indicated that these rates had something to do with the party's clientelistic ties and structure more than anything else. In order to get a job in a government office, one of the interviewees said, he was "advised" to register with the RCD first. Another respondent said even though he liked Ben Ali for keeping the country safer than its neighbors, he never supported his policies, which did not seem to stop him from getting his RCD membership card "in case anyone asked" (personal interviews, May 2015).

favor of the RCD and system had no checks and balances to restrain the presidential power, people could not hold the politicians, most of whom were Ben Ali's "yes-men," accountable for any political decision they made. The majority of people could not even voice their opinions on the party's policies, as any criticism directed towards the government was criminalized with the Articles 73 and 75 of the Tunisian Press Code, which basically equated the critique of state policies with "defamation" or "disturbance of political order" (Garon, 2003).¹⁸

Inasmuch as the regime had some success in creating economic growth and keeping inflation under control, it used these success stories to bolster Ben Ali's popularity and create a small circle of elites, consisting mainly of Ben Ali's in-laws (or, as they were called in Tunis, "the families that pillage Tunisia"). While this elite slowly but surely amassed wealth and power, Ben Ali bought people's loyalty and deference with their help and perpetuated *khubzism* (a term derived from the Arabic word for bread, *khub*, to summarize a form of political quietism -to put it simply, "you eat and shut up") in this manner (Mansfield, 2013). Not surprisingly, there was no real opportunity for political reform or institution building in that political environment. Ben Ali's reforms represented nothing but "another phase in the reproduction of hegemonic political practice based on control" rather than democratic power sharing, as Sadiki points out (2002, p. 57). In this regard, the Tunisian transition has been one personalistic ruler to another, leading to no political opening or regime change that would include all segments of Tunisian political life.

¹⁸ Considering the deteriorating conditions in Turkey when it comes to the freedom of expression and the press, Ben Ali's efforts to place himself above and beyond any criticism was not very different from Erdoğan's use of courts to punish any journalist who dares to criticize him or his policies. Ben Ali turned all the sensitive subjects into taboos, just like Erdoğan makes it very hard for the media to report, let alone investigate, what is really going on in the country (Garon, 2003; Gumuscu & Keyman, 2014).

Islamists in Exile

Writing about the victory of Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria in 1990s, Waterbury concluded that Islamism “in no way resembles [Poland’s] Solidarity”, because the leaders of the Solidarity movement was able to strike deals with their once-enemies whereas Islamists, lacking a “sense of mission”, focused too much on religiosity to be able to act pragmatic in these issues (1994, p. 39). Ennahda’s experience in exile, on the other hand, contradicted Waterbury’s expectations about how an Islamic party would behave in times of crisis and demonstrated how circumstances might force Islamists to re-evaluate their political stances and decisions to hold onto the Islamic ideals, especially when ideological purity –vis-à-vis political pragmatism- could marginalize the group further. In fact, the differences between the MTI founding manifesto and more recent Ennahda documents attest to the profound shift party went through in these years in exile- from a mainstream anti-democratic/Islamist movement to a moderate and tolerant political party with religious roots. To illustrate, Ghannouchi’s earlier writings objected to the idea of secularism,¹⁹ and frequently referred to the inclusion of “Islamic way of life” in state laws and regulations.²⁰ In his more recent work, he proposed the idea of an Islamic democracy, which could be compatible with the Quranic principles of *shura* and *ijtihad*, and combined the Western norms of popular sovereignty and free and fair elections with the *Sharia* as the supreme authority in the land (Tamimi, 2001). Finally, in a recent interview

¹⁹ “We reject your conception that is to separate religion from social life” (Ghannouchi, 1993).

²⁰ Evaluating the Tunisian constitution of 1988, Ghannouchi quoted as saying the two amendments to the Constitution is necessary for Ennahda to recognize its legitimacy: one that requires all laws to adhere to the norms of Sharia, and the other establishes an Islamic council to oversee the laws and regulations passed by the Tunisian parliament (Tamimi, 2001).

Ghannouchi abandoned all his Islamist rhetoric in favor of a pluralist democratic perspective that respected all the diversity in the country and showed interest in working with all political rivals towards a “better Tunisia” (personal interview, May 27, 2015).²¹

Rejected by a significant proportion of the Tunisians, and repressed, harassed and tortured by the Ben Ali regime, the majority of Ennahda members spent 1990s and 2000s in exile, waiting patiently for the right moment to go back to Tunisia, re-enter the political scene and take the matters into their hands. In contrast to the expectations of “moderation-through-inclusion” thesis, the violent repression and exclusion of Ennahda from political process did not make the party more radical or anti-system. On the contrary, going through a political evolution that was dubbed “moderation-through-exclusion” (Cavatorta & Merone, 2013), Ennahda weighed its political options and rejected the ones that would be unfavorable or unacceptable for the party, given the Tunisian secularism and international context. Accordingly, it adjusted itself to the realities of the Tunisian politics, came up with a brand new political agenda and adopted a more moderate stance, which would appeal to more people without risking further confrontation with the regime.

Not surprisingly, this process was easier said than done. Because the party kept its main institutions (such as general assembly and executive committee) intact even during these years of exile, even the smallest decisions had to be brought to these

²¹ Due to these changes in party rhetoric, it is hard to determine the official stance on the issues concerning religion and state. Part of the problem has to do with colonialism, Ennahda’s “third-worldism” (Torelli 2012: 77) and the history of *laïcité* in Tunisia. Ghannouchi claims that he respects the secularists but he opposes *laïcité* because it was imposed by a Western power against the will of the Tunisian people (personal interview, May 27, 2015).

institutions to be discussed and collectively decided by the party members.²² Moreover, the party hosted a large group of Islamist radicals, whose views were shaped by the “identity crisis” Tunisia went through as a result of the Bourguibist secularization process (Tamimi, 2001, p.10) and influenced by Muslim Brotherhood of 1960s. They frequently brought up the typical Islamist arguments on the incompatibility of Islam and democracy²³ and “immorality of the West” while offering strategies to the party, and defended the adoption of a more hardline (even violent) approach in responding to the “infidels” of Tunisia. On the other hand, the upper echelons of the party realized that a simplistic worldview that pitted religious groups against secular/Western forces could not solve the main problems of the Tunisian population²⁴ (such as security or financial well-being) but only render Islamists useless and irrelevant in these debates. The political positions developed through Ennahda’s exile, in this regard, displayed a much more nuanced understanding of Islam and defended pluralism and democracy²⁵ as indispensable parts of peace and order in society. ²⁶ Having lived in Europe and taken advantage of its liberties, the party elite saw that the divisions in the form of political parties, or representation of different interest groups in politics did not necessarily harm

²² While it is not certain whether these institutions had contributed to a culture of intraparty democracy, or the party’s commitment to democracy in general, their existence at least stood in stark contrast to the complete denial of democratic institutions by more radical Islamist groups in Tunisia.

²³ “Islam requires believers to implement the law of God, and not to resort to laws other than His” (Ghannouchi, 1988, p. 89).

²⁴ Accordingly, the party elite lamented that the “Arab secularists accepted everything Western and considered them the absolute truth, whereas the Islamists rejected everything Western, even the good parts of it” (R. Ghannouchi, personal interview, May 27, 2015).

²⁵ In spite of being inadequate, even a Schumpeterian definition of democracy was “still a thousand times better than despotism that is grinding the masses in some of the Arab countries where the state has been turned into a highly sophisticated machine of repression” (Ghannouchi qtd. in Tammim, 2001, p.88).

²⁶ When asked about the alleged tension between *hukmullah* (God’s rule) and democracy, Ghannouchi said “Hukm-u-llah does not mean that God comes down and governs humans, but means the sovereignty of law”, which is the fundamental feature of the modern state (personal interview, May 27, 2015).

the society in any significant way, as the divisions were on “the methods of applying the rules, but not over the rules themselves” (R. Abdesselam, personal interview, June 1, 2015). Thus, they²⁷ progressively abandoned the more extremist vision of hardliners and adopted a position according to which the state would not interfere with people’s beliefs and religious practices and the religious groups would not insist on creating policies on the basis of these beliefs and practices.²⁸ Those who preferred to frame the issues through a clash between believers and unbelievers left the party and established their own organizations, either joining the ranks of Islamist terrorists later on or becoming sidelined in political debates in the long run.

Having made that decision, the challenge ahead of the party was the incorporation of these Western values into their thinking without sacrificing religious ones in the process. First of all, the new Ennahda overturned the party’s previous position on women. It distinguished itself from more extremist groups by not advocating polygamy or gender segregation, started to emphasize gender equality in its political discourse and included female members “who would embody the values of Islam” in higher ranks of the party (M. Labidi, personal interview, May 26, 2015).²⁹ Even though

²⁷ Clearly, Ghannouchi’s commitment to democratic norms influenced the party’s decision to play the game according to its rules, mainly because his ideas had been discussed extensively and gradually accepted from within (Cavatorta & Merone, 2013), but it also created an uncertainty with regard to what would happen to Ennahda (or its ideology) once Ghannouchi stepped down.

²⁸ While Ghannouchi’s democratic ideology seems genuine, most Tunisians do not find him sincere or trustworthy. In fact, an opinion poll conducted in 2013 found that Ghannouchi’s approval rates are around thirty percent, making him the second least trusted politician in the country after the extreme left party leader Hama Hammami (Ottaway, 2013, p. 3)

²⁹ A particularly defining moment came when two women attended the party’s central committee meeting and the male members of the committee wanted to see the *fatwa* that had allowed them to be there. One of the attending women, Afifa Makhlouf, objected to this and told them Islam was “revealed as guidance for men as well as women,” therefore there was no reason for a fatwa to be required for their attendance. If men believed they had a right to “judge the legality of women’s participation in political life, why shouldn’t women set up a commission to pass the same judgment on the political role of men?” (Tamimi,

these changes did not make the party a crusader for women's rights, it still instilled a significant and healthy dose of "feminism" to a strictly conservative party, despite the fact that such ideals did not hold too much appeal in the party's voter bases. Still rejecting *laïcité* as a *sine qua non* condition for democracy,³⁰ the party first criticized the "fanatic secularists" of Tunisia, who aimed to take the absolute control of the society, regulate the freedom of religion in the name of modernity and democracy. Very aptly, it asked whether it was fair "to turn a blind eye when secularists break the law in the present and condemn the Islamist for the mere supposition that they might break the law in the future" (Hicks, 1993). That thinking shaped their approach to the secularist parties in the system later on, as their experience taught them not to base their policies on fears, past experiences and mutual distrust (O. al-Saghir, personal interview, May 26, 2015). Learning from the Algerian experience, the party also understood the importance of putting some distance between themselves and the radicals, in order not to encourage them and shrink the space for accommodation. Even though Ennahda's voter base did not always share this view, the party's committee in exile criticized these radicals openly for depicting themselves as the religious scholars in possession of the absolute truth on Islam and failing to recognize the plurality of interpretations of religious texts. Consequently, more extremist Salafists accused Ennahda of inventing a new Islam to please its secularist allies, international community and "the US State Department" (R. Ghannouchi, personal interview, May 27, 2015).

2001, p. 58). After that, the issue of women's participation was solved and never brought up in the party discussions again.

³⁰ To this day, Ennahda defends the argument that Muslims are encouraged, even required, to take the public issues to a Shura as the sacred texts embody a political authority that is accountable to public.

In the end, Ennahda adapted itself to the Tunisian political scene while it was still excluded from it, and adopted a new political strategy to ensure its survival and relevance in it by moderating its demands and respecting the plurality of opinions and identities both in theory and practice. In this regard, it was not exile (or any other form of political harassment) itself, but the party's realization that the Tunisians who remained silent (if not supportive) during their persecution would not be "at ease with the Manichean views [they] had in the 1970s and early 1980s", which made Ennahda accept democratic forms of government and pluralism as opposed to more radical forms of Islam (Cavatorta & Merone, 2013, p. 869).³¹ The primary documents of the party from 2010 still reflected a dose of Islamic terminology³² especially when it came to stating the party's policy objectives (such as "to establish *Shura*", or consultation among believers, and "promote the spirit of Arabic and Islamic unity"³³ and awareness of the fundamental issues of the *umma*" –i.e. the Islamic community).³⁴ Having said that, both the statements of Ennahda's prominent figures and its primary documents remained vague with regard to how these religiously inspired goals will be achieved, leaving enough room for party to maneuver depending on the changing circumstances.

³¹ More importantly, many interviewed MPs seemed to know that democracy means more than regular elections and parliamentary rubber stamp on laws and charters. To illustrate, Osama al-Saghir, who received a political science degree from Sapienza University of Rome when he was a political refugee in Italy, adopted a definition of democracy that was closer to Schmitter-and-Karl's (1991), as he referred to a self-governing polity (vibrant with civil society and free from any foreign influence –be it from the former colonial power or radical Islamism of neighboring states) and warned against the dominance of non-elected authorities over people's lawfully elected representatives.

³² These references to Islam stand in a sharp contrast to the AKP's refusal to officially affiliate itself with Islam, making AKP look more pragmatic vis-à-vis Ennahda.

³³ This reference can also be interpreted as Ennahda's support for Sharia, as the Ennahda statute clearly talks about according the Arab-Islamic identity "the status it deserves by implementing the requirements of the country's constitution and laws, in respect of the fact that *Islam is both a set of values for civilization and a way of life*" (emphasis added).

³⁴ Ennahda, accessed 23 October 2015, <http://www.nahdha.tn/>.

The “Arab Spring,” Jasmine Revolution and Tunisia’s Democratic Transition

Though the political situation in 2010 was discouraging enough that people thought their only hope was Ben Ali’s death to end his authoritarian rule, the regime already had the telltale signs of an imminent breakdown at that point. The progressive deterioration of social, political and economic conditions in the country put a definite end to prevailing *khubzism*. During the Gafsa Basin and Kasserine uprisings of 2008, people openly challenged the state authority and protested the lavish lifestyles of the Tunisian elite that forced ordinary citizens like themselves to live under abject poverty (Logan, 2012). More importantly, people who had lived through Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes felt cheated by the president who did not fulfill his promises, whereas young people objected to being governed by the kleptocratic regime of an aging president and his privileged elite for an indefinite amount of time (G. Louhichi, personal interview, May 30, 2015). Despite this ever-growing opposition on the domestic scene, however, Ben Ali’s international allies (mainly France and the United States) kept him in power by turning into a blind eye towards his style of government in exchange for his help and support throughout the Global War on Terror.³⁵ In the meantime, constitutional reforms removed the presidential term limits and enabled Ben Ali to rule as long as he was able and willing to do so. Yet, the presidential “elections” of 2009 still opened up a big and widely participated discussion on Ben Ali’s possible successors and on what the next political transition might look like.

³⁵ Reports from ambassadors clearly show that these powers knew what was actually going on in Tunisia, but they had to guarantee first that he was not indispensable for a post-9/11 world or foreign interests of their countries (G. Gherairi, personal interview, May 25, 2015).

Amidst these discussions, even the “yes-men” surrounding Ben Ali could see that neither the regime’s strategy of repressing all forms of dissent, nor its allocation the country’s resources to the benefit of a small group of elites was sustainable in the long run. Knowing that, more skilled authoritarian leaders of other Muslim majority countries (such as Jordan and Yemen) allowed some form of institutional change and political liberalization, which then expanded their support base, deterred rebellions and prolonged their tenures in this manner (Gandhi & Przeworski, 2007; Schwedler, 2006). Ben Ali, on the other hand, did not take public concerns and demands into account but chose to let their resentments grow further. Adding insult to injury, he did not interfere when *Madame La Présidente* Leila Trabelsi, an Imelda Marcos-like figure and arguably the most hated figure in the country, showed off her lavish lifestyle, boasted about enriching her whole family through her connections and became a de facto ruler of Tunisia through her “mafia-style control over the country’s economy” (I. Ghazouani, personal interview, May 20, 2015).³⁶

The systematic and endemic corruption, worsened by *Madame La Présidente’s* quasi-mafia takeover, became so excruciating for the Tunisians who were struggling to make ends meet, one of them ended up taking his own life to draw attention to the issue. This well-publicized self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, following his dispute with the local authorities³⁷ in the city of Sidi Bouzid, also brought the regime’s breaking

³⁶While Trabelsi was initially portrayed as the Tunisian Marie Antoinette and blamed for the country’s economic woes more than her husband, the discovery of Ben Ali’s knowledge and collaboration in Trabelsi family corruption eroded his legitimacy and credibility even further (Logan 2012).

³⁷ The source of Bouazizi’s dispute with the police officers was not clear at the time, but even without knowing the details of the case, most people found his experience relatable in one way or another. The police, especially compared to the military, had a reputation for being corrupt, and Bouazizi’s experience reminded people of all the times they had to bribe the police officers. The governor’s indifference to his

point in December 2010. In a tragic twist of events, Bouazizi's "political suicide" achieved its purpose and brought people from all social, political and religious backgrounds together to stand against Ben Ali, his RCD and the authoritarian state institutions. Its success in mobilizing the masses against the regime lied in its ability to garner the support of over-educated under-employed "law-abiding" Tunisians (Chomiak & Entelis, 2013) as well, when they saw that the economic development people sacrificed their political rights and freedoms for never materialized. Bouazizi's case became a wake-up call in terms of showing people even working hard and following the rules could not lift anyone out of poverty unless one is a member of the RCD or the Presidential clan. Yet, as the regime responded to these events with brutal force and the message that all protesters would be "severely punished" if they continued, it inspired more and more people to take their grievances to the street and join the protesters. Accordingly, the protesters demands and expectations shifted from better working conditions and economic development to more political ones, such as Ben Ali's removal from power. The ruling party, RCD, refused to intervene in the process either on behalf of the president or the protesters, as "their allegiance had been to their self-interests all along" (G. Gherairi, personal interview, May 25, 2015).³⁸ At that point, the powers-that-be realized they could not diffuse the tension with their regular techniques or with more repression. Unfortunately, this realization led to nothing but confusion,

complaints also manifested yet another example of lack of concern for citizens and administrative inefficiency (personal interviews, May 2015).

³⁸ Other sources also indicate that not all RCD members, even its upper echelons, had been corrupt officials, but they were under such pressure that they could not dare to disagree, even resign from their posts, as it could have been seen as a form of dissent (Logan, 2012).

manifested through the regime's severe lack of coordination and inability to act in response to the increasing demands and the further weakening of the state.

Unlike previous protests that remained mostly local, this uprising spread across Tunisia, not just because Tunisians effectively used social media to create online activism and share the regime's corrupt policies with those who used to believe in the government propaganda, but also because Bouazizi's action resonated well with those living in the country's impoverished interior. As events unfolded and more and more cities held protests against the regime, Ben Ali ordered the military to get involved and stop the protesters by any means necessary. Yet, because the Tunisian Army was relatively weak (at least, compared to the armies in other Arab countries) and kept apolitical by the President, who chose to rely on his Presidential Guard to keep the order and control the high-ranking military officials, the Generals sided with the protesters, and the military refused to shoot anyone by withdrawing from its positions in Tunis (personal interviews, May 2015). The army's withdrawal became the last straw for the regime. Ben Ali's "house of cards" crumbled once all the flaws in the political structure and repressive methods of action have been exposed. The month-long protests, which had been the least violent of all Arab Spring revolts, succeeded in ousting Ben Ali from power, forcing him to resign and flee to Saudi Arabia with his family on January 14, 2011.

While the event itself was dubbed the "Jasmine Revolution", it has still not been clear whether the President left the country voluntarily, or departed hastily thinking that he would be back in a couple of weeks, or the "shadow government" organized a "palace coup" à la Ben Ali of two decades ago. Regardless of the details surrounding

his departure, the fall of his oppressive regime opened up the political space to all groups and interests for the first time for years. Because Tunisians found out the power of organizations and associations during the uprisings, political parties and non-governmental organizations flourished after the regime's downfall. Though weakened by the years of authoritarian rule, NGOs still undertook the responsibility to facilitate the transition, by setting up the electoral rules and an independent electoral commission to oversee the process, as well as by urging different interest groups to focus on the "rules of the game" first and wait until the Constituent Assembly drafted the constitution to determine the political system. From its early days on, therefore, civil society organizations were at the forefront to ensure a smooth transition to a new political regime. This enthusiasm of civil society to educate people on democratic progress and monitor the politicians involved in this process indicated the excitement and high expectations of the Tunisian people.

"Islamists are Coming!"

While Ben Ali's departure provided the country with a potential for democratic transition, nobody expected that transition to happen overnight. In fact, there was so much uncertainty surrounding the regime breakdown that the highly educated Tunisians feared that the country would get stuck in the grey area (Carothers, 2002), falling short of founding a truly liberal and democratic political regime once again. Having been disappointed countless times before, Ennahda took a particularly cautious approach to these developments and most of its members did not arrive in the country until they were convinced it was the right time. In their minds, the overthrowing of the Ben Ali regime just marked the start of a new struggle, which now needed to overcome the legacy of Habib Bourguiba represented through an overall disdain for religion in the

public sphere. For them, Bourguiba's secularist experiment failed and caused the decline of the country mainly by distancing people from their genuine cultural roots and their ideal of an Islamic society. Now that the authoritarian institutions that supported these views were gone, the Tunisian state and society needed to redeem itself by giving religious ideas the role it deserved in the political system and including the religious groups in the country's decision-making mechanisms.

Although Ennahda followed a more accommodationist view in the wake of the revolution, and its leaders emphasized their opposition to the "extremists on both sides, whether Islamist or laicist" (R. Ghannouchi, personal interview, May 27, 2015), more hardline Islamists did not hide their intent to eschew political process and join the ranks of Salafists, which were supported by radical groups in neighboring Algeria and Libya. With no strong secular state to confront them, the Salafists of Tunisia asserted their presence in the public arena, mainly on the university campuses. In contrast, the leftists and French-educated elite formed a strange alliance to defend the country's Western-inspired identity against Islamist reactionaries. Seeing no difference between the Salafists and the moderate actors in the political scene,³⁹ the secularists of the country worried that this political opening would lead to the mushrooming of political parties, which would provoke in-fighting and intense rivalries among secular parties and empower the Islamists in the end. Other non-Islamists in the system, whether they represented the right of the left, also feared that Islamists would hijack the revolution and use its momentum for their own benefit, even though the revolts themselves had

³⁹ Ettakatol's Mohammed Bennour, for instance, regarded the Salafis as "a militia in formation" for Ennahda, even though the latter took pains to differentiate itself from the very same Salafis Bennour was referring to.

nothing to do with religious demands but placed great emphasis on justice, democracy and economic equality. More importantly, these groups argued, average Tunisians who lacked a truly democratic political culture and experience with free and fair elections would not be able to tell the difference between “the reality of Islamist threat” and “self-victimization” and “political manipulation” of the Ennahda.

Just like their counterparts in Turkey, in other words, secularists in Tunisia expressed their doubts about Ennahda’s commitment to democracy and pluralism in all public debates, claiming the party’s commitment to democracy was nothing but “doublespeak” that was bound to disappear as soon as the party gained political power. In addition to the disruptive effects of this mistrust in the political system (as the previous chapter discussed in great detail), this partisan rhetoric was crucial and potentially problematic for the fragile democratization process in the country since the society was already showing the signs of an impending polarization and parties on the secularist side was already fragmented. At the same time, although Ennahda still needed to fully internalize the democratic norms and encourage its support bases to take moderate stances, it was hard (and frankly, unfair) to deny at that point that the party had come a long way in terms of its adherence to the rules of the game.

Normalization and Tunisia’s Fragmented Party System

As the proposed theory of this dissertation project argued, it was ultimately the political parties and their decisions, rather than political culture and people’s enthusiasm for democracy, which would make or break the democratic process. After all, no matter how restrictive the past twenty years might be, and no matter how loyal the security apparatus was to the previous regime, it was the actions of political actors that brought

down the regime, and it was going to be the political actors again that determined the success or failure of this political experiment.

Following the Jasmine Revolution, the Tunisian party system featured Islamists, secularists (both illiberal/hostile secularists and areligious types) and communist/leftist political parties. The political mode of the country emphasized inclusiveness; therefore, the new electoral commission (formed before the Constituent Assembly elections of 2011) granted legal status to more than a hundred political parties⁴⁰ and established a fund for their political campaigns. Electoral rules also favored smaller parties,⁴¹ and system as a whole encouraged party fragmentation, not least because the legacy of Ben Ali's divide-and-conquer politics normalized infighting and distrust among parties that shared the same ideology (Brody-Barre, 2013, p. 225). However, this proliferation of political parties meant that it was rather difficult for citizens to know the differences among them enough to pick one party with enough conviction to vote. After all, even though parties in the system define themselves along a typical right-left political spectrum, economic programs hardly differentiated parties in the Tunisian political scene. Currently, all the parties represented in the parliament express similar concerns about rising unemployment,⁴² the influx of Libyan refugees and the negative impact of recent terror attacks on tourism, which is the main source of income in the country. More importantly, parties on the right and on the left do not offer a distinct economic

⁴⁰ Having spent years seeking political recognition, Ennahda gained its legal status on March 1, 2011.

⁴¹ Al-Saghir indicated that the electoral formula used in 2011 elections had limited the number of seats assigned to Ennahda, as another widely accepted electoral formula would have awarded the party as many as 150 parliamentary seats (personal interview, May 26, 2015).

⁴² At some point, one party member complained that even the ones who currently held jobs did not work more than ten minutes a day, and said I could take a look at the coffee shops that were always full if I wanted to see how out of control the problem of unemployment had been.

vision or policy to fix all these problems. Interestingly, it is the Islamic party Ennahda that claims to give its utmost attention to the country's economic problems.

Nevertheless, Ennahda's economic program lacks consistency at the moment and comes close to the (now-outdated) ideals of pan-Arabism⁴³ and Islamic social justice, which would have made the party an ally of the Tunisian labor unions and leftist movements had the leftists not been opposed to Ennahda's religious policy preferences. Regardless on their stance of the religion and state dynamics, all other parties in the system highlight the importance of promoting trade and tourism with Europe and increasing the share of private investments for a long-term economic development.

Surely, after a few elections, the Tunisian party system may "stay stuck in the same fluid or stable state" (Lindberg, 2007), but in the last two parliamentary elections, parties on the either extreme (either right or left) gained no more than ten percent of the votes in total. Of these parties in the center, two main contenders for political power emerged. First, a number of secularist parties represented different interest groups and their commitment to the progressive and *laïque* development of the country. Because the Tunisian judiciary banned Ben Ali's RCD (despite the party elite's efforts to support the revolution and re-brand their party in an attempt to adjust to the new circumstances), former RCD members established new parties, such as the Nation (*al-Waten*), the Initiative (*al-Moubedra*), Independence for Liberty, and Justice and Liberty, all of which had limited electoral success. Most of these parties disappeared after the 2011 elections, or merged with larger secularist parties. Those who did not want to affiliate themselves with the legacy of RCD, on the other hand, sought other alternatives

⁴³ Having said that, Ennahda does not agree with pan-Arabist politics in any other manner. Ghannouchi believes that Arab nationalism is "nothing but a set of slogans and passions" (Tamimi, 2001, p. 20).

to be able to effectively compete against the Islamists. There were a few parties in the system that could serve such interests, notably Ettakatol (Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties –FDTL). Originally founded in 1994, Ettakatol was legalized in 2002 but refused to participate in the authoritarian political institutions and contribute to their “vener of pluralism” (Fuentes 2010) until the Jasmine Revolution. Gaining twenty seats and being the fourth biggest party in the Constituent Assembly in 2011, the party based its program on regional development, expansion of public work programmes and elimination of corruption (K. Zaouia, personal interview, June 1, 2015). As such, it did not put the issue of secularism at the forefront and became Islamist Ennahda’s coalition partner with another secularist party (Congress for the Republic) until 2013. The Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), which represented the ideals of European social democracy, re-emerged on the political scene as a secularist party that promised its voters a “modern vision of Islam” but rejected any cooperation with Ennahda. Holding sixteen seats in the Assembly, the party frequently criticized Ettakatol and Congress for the Republic for their decision to join an Ennahda-led government and offered Afek Tounes (see below) and other secularists to merge under a “a big party of the center”, the Republican Party. Lacking cohesion, strategic planning and a shared ideal, however, the Republican Party did not last long on the party scene. Afek Tounes re-established itself and PDP’s party program carried out by its successor parties, such as Nidaa Tounes, in the National Assembly.

For those who did not approve Ettakatol’s flexible stance towards Islamists, Socialist parties, (e.g. People’s Movement, or Communist parties such as the Workers’ Party (PCOT)) presented new alternatives, although their electoral appeal was limited.

The Modernist Democratic Pole (PDM) was another center-left coalition led by a formerly Communist party Ettajdid and it sought to separate religious issues completely from political debates. Compared to the Communist parties in the system, though, the latter was less restrictive in its secular tendencies, acknowledging the Islamic community of the country but arguing that religion belonged to the private sphere. Finally, the secularists which –willingly or not- accepted the presence and importance of religion in the public sphere, however, voted for the Congress for the Republic (CPR), an all-encompassing secularist party, which continued the Bourguibist Destourian (i.e. constitutionalist and nationalist) tradition under the new regime. Most CPR politicians came from Bourguiba’s Neo-Destour (then, Socialist Destour) parties, or were former RCD elites who had managed to distance themselves from the party’s authoritarian policies. Unlike the hostile secularist alternatives in the system, CPR demonstrated its willingness to work with different groups in the system, including smaller secular parties and its main political rival Ennahda. CPR’s Moncef Marzouki was the first secular-leaning politician that openly suggested, “democracy in Tunisia would come only through an agreement with Ennahda and not against it” (Cavatorta & Merone, 2013, p. 870), and CPR took part in the governing coalition with Ennahda during the first two years of the Constituent Assembly. Yet, “behind a façade of unity, Tunisia’s secular tradition [was] riven by deep internal cleavages” (Boduszyński, Fabbe, & Lamont, 2015, p. 131). Because the party had no clear identity or program that would sustain the loyalty of the different groups it represented for a long time, intraparty disagreements over interactions with Islamists diminished the power and influence of the party and the dissenters left and established their own parties. After the elections of 2014, CPR

almost disappeared from the political scene, after the elections of 2014, gaining only four seats in the National Assembly, as opposed to 29 seats it held in the Constituent Assembly.⁴⁴

A similar ideology was represented in the National Assembly through Nidaa Tounes (Call for Tunisia), which is another umbrella party that brought together different secular groups (including Ettakatol) through the popularity of its leader Beji Caïd Essebsi.⁴⁵ Following its establishment in 2012, Nidaa Tounes tried to form a pre-electoral coalition, “Union for Tunisia” with other secular parties, but it turned out to be another stillborn project, either because smaller secularist parties did not show the same flexibility as the Nidaa Tounes, or the Nidaa elite decided the party enjoyed enough support to be able to compete on its own. In the end, Nidaa Tounes became the winner of 2014 Elections, but the party quickly ran into the problem of managing the vast diversity of interests within its ranks. Lacking intraparty democracy and transparency with which the policy decisions are made, the party elite worries now that the party’s inclusiveness and success can also lead to the its downfall. Since the groups that constitute Nidaa Tounes have a hard time agreeing on a coherent and effective policy positions that would distinguish themselves from the existing centrist parties, the party does not offer anything but the “protection of secularist principles” to its voters. Even on the discourse of democracy and secularism, the party remains divided since

⁴⁴ After the coalition with Ennahda, the party split into smaller parties, which could not agree on an effective strategy to curb the domination of Ennahda. The defectors that accused CPR of being a “limb of Ennahda”, for instance, formed the Independent Democratic Congress. Without having the numbers on their side, however, these parties quickly became irrelevant in the political scene (Ltifi, 2012).

⁴⁵ Essebsi’s ability to gather these different groups under an umbrella party can be attributed to his long and respected political career as well as to his conciliatory attitudes. Even working under Ben Ali did not taint his image as a trustworthy politician, and he played an important role as the interim prime minister following the revolution of 2011.

the secularist groups have different views regarding how to deal with Ennahda and counter the rise of Islamists in general. Considering there are already a number of parties that base their ideology on the mistrust between the secularist and Islamist groups, these divergent attitudes, as well as Nidaa Tounes's inability to present consistent positions to its voter bases may put the party's chances of getting reelected, or even remaining in the party system, in danger. In fact, the party's secretary-general and Tunisia's former president Marzouki recently announced his disappointment with Nidaa Tounes's inability to keep its promises and promised that he was going to establish a new party to better represent the interests of the Tunisian citizens, which, according to some, signaled Nidaa's imminent breakdown.

As opposed to Nidaa's tacit support of Bourguibist notions of modernization,⁴⁶ Ennahda evokes a new Tunisian identity that rejects the authoritarian tendencies of the past and embraced the Islamic culture and characteristics of the country. Thanks to the shared experiences of repression and political exile, Ennahda represents a much more unified voter base. As such, it presents itself as a better-organized and better-structured political party with solid grassroots support, which consists of low income, rural and less educated segments of the Tunisian society. On the other hand, the party's changing image and profile as a "mosaic of ideas" (S. Ounissi, personal interview, May 26, 2015) reflects its desire to appeal to a new class of highly educated and more optimistic young Tunisians disillusioned by the promises of Western-oriented secularist parties of the past. There are already a lot of young people in the country that gives more importance

⁴⁶ Essebsi frequently refers to the Bourguiba period as the golden era of the modern Tunisian state and uses the Bourguibist rhetoric of modernization and secularization as a response to Ennahda's rise to power.

to religious identities while acknowledging the importance of liberal democratic ideas; and this new class has the potential to be the force behind the changing face of Islam in Tunisia.

These different class appeals bring a familiar dilemma and a careful balancing act to the party's agenda, however. As discussed in the third chapter, Ennahda finds itself between a rock and a hard place now due to the necessity of defining its political identity either as an idealist party that strives to reach the goals MTI set in the past, or as a pragmatic political party that aims to increase its vote share as much as possible by engaging in the usual give-and-take of democratic politics. Not eschewing the first choice completely, the party seems to have decided to adopt a "Muslim-democratic" political identity and respect the norms and procedures of democratic political system. For this reason, the party feels obliged to take public opinion and concerns into account while making policies to reach new voters and assuage the fears on the secularist side about an Islamist takeover. Yet, this does not mean that Ennahda's positions on issues regarding religion and politics are monolithic and clearly defined. As Ghannouchi's statements exemplified, the party is still evolving and trying to distance themselves from the more-radical Salafis in their support bases.

Other than these two major trends, the Tunisian party system remains highly fragmented and volatile. Even the "relevant" parties represented in the Constituent Assembly (2011-2014) or National Assembly (2014-present) are smaller in size and level of support and less distinct in terms of their political ideologies. Majority of them cannot even go beyond clientelistic policies to garner support from voters, of which Slim Riahi's UPL, or the Free Patriotic Union, is the most notorious example. Launched after

the revolution by oil tycoon Riahi, UPL places itself in the center-right of the political spectrum and claims to represent the interests of “modern Tunisians” and promote a free-market economy. For most voters, however, the party owes its popularity to the material aid it had distributed before the elections to the needy in an attempt to capture their votes (personal interviews, May-June 2015). The other center right party, neoliberal and technocratic Afek Tounes, enjoys the support of the Tunisian bourgeoisie and educated elite but has little grassroots support beyond that. Lacking the distinct financial power of the UPL, Afek Tounes relies on its dedicated voter base to maintain the eight seats it holds in the National Assembly and increase its voter base. Yet, even the Popular Front (PF) that united the parties with clear leftist positions and loyal supporters barely receives the ten percent of all votes nationwide. The vote shares of all other parties located between Nidaa Tounes and PF in Tunisian political spectrum (i.e. “center-left parties”) remain in single digits. For this reason, prior to the Elections of 2014 a number of left-wing parties (including Democratic Patriot’s Movement, Baath Party, the Workers’ Party and Party of the Democratic Arab Vanguard) joined the ranks of PF to consolidate the Tunisian left and compete against the Islamist-driven right-wing dominance in the party system. In February 2013, however, an unidentified gunman killed the party leader Chokri Belaid, for which the rank-and-file members of the aforementioned parties held the ruling Ennahda government directly or indirectly responsible. As a response to these events, Mohamed Brahmi, the leader of the left wing/Nasserist People’s Movement, announced his party’s intention to join PF. On July 2013, however, Brahmi got assassinated as well. Though the culprits could not be identified or located in either case, the Ministry of Interior blamed the radical Islamists

Ansar al-Sharia for both assassinations. The government's slow response to Ansar-related violence, however, gave further "evidence" to the secularist opposition for the link between Ennahda and radical Islamists.

Though not a political party, the Tunisian Syndicate (UGTT) also plays an important role in the country's political process as an "outsider" to the party system. Co-opted by the regime (like all others) during Ben Ali's presidency, the labor union tries to redeem itself and reestablish its legitimacy by making sure that the country stays on a "modernist path," protects the revolution and expands workers' rights and social justice in general. In this regard, it acts as the "main bulwark" against Ennahda, even though (or maybe because) their demands in the economic realm are very similar (UGTT Tunis office, personal interview, May 28, 2015). Since UGTT had the ability and will to call for a general strike that would overthrow the incumbent government, as the union frequently threatened the government with, Ghannouchi referred to them as "Salafists of the Left" on several occasions. In spite of fear, mistrust and animosity between them, both sides seem to have recognized the need to avoid an open confrontation.

Having accomplished a peaceful transition to democracy,⁴⁷ parties now focused their attention to the country's economic woes and possible reforms to overcome them. As the authoritarian regime of Ben Ali only benefitted a small group of elites around the president, Tunisian citizens have high expectations from the new political regime and will hold the incumbent parties responsible if they cannot reap the benefits they expect from the system.

⁴⁷ Considering Linz and Stepan's criteria for democratic transition, Tunisia achieved the "sufficient" level of "agreement" on "procedures to produce an elected government, as all parties involved in the transition accepted the electoral rules; the country's the "popularly elected" party (or parties) came to power following a "free election;" the new government had "the authority to generate new policies;" and, finally, the branches of the elected government did "not have to share power with other powers de jure" (1996).

Constituent Assembly Elections and the Troika's Rise to Power

Because there was no incumbent party to create an unlevel playing field before the elections, or no other faction that was powerful or organized enough to manipulate the electoral process, October 2011 marked the first free and fair elections in the country. Ennahda, which ran its electoral campaign not on the easy, vague and well known "Islam is the solution" slogan, but on the party's determination to prove "that one can be Muslim and democrat at the same time" (R. Ghannouchi, personal interview, May 27, 2015), gained the plurality (41 percent) of the votes, 89 seats in the Constituent Assembly and made its comeback to the Tunisian political scene. Ennahda's closest rival CPR received approximately 14 percent of the votes and 29 seats. Voter turnout was exceptionally high, as about 90 percent of the voting population went to the polls on election day.

For most Tunisians, however, Ennahda's victory was hardly a surprise. As the previous section discussed, the huge increase in the number of parties did not necessarily translate to the number of groups represented in the political scene. Besides, most parties attracted the wrong type of attention due to their alleged or real ties to the Ben Ali regime, or simply failed to offer any policy positions to the voters for the country's existing problems. Therefore, Ennahda emerged as the only party with grassroots organizations, a clear ideology that was distinct from the mere rhetoric of democracy and human rights, and a political program that went beyond dividing the country between Islamists and secularists. Moreover, with no corruption scandals or authoritarian background, Ennahda gave the impression of being an honest and moral political party that would provide the fresh start the country needed. On the other hand, Ennahda's opponents expected the party to use this electoral victory to found an

authoritarian theocracy and destroy the modern Tunisia with its democratic prospects. In spite of their fears, virtually all party leaders accepted the legitimacy of both the elections and electoral results; and even the parties which received lower share of votes than expected considered this experience a chance to learn from their mistakes and “see what Ennahda did right and maybe emulate it in the next elections” (UPL Tunis office, personal interview, June 1, 2015).

In this respect, this analysis constitutes the first step in a research project that tries to determine “whether and how religious and political leaders in ‘electorally overachieving’ states . . . draw upon democratically beneficial concepts” in Islam and contribute to the democratic development of their countries (Stepan & Robertson, 2003, p. 40).

Despite their differences and likes/dislikes at the personal level, all parties of the troika proved their willingness to work towards a common goal and engage in consensus politics by making political compromises when necessary. In this atmosphere of change, Tunisian Islamists further adjusted themselves to a competitive arena as well as the logic of power sharing. Non-Islamist coalition partners, on the other hand, contributed to the normalization of religious party presence in the politics by allying themselves with Ennahda and moderating their hostile positions on *laïcité* within the framework of shared interests and a pluralistic political scene. In the end, the political situation approximated the idea of “twin tolerations,” where the state and religious groups respected one another and avoided infringing upon each other’s rights and paved the way for further democratization, even for democratic consolidation (Stepan, 2014).

Even though some scholars attributed this coalition-building process to “a dash of good luck” that distributed the seats in the parliament in such a way that no single party enjoyed the majority and became obliged to seek coalition (Bellin, 2013, p. 4), or to the Tunisians preference of gradualism and consensus to confrontation (Sadiki & Boubakri, 2014); the lessons from this research project suggest that the political skills and the will of political elite should not be disregarded here. After all, Egypt that went through similar uprisings and overthrow of an authoritarian leader did not achieve the Tunisian level of organization and participation in its transition process, which was cut short with the 2013 coup of General Sisi. Likewise, the results of June 2015 elections in Turkey, which denied any party a majority in the parliament and forced them to form a coalition, led to a complete political paralysis and further polarization in the country, rather than resulting in a working coalition government. The success of the troika lied in the parties’ decision form cross-ideological alliances with their former “enemies”, whose voter bases could not be more different from their own. Both for the party elites and voters, these decisions and the parties’ willingness to take these political risks signified the transformation of Tunisian political scene towards a more democratic regime, exemplified by the parties’ political maturation and acceptance of the rules of the game.

Islamists in Government

Because the speculations on Ennahda’s plans to establish a theocracy, or a possible discrepancy between its democratic rhetoric and hidden agenda, is rather trite at this point, it is important to focus on the party’s political actions and interactions with other parties to evaluate its evolution and role in the democratization process. Even though Ennahda’s limited tenure prevents this analysis from reaching any definite conclusions, the party’s policy positions and preferences during that time are indicative.

At the end of the day, unlike many other Islamic parties that are more comfortable in the opposition benches (Hamid, 2014) than in the government, Ennahda spent enough time in the government for its democratic claims to be tested.

After a promising start, the first task ahead of the troika was drafting a Constitution for the new regime. Constitution-making was going to be the first test for the democratic claims of all parties involved, demonstrating how well they could communicate with each other, work in harmony and translate their policy priorities and preferences into the articles in new democratic constitution of the country (T. Mahjoub, personal interview, May 21, 2015). Throughout this arduous constitution-writing process, the Assembly worked through six main committees consisting of twenty-two members from all parties in each.⁴⁸ Every committee was responsible for writing different chapters of the Constitution, and they could form subcommittees to conduct research, get the opinions of civil society or listen to the citizens so as to get a better grasp of their issues. Having discussed their respective articles extensively and completed the draft of their chapters with the help of outside consultations (G. Louhichi, personal interview, May 30, 2015), the commissions brought their final drafts to the assembly to be ratified. The ratification required at least the absolute majority of the votes for the process to be as representative and inclusive as possible; so, in a way, the *modus vivendi* in the Assembly encouraged different parties “to deliberate until consensus [was] achieved” (Bellin, 2013, p. 3). Once this process was over, the Constituent Assembly voted for the Constitution as a whole and ratified the document in

⁴⁸ Even though the sheer size of these committees made it difficult to get anything done efficiently, but the Constituent Assembly designed the committees in this way to make sure that all major parties would be represented and given chance to propose their ideas in each committee (G. Louhichi, personal interview, May 30, 2015).

a truly historic parliamentary session in which emotions ran high and members of assembly felt both happy and proud (personal interviews, May 2015). According to the non-governmental organizations that attended all meetings in the assembly and observed this process from up close, the process could have been much more effective; but most parliaments, being young, excited and inexperienced, lacked political finesse and learned, with their best intentions, the intricacies of the job while working on their draft chapters. In spite of these shortcomings, they found the pluralist interactions in the Constituent Assembly, the effort every parliamentarian put into the process, the respect they showed to each other and their willingness to listen each other's concerns and demands admirable and quite impressive (Al-Bawsala, personal interviews, May 2015). More importantly, though the drafting process took longer than expected due to endless negotiations among interested parties,⁴⁹ all parties involved found the final product acceptable (albeit far from the "ideal") and the whole process was legitimate, transparent and credible.

As Stepan points out, however, "this is not to deny that there [had] been deep fears and Brumairian temptations in Tunisia" during the constitution-writing process (Stepan, 2014, p. 95). Inasmuch as the process was productive and amicable in the end, the Constituent Assembly also witnessed some disruptions, controversies, heated debates, in addition to harsh criticism and rigid opinions. The efforts to sustain power-sharing mechanisms faced a lot of obstacles in the meantime, mainly due to the citizens' unmet expectations about fast and sustainable economic development and

⁴⁹ In fact, when asked what they would have done differently, most Ennahda members replied with "a more organized and faster constitution-making process" (O. al-Saghir, S. Ounissi, M. Labidi, personal interview, May 26, 2015).

concerns about spillover violence especially after the state failure in Libya. On top of that, certain issues that came up during the constitution-writing process threatened the fragile balance of power in the assembly. Evidently, one of them was the inclusion of *Sharia* in the constitution as one of the sources of law, as many secularist parties suspected Ennahda's intention to use such an article in the constitution as a stepping stone in their quest to impose *Sharia* law on all citizens of Tunisia (B. Rmilli, personal interview, May 29, 2015). Despite Ghannouchi's remarks about Islam being an indispensable part of the Tunisian identity, however, Ennahda presented no official position (or any long-term goal, for that matter) to adopt *Sharia* as a source (let alone *the source*) of law during the constitutional assembly meetings. Later on, even Ghannouchi dropped the rhetoric of *Sharia* in his personal remarks, and emphasized the party's respect for all cultures, traditions and identities, especially against the growing threat of ISIS, stationed in Libya and infiltrated in Tunisian society. With that, Ennahda refrained from associating itself with *Sharia* in order not hurt secularist sensitivities or give its opponents an easy target. Ennahda deputy al-Saghir explained this decision by saying that the members of Ennahda "will not go to the Heaven because [they] put the word '*Sharia*' in the constitution", so they prefer to "work for the unity of our people" rather than create a false dichotomy or "divisions on this issue" (personal interview, May 26, 2015). This move, in return, defused a potential political polarization between Islamists and secularists and alleviated the secularist fears, at least to some extent, about the imposition of an Islamic regime on the country. In the end, the Constitution did not include any overt or hidden references to *Sharia*, and

instead, kept the same wording as the Constitution of 1959 when it came to the Islamic identity of Tunisia.⁵⁰

Considering the history of authoritarianism and the challenges the country faced after 2011, an antagonistic or stubborn response from Ennahda on the *Sharia* issue would bring about a deadlock in the system and destroy the embryonic culture of democracy, as well as the institutional trust in the country. To show that it was not their goal and that the party was genuinely committed to the political gains of 'Jasmine Revolution' and country's democratic ideals, Ennahda refrained from bringing up controversial and potentially polarizing issues on morality, values and lifestyles in the public sphere. Cognizant of both the secular sensibilities and the limits of the party's power, Ghannouchi admitted, for instance, "just because we propose a ban on alcoholic drinks, or ban alcohol altogether, people will not stop drinking. They will find a way, so why should we talk about and antagonize them for nothing?" (personal interview, May 27, 2015). Accordingly, the party declared that it wanted to keep "both the mosques and pubs open", as it was not the state's, (or any political party's) "responsibility to tell people how to live their lives" (R. Abdessalam, personal interview, May 31, 2015). Other members of the party voiced similar sentiments as well, indicating the party's consensus as to the necessity of avoiding issues that divided religious and secular-minded Tunisians for so long. "Or main concern is security and social services", said Ounissi, "not imposing anyone a certain style of life" (personal interview, May 26, 2015). Finding the debates over her headscarf "ridiculous" and "unnecessary," the Ennahda-affiliated

⁵⁰ This makes Tunisia the only Arab country that does not mention Sharia in its constitution, because even the Iraqi constitution written under the American tutelage refers to Sharia as one of the sources of legislation (Ottoway, 2013, p.3).

vice president of Constituent Assembly, Meherzia Labidi stated, “I will not tell a girl to wear a headscarf, or any other piece of clothing, [because] I am not her tailor, I am not her fashion advisor, and she can [wear whatever] she pleases. What I am here for is to make sure that she can live according to her wishes even if I don’t necessarily agree with that life style.”⁵¹

Given the conservative attitudes of Ennahda voters and the accepted gender roles among the party’s voter base, however, these statements on lifestyle choices, especially when they concern women, were harder to implement on the political scene. Though the party officially supported women’s rights movements and brought its female members to the prominent positions both in the party and in the parliament (and in fact, 42 of the 52 female MPs in the Constituent Assembly had an Ennahda affiliation), the party still subscribed to an implicitly patriarchal understanding of relations between men and women, embodied in their “gender order” principle. Ennahda’s drafts for constitution included references to this principle, built on a “complementarity” rather than an “equality” of genders,⁵² sparked controversy and created suspicions about Ennahda’s intentions to roll back women’s rights. Thankfully, the crisis did not last long when Ennahda risked the wrath of its hardliner constituency and made another historic compromise. Either due to an internal and external pressure, or due to their genuine

⁵¹ In an interesting incident that involved a group of sex workers demanding the government re-open brothels in Sousse, Meherzia Labidi met the delegation, listened to their complaints, and promised to help them as much as she could. Because Labidi wears the headscarf and is married with three kids, her solidarity with the Tunisian sex workers and declaration that “they are our women and it’s our duty to serve them” were unexpected for the majority of Constituent Assembly members, as well as the Ennahda supporters.

⁵² According to the party’s definition, men and women have equal but different roles that “complement each other within the family” (qtd. in Oazghari, 2014, p. 4)

change of mind, the party's final constitutional draft removed the references to the "gender complementarity," and openly accepted the equality between men and women.

As Ennahda struggled to convince the skeptical secularists that it recognized the diversity in Tunisian society and sincerely respected their differences, another controversy surrounding the "blasphemy" clause of the constitution tested both this sincerity and party's promise of pluralism. Labeled as the most divisive matter during the constitution-making process, Article 3 of the draft constitution⁵³ started another heated debate over the state's role in regulating religious freedoms, restricting freedom of speech and criminalizing the criticism of religion and religious institutions. Echoing the disputes about the Danish cartoons and Charlie Hebdo attacks, Ennahda's ambiguous definition of "sacred" to be protected by the state triggered secularist fears once again about Ennahda's hidden agenda to restrict freedoms and rights in the name of protecting religion in the public sphere. Both the secularist parties in the Constituent Assembly and civil society organizations criticized the article heavily, and accused Ennahda of introducing a law that would censor free speech and stifle dissent in the public sphere (B. Rmilli, personal interview, May 29, 2015). Others in the assembly objected idea of criminalizing any thought, whether it attacked religion or some other principle, through the constitution, simply because its abusive reading and arbitrary enforcement was going to endanger the basic liberties of citizens, as well as peace and unity in the society. The debate over the third article became so tense at some point that fifteen members of the troika resigned as a response to Ennahda's "hegemonic insistence" on the issue. Soon after, acting out of its usual pragmatism and desire to

⁵³ "The state guarantees freedom of religious belief and practice and criminalizes all attacks on that which is sacred" (Qtd. in Grami, 2014).

assuage the public discontent against the party, Ennahda officially withdrew the article from the final draft of the constitution and averted another political impasse. This episode demonstrated that whether they actually like pluralism or not, Ennahda was in no position to impose its own views on the rest of the population but ready to retreat when encountered severe criticism from their voter bases and political rivals.⁵⁴

Whereas these examples indicate a “secularist victory” on many issues and show the significant concessions Ennahda made in its policy positions to bridge political divides, the give-and-take nature of democratic politics ensured that this was a two-way process. Accordingly, secular political parties also engaged in political action that went against the expectations of their voters and gave them impression that their parties gave in to the Islamist pressures. To illustrate, CPR’s Marzouki, who had a reputation for being a hardline secularist, defended the right of female university students to wear *niqab* in school within the framework of freedom of conscience. Even though Marzouki’s position largely stemmed from “his recognition that some accommodation of his opponents had to be made” (Bellin, 2013, p. 6), it created a sense of insecurity among the secularist voters, who believed that such moves would endanger their lifestyles in the long run. Another, albeit less controversial, compromise was found between Ennahda’s demands for a parliamentary system and secular parties’ insistence on a presidential system through the adoption of a semi-presidential system –a solution which did not satisfy either side completely but took the preferences of both into account and delivered a system that accommodated these preferences to the extent possible.

⁵⁴ Ghannouchi referred to this aspect as the golden rule of their party strategy, invoking the Quranic verse “there is no compulsion in religion” (2:256) in the process (personal interview, May 27, 2015).

Testing the Limits

While the skeptics interpreted these conciliatory positions as Ennahda's sly attempts to sugarcoat its rule for large number of secularists in the system, the party's interest in working with political rivals and making compromises when necessary to prevent deadlocks in the system reflected at least a certain level of maturity on the part of the party. The same goes for the secularist parties, the majority of which concluded that they could not rule without including all relevant groups in the country's decision-making mechanisms and overcame their fears and suspicions of Islamists. In this sense, Tunisia's ideologically divided elites proved themselves capable of turning their once-enemies into political allies and working through consensual rather than divisive policy-making procedures. "We cannot do anything if they reject to work with us", said Rafik Abdessalem, Ennahda-affiliated former minister of foreign affairs, "but we will never turn down any group that open to cooperate with us" (personal interview, June 1, 2015). Illustrating this point, Ennahda's Meherzia Labidi asked "can you imagine how dull, uninteresting and boring the parliamentary sessions will be had we been working only with our party members" and then remarked, "we would be agreeing with each other all the time, with no criticism and no mirror in which we could see our mistakes" (personal interview, May 26, 2015).

Unlike their Turkish counterparts who define democracy in terms of its majoritarian characteristics, then, Tunisian parties tend to emphasize political pluralism, even in the context of current economic and international crises.⁵⁵ This attitude stands in a stark contrast to the current contentious political scene in Turkey, where political

⁵⁵ When asked about the party's stance on this issue, even Ghannouchi firmly said "we are against the extremists on both sides: this includes Islamic extremists as much as secularist extremists" (personal interview, May 27, 2015).

parties rely on the existing divisions to consolidate their power bases, and AKP's post-2011 modus operandi "rule through domination" (Gumuscu & Keyman, 2014). As the previous chapter explained in detail, this type of rule polarized the country to such an extent that politics came to be defined as an existential struggle and a zero-sum game, in which the incumbent party made a number of successful and unsuccessful attempts to curtail rights and freedoms in the name of ensuring its survival. More importantly, this difference in political strategies is not arising out of differences in electoral (or political) strength: After all, Ennahda's electoral victory brought the party 89 seats, which gave the party enough power to dictate the terms of the Constitution-making process or enforce a legislative deadlock in the system. Instead, it chose to counterbalance the demands from its voter bases with the ones expressed by its secularist and liberal opponents in the parliament. In this regard, the pluralism Dr. Abdessalem talks about demonstrates a more or less equal playing field among different political parties, social movements and civil society organizations. Ennahda's Islamic identity has to compete there in order to make itself more legitimate in the eyes of Tunisian voters, which differs vastly from the cases where political Islam imposes itself on all citizens as a single truth regime.

Surely, this is not to say that everyone in Ennahda has internalized the democratic principles in Tunisia, and that every secularist in the country is thoroughly liberal. Nor does that mean that these different groups always work in harmony or that the Tunisian politics is such a utopia that everyone solves their problems with dialogue and compromise. As the abovementioned instances demonstrated, it is actually quite the opposite. Throughout the three years of Constituent Assembly, there has been a lot

of drama, insults, name-calling, footdragging or overall inability on the part of MPs to show up to the meetings or respond to their constituents' demands (T. Mahjoub, personal interview, May 22, 2015). Nevertheless, the elites across the political spectrum accepted, willingly or not, that they had no option to engage in a fruitful dialogue and strive together to move forward politically. Civil society also played an important role in establishing that norm, by encouraging parties to find ways to overcome political impasse or acting as a watchdog and warning the relevant institutions when an issue strayed too much from democratic ideals.⁵⁶ Interestingly, the most controversial compromises and the most serious divisions in the political system came to mark the success of the system and constituted the most encouraging episodes of the Tunisian democratic transition throughout this process.

One such division, and quite possibly the biggest crisis the Ennahda-led government faced during this era, emerged in 2013 and truly tested the limits of the troika. As briefly mentioned above, two left-wing politicians, first Chokri Belaid and six months later Mohamed Brahmi, got assassinated allegedly by the Salafists with the same gun. While suspects remained unidentified for a long time, the opposition forces, especially the PF to which two murdered politicians belonged, held the troika directly or indirectly responsible for the assassinations. Citing Ennahda leader Ghannouchi's failure (or reluctance) to publicly condemn the Salafists for their role in Belaid and Brahmi murders as the party's tacit approval, or, at the very least, a sign of sympathy for them; they argued that Ennahda tolerated and supported these radicals. Ennahda, in

⁵⁶ The attendance rate was so low at some point that a civil society organization, Al-Bawsala, which joined all parliamentary meetings to observe the process, started to take attendance and publish the MPs' "report cards" on its website. After they became public, members of the Assembly started to improve their image by competing among each other to have the "best score" and calling the organization for "excused absences" if they had to miss a parliamentary session (T. Mahjoub, personal interview, May 22, 2015).

their eyes, also enabled the radicals to carry out attacks on art exhibits, bars, and secularist gatherings by representing Islamist ideas in the government and making their extremist positions publicly acceptable in the eyes of many Tunisians (Popular Front Tunis office, personal interview, May 29, 2015). Blaming CPR and Ettakatol for not responding to the criticisms and being inefficient against the attacks on the armed forces as well, the UGTT, PF and opposition parties supporting their position organized campaigns against the government and mobilized the citizens to protest. Thousands of people answered this call, started protesting in front of the parliament and called for the dissolution of the “Ennahda-dominated” Constituent Assembly. Amid harsh criticisms and charges of “betraying the revolution and what it stood for,” Ennahda could not risk staying in power any further and sparking another political turmoil. Yet, the government did not want to dissolve the assembly, disrupt or postpone the constitution-writing process and thereby lose the gains of the revolution without accomplishing anything significant (O. al-Saghir, personal interview, May 26, 2015). Protesters, on the other hand, interpreted this decision as Ennahda’s grasp of power and an evidence for the “one man, one vote, one time” idea. In spite of constant negotiations between parties, a deadlock crippled the political process again. Even though the troika understood the necessity of undertaking some responsibility and possibly giving up political power to break the impasse, Ennahda members worried that the party was becoming “the party of concessions” and the other parties was not holding up their side of the bargain (R. Abdesselam, personal interview, June 1, 2015).⁵⁷ Therefore, UGTT formed an alliance

⁵⁷ After the assassination of Belaid, the government accepted the reshuffling of the cabinet to diffuse tension and changed the Ministers of Interior and Justice with non-party members. The protesters found this move too little and too late and demanded Ennahda to take some “real” action against Islamist terrorists.

known as the “Quartet” with UTICA (the association of private businesses), lawyers, and human right activists and initiated a new “national dialogue” among political parties to solve the political crisis.⁵⁸ With their mediation, the troika declared that they were ready to step down to prevent further polarization and continue working on the constitution, on the condition that the Assembly remained intact and a neutral caretaker government took over the executive branch. “We were not ashamed of these concessions”, said Abdesselam, “we did what was necessary to secure our democratic experience so that Tunisia can reach a safe shore” (personal interview, June 1, 2015). In the end, Ennahda-affiliated prime minister Hamadi Jebali resigned from his post and disbanded the cabinet by handing the political power to a technocratic (read: secularist) government supported by all parties and led by Mehdi Jomaa. Through this peaceful transition of power, the country avoided another political crisis that was serious enough to undo all the post-revolutionary political developments in Tunisia. Distrust ran high, as usual, but the elites chose to respond to the crisis and protesters’ demands rather than to escalate tensions further by engaging in a blame game. Ennahda’s decision to hand political power to the technocratic government belied the opponents’ expectations about Ennahda’s political ambitions and its ability to remain resolute even during a political turmoil. More importantly, this relatively smooth transfer of power had a significant impact on Tunisian politics, both in terms of establishing institutional trust and of setting the bar for the policies and strategies of Islamic parties.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ The same Quartet was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015 for its skillful mediation of the political crisis during this tumultuous period.

⁵⁹ Even today, a giant banner with the pictures of Brahmi and Belaid is displayed at the Bardo Square in Tunis, right across the Tunisian parliament, which reads, “so that we do not forget.”

Secularists in Power

Nidaa Tounes's unexpected victory in the parliamentary elections of October 2014 gave Ennahda yet another opportunity to demonstrate its democratic credentials. Created as an all-encompassing political party that represented the secularist forces in the system, Nidaa Tounes enjoyed a wide support but still did not manage to unite all non-Islamist groups under its umbrella mainly because the party allowed the politicians associated with Ben Ali regime to run as its candidates. Yet, the overall opposition to Ennahda, which proved to be quite hard to get over, combined with the "punishment votes" for the political crises that shook the troika, delivered 85 of 217 seats to Nidaa Tounes. Ennahda emerged as the second party with 69 seats in the assembly. These results indicated that the Tunisian voters needed the promises made during the revolutionary process to be fulfilled and if Islamists failed to do so, they would give a chance to the secularists this time around. In this regard, the Nidaa victory was not a secularist victory over political Islam, but the Tunisians' message to the parties that they wanted them to go beyond identity politics and controversies over the "Tunisian identity" and focus on security, economic development and political reforms instead.

Surely, the number of seats Nidaa gained in the National Assembly was not enough to form a government on its own, and it meant that the party would seek coalition partners just like Ennahda did after the 2011 elections. Following the elections, Nidaa announced that power sharing was absolutely necessary to ensure all segments of society that no group will impose its particular vision of society on others. Yet, due to the candidacies of former RCD members and the possibility of a fragmentation within Nidaa (as 87-year old Essebsi seemed to be the only figure who kept the party together), leftist parties refused to become their coalition partners and it was uncertain

who would fill the gap on their behalf. While the party leader Beji Caid Essebsi is a popular figure due to his conciliatory attitude and role in the transition period, he is also a well-known Bourguibist, who is surrounded by other secular-leaning members of the party. For this reason, neither the Tunisian society, nor the opposition parties, expected Nidaa to extend the coalition offer to Ennahda either. Likewise, nobody expected Ennahda to accept such an offer, provided it came, to share political power with its once-archenemy Nidaa Tounes. Even worse, the skeptics feared, yet again, that the Islamic party would use the election results as an excuse to launch an Islamist campaign, hold onto political power at any cost and reverse the process of democratic transition thereby.

Nonetheless, as the previous section showed it was precisely this polarizing atmosphere that forced Ennahda to emphasize agreement and cooperation in its policies. As El Habib Seid took over the position of prime minister from Mehdi Jomaa, Ennahda not only recognized the legitimacy of the election results and the authority of Nidaa after its electoral victory, but also declared that it would be honored to support the coalition, either from inside or outside, that would be established under Nidaa's leadership. In return, Essebsi, who frequently criticized Ennahda in his speeches, defended Ennahda's right to exist in the Tunisian political scene and struck a deal with Ennahda to include the latter in the governing coalition. By inviting Ennahda to be a part of the governing coalition, no matter how symbolic, Nidaa Tounes included Muslim groups in the decision-making and alleviate their fears of being marginalized and repressed by their political rivals once again. In the end, the elections of 2014 led to a severe competition (and conflict, to some degree) among parties, but the results also

encouraged them to come together and share the political power. Surely, there was still a degree of animosity and distrust among these parties, but at least by working with their former archenemies in the government, the Tunisian political actors show that they could accept the political system that was established through legitimate and inclusive processes, rather than resorting to violence to achieve their goals.

Despite the hysteria in foreign media and the usual suspicious of hard-core secularists about a hidden Islamist agenda, the Tunisian political scene does not seem to be divided by uncompromising religious groups and hostile secularists. All the parties in the government agree on the endemic problems of the country and necessity to give priority to the issues of economy and security, which took the hardest hit after the attacks on the country's most well-known tourist destinations throughout 2015. Thus, they look for creative ways to solve them; and their differences of opinion can be their greatest asset in this process. Ennahda plans to express its grievances in a more moderate way, and Nidaa Tounes so far avoided emphasizing the negative legacy of Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes. In this regard, it is going to be even more interesting now to observe two main parties in the Assembly translating their policy positions and priorities into concrete policies and legislative outcomes under this new parliament and as a part of the governing coalition.

Tunisia and the Politics of Inclusion

Although Tunisia has yet to consolidate democracy, and the full range of Islamic political forces in Tunisia has yet to prove its commitment to the democratic rules of the game; it cannot be denied that the country has come a long way in the past four years. Though still young, the Tunisian democratic experience already went through one of the most daunting tasks of democratic transition and wrote a new constitution that

addressed the demands and needs of almost all groups in the society. Within the first three years of its authoritarian breakdown, the country held two free and fair elections, outcomes of which had been respected by all the parties involved in the process.

One of the biggest, arguably the biggest, contributors to this transition process (and ultimately to its success) has been the Islamists of the Tunisian party scene, Ennahda. Throughout the last four decades and through what Cavarota and Marone calls “moderation through exclusion” (2013), the party evolved from a *tawhid*-based Islamist movement to an inclusive political party, which demonstrated religious groups could reconcile their values not just with democratic institutions, but also with pluralistic approaches. The reason for this change of attitude can be pragmatic,⁶⁰ as advocating a more Islamic society will not bring any political benefits to the party or its politicians or improve the image of the party in the eyes of its supporters. At the same time, it can be attributed to the party’s evolution within a democratic environment, which required Ennahda to form a dialogue and negotiate with other parties in the system, as well as to communicate with its voter bases and convince them about the necessity of the compromises it made.

Though they seem to be motivated by a similar form of political Islam, this chapter shows that the Tunisian Ennahda and Turkish AKP have some important differences in their ideals, policies and *modus operandi*. Ennahda responded to the challenges of Tunisian politics with an interest in working in tandem with other parties in the system, by holding its ground (especially against the more radical segments of the

⁶⁰ Even to serve the interests of a religiously-oriented group, Ghannouchi argues, Muslims should advocate democracy as the only viable alternative to dictatorship. “On the one hand, democracy represents the hope of salvation and deliverance from exclusion and persecution. On the other, it represents the majority” when Muslims have the numbers on their side, “whereas despotic government represents minority” (qtd. in Tamimi 2001, p. 90).

party and its voter bases) or making compromises when necessary. The political developments of the last four years proved that the party had come a long way since its establishment and it was still progressing as it learned from its more secular allies and its past mistakes and got used to the intricacies of ruling and policy making in the process. While it is still too soon to say anything, this change seems to have taken the country towards a more democratic path. The polarizing issues, distrust and suspicions, possible controversies, and more importantly, endemic problems like unemployment and spillover violence are still there, and they constitute a threat to the country's political system as well as its developing democratic culture and institutions. At the same time, however, the elite's will –and to some extent, ability- to tackle these issues are there as well; and they hold the promise of the Tunisian democratic consolidation against all odds.

The Tunisian success in overcoming the problems of democratic transition, acknowledged by the Nobel Peace Prize Committee in 2015, demonstrates the severe disagreements on the identity of country do not necessarily hinder the democratic progress, as long as state institutions, political parties and civil society organizations are willing to work with one another. On the other hand, hegemonic policies –whether they come from Islamists or secularists- tend to create “a unipolar field that can easily become a place for deadly games of ‘winner takes all’ between rulers and opponents” (Brumberg, 2002, p. 113).

CHAPTER 9 RELIGIOSITY AND DEMOCRACY IN A BROADER CONTEXT

Comparing Religiosities and Pathways to Democracy

By examining the party system religiosity in Turkey and Tunisia, the previous chapters discussed the impacts of different religiosity types political parties adopt on a country's democratic quality. Along the way, they sought answers to the questions such as what role religious parties play in the democratization processes of Muslim majority countries, what difference the types of religiosity make in that process, and whether or not these religious parties play a negative role in the democratic prospects of the Muslim world. Now it is the task of this chapter to investigate four more cases and analyze the dynamics of religious parties and democratization efforts in Albania, Azerbaijan, Indonesia and Algeria. In addition to having greater religious diversity (after all, both Turkey and Tunisia have overwhelmingly Sunni populations), these cases represent the wide variety of religious party types and political behavior associated with these parties. This strategy assures that the cases under consideration are free from selection bias, since they show variance on their independent variables (type of religiosity) and dependent variables (levels of democratic quality). Its main purpose is to demonstrate that party religiosities affect the democratic quality even under very different conditions. Islamic political parties in Algeria and Azerbaijan were heavily repressed by the regime, resulting in a years-long civil war in Algeria and a stalled democratic process in Azerbaijan. In contrast, more moderate Islamic political parties of Albania and Indonesia played a part in these countries' democratization processes, becoming important and flexible political actors over time. Along with the two in-depth studies presented in Chapters 7 and 8, these cases demonstrate that "the structure and

the interaction of political parties are the most significant variables which contribute to the consolidation or failure of the political systems of democratic politics” (Elster, Preuss & Offe, 1998, p. 110).

Using the same analytical framework, the analyses presented below compare the party system religiosities in the aforementioned cases and ask if it is possible to detect similar patterns in these countries with vastly different religious traditions. In this regard, this chapter re-evaluates and further specifies the propositions presented throughout this dissertation project. By looking at party systems where hostile secularism or religious extremism is dominant, for instance, it adds a nuance that was not covered by the Chapters 7 and 8 and further differentiates the impact of party religiosities on a country’s democratic quality. Although a thorough analysis of complex and dynamic forces of democratization at work in each case is beyond the scope of this chapter, the analyses presented here examine how parties in four Muslim-majority countries define their religiosity, shaping voter demands and responding to changing historical circumstances.

To fully explore this relationship, the following sections examine the role of Islamic parties in democratization processes on two dimensions. The first one focuses on the division between secular and Islamist groups in party systems, and the other takes a closer look the prevalence of radical and moderate views within both groups. Clearly the parties in these four countries are products of specific historical and political contexts, and as such, they face different constraints and political opportunity structures. As pragmatism and ideological positions tend to shape the religious party behavior (see Chapter 3 and 4), however, the discussions on cases “highlight the

ambivalent position of religious actors in each phase, as they maneuvered to minimize risks to themselves, or to seize opportunities” along these two dimensions (Villalon, 2015, p. 307). Thus, even though each country offers case-specific lessons, the chapter as a whole provides further evidence for the positive impact of certain types of parties on democratic development and negative effects on extremist parties in a broader set of cases.

The dynamic framework this chapter uses looks at how readily parties adapt themselves to electoral dynamics, respond to unfavorable attitudes towards religion and contain (or support) religious fundamentalism. By demonstrating the ability of some puritanical religious parties to adjust themselves to new political conditions, it illustrates how democracy can flourish even in the most inhospitable terrain, where years of political repression do not cause the religious groups to radicalize but change their radical outlooks effectively. On the other hand, by illustrating the harm the avowedly secular parties can inflict on their countries’ fragile democracies by restricting the participation of religious voters in political processes, it warns against the common trap most secularization theorists fall into when they discuss democratization in Muslim majority countries, which is to equate democracy with secularism. The figure on p.369 (Figure 9-1) illustrates the distinctions among cases in these dimensions.

Albania: European Islam and Religion-Friendly Democratization

Muslim groups in the Balkans usually constitute very interesting case studies on religion and politics, since they illustrate a different form of political Islam, marked by “both a kind of indifference and an exceptional tolerance” as opposed to its more violent forms prevalent in the Middle East (Clayer, 2007, p. 2). As the only post-Communist

Muslim-majority country in Europe with a large non-Muslim minority,¹ Albania presents even more interesting case of “religiously friendly democratization” (Driessen, 2012) with an “atheist past.” This section takes a look at this process and examines how the Muslim majority in Albania contributed to the already difficult process of democratization, rather than hindering the democratization efforts through their unreasonable demands or restrictive attitudes towards others.

The decentralized rule and *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire left the country’s religious plurality intact, but religious plurality was not a desirable quality of a Marxist-Leninist state for the Party of Labor of Albania (*Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë – PPSH*), which came to power in 1944. Aiming for a total control of the country’s social, political and economic institutions, PPSH leader Enver Hoxha was quick to condemn all religious organizations and criticize them for their “backward customs” that were “hindering the spread of socialist culture among the masses” (Hiorth, 1990, p. 16). Under the PPSH’s near-totalitarian regime, the party persecuted all religious groups, confiscated their property, restricted their all faith-based communication, and arrested and executed their clergy.² Though the party did not single out Islam throughout this campaign, Hoxha was particularly ruthless towards Muslims for their collaboration with the “invader” Ottoman imperial powers and their role in “slowing down” the Albanian

¹ The official statistics, albeit egregiously outdated, estimate that seventy percent of the Albanian population adheres to Islam, while Orthodox Christians constitute twenty percent and Roman Catholics the other ten percent (Fox, 2015). The Muslims are also divided within themselves into Sunni and Shia (mostly Bektashi) groups.

² Anti-religious measures were a common feature of the Communist regimes all over the world, but nowhere were they harsher or more extreme than in Albania. “All vestiges of religion, humanity’s great scourge, were to be swept away: religious personal names were to be changed; religious symbols to be removed from cemeteries; linguistic allusions to religious were to be dropped; an new calendar replaced religious holidays with Builders’ Day, Miners’ Day Printers’ Day etc. “ (Janz, 1996, p. 7). A number of sources give a detailed account of these repressive acts (Gardin, 1988; Prifti,1983; Sinishta, 1976), which will not be repeated here.

journey into the heart of Europe (Elbasani, 2015).³ Eventually, following the footsteps of Mao Zedong and his Cultural Revolution, Hoxha declared Albania “the first atheistic state in the world” in 1967, prohibited all forms of religious worship and imposed grave penalties on the practitioners of any religious rites.⁴ “For the sake of the progress of the human species” he argued, “the radically secular society would be pioneered in Albania, if necessary by force” (qtd. in Janz, 1996, p. 4), and with force he ruled until his death in 1985. Only after Ramiz Alia’s succession to presidency could a gradual process of liberalization start, during which people could still be persecuted for their religious adherence, but the system put enough pressures on Alia that he had to lift this ban in 1990.

Under the repressive rule of the Communist regime, Muslim groups could not find any opportunity to participate in politics by using their religious identities. Yet, many accounts of transition period referred to the surviving Islamic clergy, who provided religious services for Muslims and created the first bastions of anti-communism once the country was out of the authoritarian grasp of Enver Hoxha. It was not a coincidence, scholars noted, “that the first demonstrations against the regime took place in the former religious strongholds such as Kavaje and Shkoder, which had also resisted giving up religious practices, at least in the privacy of their homes” (Elbasani, 2015; Clayer, 2003, p. 16). While there is no denying that their religious identities were reduced to familial

³ As stated by the famous novelist Ismail Kadere, “the Albanian path to Europe should be taken without the baggage of Islam, which is not worth it, and only delays the arrival” (qtd. in Sulstarova, 2006).

⁴ Possessing religious literature equaled to three to ten years of prison sentence. If the court decided that the offense was “serious”, however, it could sentence the offender to death instead. Given the capacities of the state, it was impossible to control every single religious activity and impose those rules strictly. Indeed, some believers continued observing religious rules to the extent possible, but all “openly organized forms of religion” came to an end in 1967 (Hiorth, 1990).

ties or the acceptance of the basic tenets of the religion in most places, this role demonstrated that even in Albania, where religion had been criminalized and individualized to the extreme, it “remain[ed] an element of importance in collective representations and on the political scene” (Clayer, 2007, p. 7).

Thus, the democratic opening of 1990 marked a fresh start for the country’s religious communities, as the faith-based organizations from all over the world flooded in the Albanian religious marketplace. In addition to the four main religious groups of the pre-Communist era (Catholic, Orthodox, Sunni and Shia) which re-established themselves with the help of foreign missionaries, religious groups with no prior ties to the country (such as Mormons and Baha’is) engaged in large-scale proselytization efforts, much to the displeasure of already-established communities. Funded by the Saudi petrodollars, Wahhabi groups also went to even the most rural parts of the country and disseminated their ideas on the “true Islam.” With this level of competition to win the hearts and minds of Albanians, it was almost inevitable for religious sentiments to be reflected in the political arena. What was unexpected was the emergence of a relatively tolerant, inclusive and peaceful form of Albanian Islam out of this cacophony of religious voices. Defying the expectation that all these cleavages would create a highly polarized political system with constant confrontations among religious groups and increasing inability to agree on religious policies to solve the persistent problems, the parties in the system managed to mobilize Muslim groups in such a way they were not be in a constant competition with their non-Muslim counterparts or drawn to the radicalism of foreign Islamic authorities.

This was not an easy task, though, and the legacy of a decades-long forced atheism was hard to dismantle.⁵ First of all, the post-communist legal structures in the country expanded religious freedoms, guaranteed the equality of all religious denominations under law and established the separation between the state and religious organizations, modeled after the French system of *laïcité*. The Parliament also took measures to revoke the restrictions placed on the religious institutions and restore their role in social and political life through the funds, subsidies, tax exemptions and representation in the Committee of Cults (Elbasani, 2015, p. 340). The country's transition to democracy also created expectations about the emergence of political parties that would represent the diversity of interests and aspirations in the country. Yet, most parties formed in that era could not go beyond “evanescent gatherings centered on prominent persons who created temporary alliances to achieve their personal aims” (Jano, 2008, p. 88). For this reason, the country's party scene resembled a “two party system” rather than a multiparty system with 45 registered parties, as most of those parties remained dormant. On one side of the political spectrum stood the Socialist Party of Albania (*Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë* – PS), as the unofficial successor of the PPSH, and on the other stood the Democratic Party of Albania (*Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë* - PD), as an umbrella organization of non-communist groups with various interests. Not surprisingly, the representation of widely different groups under these two main parties was both a curse and blessing, making these parties flexible and

⁵ Over the years, the levels of religious attendance and practice plummeted; creating a society that saw religion as an important aspect of their lives only after family, friends, work, leisure time and politics (Fuga, 2004, 167). Furthermore, since the state persecuted the politically active religious groups, only a handful of survived these years of oppression.

susceptible to fragmentation at the same time.⁶ In fact, these party identities were so vague on certain issues that it became almost impossible to distinguish parties from one another through their party programs. Almost all of them used catchy phrases such as “integration of Albania into the EU and NATO,” “reduction of poverty,” and “fighting corruption” without getting into the details of exact policies or strategies to achieve these goals. The party behavior or electoral bases, on the other hand, provided clues about their real positions on various issues, including religion and religiosity.

Although a broad majority of Albanians rejected the proposition that religion, in any form, should be a part of political decisions, the newly liberalized political scene still left some room for the representation of religious interests through legal and democratic means within the party system. Muslim groups in the country were especially eager to use this opportunity, as mentioned above, mainly because they constituted the majority of the population and most of them were politically active. Their well-publicized alliance with anti-Communists during the last days of the Communist regime not only boosted the support for them, but also made them relevant political actors and desirable coalition partners. Seeing that potential, Sali Berisha and his Democrat Party used the religious solidarity rhetoric to appeal to this majority and increase his party’s chances in the country’s first elections. Whereas this inclusive attitude might have more to do with the instrumentalization of religion and religious groups than a genuine interest to represent them, its side effect was to “rehabilitate Islam” and selectively choose the aspects of Islam that would fit the needs of the country at that point. After all, in spite of the

⁶ Whereas the coalitions the Albanian Agrarian Party and the Human Rights Union formed with the Socialist Party (before its electoral defeat in 2005) and the Democratic Party (after its electoral victory in 2005) illustrates the extent of flexibility, the Socialist Party’s two competing factions (one pro-Nano, the other pro-Meta) shows how superficial these party identities could be.

widespread support of Muslims, the political elite of the Democratic Party was aware that an “Islamic party” identity could cost the party significant electoral support and coalition potential, especially among the non-Muslim segments of the population. Berisha’s extensive references to Bektashism, a branch of Shia Islam that incorporates Christian and heterodox Muslim elements, were not surprising in that sense. By creating a rhetoric around which the country’s Muslims could gather without offending other religious groups, the Democratic Party won the support of the Muslim majority that had been marginalized for decades under the communist rule.

The PD’s religious appeal was not limited to the Muslims, however. Berisha, albeit of Muslim origin, actively tried to promote his party among the country’s small Orthodox minority, albeit with limited success. The country’s small Christian Democratic Party also formed an alliance with the Democratic Party, and Berisha worked towards improving the relations with Vatican, which he saw as a part of the process of European integration.⁷ Even if the Democratic Party used religion only instrumentally in programs, it gave the party a chance to distinguish itself from its anticlerical political rivals, and convinced the voters (at least, to some extent) that the party was more respectful to their particular identities. Encountering a wide array of newly established political parties, the religious electorate used these largely symbolic religious clues its cooperative interactions to distinguish the PD from its rivals. After all, the mutual relationship between the party and religious groups meant that the PD could use the

⁷ During his visit, Berisha told the Pope that “Your visit, holy father, represents great moral and support for Albania in its efforts to be integrated into Europe and to endure the sacrifices necessary for the building of a different future” (qtd. in Vickers & Pettifer 1997, p.110).

common unifying religion to boost his legitimacy, and that the Muslims could create a space for themselves in the new political environment in exchange of their support.

Considered from this perspective, the Democratic Party facilitated the long overdue participation of Muslims in the political process. Nevertheless, it is not unusual for none-too-democratic elites to make alliances with other unlikely democracy supporters to make reforms and establish institutions that will create “democracy without democrats” (Salame, 1994). In that regard, the success of Democratic Party lied in its ability to project itself as more “democratic” than Islamist, by including other religious groups in its ranks and extending their appeal to any group that shared their “anti-Communist” political stance.⁸ This integration opened up new discussions on what Albanian Islam was going to look like and how it was going to contribute to the democratization efforts. Against the large number of radical Islamic groups trying to disseminate their ideas and advance their interests in the country, Albanian Muslims created the framework of an “Albanian-Islamic synthesis,” though their newly-gained access to political power. Similar to that of Turkey, Albanian-Islamic synthesis referred to the “indigenous” Islam, which protected the Albanian identity for centuries by preventing the country’s “Hellenization, Slavization” and now “Arabization” (Clayer, 2007, p. 18). This framework underpinned the interfaith dialogue, religious tolerance, peaceful coexistence and national unity as a counterweight against the social conflicts,

⁸ Once this strategy worked and DP achieved political power in 1992, Berisha continued these policies by establishing close relations with other Muslim majority countries (Albania’s membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference was a result of those close relations) and linking Albania’s future with that of Albanians from Kosovo and FYROM, who distinguished themselves in their respective countries through their religious identity. The party’s religion-friendly approach, in this regard, became an official state policy (Elbasani, 2015).

in which Islam was going to help Albanians treat each other with respect, protect each other's rights and find a common ground in policy debates. In addition to selecting the aspects of Islam that would be compatible with European values, this understanding stood as a bulwark against the influence of more fundamental Islamist groups. Not giving into the pressure or the riches of the latter, a high-ranking religious official declared that [Albanians] "do not need others to teach [them] faith because [they] have it [their Islamic faith] for 500 years" (Sytari, 2011, p. 46).

Although this drew some criticism from the followers of radical sects and graduates of Islamic universities abroad for not representing "true Islam," the "Albanian-Islamic synthesis" changed the image of Islam as the religion of the oppressor (i.e. the Ottomans, "the Turk") to a religion of Albanian patriotism. It effectively delegitimized the fundamentalists in the eyes of most Muslims, displayed their support for the democratization process and reassured other religious communities that they had no intentions to impose religious restrictions or "Islamize" the country. Through that framework, local actors –both religious and political – "adapted Islam to Europe" and created a "non-fanatical" and "non-fundamentalist" religiosity in the end (Oktem, 2010, p. 2). As the Islamic community successfully spread this image and established itself as Muslim representatives that embraced the whole Albanian society, the appeal of extremists on either end of the spectrum shrunk. In the end, neither Muslim groups rushed to found exclusivist political organizations to represent their interests, nor did the secular politicians take measures to prevent their participation in the political process.

While this moderate stance drew initial voter support in the elections, the Democratic Party's record in government indicated that the party could not respond to

the all problems of the country with the same efficiency. To some extent, the party had trouble changing the authoritarian structures and ruling mechanisms of the Communist era, it failed to deliver on its promises of economic development, European integration and further democratization, which constituted the general concern of the Albanian electorate. The collapse of pyramid schemes in 1997 resulted in economic and political instability, against which the PD proved ineffective, brought the Socialists to the power, with an Orthodox Christian Fatos Nano as the prime minister in 1998.⁹ While there was no love lost between the Socialists and the Muslim groups of Albania, the latter did not lose their newfound position in the state completely during this period. Surely, new government brought many religious groups and organizations affiliated with the PD under strict state control, using the increasing presence of Islamic fundamentalists in the country as a pretext, and closed down schools and mosques with alleged ties to these radicals.¹⁰ Yet, most Muslims actually supported this campaign against the fundamentalists, which they found “alien” and “too extreme” for their society. They preferred peaceful co-existence with Albanians from other religious groups to the membership in a global but fundamentalist Islamic community, which Babuna (2012) attributed to the “common suffering of all religious groups under the communist dictatorship” despite a history of religious tolerance that dates back to the Ottoman times (Poulton, 1997). Moreover, when the PS disbanded the Islamic networks closely allied with the Democratic Party, this move was seen as a political decision to diminish

⁹ For Jano, the party identities are so fluid in Albania that “the vote is not a yes for the party program but . . . a *no* for the party already in power” (2008, emphasis in original)

¹⁰ Launching a campaign against Islamic fundamentalism, the party arrested the well-known Islamists in the country, sometimes extraditing them to other Muslim majority countries in the Middle East. In order to reverse the alleged Islamic revival Albania was going through, the party also “froze” the Organization of Islamic Conference membership.

the influence of its main political rival, rather than one that targeted the Muslims specifically. Since the Socialist government relied on international assistance and intermediation to sustain itself, the level of political supervision that came with this assistance made it impossible for the party to exclude Islamic groups from decision-making altogether. In return, the Islamic community reassured the Socialist Party that they were willing to work with the government towards the twin goals of democratic consolidation and European integration. They never questioned or challenged the secular structure of the state, or mentioned any goals to give greater role to Islam or Muslims in the public sphere.¹¹ They were very well aware of the electoral benefits of not excluding Muslims from public sphere; therefore, they acted strategically to ensure their survival and political relevance under a less-than-friendly government, used frequent references to democratic norms, rights and freedoms, equality and minority protection in their statements and behavior, and mobilized their followers for the achievement of these goals (Clayer, 2011). With the return of the PD to political power with the elections of 2005, they became even more enthusiastic and optimistic about the further democratization, not just because Berisha promised to fight corruption and develop the economy, but also because the results ensured “a more equal playing field for all religious communities” (Elbasani, 2015). With their vision of European Islam on the rise and antagonism towards Islam in decline, religion did not seem like an obstacle for the country’s democratic development. If anything, the Albanian parties believed, it

¹¹ As quoted in Endersen, Muslim leaders of Albania declared “if the community or one’s own religion hypothetically departs from secularism . . . it’s because it has been hijacked by politics and anti-Albanian schemers who represent false religion or anti-religion. One’s own, true religion is fundamentally immune to politicization and therefore remains uncorrupted.” (2010, p. 205).

might have a positive effect by bringing people together as consecutive governments struggled with deteriorating economic conditions and crises in Europe.

In spite of its almost-totalitarian past, limited resources and vulnerable geopolitical situation, Albania made noteworthy progress towards democratic consolidation. Not coincidentally, the approach of the parties in the Albanian system towards their religious (particularly Muslim) communities has been one of tolerance, to which Islamist groups responded with their support for democratic process. Surely this is not to say that Albanian democracy is consolidated now or that the country owes this progress to Muslim politicians. Nor does it imply that all Muslim communities engaged in the post-Communist democratization processes, or that years of secularism made them more tolerant and inclusive. As the case of Azerbaijan indicates, the way parties handled the issue of religious participation, and the behavior of these religious groups in the country's political scene, made a big difference in post-Communist countries' transition to democratic regimes.

Azerbaijan: The Struggle to Shape Islam in the Post-Communist Sphere

As many observers of Communist regimes noted, Communism as an ideology almost always fought against religion, though its degree and intensity changed spatially and temporally. In terms of carrying the post-Communist legacy of marginalized religion within a Muslim majority context, however, Albania is not an exception. Following the demise of the Soviet Union, religion became an important and obvious alternative to communism in all the predominantly Muslim countries of Central Asia (Hunter, 2001, p. 65). Since then, these states have been trying to devise ways to reconcile their Islamic identity with their secular ideals with varying degrees of success. Nevertheless, the role of Islam or Muslim political actors varied to a great extent across the post-Communist

countries. After all, Central Asian Republics with Muslim majorities (such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan) are among the most authoritarian systems in the world, and only a few countries with this legacy managed to conduct free and fair elections since the fall of Communism in their states. Azerbaijan is one of these countries that went through a democratic opening, even though its low democratic quality indicates that the country is far from being considered a well-functioning democracy. This low democratic quality is mostly the result of foreign –and overwhelmingly radical- ideologies (mostly from Iran, Saudi Arabia, Dagestan, and Chechnya) about the role Islam should play in politics, and the position other parties took against the challenges Islamists created in recent years. The extremist positions the Islamists took in the political scene made the Azeri parties in government more repressive and less open to the idea of religious representation in politics, closing down the paths to future inclusion and heartfelt commitment to democratic ideals from all segments in the society.

Though Islam had been dominant in the Azeri life and politics for centuries, the country's religious identity went through dramatic changes with the establishment of Bolshevik power in the twentieth century. Unlike its Albanian counterpart, the Soviet regime did not go so far as to criminalize religion,¹² but, seeing Islam backward and reactionary, it started a large anti-Islam campaign to replace *homo islamicus* with a *homo sovieticus* devoid of all ethnic and religious loyalties (Hunter, 2013). Especially after the consolidation of Stalin's personal power, it embarked on a project to eradicate

¹² Rather than using heavy-handed policies to regulate religious life in Azerbaijan, the Bolsheviks first let the Azeri people "reach socialism through their own path since Islamic notions of politics and society did not contradict Marxism" (Swietochowski, 2002, p.70).

Islam's legal and educational presence in citizens' lives. With the help of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan (*Azərbaycan Kommunist Partiyası*), the regime restricted the practice of Islam and used state authority to repress religious groups and break the influence of religion and religious figures.¹³ As it arrested, exiled or even killed the members of Islamic clergy, the party replaced them with largely uneducated leaders with conspicuous Soviet ties to regulate the religious affairs in the Islamic community, which turned out to be a brilliant move that delegitimized the whole *ulama* class in the eyes of the pious Muslims for years to come.¹⁴ In the end, the decades of Soviet influence, atheistic propaganda and state-sanctioned secularism oppressed and privatized religion, leading people to adapt and dissimulate in order to keep cultural Islam alive -a practice known as *taqiyya*.¹⁵ Instead of adopting secular values and leaving behind their primordial attachments as the Soviet regime envisioned, many Azeris retained their loyalties to religious identities and resented the state institutions for the brutal repression of these identities. While this practice ensured that there would be no a direct clash between the Communists and practitioners of Islam, it also associated Islamic revival with political change in people's minds.

To the dismay of religious groups, however, the fall of Communism did not restore Islam to its "rightful place" in Azeri politics. Although the country witnessed a

¹³ Valiyev reports that there were "960 Shia and 400 Sunni mosques in the country" in 1929, "but by 1933, only 17 –eleven Shia, two Sunni and four mixed (where Shia and Sunni Muslims prayed together) survived" (2005, p.4).

¹⁴ Because these imams acquired a reputation as Communist spies and police informers, most Muslim believers stopped attending prayers in the mosques that remained open (Swietocowski, 2002). As the following paragraphs will indicate, this feeling and distrust in religious authorities lingers on in the country.

¹⁵ Though *taqiyya* tradition long existed in Islam, it had "deeper roots in Azerbaijan" due to its Shia heritage and became "a necessity for survival under the Communist totalitarian rule" (Swietochowski, 2002, p. 72).

rapid increase in the role of religion in public life following the establishment of an independent Azerbaijan, it was mostly due to the influx of religious organizations, including the fundamentalist kinds from Iran and Saudi Arabia, to the country to fill the religious vacuum.¹⁶ With the loss of its well-trained clergy and years of accumulated knowledge on Islam, Azerbaijan was open to all types of influence in its religious scene, and the Shia and Salafi groups seized the opportunity. Against the highly charged Islamist rhetoric of these *garasakallilar* (lit. black-bearded people), however, political parties' clumsy attempts to use Islam as a point of legitimacy (such as Heydar Aliyev's staged photo-ops in mosques and other party leaders' well-publicized trips to Mecca) seemed ridiculous and unconvincing to pious Muslims in the country (Valivey, 2005). Disillusioned with the country's former communist/currently democratic political elite, they preferred the promises of salvation, sense of belonging, revival of Islamic heritage and the framework of dissent these groups provided for them.

Surely, the new state and its political parties were fully aware of these trends and the importance of religion for the large majority of Azeris. The parliament passed laws to protect religious freedoms and return all illegally seized property to religious institutions in order to secure Muslim support for the state/nation-building process. Yet, they were the only policies that met the demands of religious groups in Azerbaijan. Other than

¹⁶ Although Albania also received a huge number of foreign religious organizations after its democratic opening, to such an extent that Albanians assumed a foreigner in their country was either a journalist or a (Clayer, 2007, p. 8), the Islamic foundations, mosques and schools in Azerbaijan had distinctly radical characteristics. The interests and the constraints of the religious groups were similar in both countries, yet Azerbaijan's strategic geographical position (Valiyev, 2005, p. 7) meant that that religious organizations in Azerbaijan had more ties to the well-known radical groups in Iran (such as Hezbollah and the Imam Khomeini Fund), Saudi Arabia (numerous Wahhabi and Salafi movements) and the Caucasus (Islamist militia in Dagestan and Chechnya).

these changes on paper,¹⁷ the high levels of religiosity among people¹⁸ did not translate into the representation of religious interests in the political scene. Newly established political parties with their manifest adherence to secularist ideals remained uninterested in the expansion of religious electorate and did not make any effort to promote religious groups' participation in politics. In fact, in most cases they actively tried to prevent these groups from taking part in the country's political debates, knowing that any ties to Islamists would limit their parties' appeal given these groups' increasing fundamentalism. In that regard, the parties took distinctly different attitudes towards the religious groups' inclusion in the political processes in Albania and Azerbaijan, where state repression of religion was at similar levels.¹⁹ Whereas the Democratic Party of Albania used its ties with religious groups in its civil-confessional political identity, parties in Azeri political system stayed away from specific commitments to religious groups and used vague references to secularism, religious freedoms and democratic rights in their party programs.

It is important to note at this point that Azeri parties' hostile secularism was not necessarily a product of decades long Soviet indoctrination. Nor did it offer an evidence for the ongoing effect of modernization theories on the Azeri political thinking. It was mainly based on the fear that political Islam, if left unchecked, had a potential to turn the

¹⁷ Although the constitution and the law on Freedom of Religion prevent the state from repressing religious groups or intervening in their affairs in any way, the state always had an upper hand in its dealings with religion.

¹⁸ In fact, a Baku-based research organization revealed in 2005 that approximately a quarter of the 1200 randomly-selected survey respondents favored the application of Sharia in their daily lives, even though the same study discovered that the majority of Muslims in the country did not even know the main differences between Sunni and Shia (Collier, 2006, p. 21).

¹⁹ Surely, success here is relative: Albania does not claim to be the world's most democratic country, neither does Azerbaijan act as the totalitarian state with all kinds of religious repressions.

country into a theocratic state. Given Taliban dominance in Afghanistan and political developments in neighboring Iran, the political elite found this threat quite real and did everything in their power to prevent such extremism in their own state. At the same time, however, this “Islamist threat” constituted a perfect opportunity for the parties to limit the political arena. Whether in power or in opposition, the major parties in the system used it as a pretext to protect their privileged status in the political scene and counter all the claims for further democratization. Heydar Aliiev’s New Azerbaijan Party (*Yeni Azərbaycan Partiyası –YAP*), for instance, did not differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate opposition movements and exploited these fears and concerns to prevent new parties’ entry into politics instead, consolidating its dominance in the system. Other parties used different mechanisms to suppress the activities of religious groups, arrested religious actors and closed mosques, citing the fear of Islamic radicalism as the reason. To illustrate, Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (*Azərbaycan Xalq Cəbhəsi Partiyası*) warned the country’s Western allies that this rise had been threatening Azerbaijan’s model of secularism and integration with Europe, and asked their help for the crackdown of Islamists in the country. The leader of Equality Party (*Musavat*) similarly defended his decision to support Aliiev’s incumbent party for the elimination of Islamists in the country, which inevitably emboldened Aliiev to ban the political activities of even moderate religious groups without any reasonable basis.

Under these circumstances, no religious party was able to emerge and act as a counterweight against the increasingly authoritarian attitudes of secular-leaning political parties.²⁰ Their images were further tainted with real or alleged ties to Iran and Saudi

²⁰ The post-Communist Azerbaijan’s only political party that was closely associated with Islamist doctrine, the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan, was banned due to its real or alleged ties to the “Iranian mullahs” and its

Arabia, two countries seen as the hotbeds of radical Islamist movements. Secular parties of Azerbaijan used these connotations both to boost their support and fight actively against the “Islam on the rise” that needed to be contained by any means necessary. Minor groups with radical Islamist tendencies captured the public imagination and created a lot of anxiety among secular groups. Besides encouraging politicians to express their antireligious opinions with more ease and comfort, this reaction closed the doors to dialogue, negotiation and a possible compromise between secular and Islamist groups in the country.

Yet, the adverse effects of such hostility and political exclusion were not limited to the lack of representation or participation in political arena. Religious groups’ exclusion from political processes entailed their exclusion from the debates on the role of religion in Azerbaijan’s future as well. Whereas political liberalization in Albania brought about a “democratization of religion,” in which a number of different religious groups presented their opinions on certain issues and people discuss, analyze, question and challenge them to find out whose views should be represented in the political arena, the hostile secularism of Azeri politics never let such debates take place. More importantly, whereas the lack of an established *ulama* class gave the Albanian Muslims an opportunity to evoke the years of peaceful coexistence between different religious groups and create a “European Islam” with an emphasis on common characteristics, tolerance and inclusiveness; the same deterioration of religious learning and Islamic authority created a vacuum in Azerbaijan that was filled with non-indigenous and radical

leader Aliakram Aliyev was arrested for his “antiseccular activities” in 1995. The party, founded in 1991 but never officially registered with the state, offered an anti-systemic alternative that appealed to the large number of regime opponents, but its official goal of implementing Sharia played in the hands of the regime and gave it a reason to deny an official status to party and arrest its leader Movsum Samadov along with the party activist Elchin Hasanov on bogus charges.

ideas about religion and its role in the political sphere. Salafists from neighboring regions, particularly the ones fighting against Russia in the Chechen territories, claimed to represent the “correct Islam”, the one that took the prophet Muhammad’s life as its point of reference, and advocated the adoption of these doctrines in order to recreate the glorious past. A few Islamic scholars (such as the imam of Shia Jumma mosque, Ilgar Ibrahimoglu, who studied in Poland and wanted to emulate the Solidarity movement in Azerbaijan) tried to combine their religious authority with political activism, only to find out that the government found this mix threatening and quickly intervened to “protect the country’s secular political system.”²¹

Eventually, the state’s own efforts to create a class of conservative and subservient religious clerics backfired (Hunter, 2001) and the state-sanctioned Islamic organizations failed to play the moderating role the Albanian religious authorities played. Either lacking religious knowledge to interpret the contemporary events and offer solutions accordingly, or openly propagating the governing party and its policies in religious gatherings and Friday sermons, this class of religious actors prevented the evolution of religious rhetoric, or the development of an “Azeri Islam” which would be compatible with democracy and liberal values. Particularly, the head of the Administration of the Caucasian Muslims (*Qafqazya Müsülmanlar İdarəsi* –QIM) Haji Allahsükür Pashazade, himself a notorious figure with well-known ties to the KGB, lacked credibility in the eyes of Muslim groups as a corrupt government official. Driving

²¹ Even though the Azeri Islam has a longer history of relative tolerance (after all, most of Central Asia was Islamized shortly after Islam appeared in the religious scene) and a richer religious tradition, there was no attempt in Azerbaijan to promote a local Islam against the fundamentalist teachings of the foreign religious sects. The school curricula did not include any references to religion, did not even teach the meaning of secularism, and basically left the students who were interested in religious issues open to the influence of any religious group with enough means to reach them.

religious groups “toward unofficial figures. . . often with radical tendencies” (Hunter, 2013, p. 311), he failed to create any meaningful discussion on the role of religion in the public sphere, mainly because his drinking and gambling habits did not present him as a religious authority whose views should be taken seriously. Other than supporting the politicians with very obvious secular leanings and giving them legitimacy, it looked like religious actors had no function in the country’s political life. The link between the two, or rather the dependence of these institutions on the state, left no room for political figures with religious backgrounds to develop on their own or grow strong enough to challenge the authoritarian control of the state. To an ordinary Azeri citizen, the official board that represented all religious interests in the country, the High Religious Council of Caucasian Peoples (*Qafqazya Xalqlar Āli Din Şurası*) did not look like anything but a shady organization, the sole purpose of which was to legitimize the incumbent party decisions, give them a stamp of approval and make government propaganda by using Quranic texts and tradition of *sunnah*.

Not surprisingly, this type of exclusion proved to be detrimental to the country’s democratic quality, because, as Diamond and Morlino pointed out, “democratic quality is high when we in fact observe extensive citizen participation not only through voting but in the life of political parties,” especially “in the discussion of public policy issues, in communicating with and demanding accountability from elected representatives” (2004, pp. 23-24). Azeri parties’ resistance to the inclusion of religious groups in politics raised lots of questions about the compatibility of such illiberal policies and restrictions on participation with democratic norms and rules.

Nonetheless, there is one more dimension of this exclusion that needs to be considered. By alienating the Islamists that would have favored accommodation, though, the state provided fertile ground for the fundamentalists. This hostility towards religion and ineffectiveness of secular parties in the system increased the popularity of radical sects. Because the government labeled every dissident as an Islamist extremist, religious groups in Azerbaijan didn't feel the same urge and need to cooperate with the secularists to resist the extremists and challenge their influence in the country's politics. On the contrary, the fear and suspicion on the one side, and the resentment on the other, increased the tensions between religious groups and secularist even further. Blaming Aliyev's party YAP for their pain and suffering, religious groups held onto their Islamic identities tightly and played the Islam card to gain the support of external forces (such as Iran) to advance their cause against that of the government. In addition to intensifying the domestic discord, these two seemingly irreconcilable worldviews, one represented in the political scene but not the other, increased the tensions between these two groups and brought significant levels of confrontation to the party system.

Consequently, both this level of religiosity and the government's efforts to contain it had important implications for Azerbaijan's democratic quality. The real or perceived threats urged the secularists of the government to take a harsh stance against ordinary and even non-political Muslims, which curtailed their rights and strengthened the authoritarian tendencies. More importantly, the Azerbaijani authorities invoked "the Wahhabi threat" to ban the opposition movements and lost their legitimacy in the eyes of the Azeri population, most of whom describe themselves as devout Muslims. Not surprisingly, the country's democracy scores suffered. While it was undeniable that

some Islamist actors had a theocratic authoritarian vision for the country's future, the banning of moderate and/or apolitical religious groups ruled out Muslims' participation in decision-making processes and their peaceful engagement with politics completely. This kind of exclusion made the country susceptible to the influence of foreign interpretations of Islam, most of which carried radical undertones. Rather than associating themselves with the state-controlled Islam, seen as corrupt and impure, most Azeris preferred the "ideological purity" of fundamentalists and their desire to bring back the glorious days of Islamic civilization. Eventually, "every wave of repression had further radicalized the Islamic movements and creates a more receptive atmosphere for radical ideas" (Hunter, 2001, p. 77). As each group held onto its positions tightly and saw any type of concession as a sign of weakness, any chance of reconciliation diminished. Unfortunately, so did the quality of democracy.

Indonesia: "Civil Islam" and Democratization

As the world's largest Muslim democracy and one of the successful cases of "civil Islam," Indonesia embodies a pluralistic version of political Islam and challenges most stereotypes about the role of religious groups in politics (Hefner, 2000). Just like the other two cases described above, Indonesia hosts different belief systems and different types of religiosities with their modernist and traditionalist strands.²² As such, Indonesian political Islam had never been static and united in its demands for a Sharia-based state. In fact, as many scholars point out, the political divisions among different Muslim groups had sometimes been as big as the divisions between Islamists and non-

²² According to the latest census available (2010), 87.2 percent of the population describes themselves as Muslim (either as Orthodox Muslims, or *abangan*), while the 9.9 percent says they're Christian and 1.7 percent says they are Hindu. Buddhists and Confucians make up the other 0.2 percent.

Islamists (Brumberg, 2002; Heffner, 2000; Pepinsky, 2014). Unlike the Azeri political scene, however, Indonesian party system reflected the great diversity of the country's citizenry, as political parties exist at almost every point of the religiosity spectrum, ranging from pro-Sharia Islamic parties to the secular/areligious ones.

Although the variety of states and societies in the archipelago managed the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity for centuries, pre-independence Indonesia's religious plurality became a major source of contestation with the withdrawal of colonial forces from the country. The discussions over the place of Sharia in the new country's legal documents, as well as the role of Islam in the new Indonesia's identity, heightened the tensions and pitted the country's prominent groups against one another. While the more religious groups insisted that the constitution should declare Islam as the state religion and implement Sharia²³, the nationalist leadership chose not to include state support for Islam²⁴ and to make only a passing reference to "belief in a singular God" (Hefner, 2000, p. 42) in the country's famous Five Principles (*Pancasila*) of governance.²⁵ Instead of settling the issue of state religion, however, this decision fueled intense debates among the Islamists of varying degrees (modernists like *Masyumi*, or traditionalists like *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama*) and more secular-leaning groups (secular nationalists, communists and socialists). Though the

²³ The Islamist forces agreed on their demands for state to adopt *Sharia*, but diverge considerably when it comes to how exactly the state should enforce *Sharia* law.

²⁴ The first principle in the original text, i.e. "belief in God with the obligation to implement *Sharia* for its adherents," known as the Jakarta Charter, was later dropped due to the fears that it would offend the non-Muslim segments of the Indonesian society and even lead to their secession from the state. To this day, Islamist forces see this move as "a last minute betrayal of the Muslim majority by the Christian and secularist 'minority'" (Hefner, 2011, p. 290).

²⁵ Those five principles are "belief in the one and only God," "a just and civilized humanity," "the unity of Indonesia," "democracy guided by the inner wisdom of unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives" and "social justice for all people of Indonesia" (qtd. from Baswedan, 2004, p. 673).

elections of 1955 shattered the dreams of each group to impose its vision for Indonesia on the others, these divisions set the stage for the later contests in Indonesian politics.

The country's switch to *Demokrasi Terpimpin* (better known as Sukarno's "Guided Democracy") in 1959 ended the short-lived period of liberal democracy, and the notorious September 30 events in 1965-1966 brought Sukarno regime to an end with massive bloodshed, during which half a million Indonesians were killed for having Communist sympathies. When Achmad Suharto grasped the political authority with the help of the Indonesian Army,²⁶ there was only a trace of democracy left in the country. And within this context, almost total elimination of the Communists strengthened the hand of conservative groups, including the Islamist forces such as *Nahdlatul Ulama*, but tainted their image due to their participation in the massacre.²⁷ Suharto's main strategy, which was to "suppress Muslim politics while encouraging Muslim piety," aimed to deal with this legacy and consolidate the President's power vis-à-vis other state institutions and civil society organizations. While doing that, however, Suharto never refrained from instrumentalizing Islam for his political aims and plans. First, adopting a secular and exclusivist approach, his New Order (*Orde Baru*) regime suppressed all the political channels for the Islamist demands. He banned the largest modernist Islamic party of 1950s, Masyumi (*Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia*) and merged all Islamic parties (Masyumi's successor Parmusi, Nahdlatul Ulama, Perti and PSII) under the United

²⁶ Operating under the doctrine of *dwifungsi* (dual function), the military became one of the main pillars of the New Order regime. In addition to providing coercive power to Suharto, the military routinely intervened in the day-to-day affairs of government, just like their Turkish counterparts did through their presence in the country's National Security Council.

²⁷ Many scholars of Indonesia provide brilliant and extensive accounts of this traumatic beginning of the New Order regime, but NU's role should be briefly noted here to explain its relative political apathy under Suharto rule.

Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* –PPP) as a part of his plan to “simplify the parties” in the Indonesian political scene.²⁸ Taking a step further in 1980s, the regime forced existing parties to make *Pancasila* their founding (and sole) principle (*asas tunggal*).²⁹ Though presented as a *fait accompli*, the regime’s insistence on the parties’ adoption of secular-nationalist *Pancasila*, in which “the belief in the God” was embedded, meant that even the self-proclaimed secular parties could not exclude religious groups from the political process. It also absorbed Islamist forces into the political mainstream by making sure that they would be tolerated “as long as they obeyed the regime’s rules and did not challenge it directly” (Aspinall, 2010, p. 21).

Accordingly, the parties had to be open to all Indonesians from all belief systems and they would be responsible towards the needs and demands of all religious constituencies. *Pancasila*, in that sense, expanded and guaranteed the religious pluralism in the country. Furthermore, it had been an invaluable learning experience for the Islamic parties, since they understood that a narrow and exclusivist interpretation of Islam, and a push for the implementation of Sharia, would not only cost them precious support and useful political alliances but also turn into dangerous tools in the hands of a powerful authoritarian president. Though “extremism” and radical outlooks paled in comparison to their Middle Eastern counterparts³⁰ to begin with (Tomsa, 2012), the

²⁸ Likewise, all nationalist, Christian and secular parties (including Sukarno’s PNI) were merged under the Indonesian Democracy Party (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* –PDI).

²⁹ This level of diversity made internal divisions inevitable in the long run. Even though PPP remained as the only state-authorized Islamic party of that era, its adoption of *Pancasila* and its decision to change its party symbol from Islam’s Holy Shrine (Ka’ba) to a star that represented the five principles, however, cost the party its legitimacy and a huge number of supporters. The groups associated with Nahdlatul Ulama, which ceased to exist as a political party in 1973 but still had a huge social presence, withdrew their support.

³⁰ In the Indonesian context, aiming to change the *Pancasila*, the “untouchable” state philosophy” with a sharia-oriented regime was “a radical departure from the political mainstream” (Tomsa, 2012, p. 489).

Islamist organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and *Muhammadiyah* eventually dropped their former exclusivist positions and began to promote pluralism and tolerance as a way to achieve their “Islamist” aspirations. In particular, Nahdlatul Ulama’s pluralist and charismatic leader Abdurrahman Wahid defended the minority rights and multiculturalist ideals at the risk of offending NU’s more conservative voter bases. These changes in the Muslim leadership and their political agendas empowered the opposition forces to work together and put pressure on Suharto regime, which then facilitated their inclusion in the debates to shape the country’s future and democratic transition.

Realizing the potential of Islamist politics, Suharto also switched gears towards the end of 1980s and started to sponsor Muslim activists and Islamist legislation proposed by them, such as “Basic Law of Religious Justice” (1989/7), which extended the jurisdiction of Islamic courts, or the “Compilation of Islamic Law” (Presidential Degree 1991/1). He supported more extremist but regime-friendly Islamist groups against the increasingly popular NU in early 1990s, especially after the news about an impending “red-green alliance” between NU’s Abdurrahman Wahid and PSI’s Megawati Sukarnoputri broke out, and polarized the political stage along different interpretations of political Islam this time (Baswedan, 2004). Nevertheless, economic crisis, as well as ethnic, religious and separatist violence, marked Suharto’s last years in the presidential office and New Order regime finally collapsed in 1998.

For more than five decades, as the above synopsis suggests, the contestation between the proponents and opponents of an Islamic state in Indonesia continued, although each period had its own dynamics and neither side was able to declare a

decisive victory in the end. This level and type of competition led to authoritarian resilience (Azerbaijan) or democratic backsliding (Turkey), and the competition among Islamic parties usually brought about competitive outflanking and more extremism in the party system as they tried to outdo each other in terms of their Islamist credentials, as illustrated by the Bangladeshi party system (Riaz, 2014). In Indonesia, on the other hand, it led to the realization that party programs based solely on the role of Islam in society would not be a viable election strategy and that Islamic parties needed to expand their voter bases by campaigning on other (and more relevant) political issues as well. The Islamic parties of Indonesia gradually became more pluralist and more tolerant, motivating their members not around extremist ideals of a Sharia-based state but around a democratic, peaceful and inclusive vision of the Indonesian society.

The fall of Suharto regime in 1998, in this sense, opened a new chapter in the country's politics, changing the dynamics between Islamist and secular parties and creating a competitive political arena that enabled these groups to come together and negotiate power-sharing arrangements (Brumberg, 2002). Yet, this democratic transition was by no means a smooth process, and in some cases the bloodshed evoked the memories of Indonesia's previous regime transition in 1966. Against all odds, however, the country had four cycles of free and fair elections since the fall of the New Order in 1998 and normalized the presence of Islamic parties in the political scene, without leading to any further conflicts between Islamist and non-Islamist forces.

As the regime lifted the mandatory adoption of Pancasila, 21 Islamic parties (out of 48 parties in total) competed in the 1999 elections,³¹ and 4 of them, including two pro-Sharia parties of the Indonesian party scene -the long standing defender of the Jakarta Charter, PPP and Masyumi's successor PBB (*Partai Bulan Bintang* – The Crescent Moon and Star Party)- gained representation in the parliament. Within this competitive environment, the PBB distinguished itself as the main defender of the state enforcement of the Sharia law, whereas the PPP's broader voter base made the party wary of Islamist dogmatism and demands for a big constitutional change that would lead to divisions within. The results of 1999 elections showed, however, that Sharia-based state did not have a large appeal for the Indonesian electorate (the combined vote share of PPP and PBB was approximately twelve percent) and the support for these pro-Sharia parties declined even further in the elections of 2004 and 2009. Instead, the centrist and more moderate parties that had no interest in formal incorporation of Sharia into the Constitution, such as the National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* – PKB) and the National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional* –PAN), expanded their voter base at the expense of pro-Sharia parties in the system. The former quickly gained grassroots support with the backing of Abdurrahman Wahid and as the official party of the NU,³² and the latter maintained its pluralism by championing the interests of its Muslim and non-Muslim supporters alike, in spite of its formal and informal ties with

³¹ Of the 141 newly established political parties, more than one third declared their Islamist tendencies to the electorate through their party programs, but this number significantly declined as only 20 Islamic parties qualified to run candidates in the 1999 elections.

³² Three other parties (People's Awakening Party –PKU, Nahdlatul Ulama Party –PNU, United Indonesian National Solidarity Party –SUNI) claimed to represent the NU members, but the NU leadership declared the PKB as the sole official party (Baswedan, 2004, p. 673). Hamayotsu explains in detail the ties between PKB and NU, but argues that the party's inability to institutionalize and translate Wahid's liberal vision into meaningful politics led to its decline (2011).

the *Muhammadiyah* movement.³³ Likewise, Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan –PK*), which started its political life as an exclusivist and puritanical Islamic party inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood (Hamayotsu, 2011; Hefner, 2011), rebranded itself as the Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera –PKS*) and ran on non-religious issues in 2004 elections. Despite the suspicions over the party's genuine interest in plurality and democracy,³⁴ the party defied expectations that a party with such an extremist background would not survive in Indonesia's increasingly secular party system or convince its followers to vote for its moderate Islamist ideology without splitting the party. As the vote share of Islamic parties collectively shrunk³⁵ and new secular parties in the system, such as Gerindra (Greater Indonesia Movement - *Gerikan Indonesia Raya*) and Hanura (People's Conscience Party - *Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat*), gained momentum, experts on Indonesian politics started to ask if the post-Suharto elections signified the progressive decline of political Islam in Indonesia. Others disagreed with that point, by arguing that political Islam was still alive and well to the point of forcing nationalist parties like the New Order's ruling party Golkar and Democrat Party (*Partai Demokrat –DP*) to adopt "secular – inclusive" positions (Tanuwidjaja, 2010). Through a process Aspinall calls "superficial Islamization" (2010), ostensibly secular parties and

³³ The leader of the party, Amien Rais, is the former leader of the *Muhammadiyah*, and the majority of the PAN elite served in the *Muhammadiyah* in one way or another.

³⁴ Due to their initial stances and subsequent evolutions, PKS is often compared to Turkey's AKP. The parties' organizational structures, discipline, focus on intraparty democracy and commitments to rhetoric of democracy are surely similar, but PKS and AKP's positions in their respective party systems greatly differ from one another, putting different types of pressures on parties (secularist vote players and a polarized party system in Turkey; and competition with other religion-friendly politics and fighting corruption in Indonesia) and making them respond to the demands of their electorate in different ways.

³⁵ In 2009, the aggregate vote share of the Islamic parties (PBB, PPP, PKS, PKB and PAN) was less than 26 percent. Compared to the country's first free and fair elections in 1955, where Masyumi and NU gained approximately 40 percent, the election results led many analyst believe that political Islam was in decline in Indonesia.

leaders began to endorse a “Muslim democracy” and back more and more religion-friendly policies in an attempt to accommodate Indonesia’s pious and conservative voters.

Even though the extensive literature on these parties (e.g. Tomsa, 2012; Hasan, 2012; Hamayotsu, 2011) give a detailed account of how each one of them adopted moderate stances in order to survive in the competitive electoral and religious arena,³⁶ the overall impact of this moderation had been that all the parties in the system demonstrated their commitment to democratic norms and kept their distance from the extremism on both sides of the spectrum. While the Islamic parties convincingly distinguished themselves from the radical and violent Islamist fringes (like *Jemaah Islamiyah*, which carried out a number of terrorist attacks on tourist destinations in 2000s) and showed their commitment to the democratic rules of the game, “secular nationalists” like Golkar and Sukarnoputri’s PDIP did not advocate a strict separation of religion and politics but accommodated the needs and demands of Muslim groups to some extent. After all, almost all Golkar leaders had Islamic credentials³⁷ and the party elite mostly came from Santri (orthodox, as opposed to the local and syncretic *abangan*) backgrounds. As such, they understood, welcomed and upheld the demands and aspirations of Indonesia’s Muslim groups as long as they did not contradict *Pancasila* and the goals the party set for itself (Baswedan, 2004; Buehler, 2008). Even the less-friendly PDIP had large Muslim constituencies and formed a party affiliated Islamic organization in 2007 in addition to its –usually informal- alliances with Islamic parties

³⁶ Though insightful, this chapter’s scope and focus on party systems does not allow a deeper analysis of each party, interactions among them and their individual contributions to the democratic process.

³⁷ For instance, Golkar’s presidential candidate for 1999 elections, B. J. Habibie was the chairman of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association –ICMI.

and movements. PD, similarly, used the method of “soft-selling Islam” before the elections of 2009, campaigning around the idea that Islam was crucial for their fight against corruption (Chernov-Hwang, 2014). Thanks to their pragmatism or genuine desire to represent all segments of the society, Indonesia’s political parties managed to transform their political platforms along more inclusive and centrist lines.³⁸ Those who did not share these moderate stances and decided to form their own exclusivist parties mostly remained in the fringes.

Amongst the religious extremists, Islamist pluralists, secular nationalists and “illiberal democrats” of the Indonesian politics, the NU emerged as the key actor with a kingmaker status due to the popularity and legitimacy it enjoyed. While Wahid’s personalistic rule during his presidency (October 1999-July 2001) did not live up to the expectations about greater democratization, his resignation brought a power-sharing coalition led by Sukarnoputri. The cabinets from then on represented nearly all the major parties in the national legislature, and when Sukarnoputri lost the 2004 elections due to rampant corruption, sluggish economic growth and unemployment, the country’s next president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono maintained the tradition of having diverse interests included in the government and building alliances across parties. Within this context, Indonesia’s religious parties constituted, just like Villalon described in the case of Senegalese Islamic parties, the “new voices [that] challenge established authorities” and created “a proliferation of debates on the interpretation of religious truths” and “the

³⁸ This does not mean, however, that the parties are on par with their Western counterparts in their adherence to democratic norms. After all, both Islamist and non-Islamic parties (such as Golkar and PD) supported the anti-pornography law of 2008, which many saw as the breach of civil liberties. Similarly, secular political parties failed to protect the Ahmediyah group, which most Muslims saw as heretical, from physical attacks and failed to protect their rights to practice their religion in the face of Islamic parties’ demands to prevent them practicing their beliefs publicly (Tanuwidjaja, 2010, p. 42).

meaning of secularism in a democratic system” (Villalon, 2010, p. 389). The negotiations, compromises and gradual accommodation meant that the inclusion of Indonesia’s religious parties within the system would not necessarily lead to political extremism, irreconcilable policy positions or constant clashes between the groups on either end of the religiosity spectrum. Thanks to this normalization process, Indonesia boasts one of the highest scores of democracy in the Muslim world. At this point, rather than religious parties or their Islamist agenda, corruption and ambitious communal and political elites seem to stand in the way of higher levels of democratic quality in Indonesia.

Algeria: Between Islamic Extremism and Secular Skepticism

Since the Islamic Salvation Front’s (*Front Islamique du Salut* – FIS) electoral success in 1991 was the first instance that drew attention to the rise of Islamists in Muslim majority countries, much has been written on the “dangers” of Islamist politics, validity of religious messages for democracy and their relation to violence and years-long bloodshed. Evaluating the long-term implications of the FIS extremism and secular responses to this legacy, this section focuses on the electoral participation of two sets of Islamic parties, Mahfoud Nahnah’s *Harakat Mujtama al-Islami* (later renamed *Mouvement de la Societe de la Paix* -MSP) / *Harakat Mujtama al-silm* (HMS) and Abdallah Djaballah’s *Ennahda/ Mouvement du Renouveau National* (MRN) / *El-Islah* ³⁹ as well as their implications for the development of a democratic regime in Algeria.

³⁹ Like the parties in Turkey’s *Milli Görüş* tradition, Djaballah’s and Nahnah’s parties changed names and party programmes a couple of times, either to comply with the legal requirements or to deal with the internal crises. For more information on the issue, see Entelis, 2001; Takeyh, 2003; Bouandel, 2003; Driessen, 2012.

Starting from its independence in 1962, a single party, the National Liberation Front (*Front de Liberation Nationale* - FLN), ruled Algeria and dominated its politics with the help of the military and petroleum-based state economy. Thanks to its post-independence legitimacy and popularity, the party under its leaders Ahmad Ben Bella and Houari Boumedienne established a Western (mostly French)-oriented secular system and envisioned a socialist state. While the transformation they expected to see did not involve uprooting Islam from the social and political life,⁴⁰ the state still tried to contain religion (and use for its own legitimacy when possible) through its Ministry of Religious Affairs under the guise of regulating mosques and educating imams. In spite of all their efforts to take the control of religious life, however, FLN's political elite remained helpless against the advent of Algerian Islamists in the universities and the "free mosques," i.e. the makeshift places of worship independent of the Ministry control. Criticizing the state interference in religion and the FLN's reluctance to "recognize the rightful place of Islam in politics," the Algerian Islamists started to oppose the FLN regime and its 'insufficiently Islamic' characteristics (Driessen, 2011, p. 236). As their influence grew, Boumedienne's successor Chadli Bendjedid used an accommodationist strategy and made policy concessions to the country's Islamists, hoping that the regime would be able to co-opt them or reconcile the plurality of identities in the long run. In return, however, the Islamists of Algeria used the Free Mosques to which Bendjedid turned a blind eye to mobilize large numbers of people disillusioned with the FLN regime through Friday sermons and prayers.

⁴⁰ In fact, it adopted a nominal Muslim identity where the role of Islam in society (but not in politics) was strengthened with "laws making it illegal to sell alcohol to Muslims and for Muslims to raise pigs; declaring Friday as the national day of rest; and by promoting Arabic-speaking education which required all students to study Islamic sciences" (Driessen, 2011, p. 231).

Even though the petrodollars managed to hide the economic effects of corruption and unsustainable development policies for years, declining oil prices and deteriorating economic conditions in 1980s culminated in mass protests and rallies against the government which left the FLN with no choice but to respond to the crisis with some degree of political liberalization. In the face of this diversity of expectations in the Algerian society, the FLN first tried to repress the differences among people through its authoritarian rule, and when that strategy failed, experimented with a degree of political opening and pluralistic politics, which –in an unexpected twist of events- led to a bloody civil war that lasted years.

Before the country drifted into a political chaos, however, it carried all the hopes and promises of an easy and untroubled transition to democracy. In addition to appeasing the disenchanted Algerian population through an electoral process, the FLN expanded freedoms and encouraged the formation of new political parties, which changed the rules of Algerian political game to a great extent. With the political arena open to competition, the incumbent FLN lost its dominant status in the country's politics, and the Islamist leadership lost no time to form its own party to compete for the same role. Amidst the popular desire for change, their party FIS emerged as the main contender for the political power, even though they were Algeria's most unlikely democratic candidates at that moment. Exclusivist and puritanical from the beginning, the Islamic movement still enjoyed a huge grassroots support thanks to its relations to the anti-colonial movement and ties to the mosques. For the disaffected and alienated youth of the country, these radical views and the "salvation" promised by FIS had a certain appeal. Many Algerians thought, however, it was this popularity, rather than a

sincere interest in democratization, which motivated the party to accept the procedural norms of democracy. The statements and sermons of its fiery leader Ali Belhadj, who regarded democracy as something heretical (*kufir*),⁴¹ added a new layer to these suspicions among the supporters of political liberalization. Even for the FIS supporters, these concerns were not unfounded, because the party's "Islamification from above" program (Kepel 1994) foresaw the party's capture of democratic organizations to take the political power away from pluralistic secular parties in the system and the establishment Sharia based institutions in their stead. Interestingly enough, though, the regime did not invoke the restrictions on the newly promulgated Algerian Law on Political Parties, which banned "intolerance", "sectarian practice" and the parties established on "exclusively confessional basis" against FIS' entry into the political scene.

This is not to say that the party univocally demanded an Islamic state and endorsed violent means to achieve that goal. In reality, it had to manage a considerable internal division (between its hardliners and softliners) concerning the party program and policies. Even though the FIS elite consisted of figures known for their radicalism, such as Belhadj, the party also had its moderate wing, led by leader Ali Abbasi al-Madani. In every chance he got, Madani reassured the Algerians that the party respected the democratic rules of the game and that if elected they would not impose Sharia on secular Algerians.⁴² In between these two sides existed more ambiguous

⁴¹ "In Islam, the sovereignty of the divine law; in democracy, the sovereignty of the people, and of the scum and charlatans. That which is forbidden is forbidden, even if an order arrives from all the parliaments of the earth. The only right the people has is to choose a Muslim sovereign who governs by the Sharia" (qtd. in Al-Anaf, 1991, p. 93).

⁴² "We say that the elections are determinant for everyone. No matter what the results are, we will respect the majority even if it is only made up of one lone vote. We consider, in effect, that he who has been

Islamist figures like Abdallah Djaballah, who did not explicitly authorize violence and the imposition of Sharia but did not accept the legitimacy of pluralist and secular (or “laico-communist” as he called them) political parties either.

In this sense, the Islamic parties’ positions on the issue never became anything but ambivalent for many Algerians. Owing to all those inconsistencies, the party as a whole not only failed to convince the majority of Algerians but also actually offended the hardliner party supporters. In fact, the party seemed to have a polarizing effect on the society even before the parliamentary elections took place.⁴³ Following the local elections of 1990, in which FIS received more than half of valid votes, the situation got worse: the party zealots started to harass women who did not abide by the “Islamic dress code” on the streets and the FIS-affiliated mayors started to close down music venues and movie theaters to enforce a gender segregation (Boumezbar & Djamilia, 2002; Laimchichi, 1992; Tlemceni, 2003). Acting as the moral police force against secular groups and raising concerns about “the green peril,” the party gave the impression that it was simply amassing political power to undermine the embryonic democracy from within. In Mortimer’s words, “the insensitivity of some of the Islamic leadership to the tolerance and freedom of conscience that must underlie any society as undeniably pluralistic as that of Algeria threatened the very premise of the [democratic] experiment” (1991, p. 592).

elected by the people reflects the will of the people. In contrast, what we will not accept is this elected person not acting in the interests of the people” (qtd. in Burgat & Dowell, 1993, p. 131).

⁴³ Mortimer reports that in March 1990, an Algerian newspaper conducted a telephone poll after the party candidates made their public appearances, and FIS’s Madani got the unexpected score of 3.5. Looking closer, the journalists noticed that he “received 199 zeros, and 104 perfect tens,” drawing strong reactions –both good and bad- from all sides of the public.

Unfortunately, secular parties in the system did not have much to offer to the FIS supporters, and the parties in the middle did not have the power or appeal to play the mediator or provide a common ground for secular and Islamist voters. FLN, on the other hand, further antagonized many voters with its blatant attempt to win the votes through gerrymandering. Protests against the FLN government before the elections of 1991 quickly brought the country to the brink of a political meltdown, and the army intervened to restore order and find the balance between secular and Islamist demands.⁴⁴ During this period, some non-Islamic parties decided to boycott the elections, on the grounds that they were not given enough time to prepare, which sealed the FIS victory against FLN in the elections of December 26, 1991. The party won approximately 48 percent of the votes and 188 of 231 contested seats in the parliament. Nonetheless, for both the regime supporters and the opponents, these results were quite unexpected and alarming. The FLN elite feared that FIS, thanks to its parliamentary majority, would change the country's constitution to form an Islamist state. Likewise, the non-Islamist proponents of a democratic regime doubted that FIS could really invest in the country's democratic future, promote the values of tolerance or protect the rights and liberties of all citizens, including minorities. For them, the election of FIS represented a simple change in the ruling class in an otherwise authoritarian regime.

In this highly charged political atmosphere, the rapid rise of FIS to political power ignited a full-scale confrontation between the supporters and opponents of the Islamist group. Even though most experts agree now that this high percentage had more to do

⁴⁴ With this mediation, the Islamists agreed to give up their election strategy of mass mobilization and demonstrations, and Bendjedid appointed a new prime minister, who then promised to conduct free and fair elections.

with protest votes than the endorsement of FIS's Islamist extremism, those who did not share FIS's vision for the country believed that the party was going to use its electoral victory to establish a theocratic state a la Iran, and did everything in their power to prevent FIS from taking power. Thus, cutting FIS' political tenure short, the Algerian state and the military annulled the results of December 1991 election, arrested the leaders of the Islamic party and repressed all FIS activity. Rather than discrediting extremism and encouraging pluralism, these events made the relations between secular and religious groups more confrontational. First small militia groups, and then the Armed Islamist Group (*Groupe Islamique Armé* –GIA) took up arms and engaged in terrorist activities against the state. FIS leaders neither endorsed nor condemned this violence and guerilla warfare, but the state brutality against the FIS members in prison made the party elite less than enthusiastic to play a role in this crisis. Fights on the streets, provocative remarks from both sides, and the involvement of the military forces exacerbated the situation and Algeria slid into a civil war in which several hundreds of thousands people perished.

Ironically, since FIS did not have a chance to undermine democracy within, it was FLN that brought the end of a democratic experiment in Algeria (Burgat, 1997). Because the state forcibly excluded all the Islamists –both radical and moderate- from political arena, the religious groups were able to appeal to voters' Muslim identities, Islamic values and moral sensitivities while mentioning “the existential threat” this exclusion posed to Islam as a whole. As in the case of Azerbaijan, this exclusion made religion a more salient factor in the country's politics because its presence was never normalized in the political sphere. One might speculate, just like the proponents of

“potholes theory of moderation” do, a FIS-dominated government would have decreased the appeal of radical Islam by revealing the party’s political and economic incompetence and showing Islam could not solve the country’s *all* problems. Under different conditions, FIS might have even followed the footsteps of the Tunisian Ennahda or Indonesian PKS to moderate its positions and cease to be a single-issue party. At the same time, however, even within the party and even immediately after the elections no one thought that the party’s access to political power would lead to anything but an Islamist state in Algeria. After all, while the religious authority the party claimed helped FIS to legitimize itself in the authoritarian political arena, it prevented the party from severing its ties with the radical groups and re-establishing itself as a “moderate/democratic party with Islamist leanings” to deter the military intervention, take the country back to the democratic process or prevent an impending civil war.

The extremist religiosity, in that sense, not only raised the concerns of secularist forces in the system but also limited the party in several ways. It associated the party with Salafists and restricted its options and political flexibility to enter into coalitions. Nor could FIS present itself as a better Islamist alternative against the more extremist segments (as Ennahda did in Tunisia, by offering a moderate alternative to the country’s religious groups) as their ideological commitments made them virtually indistinguishable from the extremists. In this sense, the religious “magnet” of FIS acted “very much like a real magnet: it [had] the disposition to both attract and repel” (Van Kersbergen, 1994, p. 35). It attracted the religious group support but it closed the doors for new electoral appeals or alliances with secular parties, and increased the military’s concerns about its Islamist agenda.

This background had important implications for the country's current party system and the contemporary relations between religious and secular groups. At the end of the day, most politicians (and voters) today have witnessed the horrors of the Algerian Civil War and suffered under the authoritarian power structure in its aftermath. Moreover, from then on, the Algerian state's perception of the Islamists ranged from cautionary suspicion to open hostility. The democratic forces in the country joined the state in its suspicions and forwent their demands for a regime change due to their fears of an Islamist takeover. During that time, they learned to tolerate (if not support) autocratic leaders in charge, turning Algeria into an "autocracy with democrats" (Brumberg, 2002, p. 111).

Realizing that they could not rule the country with an iron fist indefinitely, however, powers-that-be promised an end to the years-long violence through a reconciliation process with the Islamists. After three years of authoritarian rule, the state allowed the Islamists to compete in the elections that resumed in 1995. This promise opened up the political arena to political competition and multiparty system once again, in which two Islamic parties (Djaballi's Ennahda and Nahnah's Movement for a Peaceful Society -HMS) rose to prominence. Given the horrors of the civil war and the tumultuous history of religion and politics in the country, both parties knew that they could not rally around the FIS' idea of a *sharia*-based state without drawing the criticism of the not-so-pious Algerians. Furthermore, because both parties came alive with some government backing, they could not afford to openly complain about the party in charge for not being Islamist enough or make Islam as an all-encompassing feature of their political stances. In this regard, compared to the FIS's "Islam is the solution" rhetoric and its use of

violence (albeit as a last resort), these new Islamic parties manifested more open, tolerant and inclusive political positions.

However, for many voters, this commitment to an “Islamic democracy” is just a façade for the Islamic party elites, whose acts in the past clearly indicated their desire to establish an Islamic state rather than a democratic one. Nahnah’s image as a moderate party leader who almost always renounced violence⁴⁵ and efforts to assuage secular groups’ fears by stating his party’s interest in expanding political participation and promoting power-sharing coalitions had little effect on people, especially because he later admitted that the regime he envisioned for Algeria was not democracy but a “shuracracy.” Nahnah’s shuracracy meant that the country would be ruled according to the Islamic tradition of *Shura* (consultation) and that the regime could restrict the participation of non-Muslims and Muslim minorities on the grounds of Islamic legislation and morality (Driessen, 2012). On the other hand, Djaballah took an even more decisively hard-liner stance on the issue and never completely rejected the violence and radicalism associated with the FIS and its leadership. In fact, by building his party’s programme almost solely on Islam, he closed the doors for alliance and power-sharing to the non-Islamists. He implied in more than one occasion that the party would not recognize the legitimacy of non-Islamic parties in the system. In both cases, the Islamic parties’ statements and behavior showed no sign of respect for the country’s plurality or “freedoms for beliefs, expression, and association” (Driessen, 2012, p. 173).

Traumatized by the experiences of civil war and political violence that came with it, the secular parties did not show any interest in negotiating with their religious

⁴⁵ The exception being Nahnah’s personal efforts to recruit and send Algerian Muslims to wage jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

counterparts and making alliances to ensure a democratic transition (and the overthrow of the authoritarian regime if necessary) either. Not surprisingly, these extreme measures created a combative competition among the parties, where defeat of the rival party became “more important than the survival of democracy itself” (Tan, 2010, p. 98). Gradually, however, Algerian Islamists joined the Presidential candidates in their quest for political power and adapted themselves to the country’s harsh political environment. Both Nahnah and Djaballah decided that it would be wiser and more advantageous to incorporate their parties in the political apparatus. Thus, they became more eager to adopt a framework for democracy not just in words but also in spirit, make some compromises on ideological purity and gain access to the political arena with little or no backlash from the secular groups and parties in the system. Knowing that “many [Algerians] were afraid of an Islamic party”, the HMS spokesperson referred to this decision by stating “we are a civic party and do not try to make religion a totalizing aspect of our politics like the FIS did” (qtd. in Driessen, 2012, p. 181). Likewise, the political elite of Djaballah’s Ennahda criticized the party’s refrain from endorsing democracy or softening its stance on the role of religion in politics, which led to so much internal division that the party split into two fractions. Djaballah founded el-Islah and continue to emphasize Islam as the one and only solution to everything, yet later on, even el-Islah realized the utility of moderating his position and appealing to non-Islamist groups in the country. Right before the elections of 2004, Djaballah declared, “diversity is positive and perfectly sanctioned by God, and it is only the misunderstanding of Islam which leads people to say that all must be of the same political color” (qtd. in Driessen, 2014, p. 162). Then, in a move that surprised everyone, el-Islah entered into a pre-

coalition alliance with the country's most secular party Rally for Culture and Democracy (*Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Democratie* – RCD), which Djaballah criticized for its ultrasecular views years ago, to oppose President Bouteflika's reelection campaign. Though a temporary alliance, this partnership demonstrated how far el-Islah was willing to go make changes in the existing political conditions through legal and accepted means.

While this ability to negotiate and compromise when necessary did not indicate a full and sincere commitment to democratic ideals, it still constituted a big step in the right direction. Over time, both HMS and el-Islah started to formulate their priorities and policy preferences along non-Islamic issues, such as economic conditions and electoral laws, instead of demanding a change in the country's constitution to implement Sharia law. "Algeria is a Muslim country, the call for prayer can be heard, Ramadan is observed, women increasingly wear the veil, so talking about the Islamization of society when the country is already a Muslim country is a false problem," said the former HMS member of parliament for the region of Béjaïa (qtd in Boubekour in Salih, 2009, p. 171). After the Islamic parties toned down their demands for Islamization of the society with the claim that "Algeria is already Islamic" (Boubekour in Salih, 2009), however, they made no other effort to extend their democratic credentials, work with their rival groups to consolidate democracy or represent the groups that were not affiliated with them. They even came to the point of losing the religious groups who supported the FIS and its ilk, as they found these parties' new positions increasingly treacherous. In their eyes, that the secularist National Rally for Democracy's (*Reassemblement National Democratique*- RND) Zeroual and FLN's Bouteflika governments tried to fill this vacuum

by building mosques, training imams, criminalizing proselytism and spreading their own political ideology⁴⁶ added insult to the injury. Rather than decreasing the significance of religiosity in the country's political affairs, these events facilitated its further politicization and risked its re-radicalization. With the co-optation of the Islamic parties into the regime, political parties lost their ability and credibility to represent the growing religiosity in the country.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, it did not take long for the Islamic parties to notice this trend in religiosity. As they realized the potential effects of growing religiosity on election outcomes, they felt the need "to align themselves more with popular (religious) sentiment and away from the secular values the promoters of democracy" (Villalon, 2010, p. 383). In fact, some groups within the existing Islamic parties responded to this trend by reversing their parties' previous moderation, drifting away from their parties' pluralistic ideals and adopting harsher stances. Unfortunately, this rhetoric resonated with the hardliners in the society who felt betrayed by the Nahnah and Djaballah leadership, and encouraged more Islamic party members to revert back to exclusivist forms of political Islam. This was surely an attempt to restore the religious authority they realized they had been losing, but it also undermined the little trust they had built with non-Islamist groups. Under these circumstances, the party system could not foster the

⁴⁶ President Bouteflika is known to use mosques to advance his political interests and enforce Islamic morality to discipline the dissenters. The high profile cases, in which a woman was sentenced to ten years in prison for "showing disrespect to the Quran" and two soldiers were imprisoned for smoking during the month of Ramadan" showed the extent of measures the president was willing to take in order to enforce his religious authority.

⁴⁷ Both World Values Survey and the Gallup World Poll indicate an upsurge in religiosity, measured by the mosque attendance and the increase in the percentage of those who agree with the statement "religion is important in my life." Country experts also note a noticeable growth in religious symbols in public (beards for men, and Islamic style dresses for women).

culture of negotiation, compromise and deal-making that made the neighboring Tunisia relatively more successful in its democratization.

While the Algerian experience presented here demonstrates that in some cases parties with Islamist agendas may use the democratic rules and institutions instrumentally to create “proto-hegemonic parties” (Gunther & Diamond, 2003), it also shows their exclusion from the political process with the assumption that they will dismantle democracy altogether decrease the chances of a country’s achieving a democratic status even further. Thus, “the democracy derailed” in Algeria does not suggest that Islamic parties should not be allowed to take part in the party systems “to prevent election-related violence and, in the worst case scenario, a repeat of the events that unfolded in post-Weimar Germany” (Tomsa, 2012, p. 487). Having said that, whether Algeria will overcome these suspicions and resentments and move towards a civic Islam in the future remains to be seen.

Hostile Secularism, Piety and Pragmatism

It would have been easy to conclude this analysis with a simple and oft-cited mantra, “context matters.” Surely, context does matter, and in fact, some researchers think that it matters so much that they label analyses label each one of these cases as “exceptional,” with the implication that the idiosyncratic factors determine the quality of democracy and that there is no pattern when it comes to how democracy works in Muslim majority countries (Pepinsky, 2014). The synopses given above point out to the case-specific dynamics regulating the political arena and shaping the relations between secular and religious groups, as well as their impact on the processes of democratization. Considered collectively and comparatively, however, one can see there is more to the levels of democratic quality than the idiosyncratic factors that are

used to explain the success or failure of democratic regimes in these countries. Furthermore, the case studies show that even the self-proclaimed Islamic parties in the same country, despite being exposed to the same pressures and enjoying similar political benefits, can take different paths in this process.

Thus, the cases at hand present important lessons with regards to the ways in which political parties in these countries “have drawn on ‘democratically beneficial concepts’ in reconciling Islam with democracy” (Villalon, 2010, p. 375). As such, they contribute to our understanding of democratic consolidation in Muslim majority countries, as well as the role of Islamic parties in it. Generally speaking, the high levels of religiosity in a party system present both risks and opportunities for democratic development. If a civil-confessional religiosity is dominant, religiosity should be conducive to a higher quality of democracy by incorporating almost all groups into the political system and reducing the likelihood of polarization between different groups. If an extremist (be it religious or secular) position dominates the party scene, however, it presents all kinds of problems for the country’s democratic development. It prevents the participation of “outgroup” members into political process, it opens up the political arena to more radical ideas, it decreases the trust in political institutions and it leaves no room for meaningful dialogue, negotiation and compromise, which constitute the give-and-take mechanisms of a democratic regime. While the literature discusses this last point with regards to the Islamist regimes, it tends to disregard the impact of hostile secularist parties, which harbor the same exclusivist ideas, on democratic quality; and it was the purpose of this paper to show that with the cases presented here.

Additionally, the cases analyzed in this chapter demonstrated a few important points to expand on the lessons from Turkey and Tunisia. First of all, while “fundamental paradox of participation” may lead to the election of parties and candidates that do not respect democracy and its institutions, there are not enough grounds to prevent the participation of religious groups in the democratic process. The large majority of contemporary Islamic parties accepts at least the procedural rules of democracy and adjusts their party programs to reflect these changes in their approach to democratic institutions (Schmitter & Karl, 1991). While some of these parties turn out to be genuinely committed to further democratization, most of the time this change arises from the parties’ realization of their electoral potential and their pragmatic decisions to compete for power. It must be noted, however, although it is the first necessary step, Islamic parties’ pragmatic decisions to participate in political process and moderate their stances do not guarantee an increase in democratic quality, simply because a lip service to democratic norms and procedures is not sufficient to make democracy work. Unless the party go through the necessary steps for a behavioral moderation -in the form of recognizing the legitimacy of their political rivals, accepting the diversity of opinions with regards to religion and politics, making compromises, establishing alliances with parties in the other end of the political spectrum and the like, it will be just as easy to reverse the moderate positions, and make religiosity a polarizing factor in country’s politics.

The cases present another important lesson in this regard, which usually gets lost in debates about “moderation-through-inclusion” thesis. Moderation is not a linear process and it may be reversed over time, especially if the party faces a threat to lose

its core constituency or decides that its emphasis on ideological purity will put the party in a more advantageous position. In this sense, “reverse pragmatism” (Tomsa, 2012) through increasing intolerance and radicalization can be an equally viable election strategy if the party does not think it can convince its voter bases of the merits of having inclusive stances. Alternatively, the party can choose this strategy if it believes that Islamist credentials and conservative policies please the electorate more. After all, when the party adopts more moderate positions, it appeals to the outgroup members (secularists or members of other religious groups) and liberals within their group, but it means the party’s religious ideology will be watered down sooner or later with their participation. On the other hand, if the party elite reverses this process, it saves itself from internal divisions and its appeal among more puritanical supporters increases to a great extent. The party’s position and status among other parties (i.e. its place in the party system) usually help the party decide (and sometimes dictate) which course of action to take.

	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Radical</i>
<i>Religious/Islamist</i>	Indonesia	Algeria
<i>Secular</i>	Albania	Azerbaijan

Figure 9-1. Classification of party systems in the cases described in Chapter 9

CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

Islamist Parties and the “Free Elections Trap”

“Democracy in Europe was often expanded and consolidated by its enemies,” argues Stathis Kalyvas at the end of his instructive book on the rise of Christian Democracy, “this lesson should not be lost, especially among those studying the challenges facing democratic transition and consolidation in the contemporary world” (1996, p. 264). Contemporary scholars of the Islamic world, however, do not seem to have taken Kalyvas’s warning seriously, as their work continue to describe religious parties as hostile political actors whose influence should be limited by any means necessary. Situating their arguments in the realm of political theology, they still explain the “durable authoritarianisms” of Muslim majority countries with this influence of Islam in political life, disregarding the fact that these countries had a huge diversity of regime outcomes despite sharing the same belief system.

As opposed to this trend, this dissertation questioned whether this logic held against empirical analysis, and asked what influence Islamic political parties really had on the quality of democracy in Muslim majority countries. With that, this project sought to put the issue in a more comparative perspective, extend the breadth of the studies on Islamic parties beyond the Arab states of the Middle East, challenge the assumptions about the compatibility of Islam and democracy and change the misperceptions of the indispensability of secular politics for democratic regimes. In making this argument and analyzing the frequently overlooked ways in which Islamic parties contributed to political processes in their countries, it demonstrated over and over again that the low democracy scores in Muslim-majority countries were not a result of Islam as a religion

or its “inherently authoritarian” outlook to political events, but the consequence of different types of religiosity dominant in the party systems of these countries.

In this respect, previous chapters noted the significant differences in Muslim majority countries’ democratic qualities, and explained why and how the religiosity of party systems yielded such different results. As they explained more in detail, the research drew on the literature that identified the political parties as the key actors in democratization processes, since parties created the necessary mechanisms for people to express their identities and voice their demands, and helped the development of a “political society” that “contest[ed] the legitimate right to exercise control over public power and the state apparatus” (Linz & Stepan, 1996). As such, “the structure and the interaction of political parties” emerged as the “the most significant variables which contribute to the consolidation or failure of the political systems of democratic politics” (Elster et al., 1998, p. 10).¹ By assessing the role of these different types of parties in democratic transition, consolidation and even de-democratization processes, this research project tried to shift the focus of discussion from long-standing biases against religious parties to the empirical analysis of their contributions to this process, as well as to the nuances among them.

The plurality of interpretations of Sharia and religious texts had always been a part of Islam, but the literature rarely investigated the different ways in which the parties interpreted the modern challenges and responded to them. Too invested in the rather

¹ Surely, the dynamics created by political parties and affected by their type of religiosity do not shape the democratic outcomes on their own, but interact with other “determinants” of democratization -such as economic development and natural resource wealth (Barro, 1999). Despite the effect of these “usual suspects,” however, the analyses presented in the fifth chapter indicated a general influence of the type of religiosity dominant in party systems on the quality of democracy of the country in question, regardless of these interactions.

pointless exercise of trying to determine whether Islam was inherently illiberal and authoritarian, many scholarly works on the issue missed the main point, which was to see if the Islamic parties acted according to the rules of the game once they came to the power, or actually used the system to implement their religiously inspired agendas at any cost. This dissertation project aimed to set the record straight in that sense, by showing how misleading it would be to cast the politics in the Muslim majority countries either as completely religious party-driven processes or as a zero-sum game between two irreconcilable Islamist and secular groups. As this kind of an overly simplified assessment could not account for the wide variety of ideologies, it had been the goal of this project to change the emphasis of these issues away from prejudices, apologies, abstract concepts that have no basis in empirical world, and more to systematically tested theories on religion and its impacts on political life.

Revisiting the “One Man, One Vote, One Time” Argument

In the post-Cold War period, during which democracy became a norm, political parties of the Muslim world could not ignore the calls for political liberalization. Even though most religious groups previously rejected democracy for “prioritizing man’s laws” over the divinely-ordained ones, brief democratic openings that came with “the fourth wave” of democratization created an opportunity for all groups to re-evaluate their positions on democracy and opened up new debates on how Islamic principles could be adapted to the political needs of the modern era. Within a few years, the advent of democratic ideals changed the Islamist ideology and policies so much that even the extremists of the past realized the merits of electoral reforms as well as the utility of declaring their commitment to democracy. This commitment was often more strategic than genuine, but it still ceased the Islamists’ calls for the implementation of Sharia law

and allowed them to reap the benefits of democratization as the most organized groups with arguably coherent ideology. With that, they drew many voters from incumbent but unpopular parties even when voters do not fully embrace the Islamist ideology. In their attempts to hold this constituency, they also struggled to reconcile their previous hostility towards democracy with their current participation in democratic institutions. Accordingly, they dealt with the issue of freedoms and rights in a more concrete manner, and engaged in dialogue and negotiations with their political rivals, seeing that Islam might not be the only solution to all problems their countries were facing.

Yet, their statements and actions did not convince everyone, not least the secular modernizers of the Muslim majority countries. Due to all the fundamentalist groups that had used Islam as a pretext for their violent behavior, those skeptics expected all Islamic parties to participate in politics only to hijack the transition process and establish their dominance to impose Sharia, never allowing the second round of elections and causing the democratic experience to be just “one man, one vote, and one time.” Neither the ambiguity in religious doctrine with regards to the forms of governance, nor wide variety of policy positions Islamic parties advocated put a halt to the fears and suspicions on these parties. The different types of religiosities these parties did not make any difference in the treatment of these parties, either. The institutional constraints, electoral pressures and changing political scenes that forced Islamic parties to adjust themselves to new realities got lost in the debates over the uncertainty surrounding their “true intents” and “hidden agenda.” Authoritarian leaders of Muslim majority countries happily contributed to this discourse by citing the need for certain cultural prerequisites before allowing religious parties to form and function and holding

free and fair elections, forgetting that in many Western countries “the ballots came first,” and “democratic mechanisms predated a democratic political culture” (Kurzman, 1998, p. 9).

This research aimed to hold these taken-for-granted narratives in the literature to close scrutiny, by moving beyond the issue of whether or not these parties truly committed themselves to democratic reforms. While its framework did not disregard the importance of intentionality (Kalyvas, 1996), it did not solely dwell on the presumed “secret plans” of Islamic parties to “destroy the democracy from within,” either (Blaydes & Lo, 2012). Acknowledging that “commitments to democracy are more often born of environmental constraints than of true belief” (Masoud, 2008, p.19), this project did not start the analysis with the assumption that these parties had adopted these moderate and inclusive positions only superficially, or only to use them to their advantage later on. Instead, it looked at the practical aspects of the question and examined the demands and opportunities created for these parties by regular elections. Within this context, the project estimated the sincerity of the party by “look[ing] beyond [the] party’s strategic behavior and focus[ing] on various dimensions of ideational change” (Schwedler, 2006). In addition, it paid particular attention to the party behavior at crucial moments (such as decisions to step down when they were voted out of power, or their stance towards the incorporation of Sharia as the main source of law) to see if the party’s democracy and tolerance rhetoric matched to its deeds on the political arena (Wickham, 2004). After all, merely accepting the institutional rules, while still important, could not be expected to lead to significant changes if the party continue to endorse violence to achieve its goals and discriminate against those who did not share their belief system. Along these lines,

the research project distinguished the parties that appointed (or nominated) “outgroup” members to important party positions from those who categorically rejected cooperation with non-Islamist groups in the religiosity scale it created.

With that distinction in mind, this dissertation created a six-point religiosity scale, which ranged from religious extremism to hostile secularism, to reflect the diversity of religiosity types parties adopted in the political arena. In contrast to the predominant trend in literature to subsume parties as different as Algerian FIS and Indonesian PKB under the same conceptually stretched category, this religiosity scale accounted for the intra-group variances with regard to whom these parties represented, how they appealed to these groups and how willing they were to implement religious agenda. To fit every party in the appropriate “ideal type,” it carefully studied the ideas and goals of each party, their political positions vis-à-vis the other parties in the system and the inclusion of social groups outside of the core constituency in their party ranks. Chapter 3 provided the necessary information on this typology, as well as on the characteristics of each religiosity type in great detail, and then Chapter 4 expanded this discussion to the possibility that parties could change over time to accommodate more or less inclusive positions in their goals, priorities and preferences. Again, in some detail, that chapter surveyed the evolution of parties and explored the institutional constraints (e.g. laws that banned the establishment of religious parties), new opportunities created with democratic openings, the pressures that electoral politics would bring to the table, and grassroots demands for certain policies and positions that might force the party to alter its course of action.

Having differentiated the types of religiosity and discussed the mechanisms under which parties could evolve from one type to another, these first few chapters laid out the necessary groundwork for the theory. The next chapters, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, embarked on capturing the wide range of effects of party religiosities on Muslim majority countries' levels of democratic quality. First of all, the original time-series dataset, created for the large-N analysis of Chapter 5, constituted the first major contribution of this dissertation to the literature on religious parties in the Muslim world. This dataset included the meticulous codification of all relevant parties (that is, parties with at least one seat in the parliament) based on their religiosity in all Muslim majority countries that went through at least some kind of democratic opening in the post-Cold War era. With country-election year as the unit of analysis, this data collection effort resulted in 158 observations for 36 countries over the span of twenty-five years. Then, the operationalization section generated several measures of aggregate-level party religiosity in order to test the hypotheses that (1) As the party system religiosity increased, the quality of democracy decreased, (2) Dominance of the extremist forms of religiosity (either religious or secular) led to lower qualities of democracy, (3) Party system polarization decreased the quality of democracy and (4) Civil-confessional religiosity type produced the highest quality of democracy in these countries. The subsequent analyses used three different measures of democratic quality (Freedom House, Polity and Unified Democracy Scores) and controlled for other variables that were known to affect democratic quality (such as the level of economic development or the reliance on natural resource wealth). In the end, their results turned out to be consistent across different models. For instance, anecdotes on the actions and

statements of some Islamist leaders, which had been presented as the factual evidence for incompatibility of Islam and democracy, stumbled upon close examination:

Religiosity by itself did not have any negative influence on the democratic quality of a country, and in fact, certain types of religiosity (i.e. civil-confessional) seemed to be conducive to democratic progress -as suggested by the abovementioned hypothesis.

On the other hand, both religious extremism and hostile secularism reduced the likelihood of having a high quality of democracy, even though the negative effect of religious extremism seemed more significant both statistically and substantively. In that regard, the study had some clearly stated practical implications. While it did not encourage a sweeping statement like “all Islamic parties have a uniformly positive (or negative) impact on their countries’ democratic quality,” it provided enough evidence to debunk the myths about the absolute necessity of preventing Islamic parties from competing in the elections with the fear that they might turn the country into a totalitarian theocracy.

To reveal the causal mechanisms behind these relations, though, Chapters Six and Seven examined the complex processes of democratization (and de-democratization) in Turkey and Tunisia, respectively. Tracing these processes, analyzing party documents and interviewing the party elites conducted during months of fieldwork helped to study the dynamics created by the Islamic parties’ access to political power in highly religious societies with hostile secularist pasts. As two of the most successful cases of democratization in Muslim majority countries, Turkey and Tunisia clearly demonstrated the merits of “tolerant” and “civil-confessional” religiosities in terms of building secular-religious alliances, reassuring religious rights without antagonizing

nonbelievers or religious minorities and creating a respectful and consensus-based political dialogues. Far from being the first step towards the establishment of a Sharia state, incorporating religious groups into the system, as well as encouraging their leaders to seek power and influence through electoral means, facilitated the resolution of the tensions surrounding the issue of religion and reduced religious groups' hostility towards the political system. Without a doubt, implicit in this reading were the processes of habituation and other learning mechanisms, which would lead the party elites to gradually develop mutual understanding and respect, as well as the skills to discuss and negotiate policy positions with their political rivals. Over time, these ongoing contacts eased the tensions and would bring the elites from various backgrounds together to work towards a common goal as well.

The Tunisian success in passing the new democratic constitution, holding two consecutive free and fair elections and managing the leadership change without violence and protest could be attributed to this stabilizing effect as much as to the inclusive, cooperative and consensus-based politics the parties followed during the democratization process. On the other hand, the recent backsliding of the Turkish democracy was a direct result of the departure from this type of religiosity, which diminished trust and willingness to cooperate among parties. The main religious party in the Turkish political scene decided that it would be more electorally beneficial to emphasize its religious credentials and consolidate its core constituency. However, this strategy alienated those who did not support the party, polarization and fear of Sharia-based impositions started to dominate the political life, creating more obstacles for the inclusive, participatory and trustworthy democratic practices. In this sense, these two in-

depth studies indicated that the parties that embodied the main characteristics of this civil-confessional religiosity type, while differed on many other aspects, contributed to the success of democracy in their countries, whereas their growth into less inclusive types of religiosity brought back the fears of “one man, one vote, one time” democratic experience and evoked the suspicions about religious party participation in politics.

Later in the dissertation, Chapter 9 analyzed four more cases (Albania, Azerbaijan, Indonesia and Algeria) where the historical legacies, the understanding of secularism and the dominant Islamic sect varied to great degree so as to see if the theory presented traveled well across all Muslim majority countries. In addition to reinforcing the validity of the research, those cases added deeper insights and nuances to the causal mechanisms discussed in previous chapters. To illustrate, they collectively explained how Islamic parties opened up new areas of influence for religion and shifted the focus of religious values in political life for better (as in Albania) or worse (as in Azerbaijan). Precisely because the Muslim world had been so divided with regards to the “correct” interpretation of religious texts (the so-called “true Islam”), any group’s claim to power was regarded as having a scary prospect of imposing its own version of Islam on religious and secular groups alike.² These concerns were usually enough to destabilize the system and even break down the democratic regimes by provoking fears and justifying autocracies in the name of protecting the group from some other “outgroup.” However, the evidence from more successful cases also denoted that religiosity, if it respected different interpretations of religion (or people’s right not to

² After all, a group’s dominance in the political system means that those who do not share that group’s understanding of Islam live under the real or perceived threat that the group will impose its version on Islam on the rest of the population.

affiliate with any religion, for that matter) and structured its values around the support for democratic norms and procedures, could help countries achieve a higher quality of democracy and deepen their democratic character. In Philpott's words, then, religious parties "construct[ed] not only bellicose communal identities but also democratic civil society" (2007, p. 505), and those four cases analyzed in the chapter testified to that. Recognizing this "political ambivalence" was necessary to understand the role of religious-political actors and their contributions to political processes.

Contributions

Building on the work of Stathis Kalyvas on the development of Christian Democrats in Europe, and inspired by the case studies conducted by many authors on the political evolution of Islamic parties, this dissertation investigated why and under what circumstances religious party participation could lead to better quality of democracy. While doing so, it examined one of the most well-known hypotheses on the topic, "moderation-through-inclusion," and advanced its arguments in several ways. For instance, it showed that even though political participation did encourage religious politicians to adopt more moderate stances, their exclusion from political scene also generated the same type of moderation in several cases. In addition to the "moderation-through-exclusion" aspect of the question, the cases indicated that participation and political pragmatism could also lead to what Riaz calls "competitive outflanking," in which Islamists would gradually move to the more extremist forms of religiosity to prove that they were the most pious group and best representatives of people with Islamist identity. Accordingly, these examples denoted the less-researched aspects of "moderation-through-inclusion," and showed that moderation was not a linear, straightforward process under all circumstances. Instead, by critically evaluating the

ideological positions and political strategies of party elites, the theory presented here studied the flexibility and adaptability of religious ideas and positions beyond the “moderation-through-inclusion” hypothesis (Kalyvas, 2003).

Along these lines, the dissertation also challenged the secularization theories and argued that secularism was not a prerequisite or *sine qua non* condition for democratic practices.³ Based on the distinction between assertive and passive secularism (Kuru, 2007), it systematically examined the effect of these different types of secularism and raised questions about the indispensability of secular values for democratic processes and the possibility of “religiously friendly democracy” (Driessen, 2014). While it found a positive relationship between secularism in the party system and democratic quality, a time series analysis of more than thirty Muslim majority countries also displayed that party systems dominated by “hostile secularism” had lower quality of democracy. Similarly, evidence from the cases demonstrated that the form of secularism that left religion out of the public debate had a tendency to undercut democratic practices, alienate large number of voters and decrease the legitimacy of the system in many countries. In the Arab context, the exclusive form of secularism (French type of *laïcité*) eliminated a major source of opposition to the authoritarian leadership, as it restricted their access to the political arena and gave the authoritarian leaders a reason to suppress them through fear mongering and the “green peril” discourse. An analysis of secular party behavior likewise revealed that autocratic

³ It is also important at this point to highlight that this research project does not see the Western path to democracy as the only alternative, because it is quite possible that a Muslim majority country can democratize without eradicating the influence of religion in the public sphere. It would be naïve, in this sense, to expect all cultures or societies to evolve in the same way and adhere to the Western standards throughout this process. Furthermore, while it is often (and mistakenly) assumed that the West has a clear separation between the Church and the state that Islam does not have, the evidence suggests that religious values and authorities still play an important role in the conduct of politics in many Western democracies.

leaders of these countries simply used this excuse to delay (and prevent, when possible) democratic openings in their countries and retain their privileged status in the system.

Yet, this observation did not entail the conclusion that religious participation was something inherently good and beneficial for democratic processes everywhere at all times. On the contrary, there was also a third, and more cautionary, conclusion to be drawn from the cases under investigation, which was that Islam, or religion in general, had been used by political parties not just to incorporate citizen demands into political processes, enhance social justice, or provide legitimacy to the system by presenting religion as the unifying force. It had been also instrumentalized to suppress dissent, create divisions within society and restrict the number of political issues open to meaningful public discussion –all of which predictably derailed the democratic development in the countries in question. As the Turkish religious bloc grew stronger and more confident, for instance, its leaders became less interested in representing other minorities, maintaining good relations with their secular rivals and trying to build bridges between different communities. With that change of attitude and preferences came the end of reconciliatory political atmosphere, high levels of polarization, political instability and lower levels of democratic quality. In other contexts, secularist responded to these trends with their efforts to eliminate the influence of religion in public life by any means necessary, but this forced secularization period ended up doing more harm than good to democracy. As illustrated in Chapter 9, the legacy of an extremist religious party, FIS, created so much anxiety among Algerian secularists that the majority (even the potential supporters of a political opening) started to fear the consequences of a

democratic transition and dreaded the possibility of another religious party's gaining political power. As they tried to protect the system from pious Muslims, who would elect candidates that would "reject pluralism and propound an exclusionary form of rule based on the assertion of the absolute truths of their religion" (Fish, 2011, p. 262), authoritarianism prevailed in the country. Both cases illustrated that there had been no direct and progressive development on parties' perspectives on democracy. They moved to the extremes on either side just as easily, especially if external (e.g. foreign interventions) and internal (such as parties' inability to justify their political participation to their social bases, or competition among them to prove their religiosity vis-à-vis other parties) events made this option more appealing. While offering the examples of this type of religious party behavior in the cases analyzed for this study, the dissertation avoided making grandiose statements about the "dangers" of secularism or the moderation that would "inevitably" come with religious party participation in politics.

Having said that, this research made no claim that one country or another should serve a model for "Muslim democracy," either. While it presented that civil-confessional type of religiosity correlated with higher quality of democracies, it also acknowledged that different countries might reach this type of religiosity through different ways and possibly at different times. Given their diversity and unique experiences, no country could be expected to copy some other's regime characteristics without solving their participation problems or collectively agreeing upon the rules of the game. There had been (and there are going to be) wildly different forms of Muslim democracies -and there is nothing problematic about that as long as they all adhered to the basic democratic norms and institutions.

Future Research

At this point, the discussion needs to turn to the question of which areas of research scholars should be focusing on if they need to move beyond these monolithic/simplistic understanding of Islamic parties. As stated above, the main argument of this dissertation has been that religious parties, in different forms, played an important role in increasing or decreasing the democratic qualities of predominantly Muslim countries, and that they are likely to do so in the future as well. From this perspective, it is easy to see that it is instructive to keep studying the cases analyzed here to see how the further democratization efforts will unfold, and what role Islamic parties will play in this process. The widespread support these parties may very well decline with the changes in international patterns of religiosity or banalization of religious party participation in politics. Some may even say that it is a more likely scenario considering their very ambitious party programs with little resources and ideas to implement them. However, it would be naïve to expect that the appeal of religious politics will disappear from electoral politics anytime soon. Nowadays even the most committed secularist parties seem to incorporate some religious elements in their policy agendas to satisfy the citizens' demands for an increased role of religion in political life, but whether it will increase the popularity and relevance of secular parties, especially in the Middle East where their ideas had been out-of-touch with the realities on the ground, remains to be seen. Under these circumstances, it becomes imperative to keep track of the growing diversity of religiously oriented political parties and evaluate their trajectories in the face of ongoing changes in domestic and international politics.

On that note, it is necessary to highlight that with its focus on the domestic politics aspect of the question, this research did not include the discussions on

international dynamics, foreign networks and support, and spillover effects.

Nonetheless, they probably play an important role in shaping the type of religiosity dominant in a party system, simply because none of the parties discussed in previous chapters stood in isolation. Rather, they frequently received feedback from the international community and had consistent interactions with their counterparts in other Muslim majority countries, creating a new “secular solidarity” or a different dimension for the global Islamic community (*ummah*). Future scholarship can investigate these ties and alliances among religious parties of different countries to see their impact not only on democracy but also on political choices, social movements and international cooperation.

Similarly, while it was beyond the scope of this project, previous chapters implied that Western fears of an Islamist takeover had been an important aspect of these developments –whether they came in the form of repressing religious parties or endorsing their role in democratic transition and consolidation processes. Even though Western leaders did not always voice their reservations about religious groups in public, or refused to overtly defend the secular authoritarian governments who restricted religious groups’ access to politics, these fears and suspicions continue to shape their attitudes towards the Islamist and secular groups in the Muslim world. When faced no external pressure for a democratic opening, for example, Muslim autocrats simply did not conduct any free and fair elections that might have led to a meaningful regime change. Further analyses on these relations can examine more systematically how these biased views and prejudices against religious participation in politics hindered the democratic progress in Muslim majority countries –or, protected the fragile democratic

institutions from usurpations of religious politicians. Such research will be especially important for the foreign policy and democracy promotion aspects of the question –as it will be hard to work on any of these areas without understanding the proper place of religion in democratic transition and consolidations or without fully grasping the role of religious parties in politics.

Furthermore, even though the six cases covered in previous chapters present a significant diversity in terms of Islamic party participation in politics, more in-depth analyses in the Muslim world is essential to deepen our understanding on other aspects of this issue, especially because political Islam became such a compelling and timely research agenda in recent years. Despite the tendency in most Muslim majority countries to adopt more pluralistic, more “moderate” and more democratic role of Islam in politics, additional analyses may show this trend reversed in near future and more radical ideas and values represented by the parties, as electoral competition leads to party fragmentations, or as core supporters of religious parties express their discontent with moderate stances. In this regard, further research on this topic can track, for instance, the responses of such parties to more extremist forms of Islamism and reactions to more militant forms, such as the so called the “Islamic State.” Then, this type of study can be extended to other religions and regions, asking whether religious parties act in the same manner in non-Muslim majority settings too. In addition to providing yet another test for the external validity of this research, such a research project can highlight the differences and similarities between Muslim and non-Muslim majority countries, and perhaps show that the religious doctrines the literature clings too much in its explanations matters less than we think. Or, rather than engaging in

theological debates, a new research agenda can examine the institutional constraints in those settings and question the role of the Church, or of a single authority –like the Pope- on these democratic processes. In the light of Pope Francis’s progressive outlook and conciliatory stances, for instance, his effect on the religious parties of Catholic countries will make an interesting topic for the study, especially because the role of liberation theologies in bringing about regime changes in Latin America has already been established in the literature. Or, taking a totally different stance on the matter, further research can answer to the question of why civil confessional religiosity fail to emerge in many predominantly Muslim countries. After all, having read all the accounts in its favor, one cannot help but ask why we do not see more parties adopting this type of religiosity if it brings electoral benefits to the parties themselves and increase the quality of democracy in the country. New studies on this topic can illuminate if civil-confessional parties are more prevalent in non-Muslim settings, and then shed more light on whether this has something to do with the historical experiences and institutions of Muslim majority countries, or if it is based purely on the characteristics of Islam.

Surely, there are other interesting avenues of research concerning the larger role of religious parties (Islamist or not) in political arena. The theory proposed here paid specific attention to parties’ changing identities and policy preferences as they respond to the demands of their supporters or come in contact with other parties in the system. While the focus here was the impact of such changes, a new line of research can identify the conditions under which these preferences are formulated and altered. The literature on state involvement in religion (e.g. Fox, 2006, 2015; Grim & Finke, 2006) deal with the institutional constraints aspect of the question by differentiating the reality

religious parties face in countries where the constitution guarantees all religious rights and freedoms as opposed to that of other countries where the state controls all aspects of the religious life. The literature on religiosity and public opinion, on the other hand, examine the citizen demands for religious representation and support for increased (or decreased, for that matter) role of religion, which may then form opportunity structures for the parties to a large extent.⁴ Unfortunately, however these two strands of research usually do not engage in a conversation, and only rarely they incorporate discussions on the mechanisms or actors through which the grassroots demands are met at the institutional level. Additional studies can ask these questions on the emergence of different types of religiosity within parties, as well as the links between the grassroots demands and elite opinion/party behavior. By combining these two levels of research, it will be possible to evaluate how public reacts to the Islamic party elites, and demonstrate how these opinions influence the elite behavior and party politics. Then, other studies can focus on the ways in which these types of religiosity that is conducive to democracy may be sustained, such as by reassuring citizens of the value of cooperation and overcoming the divisions and polarizations in the society.

Finally, while this project focused on faith-based political parties, a similar typology can be created for ethnic parties, whose aims may similarly range from establishing an ethnic-based state to more recognition for their group in the public sphere.

⁴ To illustrate, if there is a history of mistrust between different segments of the society, and especially if one group feels the other is going to coerce them once they gain political power, parties may figure out that civil-confessional religiosity will not be sustainable and choose to consolidate their voter bases by excluding those who do not share their views. While it is usually the elites that shape public opinion and mobilize their followers, the views of their constituents may constrain the elite behavior in some cases and have an indirect effect on the party religiosity particularly in the long run.

Questions Raised

The observations and analyses mentioned above provide a fertile ground for future research, as they open the doors for many questions at the two other levels beyond the scope of this project. The interviews conducted during the fieldwork, to give a few examples, made it clear that parties' understanding of democracy differed significantly, particularly when the concept of democracy was taken beyond its procedural aspects (such as holding elections). While all party elites –regardless of the religiosity of their parties- praised democratic institutions and talked about the desirability of such values and establishments for their country, further conversations revealed that what they were referring to was closer to majoritarianism than it was to liberal democracy in most cases. Most elites were uncomfortable with the idea of sharing power (or giving up power), and others thought the minority rights and demands held little weight simply because the minority votes did not matter as much as those of their core supporters. Moreover, previous experiences of the party elite with democratic institutions colored their views on democracy, causing some to label it as a regime type “in which nothing gets done” or others to conclude that “if it were any good, it wouldn't be imposed on [them]” by the Western powers. Yet, if both religious and secular parties consider democracy a regime where large numbers of pious voters can elect a government that will dictate the rules of the game, citing the legitimacy they gained through elections in the name of the whole nation, what is to be done to improve the quality of democracy then?

While the elites' support for democracy (or lack thereof) was not exceptionally encouraging, it is still uncertain to what extent religious parties tolerate, but not necessarily embrace, people who do not share their belief systems. It is a familiar

problem, which has been discussed at length in the context of the Communist and Neo-Nazi parties in Europe. Many scholars now argue that it does not really matter how the elites view democracy itself, as democratic institutions can take a life of their own once established. The idea of “democracy without democrats” is not new to the political science literature, and it only requires taking a brief glance at the compelling arguments made by Rustow (1970), Przeworski (1991), and more recently by Lindberg (2006) to see that the cynicism by the elites and citizens does not necessarily hamper democratic progress.

From a different perspective, Sadiki argues that any democratic transition should be “historically situated, flexible, contingent, fragmented, nuanced, non-linear, and variable” (2009, p. viii). Several interview subjects also remarked that local needs and sensitivities need to be taken into account while designing democratic institutions, otherwise transitions will not be successful and democracy will collapse before it gets a chance to consolidate itself. Yet, this raises the question of whether democracy is really something that should accommodate the cultural characteristics of the countries in which it flourishes. If we are to allow democracy to be operationalized according to the cultural sensitivities, what will constitute its substantive aspects? Is “Muslim democracy” even something that we should be talking about, or is democracy in Muslim majority countries not supposed to differ from democracy elsewhere? If the former, are scholars right to assume that a “Muslim democracy” is defective or “illiberal” by nature? Completing a full circle on orientalism, should we conclude that Muslim majority countries are different due to their “Islamic exceptionalism”?

On a different level, the second question becomes, how much religiosity is too much for the party system? The dissertation had already established that religious extremism –even conservative religiosity to some extent- had negative effects on the quality of democracy, but is there a threshold below which their influence is negligible? Is there a seat percentage, to illustrate, above which these parties would definitely derail the democratic process, either by imposing their views on everyone or creating divisions in the society and diminishing the level of trust and mutual respect in the system? In other words, at what point does religiosity lose its cooperative and inclusive aspect and give way to more exclusivist demands or even to the imposition of religious beliefs on all members of the polity?

And finally, both the evidence from fieldwork and public opinion surveys indicate that while religiosity remains an important part of the social fabric in these countries, there is also a growing number of atheists and “cultural Muslims” (or “liberal Muslims”, as Roy [2006] calls them), who simply do not share the majority’s views on the role of religion in political life. In contrast to the assertive secularists of the modernization era, however, they do not favor the strict control of religious life by the state institutions, call into question how they will affect the ongoing debates and perhaps the reconciliation processes among parties with different types of religiosity. If they oppose the strict state control of religion, for example, will their demands lead to more or less extremism on the part of parties and their followers? Is a society’s overall religiosity an important indicator of what role religion will play in its politics? How much influence do Islamist groups that did not get involved in political life have over ordinary voters? To what extent are people free from religious influence in their political decisions? What characteristics do they

need to have in order to make informed choices about the role of religion in politics? Are some individuals, or religious groups, more likely to lend their support to these extremist organizations? Are adherents of a particular sect of Islam more or less likely to belong to moderate parties? After all is said and done, where do we expect political Islam to go in contemporary Muslim world?

Recapping, and Looking Forward

This study went against this “static” understanding of Islam and democracy in the literature (Stepan, 2010) and argued that the relatively low levels of democratic quality could not be attributed to the role of religion or peculiar characteristics of Islam, mainly because Muslim majority countries, in spite of their shared belief system, differed from one another in terms of their qualities of democracy. In this process, the dissertation singled out the religiosity of political parties as an explanatory variable and took a closer look at the parties through which religious groups participate in politics. Arguing that they represent such diversity that their access to political power did not imply any negative or positive impact by itself, it examined the different types of religiosity parties in the Muslim majority countries had. Only after then, it drew conclusions from the actions and statements of the party in question, as well as its relations with the state, its social bases and rival political parties in the system.

The electoral victories of some Islamist groups actually forced them to take more moderate positions, listen to the arguments of secularists whom they labeled the “infidels” just years ago, and form coalitions and alliances with them as they faced the difficulties of governance. Within these groups, some have managed to learn from their mistakes and found ways to translate their ideological positions into practical policies without antagonizing their opponents in the process, while others have been struggling

to reconcile their objection to democratic institutions with the need to participate in them in order to express their demands and take a part in decision-making mechanisms. Surely, though, the story does not end here. That calls for democracy changed Islamic parties, or that Islamic parties influenced the transition and consolidation processes, is just a beginning for many Muslim majority countries in their quest for well-functioning democratic regimes. The contested place of religion in public life may complicate the democratic process even further, causing rifts among Islamist themselves about precisely what role religion should play in politics and leading non-practicing Muslim groups to demand less influence of religious actors and observant politicians in the country's policy making processes. Then it will be the responsibility of religious and secular politicians to come together, work together and build a system in which no group feels marginalized or excluded so that the long-standing dream of "advanced democracies" in the Muslim world could be realized.

APPENDIX A
COUNTRIES AND ELECTION YEARS

Table A-1. List of Countries and Election Years Analyzed For This Study

COUNTRY	ELECTION YEARS
Albania	1991, 1992, 1996, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013
Algeria	1991, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012
Azerbaijan	1995, 2000, 2005, 2010
Bahrain	2006, 2010
Bangladesh	1991, 1996, 2001, 2008, 2014
Burkina Faso	1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012
Cameroon	1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2013
Chad	1997, 2002
Comoros	1992, 1993, 1996, 2004, 2009
Djibouti	1992, 1997, 2003, 2008
Egypt	1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2012
Indonesia	1992, 1997, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
The Gambia	1992, 1997, 2002, 2007
Guinea	1995, 2002
Iran	2000, 2004, 2008, 2012
Iraq	1996, 2005, 2010, 2014
Jordan	1993, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2013
Kuwait	2006, 2010, 2012
Kazakhstan	1994, 1995, 1999, 2004
Kyrgyz Republic	1995, 2000, 2007, 2010
Lebanon	1992, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2009
Malaysia	1990, 1995, 1999, 2004, 2008, 2013
Mali	1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2013
Mauritania	1992, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2013
Morocco	1993, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2011
Niger	1993, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2011
Nigeria	1999, 2003, 2007
Pakistan	1993, 1997, 2002, 2008, 2011
Senegal	1993, 1998, 2001, 2007, 2012
Sierra Leone	1996, 2002, 2007, 2012
Sudan	2000, 2010
Syria	2007
Tajikistan	1995, 2000, 2005
Tunisia	2004, 2009, 2011, 2014
Turkey	1991, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2007, 2011
Yemen	1993, 1997, 2003

APPENDIX B
ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

Table B-1. Aggregate Religiosity Score and Other Predictors of Democratic Quality: Ordered Logistic Regressions on Panel Data

	Polity2 Scores		Freedom House Scores	
	Random Effects Model	Quadratic Term	Random Effects Model	Quadratic Term
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
Main				
Party System Religiosity	0.0041 (0.0027)	0.0050 (0.0033)	0.0045 (0.0028)	0.0062* (0.0027)
Communist Legacy	-0.7784 (1.1886)	-0.7689 (1.1939)	-0.6525 (1.0344)	-0.6368 (1.0419)
History of British Colonialism	0.3863 (0.7442)	0.3854 (0.7429)	-0.0001 (0.9036)	-0.0045 (0.9052)
GDP Growth	0.0134 (0.0284)	0.0151 (0.0296)	0.0299 (0.0187)	0.0326 (0.0192)
GDP per Capita (log)	0.4597 (0.4173)	0.4524 (0.4155)	0.1921 (0.2556)	0.1778 (0.2549)
Oil/Gas per Capita (log)	-0.0967 (0.1731)	-0.0975 (0.1729)	-0.0233 (0.1188)	-0.0246 (0.1196)
Monarchy	-2.7181 (1.5578)	-2.6791 (1.5585)	0.5163 (1.0201)	0.581 (1.0016)
Party System Religiosity (Quadratic)		-0.0000 (0.0000)		-0.0000 (0.0000)
Sigma2_u				
Constant	4.1112 (2.2086)	4.0857 (2.2151)	4.4760* (1.1998)	4.4580* (2.0093)

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (Robust Standard Errors are in Parenthesis)

Table B-2. Party System Extremism and Other Predictors of Democratic Quality:
Ordinal Logit Regressions on Panel Data with Polity2 and Freedom
House Scores

-----	Polity2 Scores		Freedom House Scores	
	Combined Effects Model	Individual Effects Model	Combined Effects Model	Individual Effects Model
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
Main				
Extremist Party Seat Share	-0.0411** (0.0149)		-0.0373* (0.0169)	
Communist Legacy	-0.4748 (0.9912)	-0.6509 (1.0463)	-0.2131 (0.9895)	-0.4122 (0.9925)
History of British Colonialism	-0.0819 (0.6710)	0.1043 (0.7203)	-0.4792 (0.8558)	-0.2164 (0.7721)
GDP Growth	0.0241 (0.0291)	0.0218 (0.0282)	0.0420* (0.0186)	0.0369* (0.0184)
GDP per Capita (log)	0.4833 (0.3807)	0.4915 (0.3806)	0.1990 (0.2510)	0.2164 (0.2465)
Oil/Gas per Capita (log)	-0.0663 (0.1589)	-0.0478 (0.1547)	-0.0019 (0.1181)	0.005 (0.1079)
Monarchy	-3.0634* (1.2832)	-3.0020* (1.2510)	0.1663 (0.7456)	0.3213 (0.6730)
Religious Extremist Party Seat Share		-0.0580** (0.0205)		-0.0594** (0.0191)
Hostile Secularist Party Seat Share		-0.0323 (0.0165)		-0.0265 (0.0195)
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Sigma2_u				
Constant	2.9130 (1.6556)	3.0359 (1.7472)	3.7403* (1.5263)	3.2223* (1.4072)

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (Robust Standard Errors are in Parentheses)

Table B-3. Party System Polarization, Dispersion and Other Predictors of Democratic Quality: Ordinal Logit Regressions on Panel Data with Polity2 and Freedom House Scores)

	Party System Polarization		Party System Dispersion	
-----	(testing <i>Hypothesis 3</i>)		(testing <i>Hypothesis 4</i>)	
	Polity2 Scores	Freedom House Scores	Polity2 Scores	Freedom House Scores
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
Main				
Party System Polarization	-0.2829*	-0.3037		
	(0.1230)	(0.1905)		
Communist Legacy	0.0953	0.2568	-0.6601	-0.3529
	(0.9782)	(0.9442)	(1.1100)	(0.8991)
History of British Colonialism	0.1964	-0.3406	0.2556	-0.1127
	(0.7337)	(1.0436)	(0.7068)	(0.7687)
GDP Growth	0.0130	0.0319	0.0246	0.0398
	(0.0296)	(0.0179)	(0.0302)	(0.0212)
GDP per Capita (log)	0.4533	0.1867	0.4797	0.2177
	(0.4176)	(0.2537)	(0.3958)	(0.2559)
Oil/Gas per Capita (log)	-0.1349	-0.0345	-0.0828	-0.0161
	(0.1814)	(0.1288)	(0.1604)	(0.1162)
Monarchy	-3.0800*	0.0515	-2.9594*	0.2634
	(1.3868)	(0.9207)	(1.1830)	(0.6543)
Weighted Party System Dispersion			-0.0052*	-0.0061*
			(0.0023)	(0.0024)
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Sigma2_u	3.3898	4.3906*	3.0852	3.1263*
	(2.1349)	(1.9565)	(1.7638)	(1.4510)

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (Robust Standard Errors are in parentheses)

Table B-4. Party System Extremism and Other Determinants of Democratic Quality: Ordinal Logit Regressions on Panel Data with Freedom House Scores

	model 2 b/se	Model 3 b/se	Model 4 b/se
fhrev_2			
Extremist	-0.037* (0.02)		
GDP Growth	0.042* (0.02)	0.032 (0.02)	0.045* (0.02)
loggdp	0.199 (0.25)	0.218 (0.25)	0.178 (0.26)
oilgaspercapita	-0.002 (0.12)	-0.011 (0.11)	-0.022 (0.13)
PostCommunist	-0.213 (0.99)	-0.723 (1.03)	-0.234 (1.04)
British Colony	-0.479 (0.86)	0.105 (0.73)	-0.549 (1.09)
Monarchy	0.166 (0.75)	0.304 (0.68)	-0.096 (0.94)
ExtremistReligious		-0.056** (0.02)	
HostileSecular			-0.025 (0.02)
cut1			
Constant	-5.128** (1.80)	-4.641** (1.77)	-4.864* (1.92)
cut2			
Constant	-3.987* (1.71)	-3.548* (1.71)	-3.804* (1.78)
cut3			
Constant	-1.640 (1.69)	-1.197 (1.68)	-1.510 (1.74)
cut4			
Constant	0.211 (1.73)	0.655 (1.71)	0.354 (1.78)
cut5			
Constant	0.879 (1.74)	1.319 (1.72)	1.036 (1.79)
cut6			
Constant	1.947 (1.74)	2.355 (1.74)	2.127 (1.80)
cut7			
Constant	3.374 (1.79)	3.729* (1.81)	3.583 (1.87)
cut8			
Constant	4.208* (1.86)	4.541* (1.88)	4.426* (1.93)
cut9			
Constant	5.678** (2.12)	5.984** (2.17)	5.917** (2.19)
cut10			
Constant	7.848*** (2.30)	8.142*** (2.33)	8.106*** (2.39)
sigma2_u			
Constant	3.740* (1.53)	3.372* (1.57)	5.033* (2.17)

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A Sample of Questions Asked to the Tunisian Nidaa Tounes Party Elites

1. First of all, I would like to start by asking your definition of democracy, because sometimes parties emphasize different aspects of democratic process. How does your party define democracy, how do you think your political rivals understand democracy and, in your opinion, is there any difference between the two?
2. If you were to evaluate the development of democracy in the post-revolutionary Tunisia, what would you say? Do you see any improvement or any derailment? If so, in what sense and in which areas? If there has been no change, what should be done for the country's democratization?
3. Is the current level of democracy close to what your party envisioned for the country, or do you think there is still a long way ahead? In your opinion, has the country been able to solve its problems? If so, in what ways? If not, what hinders this process?
4. What has the party done to make sure that the country can attain the level of democracy described in the party program? How did you contribute to this process?

**At this point, different context-specific questions are asked to each elite (e.g. parties' identity formation following the Algerian Civil War, impact of French laïcité, the Arab Spring Revolutions, Ben Ali's removal from power and Ennahda's rise to power, as well as a backlash against all these developments) and these questions will be tailored according to the roles of party elites, conditions under which they worked and critical events in these periods.*

5. How would you interpret the events following the Arab Spring protests? *(Depending on the answer given by the respondent, one of these follow-up questions will be asked):*
 - a. Based on your answer, can we say that the parties involved in the process did a good job of addressing the demands of the citizens?
 - b. How does current situation differ from Ben Ali's regime, and Ennahda-led government?
6. What role does religion play in the activities of the party? What is the attitude of the party towards religion and the participation of religious groups in politics?
 - a. How likely is it for a member of the party who is known for her piety to rise in party ranks?
 - b. Is party membership restricted in any way (e.g. in favor of or against any group)?

- c. Approximately what percent of the party members belong to a different sect or religion?
 - d. Does having conservative allies in government hinder taking an active role in government's decision-making mechanisms?
7. How would you describe the party's voter base? Has there been any significant change in this voter base in the period you worked for the party? If so, for what reasons? What exactly has the party done to appeal to this new voter base?
 8. Is there anything that connects the voters to the party, other than the party ideology? How and why does the party receive votes from those who are outside its consolidated voter base? Does the protest votes have any impact in electoral trends, especially after the Ennahda's rise to power?
 9. The party has managed to bring together a diverse set of groups and interests and win the last elections. What was the key thing behind this success? What were the core principles that united the members of the coalition and appealed to the electorate?
 10. How does the party manage to address this diverse set of demands and expectations? Are there competing agendas, or does the party find it easy to represent more or less everyone's point of view?
 11. How does the party deal with dissent and different political stances on important matters? Is there any dominant group within the party? If there is such a group, are institutional mechanisms and other groups sufficient to check and balance this group's power? Can the party take crucial decisions without this group's approval?
 12. Even though I can reach the party programs and membership information online, I would like to know how both processes work in reality. Is there any difference between official party programs and what is being done in practice? If there are differences, in what areas are they mostly? Does the party make any effort to prevent the contradictions between the two?
 13. What are the criteria to become a high-ranking official in the party? Are there any expectations, besides merit? Especially considering President Essebsi's ties to the Ben Ali regime, some think that Nidaa is the de-facto successor of the RCD – to what extent do you agree with this statement?
 14. What can you say about intraparty democracy? Is it possible to shape party positions without the knowledge or approval of the party leader? Do you think the improvements in intraparty democracy will contribute to the development of democracy in general?
 15. Can you please explain your party's stance on plurality, *laïcité* and tolerance with concrete examples? To what extent do you think these

- concepts contribute to democratic development? Are any of the aforementioned concepts essential for democracy? Is it possible to be democratic without any particular attachment to these concepts? Does the strategic use of these concepts in politics hinder the attainment of desired democratic level?
16. In your opinion, can religiously oriented parties be democratic? Is *laïcité*, or secularism in general a crucial part of democracy?
 17. In his study, Alfred Stepan argues that religion does not need to be confined in private sphere and that a well-functioning democracy can exist where religious values shape the public sphere and religious leaders play an important part in society. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?
 18. How would you interpret the (actual or perceived) rise of political Islam in Tunisia? What could be the reasons and consequences of this political development?
 19. Do you think that Tunisian voters' recent gravitation towards the Ennahda was a result of a long-lasting tendency in their ideology and political attitudes, or do you think that it was simply a short-term change that is mainly due to protest votes? How do you interpret the events following the victory of Nidaa Tounes?
 20. Do you think this peaceful transfer of power improved the chances of consolidating Tunisian democracy?
 21. How does the party deal with the challenges of being the governing party? What are the party's hopes and fears at this moment?
 22. Did Nidaa Tounes's this rise to power change anything in the way it operates, or lead to any policy changes? Also, along these lines, does the multiparty government prove hard to work effectively and efficiently?
 23. What was behind the decision to include Nidaa's biggest political rival Ennahda in the governing coalition, and how did the party's supporters react to this decision? Did the Nidaa feared that it would be offending its core voters by forming a coalition with Ennahda?
 24. What does this say about tolerance and pluralism in the Tunisian political scene?
 25. Surely, the transition brought about many problems, including some economic stagnation and threats to security. How do you think these problems will affect the prospects of democracy in Tunisia?
 26. What do you think is the biggest problem in the country right now?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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