Islamists for Democracy: Explaining Ennahda's Democratizing Role in Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution

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Introduction:

Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution is a counterpoint to decades of literature deriding the compatibility of Islam and democracy. The successful ousting of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011, the establishment of an Islamist-secularist coalition to author a new constitution in 2014, two peaceful elections and a successful transition of power between Islamist and secular parties are all milestones in the history Arab Muslim democracy. What makes these events even more puzzling is that the driving democratizing force was Tunisia's most prominent Islamist party, Ennahda. Robust analysis of Ennahda and Tunisian political Islam before and during the Jasmine Revolution provides priceless information on the Arab Spring, the preconditions for democracy in Muslim majority countries, and the strategies that create harmony between Islamist and secular parties in democratic systems.

The rapid democratic transition in Tunisia is especially important in a post-Arab Spring landscape, where unexpected opportunities for Arab democratization and the evolution of political Islam occurred in spite of past predictions. As Paul Kubicek discusses in his book "Political Islam and Democracy in the Muslim World," scholars and analysts of Middle Eastern politics applied both qualitative and quantitative methodology to claim that Islamic societies lack core values that are compatible with democracy. I adopt Kubicek's defense against this literature: "(These scholars) essentialize Islam into a single variable (often labeled "Islamic"), thereby failing to recognize that Islam can manifest itself politically in a number of different ways, or even not manifest itself at all.[i]" Rather than approach Islamism as a static value, I view

the manifestation of Tunisian political Islam as a product of multiple cultural and situational factors. This open-minded approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of Islamist movements which represent political Islam in democratic states.

Outlining the argument:

The Ennahda party's decision to lead Tunisian democratization can be explained by identifying the preconditions for a democratic interpretation of political Islam in Tunisia and by analyzing Ennahda's political tactics during the Jasmine Revolution. I set up these explanations by starting with a history of political Islam in Tunisia to provide context. My new historical understanding of Tunisian Islamism reveals key factors that allowed Ennahda to successfully adopt democratic principles. Building upon that, the application of rational choice theory shows that democratic inclusion of Ennahda forced it to moderate to appeal to voters. Additionally, Ennahda's participation in democratic elections created a mutual security guarantee between Islamists and secularists. As I illustrate, each of these factors augmented the chance of successful democratization and built upon each other from the beginning of the Tunisian Islamist movement to the present day.

My research on Tunisia is an extension of Paul Kubicek's analysis of political Islam in Muslim-majority countries. Paul Kubicek's preconditions for democratic values in political Islam offer common sense explanations for democratization in countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Senegal, and Mali. The initial success and durability of democracy in these Muslim-majority countries is linked to their compliance with five factors: a syncretic, "national" Islam; decentralized, nonhierarchical religious institutions; legal and political secularism; democracy movements before Islamist movements; and the inclusion and moderation of Islamist movements and parties. The most democratic Muslim countries typically

fit most of these categories, while struggling Muslim democracies only partially fit these criteria. When analyzing Tunisian democracy, Kubicek's theories should reveal that Tunisia, the most democratic Muslim-majority country according to Freedom House rankings, has been influenced by a strong combination of these factors. In his book "Political Islam and Democracy in the Muslim World," he speculates only briefly about Tunisian democracy as part of a chapter on the Arab Spring. This essay will evaluate his observations with additional historical and current evidence from past years.

The second part of my argument draws upon political science research about how politics and religion interact. Studies of religious political party behavior are critical to explaining the relationship between Ennahda and secularist parties throughout the history of Tunisia. One way to explain the Ennahda's internal changes is through Alfred Stepan's inclusion-moderation theory, which states that when Islamist political parties are included in democratic systems, they are forced to moderate their religious ideology to appeal to moderate voters. Ennahda's de facto inclusion in Tunisian democracy can explain how the party backed down from traditional Islamist stances that were irreconcilable with Tunisian democratic institutions. To explain Ennahda's role in Tunisia's democratic systems, the "twin tolerations" theory helps clarify how Tunisian Islamist and secularist parties accepted democracy as a mutual security agreement to prevent the violent cycles of revolution present elsewhere in the Middle East. Malik Mufti elaborates the mutual security agreements of Islamists and secularists through his description work on Turkish democratization, which can be applied to both successful and failed Arab Spring democratization. These two theories provide convincing explanations for the internal and external evolution of Ennahda's application of political Islam throughout the Jasmine Revolution.

Historical background of political Islam in Tunisian democracy:

The Tunisian Islamist movement started in the early 1970s after the euphoria of Tunisian independence faded and the failures of the secularist Bourguiba regime became apparent. In the 1950s, President Habib Bourguiba led the fight for Tunisian independence as a broad populist movement, uniting different socioeconomic strata against the French colonial government, whose corruption was seen as the root of Tunisia's economic struggles. His Neo-Destour ("new constitution") party carried out a pragmatic, peaceful revolution in 1956. They rejected governance by the French, but adopted France's secular cultural and political values[ii]. The basis of the independent Tunisian constitution was explicitly secular, and Bourguiba pursued massive cultural reforms, claiming that it was part of the progressive evolution of Islam. His regime centralized and secularized the Tunisian education system, dismantling the historically important Zaytouna mosque-school. He implemented French as the academic and political language of Tunisia. Additionally, his regime dismantled Islamic marriage and divorce laws, and passed laws guaranteeing women's rights, including equal legal privileges, access to birth control, and legalized abortion.[iii] Islamic "habous" land laws and sharia courts were dismantled as well.[iv] Bourgiba's fame and legitimacy, gained through the independence movement, allowed his regime to rapidly westernize Tunisian society.

From Tunisian independence in 1956 to the 1970s, Bourguiba consolidated authoritarian power by coopting the anti-Islamic rhetoric of secularists and Western liberals. He faced little opposition until a domestic economic crisis and international shifts in Islamic identity prompted new resistance to his social policies. The Association for the Safeguard of the Qur'an (ASQ) formed in the early 1970s as an advocacy group promoting the Arabic language and Islamic values as important components of the Tunisian identity.[v] Bourguiba permitted this and

supported the spread of ASQ local chapters, seeing ASQ as a conservative ally against Tunisian communist organizations.

The repression of Tunisian labor unions and the political success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran started dialogue about the role of Islam in Tunisian identity. Bourguiba's regime represented only the secularized, coastal elites, and alienated the poor, religiously conservative, interior Tunisians. The Iranian Revolution demonstrated how an Islamist movement could amass popular support utilizing populist economic policies. Rachid Ghannouchi, a theology student of the closed Zaytouna mosque-school who was aggravated with the Bourguiba regime's social and economic policies, formed the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) to challenge the government's economic and cultural policies with a conservative populist platform.[vi] The MTI committed to participating in democracy and to rejecting violence, influenced by Ghannouchi's moderate leadership. The party grew rapidly with a cross-class coalition of conservative professionals, disenchanted poor youth, and students who were frustrated with the Bourguiba government's economic policies. The Bourguiba regime refused to grant MTI participation in the 1981 elections and arrested MTI leaders. Attacks on religion escalated as MTI grew: The Bourguiba regime arrested Islamists, expelled them from school, or conscripted them into the military, and banned public servants from prayer during work hours or wearing traditional Islamic clothing.[vii] Ghannouchi was arrested by the government again in 1987, "accused of inciting violence and conspiring against the government.[viii]" At the same time, Minister of the Interior Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali usurped the aging President Bourguiba by accusing him of senility and inability to rule.

The leadership of MTI saw Tunisian regime change as an opportunity to push for peaceful political integration. The new Ben Ali regime entertained the idea, fearing that a

massive repression campaign would invigorate Islamist supporters and potentially prompt a militant revolution by the MTI's clandestine wing.[ix] In 1988, MTI rebranded as Ennahda ("The Renaissance" Party) to comply with Ben Ali's terms for political inclusion. In the 1989 elections, independent Islamist candidates, backed unofficially by Ennahda, won 17% of the national vote and 30% of the urban vote, triggering Ben Ali to view Islamist political movements as a legitimate threat warranting repression.[x] Ghannouchi and Ennahda leaders sensed that a political crackdown was imminent and fled internationally. After the elections, the Ben Ali regime arrested 200 Ennahda activists, prevented previously jailed leaders from running for office, seized passports and tortured party members, and framed Ennahda for planning terrorist attacks on government activists. The Ben Ali crackdowns and the absence of Ghannouchi's pacifist leadership caused Ennahda activists to respond to violence with violence. Attacks on government offices in 1991 by Ennahda-affiliated extremists prompted the Ben Ali regime to escalate its anti-Islamist campaign, resulting in the arrests of 8,000 individuals from 1990-1992.[xi]

The void of moderate Islamist representation in government caused the rise of anti-government, anti-democracy Salafi groups. If there were no moderate options for inclusion, Salafists felt justified in pursuing an Islamic revolution. Tunisians formed both peaceful and militant Salafist groups, advocating for activism against the Ben Ali regime and the West.[xii] In 2002, an Algerian Salafist group linked to al-Qaeda attacked a synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia. Gun battles occurred between local Salafist militant groups and Tunisian police. State police investigated Salafist groups and found plans to attack tourist sites and the American and British embassies.[xiii] The 9/11 attacks and local Djerba attacks provided a convenient justification for the Ben Ali regime to steepen repression of both moderate and radical Islamists during the 2000s.

In the mid-2000s, economic struggles and reports of corruption of the Ben Ali family created new opportunities for peaceful Islamist resistance. Unemployed, uneducated, and alienated Tunisians protested for economic equality. Resentment brewed between the secular, coastal elite and the traditional, interior poor. Whistleblowers revealed that Ben Ali's regime siphoned money from a development fund for the economically-struggling interior into the pockets of his own family members.[xiv] Economic frustration coincided with political frustration. Islamist activists were released from past prison sentences and formed clandestine networks to support each other during government repression campaigns.

Ennahda's strategy evolved when local leaders sought opportunities to work with secular anti-government organizations. In 2005, Ennahda participated in the 18 October Coalition for Rights and Freedoms in Tunisia, calling attention to the human rights violations of the Ben Ali regime. Center-left and center-right secularist movements took part in this coalition as well and pressured Ennahda to accept secular policy concessions. Together, they demanded the release of political prisoners, freedom of association for political parties, and freedom of the press. To combat Ben Ali's anti-Islamist, anti-conservative rhetoric, all parties agreed to respect political pluralism, freedom of conscience, and the status of women.[xv] In 2008, Ennahda's support for the Gafsa economic uprising cemented its role as a respected member of the coalition of unionists, human rights activists, the unemployed rural poor, and students that would topple the Ben Ali regime during the Jasmine Revolution.

The protest phase of the Jasmine Revolution succeeded rapidly in contrast to other Arab Spring revolutions. The socioeconomic coalition that rallied behind the Gafsa uprising grew in strength and breadth. When Mohammed Bouazizi, a disgruntled young Tunisian man, protested the Ben Ali regime through self-immolation in December 2011, his actions set off an avalanche

of anti-government activism. Crippling strikes followed massive public protests. Tunisians recorded the Ben Ali regime's military and police repression and spread their videos across social media, steepening national anger toward the government. By January 12, devastating nationwide strikes signaled the intent of the protest coalition to remove Ben Ali.[xvi] Protestors viewed Ben Ali's speeches and concessions as empty promises.[xvii] On January 14, protesters flooded into Tunis, demanding that Ben Ali finally step down. Ben Ali fled into exile in Saudi Arabia. Tunisians suddenly faced the new opportunities and hazards of forming a democratic government.

Over the next years, Ennahda seized the opportunity to govern on behalf of the Tunisian people with a focus on addressing socioeconomic inequality, building durable democratic institutions, and redefining the Tunisian identity to allow for state respect of religious freedoms. As other political parties struggled to organize, Ennahda had legitimacy and experience advocating its political platform, including a harsh anti-Ben Ali stance and a strong record of protesting human rights violations.[xviii] They focused on improving economic issues rather than focusing on cultural issues. In addition, Rachid Ghannouchi returned from exile as an established leader and public figure advocating "political reforms and a democratic message of political inclusion, pluralism, and freedom.[xix]"

Ennahda was well-prepared to dominate the political process, even as secularist critics feared that Ghannouchi would renege on his promises of secular democracy and pursue a theocratic state. These critics feared that Islamists would undermine the democratic constitution-writing process in the National Constituent Assembly.[xx] In the August 2011 elections, Ennahda won 40 percent of the National Constituent Assembly, uniting a coalition of religious voters, social conservatives, Tunisian identity voters (anti-French), and democracy and human rights

voters.[xxi] The willingness of two secular left parties (CPR and Ettakol) to join Ennahda in a governing coalition bolstered this stunning performance.

The Ennahda-led coalition was tasked with writing a new constitution, alleviating Tunisia's economic struggles, and mending ties between Islamists and secularists as political animosity still festered. Drafting the constitution subjected Ennahda to attacks from both leftist secular opposition seeking a more liberal system and conservative party members vying for the inclusion of more Islamic legal concepts. In addition, Ennahda's coalition and the opposition parties in the Constitutional Assembly both intended to shape government institutions to ensure the future success of their party. For example, Ennahda first advocated for a strong parliament and prime minister, while opposition parties preferred to wield power through a presidential system.[xxii] Ennahda attempted to establish a monopoly over conservative, poor voters, while their opposition sought opportunities to balance against the united Islamists with a strong, independent executive. The collapse of the Tunisian tourist market and direct foreign investment in the country exacerbated these social and political conflicts.[xxiii]

Furthermore, Salafist violence in 2012 unleashed new criticism from secularists about the role of political Islam in Tunisia and the actions of Ennahda, whose leaders were silent about the attacks. The 2013 assassination of Chokri Belaid, a secularist and staunch critic of Ennahda, caused anti-government protests directed at the Islamist-led coalition. Ennahda distanced itself from Salafist extremists and battled against secularists' cultural denunciations. The coalition was breaking apart when Ettakol and CPR pulled away from the failing Ennahda government.[xxiv] After the coalition reached a last-minute deal to remain together, the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi months later was another flashpoint in a series of organized terror attacks on anti-Islamist activists.[xxv] The coalition fell apart after secularist parties could no longer risk being

bound to Ennahda's failing policies. Tunisian unions and military figures joined the opposition's call for Ennahda's resignation after multiple years of economic stagnation, political conflict, and no new constitution.[xxvi] Ennahda countered with frustration that these organizations recklessly aimed to overthrow an elected government without giving the Islamists a fair chance to address these daunting tasks.

In September 2013, Ennahda recognized its divisive role in the National Constituent Assembly and resigned from government for the sake of preserving stability and unity. This historical moment stands as a counterpoint to decades of literature discussing the interactions of Islam and democracy. This moment leads us to the critical analysis of Ennahda's commitment to democracy and national unity throughout the Jasmine Revolution, drawing from the previous discussion to understand the party's Islamic ideology and calling upon political science analysis to explain Ennahda's key role in compromising to build a democracy of Islamists and secularists.

Preconditions for Democracy in Islamic Societies

The historical, cultural, and institutional factors identified by Paul Kubicek are instruments to predict the success of Muslim-majority societies in adopting democracy. As mentioned in the introduction, Kubicek researched these factors through extensive case studies of Muslim-majority democracies and pseudo-democracies from Africa to Asia. These factors are important for specific analysis of Islamist political parties that serve as the institution which best represents political Islam in Muslim societies. Kubicek briefly discussed the presence of these religious and political factors in Tunisia as part of a larger analysis of the Arab Spring. In this section, I build upon four out of five of the factors mentioned in his book and contextualize how they impacted Ennahda's development. The fifth factor, "incorporation and moderation of

Islamist parties," is explained in the following section as a subject that requires greater detail to describe the political strategies employed by Ennahda in the Tunisian democratic system.

From the four factors described in this section, it is evident that Tunisian political climate was favorable to democracy. Ennahda has adopted syncretic, national Islam, although its origins lie in pan-Islamist thought. Both political secularism and the development of democracy before Islamism conditioned Tunisians toward a moderate democratic government. These factors forced Ennahda to comply with democratic traditions during the party's adolescence. Although Ennahda's development may have been hindered by centralized, state-controlled religious authorities, the party has been able to succeed despite this limitation.

Syncretic, national Islam

Kubicek finds that when a state's Islamic traditions blend with local traditions and cultures, they are more likely to produce rational, liberal interpretations of Islam. These interpretations are particularly rare in the Middle East, where Arabic and Islamic culture are infused by deep historical ties. As a result, Arab countries accept traditional literalist Islamic interpretations, which are more likely to manifest as Salafist Islamic governments rather than governments that accept Western democratic influences.[xxvii] Non-Arab countries, in contrast, have a different balance between national culture and Islamic culture, which creates an Islamic ideology that is more pliable to outside influences.

Historical evidence for the creation of a Tunisian national Islamic culture is mixed. On one hand, the Islamic Tendency Movement and Ennahda party were clearly based on the example of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood aspired to pan-Islamism within the Arab World as opposed to embracing the specific national cultures of Muslim countries. Rachid Ghannouchi describes these foundations: "Our approach was shaped

by our contact with a variety of reformist Islamic thinkers. Early on, we were influenced by thinkers in Egypt and Syria linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, such as the movement's Egyptian founder, Hasan al-Banna, and Mustafa al-Sibai, the leader of its Syrian branch.[xxviii]"

MTI/Ennahda evolved following the fall of Bourguiba and utilized Tunisian interpretation of Islam to guide the party platform. Ghannouchi and Ennahda leaders called upon the legacy of Islamic scholar Mohammed Tahar Ben Achour, who argued in favor of a more liberal and rationalistic interpretation of the Quran to allow focus on the practical outcomes of Islamic law. Ennahda also referenced strong Tunisian Sufi traditions and the liberal juridical traditions of the Zaytouna mosque-school. Arguments like this allow Ennahda to synthesize Tunisian and Islamic identities in their party ideology.[xxix] This is convincing modern evidence, but one cannot ignore the past influence of Egyptian pan-Islamic thought on the MTI's development as a precursor to Ennahda.

Decentralized, nonhierarchical religious institutions

Decentralized, nonhierarchical religious institutions create space for democratic-style dialogue within religious communities and limit the power of Islamist movements by preventing unification of ideology and resources. The polarization of Islamic politics and religion in a central institution causes cases like Iran, where religion dominates the government and eliminates secular opposition.[xxx] In other cases, centralized religion is co-opted and used to augment the authority of the secular state over religious institutions. Decentralization allows for political Islam to reach a stable equilibrium of power, not so monolithic that it can overrun the state but not so weak and inflexible that the state can coopt and destroy religious movements by targeting one organization alone.

Tunisian religious authorities are historically hierarchical and centralized, although this has been used to advance a singular Islamic ideology and to undermine the Islamic community at different times. Throughout Tunisian history, "Islamic learning was centered on the Zaytouna mosque, which...had its own mufti who could 'speak' for Islam." [xxxi] Although the Zaytouna mosque-school was remarkably liberal and dynamic,[xxxii] the hierarchical structure of the mosque allowed for little dissent. The French used pre-existing centralized institutions to link the Islamic body governing mosques and mosque leadership to the secular state, deepening state control over Islam. Throughout the secular presidencies of Bourguiba and Ben Ali, these structures were used to subordinate Islam in political and social spheres.[xxxiii] Consequently, past regimes tainted the centralized authority of Islamic institutions in Tunisia to use against Islam, and theorists defer to Ennahda as the main manifestation of political Islam in the state.

Legal and political secularism

One the most obvious preconditions for democracy is legal and political separation of church and state. According to Kubicek, a key indicator of this is the aggressive limitation of political space for Islamic actors.[xxxiv] This means removing mentions of Islam from constitutions or clearly stating that government is secular. In particular, this can mean banning sharia law and/or parallel sharia court systems, allowing for the established and legitimate rule of secular law. Any Islamization of the state leaves openings for authoritarian Islamic interpretations to seize control.

Secularism was a key component passed down from the founding fathers of the Tunisian state. As a result of Tunisian access to French education in the late 1800s, generations of Tunisian politicians and policy-makers were exposed to liberal democratic principles that were associated with modernization and French prosperity.[xxxv] Habib Bourguiba channeled these

ideas by imposing a liberal and secular vision upon the Tunisian state through the legislation guaranteeing Western-style women's rights, controlling Islamic practices through the state, and removing remnants of sharia law in Tunisian law. The Ben Ali regime carried out this legislation and intensified crackdowns on Ennahda and other Islamist movements. The conflict between Islamism and secularism continues to define Tunisian politics. The greatest attack from secularists against political Islamist movements was and continues to be the suspicion that they will undermine Tunisia's secular laws.

Democracy mobilized before Islamism

Kubicek explains that if popular democratic movements precede popular Islamist movements, the state will be more likely to democratize. Liberalization without Islamic opposition creates an institutional foundation that cannot be so easily undermined by religious thought. Even the flawed implementation of democratic rights in pseudo-democratic governments creates an ideal that people seek through the political process. On the contrary, if democratic thought is preceded or defeated by Islamic thought, states are more likely to adopt authoritarian governments guided by Islamic ideology.

The adoption of Western-styled democratic dialogue started during the Tunisian revolution. Bourguiba constructed pseudo-democratic institutions, including a single-party legislative bodies and a bureaucracy, and utilized liberal democratic rhetoric to legitimize his rule. Ben Ali steepened the authoritarian nature of Bourguiba's framework and further utilized anti-Islamist rhetoric to co-opt Tunisian secularists and liberals into accepting his regime. Tunisian Islamist movements didn't arise until the 1970s with the foundation of MTI, and Salafist movements didn't gain substantial traction until the early 2000s. Consequently, secular

democratic ideology has the advantage in Tunisian discourse, and political Islam must adapt to it to gain traction.

Detailed analysis of Ennahda's moderation through political strategy

While these four historical and institutional preconditions for democracy demonstrate the likelihood that an Islamist party could moderate, it is important to analyze Ennahda's political process of moderation during the Jasmine Revolution. In Kubicek's model, this is the fifth precondition, but his theoretical explanations about Tunisia are brief. New reflections on the Jasmine Revolution show how impactful Ennahda was throughout the process. After explaining the modern history of the Jasmine Revolution, I will support the inclusion-moderation model to explain internal shifts in Ennahda's policies because of democratic participation, as well as the "twin tolerations" model as rationale for how Ennahda shaped Tunisian democracy by maintaining mutual security agreements between secularists and Islamists.

The inclusion-moderation model

Ennahda's political concessions to support Tunisian democracy started immediately after ousting the Ben Ali regime. When debating proportional representation versus "first past the post" single member representation in the National Constituent Assembly, Ennahda fought for a proportional representation system that would limit their power.[xxxvi] In a majoritarian first-past-the-post system, "Ennahda would have swept almost nine of every ten seats" given the chaos of the newly-forming party system.[xxxvii] The coalition-building nature of proportional representation was tested when Ennahda struggled to hold together its coalition of secular centrist parties. Critics in Tunisia feared they had fallen victim to the "Islamic free-elections trap," the theory that any Islamist party that wins in free elections will never relinquish power, given their alleged authoritarian and radical religious nature. These critics would have predicted

that Ennahda would use state and paramilitary forces to silence the opposition. Instead, Ennahda took an unprecedented step toward moderation. After failing to produce a successful constitution, they relinquished their own power for the sake of preserving democracy and national unity and deferred to a neutral, technocratic government to author the Tunisian constitution instead. These sacrifices are uncharacteristic of any political party (particularly an Islamist party) and the impact of Ennahda's decisions resulted in Tunisia's incredible democratic transition.

One explanation for Ennahda's decisions stem from its long-term involvement in democratic institutions and civil society organizations. This is called inclusion-moderation theory, which posits that inclusion in democracy, even as a pro-authoritarian party, causes radical parties to moderate their ideology to achieve electoral success. Malik Mufti explains his take on the inclusion-moderation theory in Arab states: "Today's mainstream Islamists did not arrive at these conclusions (to participate in democracy) by proceeding from individual freedom and equality as foundational philosophical premises. Instead, they arrived there through the series of tactical counter-moves directed against...various authoritarian secular-nationalist regimes." [xxxviii] Given this theory, I find that decades of aspirations to participate in democracy transformed both MTI and Ennahda internally. To counter the secular authoritarianism of the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regime in a democratic process, Ennahda sacrificed its religious platform to become more politically competitive. Dr. Larbi Sadiki further explains Ennahda in this context: "As a stakeholder, Ennahda is now concerned with self-reproduction: via the contestation of power, effective political strategies and responsive public policy platforms. Ideology ceases to be a guiding force.[xxxix]" According to this theory, participation the political game pulls attention away from the initial ideological goals of the party. When balancing between adherence to

religious ideology and democratic competitiveness, religious ideals are sacrificed first to achieve the party's goals of political success.

The evidence for this theory is seen clearly in the transformation of Ennahda's gender politics from the Ben Ali regime until the present. The Ben Ali regime secured political support and isolated Islamist sympathizers by adopting robust gender equality laws and by claiming that these laws would be reversed if Islamists were elected.[xl] Both Bourguiba and Ben Ali instrumentalized this fear to avoid inclusion of Islamist parties in government. Ennahda's goal was acceptance as a legal political party to advance an Islamist agenda, and the party's gender attitudes were a strategic obstacle to political success.

Ennahda made policy concessions to become viable. Ghannouchi fought back against the Ben Ali regime during his exile by writing hundreds of articles decrying sharia law and advocating for a flexible Islamic interpretation that allowed for consistency with existing gender equality laws.[xli] During Ghannouchi's exile, Ennahda leaders built credibility on gender rights by accepting "The Call from Tunis" with other activist leaders, guaranteed "the full equality of women and men," and by joining the 18. October Coalition for Rights and Freedoms in Tunisia, during which Ennahda reiterated commitment to civic democracy, rejected religious compulsion, and guaranteed robust gender rights. These were necessary steps to link Ennahda with the secular anti-regime activists and form the successful Jasmine Revolution coalition. In the process of seeking political power, Ennahda's engaged in a decades-long process of moderating their religious perspectives on gender.

How can we prove that these secular adaptations weren't a long-term facade to gain power? Even after Ennahda won its 2011 victory in the National Constituent Assembly, they agreed to male-female parity on candidate lists, institutionalizing the participation of women in

Tunisian politics.[xlii] Ennahda continues to hold to its pre-revolution promises on gender equality, even though the party is well-positioned for electoral success without such religious concessions. Gender politics is one strong example of Ennahda compensating for one of its major weaknesses to moderate Tunisian voters, but Ghannouchi committed to similar political changes regarding the rejection of violent Islamist revolution, the abolishment of sharia law, and Ennahda's full commitment to democratic values. As a result, one can connect Ennahda's commitment to liberal democracy as a product of the inclusion-moderation process.

The strongest argument against the inclusion-moderation model is that Ennahda had already moderated before it was definitively included in Tunisian democratic politics. Should case studies of Tunisian Islamist moderation start in the 1970s, when the MTI was still banned from Tunisian politics? This status doesn't fit the purest definition of inclusion in politics. If we count Ennahda's inclusion in the National Constituent Assembly as its starting point in the inclusion-moderation model, their policy changes are much less impressive. Instead, it appears that the moderation of Tunisian Islamism happened much earlier and the Jasmine Revolution is unimpactful as a signpost for Ennahda's moderation. I believe that a somewhat loose definition of inclusion should be adopted. MTI/Ennahda aspired to participate in democratic politics from their inception and underwent institutional processes to meet the impossible demands of secular nationalist governments. Throughout 2000s, Ennahda collaborated with centrist and secular parties and other democratic civil society organizations (notably, unions and human rights activists) and secularized their political platforms for future competitiveness. This inclusion-moderation process continues today, as Ennahda balances religion and democracy in its internal politics to appeal to Tunisian voters.

The twin tolerations model

The "twin tolerations" argument explains that emergent democracies are dependent on the balance of power between religious and secular authorities. When this balance of power is upset, authoritarian regimes rule and violently suppress the opposition. Stepan explains the twin tolerations:

> "The first toleration is that of religious citizens toward the state. It requires that they accord democratically elected officials the freedom to legislate and govern without having to confront denials of their authority based on religious claims...The second toleration is that of the state toward religious citizens. This type of toleration requires that laws and officials must permit religious citizens, as a matter of right, to freely express their views and values within civil society, and to freely take part in politics.[xliii]"

In the Tunisian case, this theory explains Ennahda's tactics to create harmony by engaging in democracy. Both secularist and Islamist parties must build trust to make credible commitments to power-sharing and respecting the existence of their opponent. By establishing a mutual security agreement, both parties benefit because they must no longer worry about violent repression after losing an election. Establishing these agreements are difficult, as illustrated by the tumultuous history of democratization in the Arab world. I assert that Ennahda, driven by historical factors, is uniquely able to reach out to secularist parties and to build trust with their secular opponents.

In Arab Muslim countries, the search for "twin tolerations" has been particularly grim. Throughout the 50s and 60s, elite secular nationalist governments, such as the Turkish Kemalists and Ba'athist parties, imposed harsh restrictions on religion throughout the Arab world. The 70s, 80s, and 90s brought Islamist revival across the Middle East, including populist Islamist revolutions that unseated secular governments and instituted sharia law. Most Middle Eastern governments fit into these two categories and experience an uneven balance-of-power that generates political tension and violence between Islamists and secularists. Fully-fledged liberal

democracy ends this cycle of violence by creating mutual security guarantees for peaceful cooperation, and is an ideal outcome for both parties. Regardless of this, waves of democratization, such as 19th century European revolutions and the Arab Spring, tend to be violent as mutual security agreements fail. For example, the Arab Spring unleashed tensions between religious and democratic forces, as evaluated by Malik Mufti: "These then are the elements that align the Arab world with Turkey's trajectory: an authoritarian secular nationalist establishment with daunting coercive capabilities and substantial electoral support, an Islamist opposition with often greater popular grounding, and a population that has increasingly come to believe that democracy is the only legitimate form of government." [xliv] This paradigm loosely fits all Arab Spring countries, with context-based modifications that have been agents for democratization, failed revolution, and stagnant civil war.

Mufti's model to describe Turkish secular-Islamist democratic tensions can explain the political-religious conflicts of the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution. The coastal secular elite of the Ben Ali regime pitted themselves against Ennahda's populist Islamist movement, and decades of brutal repression ensued. The preconditions for Islamic democracy and the inclusion-moderation model primed Ennahda to become a willing participant in the democratic balance of power once the Jasmine Revolution occurred. Given the choice to exploit Tunisian's developing democracy to ensure Islamist political rule, Ennahda leaders instead chose to embrace the mutual security agreement of a democratic constitution that guarantees the twin tolerations. As previously mentioned, Ennahda sacrificed voting methods that would have given it a 9-to-1 majority in the constitution-writing process, and they accepted a coalition-encouraging democratic system rather than a populist parliamentary system. Furthermore, when sociocultural issues endangered the democratic transition, Ennahda maintained the balance of power by sacrificing their elected

leadership of the National Constituent Assembly to allow for a technocratic transitional government.

Rachid Ghannouchi reflected on Ennahda's motivations throughout the Jasmine Revolution: "Even if we lose in elections, democracy gains. The main goal is to make a success of democracy. Tunisia has gotten rid of despotism. There is chaos in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Egypt, and Iraq. We saved our country. We lose power but we saved Tunisia. We will try to oblige Nidaa Tounes to accept the game of democracy. Moving from government to opposition, and preserving the right to come back, this is the point of democracy." [xlv] In contrast to the chaos of violence and civil war in other Arab Spring countries, Tunisian political opponents accepted these political agreements for unity and peace. Both the actions and promises of Ennahda's leaders serve as substantial evidence to support the "twin tolerations" model to explain the success of Tunisian democracy as a balance of power between Islamists and secularists.

Forecasting Tunisian Democracy: An uncertain transition

The international community lauds the passage of Tunisia's 2014 constitution as a turning point in Islamic democracy and Middle Eastern democracy as a result of Ennahda's cooperation with secularist opposition. Like all democracies, Tunisian democracy still faces obstacles that stem from historical factors and imperfect institutions. Because of this, it is important to celebrate Tunisian democracy with caution.

Tensions between secularists and Islamists persist, and sociocultural issues are among the central debates between Nidaa Tounes, the center-left secular nationalist party, and Ennahda. Nidaa Tounes' campaign threatened that another Ennahda-led government would erode civil liberties, increase political violence, and create no positive economic change. Moderates swayed in favor of this dogmatic position. In the 2014 elections, Nidaa Tounes received 37% of the

popular vote, while Ennahda received only 27.5%.[xlvi] Ennahda peacefully ceded power to the new government. While Ennahda's role in the Jasmine Revolution is heavily scrutinized, secularists now hold the burden of maintaining stability. Many secularists from the draconian Ben Ali regime joined Nidaa Tounes, including President Beji Caid Essebi, Ben Ali's Minister of the Interior. This may be the cause of Nidaa Tounes' provocative, anti-Islamist rhetoric, which attacks Ennahda based on its religious origins and not on its party platform. The balance of secularists and Islamists is fragile, and Nidaa Tounes threatens Tunisian democracy by using identity politics to instigate conflict.

Another major concern for Tunisian democracy is increasing Salafist jihadi violence. The Islamic State claimed three major terrorist attacks in Tunisia throughout 2015, although the Essebi government claimed that local jihadists organized them.[xlvii] In response, a harsh anti-terrorism law has been passed. Its provisions include restricting civil liberties to allow Tunisian security services to hunt alleged terrorists and limiting government transparency and accountability during trials of suspected terrorists.[xlviii] It remains uncertain how linkages between Tunisian jihadists and the Islamic State are taking shape. Georges Fahmi speculates that the rise in jihadi violence stems from Ennahda's failure to represent conservative Islamic values, such as the aspiration for an Islamic state ruled by sharia law.[xlix] Because religious conservatives aren't politically engaged in Tunisia, many of them have radicalized and left to fight for ISIS. As of February 25th, it was reported that between 6,000 and 7,000 Tunisians left the country to fight for ISIS, dwarfing other top countries, which sent between 2000-2500 fighters.[l] The next crisis for Tunisia democracy will be the return of these fighters, who will inject Tunisian politics with a level of extremism that the government has never dealt with before.

I support Malik Mufti's level-headed comparison of Tunisian democracy to the early stages of Turkish democracy. There isn't enough evidence to show that Tunisian secular-Islamist relations are durable enough to outlast future crises. Tunisia's neighbors are unstable and undemocratic, Tunisia's economy is still struggling to recover, and the return of jihadi fighters may upset the ideological balance of power. These factors add pressure to Ennahda's internal politics and may cause the party to revert to more conservative populist policies to appeal to religious hardliners. These agitations could kick-start a cycle of antagonism and repression, as seen in recent Turkish politics. The Tunisian government could also continue to defy pessimistic theories, and secularists and Islamists could jointly address these problems. I prefer prudence in the face of these circumstances, understanding that democratization is a difficult process that generates conflict before long-term stability is achieved.

Broader conclusions for the Arab Spring?

Ennahda's evolution as an Islamist political party is remarkable and meets the idealistic visions of democracy from the Arab Spring. Although the unique history of Tunisian contributed to the party's development in many ways, the methodical analysis of Ennahda's history and strategies provide us with information to apply to other emerging Arab Islamic democracies. The preconditions of democracy in political Islam can be identified in other Arab Spring countries, although Islamist parties will face a more difficult adaptation into democracy. Ennahda was fortunate to develop in a state which fit many of these preconditions, allowing for an easier fusion of religious and democratic values. For pro-democracy parties and governments, these preconditions can be seen as goals for the gradual democratization.

These preconditions have limited applications, as they don't explain why Islamists parties are strategically motivated to participate in democracy. The inclusion-moderation model

provides an explanation for why Islamist parties should never be banned, repressed, or excluded from democratic governments and institutions. Ennahda's coalition-building with secularist parties and its engagement with the democratic process forced the party to compromise on irreconcilable goals, such as the imposition of sharia law on a democratic state. According to the inclusion-moderation theory, Islamist parties should be included in democratic institutions as soon as possible, as their participation in democracy has a democratizing effect.

Why would Islamist parties accept this fate if it was certain that they would surrender some of their initial goals? Democracy creates mutual security guarantees that break the cyclical Islamist-secularist violence found throughout the Middle East. By creating governments that embrace twin tolerations, Islamists and secularists can avoid the vicious sectarian violence found in Arab Spring countries like Syria and Yemen. Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes are attempting to institutionalize this relationship; the 2014 constitution and the peaceful transition of power between the two parties are excellent signs. Tunisia still faces many challenges, and it will take generations to build permanent trust between Islamists and secularists in the democratic government.

When applying this analysis to other Arab Spring countries, we must recognize that the Arab Spring is the start of a century-long process of democratization. Tunisia is still an emerging democracy that could crumble or thrive based on both exogenous and endogenous factors. More broadly, the Middle East faces new conflicts between Islamists and secularists and between democrats and authoritarian regimes. The Arab Spring symbolizes the crossing of an ideological line that cannot be undone: Arab peoples will no longer accept the unprotested repression of the postwar period. They demand democratic governments. The international community must acknowledge that democratization may be a long, chaotic, and violent process,

as it was in Europe from 1848 to 1948. Although Tunisia doesn't play a significant geopolitical role in influencing the Middle East, the case study of Ennahda lays out a blueprint for how an Islamist political party can bridge the gap between a seemingly intractable ideological conflict for the sake of stability and democracy. Over the next decades, we will observe whether other Arab-Islamic countries and political movement can foster the preconditions of Islamic democracy and act strategically to implement it.

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[ii] John Esposito, Tamara Sonn, John Voll, Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring, pg. 176
[iii] Esposito et al, pg. 177
[iv] Christopher Alexander, Tunisia: From stability to revolution in the Maghreb, pg. 35
[v] Alexander, pg. 47
[vi] Esposito et al, pg. 180-181
[vii] Esposito et al citing Ghannouchi, pg. 182
[viii] Esposito et al, pg. 182
[ix] Alexander, pg. 50
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[xi] Alexander, pg. 57
[xii] Esposito et al, pg. 186
[xiii] Alexander, pg. 58
[xiv] Alexander, pg. 72
[xv] Alexander, pg. 75
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[xviii] Esposito et al, pg. 189
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[xx] Alexander, pg. 89
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[xxii] Alexander, pg. 94
[xxiii] Esposito et al, pg. 40
[xxiv] Esposito et al, pg. 192
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[xxvi] Esposito et al, pg. 196
[xxvii] Kubicek, pg. 10-11
[xxviii] Rachid Ghannouchi, "From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy: The Future of Tunisia's Ennahda Party, pg. 60
[xxix] Kubicek, pg. 289
[xxx] Kubicek, pg. 12
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[xxxii] Ghannouchi, pg. 60
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[xxxiv] Kubicek, pg. 13
[xxxv] Alexander, pg. 22
[xxxvi] Alfred Stepan, "Multiple but Complementary, Not Conflictual, Leaderships: The Tunisian Democratic Transition in Comparative Perspective", pg. 103
[xxxvii] Alfred Stepan, "Tunisia's Transition and the Twin Tolerations", pg. 93
[xxxviii] Malik Mufti, "The Many-Colored Cloak: Evolving Conceptions of Democracy in Political Thought", pg. 21
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[xl] Stepan, "Multiple but Complementary", pg. 100-101
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[xlii] Stepan, "Twin Tolerations", pg. 93
[xliii] Stepan, "Twin Tolerations", pg. 89-90
[xliv] Mufti, "Democratizing Potential", pg. 411
[xlv] Stepan citing Ghannouchi, "Twin Tolerations", pg. 105
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[xlix] Georges Fahmi, “The Future of Political Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia”
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