

## Political Islam's influence on dictatorships in Egypt & Tunisia after the Arab Spring

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## **John Cabot University**

Departement of Political Science & International Affairs

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science  
Minor in History

### Political Islam's influence on dictatorships in Egypt & Tunisia after the Arab Spring.

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines political Islam's influence on dictatorships in Egypt & Tunisia after the Arab Spring through studying the Islamist political parties involved. By examining their historical backgrounds, the process of the Arab Spring, their time in power, and the aftermath, I clarify that Islam is compatible with democracy under certain circumstances that were evident in Tunisia but not in Egypt. The period studied includes the Arab Spring and the ten years afterwards. I use two primary methods of investigation: a quantitative analysis of each country and two case studies on the Islamist political parties. Data has been collected from archives, published reports, and newspapers. This thesis challenges the argument that Islam is not compatible with democracy.

My thesis will focus on the Islamist political parties, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Enhad party in Tunisia. This thesis will show the rise and fall of the groups as political forces in the region, the effects of the parties on the national political landscape in each country, and the democratization process. I will consider questions such as: Are the values of the Islamist political parties compatible with Islam? Were the Islamist political parties willing to secularize the country? Finally, I will look at the cultural atmosphere produced and whether it helped produce democratization or hindered the process.

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# 1. Introduction

This thesis will discuss Islam's influence on dictatorships in the Arab world post Arab Spring. It will argue that Islam is compatible with democracy by using the cases of Egypt and Tunisia. Both countries ousted their leader during the Arab Spring, and Islamic political parties were elected into power directly after. Furthermore, this thesis will discuss Islam and its connection to politics and how secularism is evident in the cases Egypt and Tunisia. Several scholars have questioned the compatibility of Islam and democracy throughout history.

A standard narrative that has been presented with arguments to prove their incompatibility. Nevertheless, in the past decade, we have seen political parties inherently grounded in Islam helping and even leading the democratization processes during the Arab Spring, for example Tunisia and the Ennahda party. However, the case of Egypt suggests why the involvement of Islamic political parties is not always successful.

Firstly, this thesis will briefly discuss what dictatorships look like in Egypt and Tunisia and how that contributed to starting the Arab Spring. Moreover, it will discuss the differences between the two countries by examining what they wanted to change and what they asked for. The dissertation will then highlight the Islamic organizations involvement in both countries and how they impacted both uprisings. Additionally, it will examine if the Islamic organizations can be considered genuinely Islamic, then discuss why today Tunisia can be considered a democracy, while Egypt cannot, and what led each country to become the way it is.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Many scholars have questioned the compatibility of Islam and democracy throughout history. A standard narrative that compares democracy and Islamic cultures has been presented with arguments to prove their incompatibility. Nevertheless, in the past decade, we have seen political parties inherently grounded in Islam helping and even leading the democratization processes during the Arab Spring, for example Tunisia and the Enhad party. However, the case of Egypt proves how the involvement of Islamic political parties like the Muslim Brotherhood was unsuccessful and ultimately ended in the country back-sliding into authoritarianism. While their counterparts in Tunisia were able to modernize their Islamic way of ruling and somewhat reach democratization.

### **Compatibility between Western and Islamic Cultures**

Research examining the compatibility between western and Islamic cultures is contradictory. Some works of literature have found that democracy is difficult to achieve in Muslim countries because their culture is not compatible with democracy. In contrast, others have not attributed this incompatibility to the Arab world instead of the Muslim communities. Both Tarek Masoud (2015) and Samuel Huntington (1996) agree that culture is an essential factor for the failure of the Muslim community to achieve democracy. Huntington (1996) argues in "Clash of Civilizations" that Islamic cultures are inherently incompatible with Western civilizations because the Muslim communities are inherent with an ongoing lack of agreement about the meaning of an authentic Islamic culture.



Similarly, Masoud (2015) expands on Huntington's (1996) argument in his "Has the Door Closed on Arab Democracy," suggesting that as a result of the absence of toleration, Arab civilizations cannot form democracies. He explains this absence of democracy by giving the example of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and how they had an "absence of toleration." This can be linked to Huntington's (1996) theory about cultural identity as the reason for clashes of civilizations because this absence of toleration is sometimes considered the central cultural aspect that prevents Arabs from creating and sustaining any democratic governments.

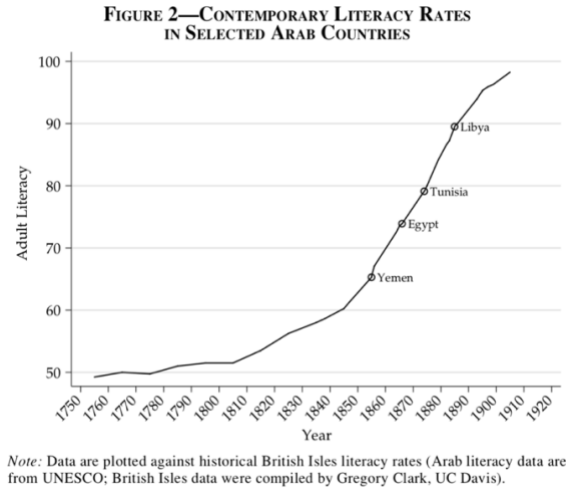
Huntington (1996) further states that cultural identity is the reason for the clashes of civilizations. He states several times that culture is the main factor that creates conflicts within the international community, but that was not the case during the Arab Spring, as it will be explained chapter 5 of this theses. In addition, Huntington (1996) limits culture to religion and language only.

On the other hand, Tarek Chamkhi (2014) elaborates on how Islam or political Islam is now a political ideology and not a religion, which is a point that is widely argued today. Additionally, Chamkhi (2014) argues that the Islamists who participated in the revolution shared the people's interests by chanting things such as "leave," referring to the Egyptian president at the time. This had nothing to do with the West. Contrary to what Huntington (1996) believes is the reason for the clash of civilizations, even the Islamists were not chanting for anti-western solutions.

However, while Huntington (1996) argues that incompatibility was linked to Islamic culture, Masoud (2015) argues it is linked to Arab cultures. He gives many examples like Indonesia, Senegal, Albania, and Pakistan, among others. He then states that 20 years ago, out of all Muslim democracies in the world; none was Arab. Even though his survey data states that most of the Arab world believes that democracy is the best form of government, which declines the idea that Arabs are vulnerable only to dictatorships.

Masoud (2015) proceeds to challenge this idea by stating that even though the Arab countries are considered prone to dictatorships, a simple small event such as "the self-immolation of a fruit seller in a dusty Tunisian town" was enough to shake the Arab world and bring down several "seemingly unshakeable regimes." He then proves that even though this event shook the Arab world, change was possible in 6 countries only, including Egypt and Tunisia.

As Masoud (2015) broadens his argument, he reveals how people revolted against Mohamed Morsi in Egypt and what happened in the aftermath. Using his argument, he assumes that the Brotherhood has been making false promises since the beginning of the revolution. Masoud (2015) claims that they pushed for peaceful protests and made many promises that they did not keep, which was why people revolted against them in 2013. The Brotherhood was always considered a "religiously conservative" organization.



*Contemporary Literacy Rates in Selected Arab Countries, Masoud (2015).*

Masoud (2015) then gives other reasons for Arab democracy and states that perhaps it is limited due to underdevelopment and literacy rates. He then explains his theory further and provides counterarguments that force him to dismiss his argument. Most Arab countries, disregarding the oil-rich Gulf states, are considered middle or low-income income countries. Furthermore, they also have low levels of education and low literacy rates. Since the time these statistics were taken, the numbers have changed to a certain extent, which explains Libya's high literacy rates which can be attributed to their population numbers which were estimated to be almost 7 million citizens in 2020.

He compares in the chart above Tunisia and Britain and states that "Tunisia, with a literacy rate of about 80 percent, is today where Britain was more than 130 years ago." Regardless, he suggests that poor, illiterate countries can still maintain democracy as he compares India and Egypt because they have a similar literacy rate. He also states that India has

a similar literacy rate to Egypt and is still democratic, but also that India has less than half of Egypt's per capita GDP.

Huntington (1996) provides a similar argument as he proposes that universal culture is limited to the West, alienating non-western cultures. He states that freedom and democracy belong to the West. When fundamental human rights are mentioned, Huntington (1996) considers them "Western values." Moreover, he uses religion as the main factor to explain the rift between Western and Muslim communities. In this regard, he adds to this by tending to base his theories on Muslim extremists even though he continuously states that "Underlying problem for the West is Islam, not Islamic fundamentalism" (217, 1996). He believes that Islam and the West are in a constant war and carried on to use the example of Qadhafi as he used to continuously state that there is a "Holy war against the West."

However, several other studies argue otherwise, finding that Muslims were not the issue in achieving democracy, but secularization. In "The Role of Political Islam in Tunisia's Democratization Process," Alkan Özcan (2018) argues that the Muslim's world main issue in achieving democracy is secularization. The author explains that one of the main turning points regarding secularism in the Muslim world was the rise and fall of the Enhad party in modern-day Tunisia. Furthermore, he states that it was necessary in the Muslim world but also imperative in Tunisia. It was one of the main reasons why the country was able to achieve secularization somewhat. He elaborates by explaining how Tunisia went from an authoritarian country to a secularised nation with the help of political Islam and the Enhad party. Political Islam proved successful after the 2011 Jasmine Revolution.

Masoud (2015) disagrees with Özcan (2018) as he tries to give possible reasons several authors used to see why the Arab world is having a hard time creating democratic regimes. He explains the rise of Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia after the uprisings by stating that "Muslims' innate thirst for shari'a causes them to vote into power parties that promise to erect illiberal regimes" (81, 2015). Although this might be part of the reason, it is not the whole story. This means that either democracy wasn't an option to begin with or that electing these parties is a form of retaliation from Muslims. Meaning that, Muslims have always pushed for the existence of sharia law in government, but the question remains; to what extent should it be involved?

Marc Lynch (2016) explains that five years on, "Egypt has fallen under a dictatorship disturbingly similar to that evicted in 2011, and Tunisia's fledgling democracy, the one exception of real progress, is threatened by fundamentalist terrorism and comeback efforts by old regime insiders." In chapter 5 of "The Arab Uprisings Explained" Lynch (2016) explains the absence of democracy in Arab communities, like Masoud's (2015) characterization that it is an Arab issue and not a Muslim problem. He attributes this failure to the fact that the "Arab tsunami of contention resulted from diffusion processes facilitated by the unified communications environment created by Al Jazeera and social media." (Lynch, 2016)

Furthermore, he explains that "these counterrevolutionary efforts, which confronted enthusiastic protesters in a notably calculating, systematic way, were facilitated by the weak organization of the primary challengers" (Lynch 585, 2016). The protestors along with the citizens who witnessed the events of the Arab Spring unfold were surprised by the amount of

people who participated, which gave them bigger hope. Lynch further explains that for that reason and the spontaneousness of the situation, it was challenging to maintain. Therefore, some of the revolts during the Arab Spring proved that they were not able to continue fighting against their determined rulers, who through years of experience, were able to maintain repressing the citizens of their countries. For example, this was seen in Morocco and Oman as the Arab Spring reached them, but their leaders were able to employ repression and dismiss the revolts.

Lynch (2016) then tries to give another reason for the absence of democracy by explaining how the more influential “Organizations that existed in a few countries, such as Egypt, acted with greater caution than the enthusiastic masses and primarily played a limited role in the uprisings and their aftermath, as Vickie Langohr demonstrates in a particularly well-grounded analysis for trade unions. Quinn Mecham shows in an equally thorough study that Islamist movements initially stayed on the sidelines as well.” (Lynch, 2016)

However, the parties that are more organized and have more history in organizational networks usually tend to get more votes than parties that are not well organized, who were representing the leaders of the uprisings, when it comes to free and fair elections. These authors that Lynch (2016) mentions stated that the rise of political Islam and Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had more to do with social organization rather than religious aspects of the situation.

### **Different Outcomes in Egypt & Tunisia**

Aside from literature examining the compatibility between Western vs. Islamic cultures and how this explains the absence of democracy in the Muslim world, multiple studies have

analyzed the different outcomes between Egypt and Tunisia to explain the absence of democracy within Islamic countries. Tarek Chamkhi (2014) discusses Islamists' rise in Tunisia and Egypt by explaining the similarities and differences in both countries after the Arab Spring. He begins by stating that "The Islamist agenda is debatable on issues regarding their commitment to democracy, pluralism and individual freedom" (455, 2014). He explains how Islamic political organizations in both countries have evolved concerning their success in 2011 and how their views of democracy have affected this success.

He explains that the clear difference between the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Enhadha party in Tunisia is how the Muslim Brotherhood's autocratic rule in Egypt ended in street protests and a military coup d'etat. In comparison, the Enhadha party went for a more inclusive approach. They formed a coalition government with two other Tunisian political parties that were primarily considered secular groups but only because they won 40 percent of the first vote in a proportional representation electoral system which forced them to form a coalition with other parties to stay in parliament. The author clearly states that Islamism is a complicated concept, but he approaches it by explaining its modern tendencies of connecting to democracy.

Other authors analyze Egypt and Tunisia, how their approaches to democracy differed, and how each factor led to a diverse outcome. Both Chamakhi (2014) and Emy Mateasan (2012) argue that small events are essential in shaking people. However, Mateasan (2012) explains that Tunisia went from an authoritarian country to a secularized nation with the help of political Islam and afterward took on Egypt. The reason Tunisia was not considered secular before and was mainly authoritarian is that their previous leader Zein El Abidine Ben Ali imprisoned his

Islamists oppositions in order to make sure they did not find their way back to the political scene in the country, which was done by many authoritarian leaders at the time, including the former Egyptian Presidents.

She elaborates on Tunisia and how, for the reasons mentioned earlier, Islamists in Tunisia were forced to reevaluate their approach and offer a more inclusive political process. The Islamists' inclusion of opposing parties offered a learning process and a better understanding of implementing secularisation while still achieving their goals. It should be noted that the Islamists' intentions of implementing democracy have constantly been questioned, not only in Tunisia but also in Egypt.

In Tunisia, the regime of Ben Ali still had many supporters. However, they had few problems with the Islamists as long as they could see signs of implementing secularisation. The reason Enhadha has many supporters can be accredited to the fact that they had an understanding that people were looking for democracy and secularising the country. They also always spoke in national unity, which made them even more popular amongst the Tunisian crowd. After the revolution, Tunisians were not looking for an Islamist government, as reported by data conducted after the elections in 2011. "78.4 percent of respondents agreed that men of religion should not influence how citizens vote in elections, and 78.5 percent agreed with the statement that religion is a private matter and that it should be separate from social and political life" (217, 2018).



After the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Tunisian citizens were encouraged to look for a more secular government. Enhada was performing inadequately like their counterparts in Egypt as the country saw a decline in the economy, and the unemployment rates were still a problem. These were some of the reasons people revolted in 2011 in the first place. After Mohamed Morsi was ousted in 2013, there were many bomb blasts in Tunisia, which caused a feeling of distress among Tunisians. Enhada was considered more innovative than the Muslim Brotherhood because they avoided creating more chaos in Tunisia, even though Rachid Ghannouchi criticized the military coup in Egypt.

Alkan Özcan (2018) agrees with Mateasan (2012) and explains how Egypt and Tunisia were connected and how the events in Egypt forced Islamists in Tunisia to reevaluate their approach and offer a more inclusive political process. The Islamists' inclusion of opposing parties offered a learning process and a better understanding of implementing secularisation while still achieving their goals. It should be noted that Islamists' intentions of implementing democracy have constantly been questioned, not only in Tunisia but also in Egypt.

### **Muslim Brotherhood & Enhada**

While the comparison of Egypt and Tunisia gives insight into how democracy was the main goal for Tunisia and Egypt, the research question can be informed by analyzing and utilizing studies that have examined the Muslim Brotherhood and Enhada and their approaches to Islamism and government. Emy Mateasan (2012) explains that it is essential to understand that the Arab Spring impacted Islamist strategies, especially in Egypt and Tunisia.

Matesan (2012) explains this impact by explaining that the Islamic movements in Egypt and Tunisia opened up many opportunities for Islamists looking for peaceful political participation. She begins by explaining the phenomenon of the Arab Spring and how revolutions, in general, are hard to predict because of "The interaction of social and psychological factors." (29, 2012) She further mentions the domino effect and how one small event like the one in Tunisia gave people the belief that even after several years, they can still make fundamental changes in their country's politics.

Bruce Rutherford (2013) argues that the Muslim Brotherhood provides a platform that offers the most public participation than any other political party in Egypt. They can achieve that through several factors, including a ruling utilizing the Sharia law. The Sharia law stresses ideas such as shura, which when translated means consultation, and in terms of governments today, it means that things are decided based on the majority vote. This is the essence of Islamic law as Muslims back in the day could vote on who succeeded Prophet Mohamed after his death, which was Omar Bin El Khattab.

This means that people can have free and fair elections on proposals such as the legislature and presidency. The Muslim Brotherhood feared, especially after the Egyptian revolution, that this would cause disorder in the state and politics since this means that people regulate laws and the actions of the political powers in charge. The Muslim Brotherhood fixed their problem by stating that if they find that the people voted on are deficient, they can impose an emergency law that allows them to restrain any individual or organization considered dangerous for what they wanted to achieve. This can be attributed to the fall of the Brotherhood

and explains why political parties that are formed under this regime would be restrained and inadequate.

Moreover, this gives them power over the private sector to select prices and policies, among many other factors. Not only that, these policies are enforced selectively by the Muslim Brotherhood, which means that if you are on their side, you have several advantages. If you are considered an enemy, you certainly will not be able to succeed. This provides a framework that forces business people to cooperate with the Brotherhood and avoid going against them. This was one of the reasons the party was banned in the first place in Egypt and why the country had strict laws to ban religious, political parties for many years.

Mateasan (2012) attributed the success of Islamists in both Tunisia and Egypt to the fact that these organizations saw a chance and quickly acted by forming political parties and disassociating themselves from any violence, considering their past reputations of violence. The main difference between their appearance during the Arab Spring and in the past is calling for democracy. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood still refused to secularise the country, but the Tunisian Islamists knew that the citizens would react badly to them if they had done the same. The need for secularization comes from the modernization that both countries have been going through for the few years before the Arab Spring. People were not ready for pure Islamists to rule since they believed it will eventually infringe on their freedoms that they gained after the modernization period.

She then further understands how their ideologies have changed over the years and where they initially came from. The Muslim Brotherhood had significant support after the Arab Spring that was never seen before can be explained by exploring their past. As the author states, "Between 1989 and 1995, the group focused on attempting to assassinate prominent Egyptian figures" (33, 2012) This did not attract supporters at the time; it had the opposite effect. Many of the figures they assassinated were secularists, making it harder for modern Egyptians to support them. For example, they attacked the Interior Minister, the Information Minister and former President Hosni Mubarak but their attacks were unsuccessful. They also performed several attacks against foreign tourists in the 1990s, killing tourists and Egyptian citizens.

These attacks were inspired particularly by the writings of Sayid Qutb, who justified the murdering of innocent people by calling them infidels. The Egyptian figures were infidels because they accepted secularism in an Islamic country, and they justified the murdering of people if they thought they were breaking the Islamic code. They thought this would bring the Egyptian population closer to them and support the organization because they forbade anything against Islam. The Muslim Brotherhood did not admit that violence "split the people, harmed the interests of society, and did not achieve the goals it set out to achieve" until 1997.

Nevertheless, they went back to that after 2013 when they failed to achieve their objectives and rejected peaceful solutions in exchange for a more violent approach like burning police stations and churches. The Human Rights Watch stated that "Immediately following the violent dispersal of the Muslim Brotherhood sit-ins in Cairo on August 14, crowds of men attacked at least 42 churches, burning, or damaging 37, as well as dozens of other Christian

religious institutions in the governorates of Minya, Asyut, Fayum, Giza, Suez, Sohag, Bani Suef, and North Sinai.” Their violence can be attributed to their repression in previous years. However, their peaceful contributions during and after the Arab Spring can be linked to rethinking the theological legitimacy behind their violence in previous years.

Tarek Chamkhi (2014) expands on Matsean's (2012) points by mentioning how Enhada and the Muslim Brotherhood have several similarities but differ in how they approached their citizens after the Arab Spring. Ghanouchi, the leader of Enhada, was pushing for a more secular approach and cooperated with the opposition to achieve what Enhada and the people of Tunisia wanted. On the other hand, Morsi issued a controversial constitution that gave him more powers than previous presidents, which was the opposite of what the Brotherhood promised to do. He refused to cooperate with the opposition or anyone who was not part of the Brotherhood.

Chamkhi (2014) further explains the differences by saying that Enhada wanted to be viewed as a moderate group that has the ability to work with secular parties and not force an authoritarian Islamist regime. This leads to more exposure and more support as they are viewed more flexibly. At the same time, their counterparts in Egypt failed to do the same. The new political atmosphere was not the only reason for this drastic change in Enhada's political views; the oppression Tunisians also caused went through for many years before the Arab Spring forcing Enhada to find alternative solutions. Many of these so-called Islamist parties lack, as was proved by both the Muslim Brotherhood and Enhada, are sincerity and a real commitment to the welfare of the state and its citizens instead of their hunger for power and vengeance.

Both Mateasan (2012) and Özcan (2018) explain how both countries highly affected each other during the uprisings and how Islam played a role. After Morsi was ousted in 2013, there were many bomb blasts in Tunisia, which caused a feeling of distress among Tunisians. Enhada was considered more innovative than the Muslim Brotherhood because they avoided creating more chaos in Tunisia, even though Ghannouchi criticized the military coup in Egypt.

Chamkhi (2014) explains both countries' attraction to an Islamists government and the differences between the citizens of both. He begins by saying that the Muslim Brotherhood's slogan was "Islam is the solution," which makes sense for Muslims by constantly stating that the Brotherhood tends to undermine ten percent of the Christian population.

He then compares them to their counterparts in Tunisia and how the realization that the Enhada members came to but the Brotherhood failed to realize might be the main difference between both groups and subsequently the Brotherhood's failure. That realization was that if the organization did not change its attitudes and follow the trends that the protesters were aiming for, they would not have a say in what happens next or even a chance to contribute. Enhada changed its old "style" into a new semi-secular yet Islamic political system.

Furthermore, Chamkhi (2014) explains the different styles both organizations used in each country and how one was successful while the other was not. Enhada members tried to make the world follow Sharia law to aim for democracy in a new and improved Tunisia. This does not make Enhada members post-Islamists or secularists; they just had a new worldview more compatible with their interests in this new era. Their leader admitted that they would not let

go of Sharia laws or fight for secularism; however, he states that secularism may somehow be part of Islamic politics. Their new thinking process made them more relatable to Tunisian citizens, which explains their success in the free elections following the revolution.

Rutherford (2013) then states the failure in Egypt was because when the Brotherhood was in charge, they abused the emergency law and suspended the constitutional rights of many citizens that were disapproving of the Muslim Brotherhood. If this happens to citizens, they are automatically considered terrorists as the Brotherhood did not specify what a person could do to be considered one. During the presidency of Mohamed Morsi, the Brotherhood imprisoned many people that would speak out against them and would continue to monitor them as they were scared of what would happen if these people gained popularity. Many governments executed the emergency law in Egypt since the day it went from a monarchy to a republic, not only by the Muslim Brotherhood. If they did not have the emergency law, they feared that open debate would be the reason for their downfall, which was the case inevitably.

Lynch (2016), on the other hand, argues that the “distrust between Islamist and secular forces created significant obstacles to democratic consolidation, however, proving insurmountable in Egypt and continuing to plague Tunisia” Lynch (2016). He agrees with both Chamkhi (2014) and Rutherford (2013) but gives more insight into the old regimes. “The virtual invulnerability of monarchies seems to have resulted more from traditional legitimacy than formal institutional structure” (Lynch, 2016).

Tunisia, for example, has profited from its relatively high level of modernity, which has boosted a powerful labor movement. While colonial powers and former regimes purposefully exacerbated these divergences, they had deep roots and had long acquired their significance. The nature of crucial institutions, such as the military, is shaped by these underlying variables, with far higher institutional solidity in culturally homogenous countries like Egypt and Tunisia. “Among republics, prior regime type had little bearing on the processes and outcomes of the protests; instead, socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural factors seem to play a much more critical role” (Lynch, 2016).

The goal of my case studies is to gather data for my research question, which is "How has political Islam influenced dictatorships in Egypt and Tunisia after the Arab Spring?" Throughout the case studies, I will investigate the cases of Egypt and Tunisia separately, looking into four categories that will help me understand how political Islam influenced each country. To begin, I shall examine each Islamist party's historical past by determining when and by whom they were created by. I will also investigate who their members are, what they stand for, and what their objectives are. This will help me determine whether their values are consistent with democracy.

The Arab Spring in each country, as well as why the uprising occurred in the first place, is the second issue that I will investigate. Furthermore, I will examine how citizens in each country were able to depose their presidents, who were the key players in the process and what their motivations were, as well as the political climate and its ability to digest democracy. Afterwards, I will begin examining the Islamist political parties and their support and where it came from, while highlighting their involvement and actions leading up to, during and after the



Arab Spring. Finally, I will examine the aftermath of the Arab Spring, as well as the activities made by political parties while in power. This will bring me to the conclusion of the case studies when I briefly discuss where each political party ended up after the election. By exploring what role Islam played in these two countries and how it effected the democratization process, it will become clearer if the political parties' models of Islam can be successful or hinder the democratic transition.

After discussing the case studies, I anticipate being able to make a more informed decision about whether my views are correct and whether Islam is compatible with democracy. My expectations are that by discussing these four elements, which include historical context, the Arab Spring, Islamist political parties, and the aftermath, I would be able to understand why Egypt's democratic transition failed while Tunisia's transition was judged moderately successful and if political Islam is the main factor that brings or hinders this success. These expectations are derived from the literature review since the authors emphasized the importance of the four factors discussed above in judging whether the transition was successful and if not, why it failed.

### **3. The Case of Tunisia**

#### **Historical Background**

Enhada was founded in 1981 by Rachid Ghannouchi to apply Islam in the daily life of Tunisians through peaceful means. With that goal, the group was also aiming to form a multiparty democracy. They obtained their current name in 1989 which translates to “Renaissance Movement Party”. Upon its creation, Enhada was advocating to teach and practice true Islam and resurrect Islam. The group was also criticizing the president’s modernization initiative at the time and were against the country’s religious elites as they perceived them as workers of the regime.

Enhada saw an unpredictable rise in the 1960s as Tunisia was no longer colonized and a new social class that was formed in rural areas were supporting the movement because they saw their social development being hindered by the president’s modernization initiatives. This social class and low-income families were pushed to the sidelines by the new westernized bourgeoisie, which had opposing views about sociocultural ideals. Enhada became their savior as they were pushing for a socioreligious movement that includes all members of society and doesn’t discriminate against underprivileged groups.

Before the Arab Spring, both the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Enhada Movement in Tunisia were not legal entities. However, after the events of the Arab Spring took place, both organizations formed new political parties and were legalized in both countries due to

the search for new political parties. Both parties won the majority of votes in parliament. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's presidential candidate won the elections. In Tunisia, Moncef Marzouki was elected after ten years of being exiled in France to form the Congress for the Republic political party.

Ousted President Ben Ali previously jailed Marzouki for being an Islamist extremist and going against his regime. Marzouki was also a member of the Ennahda party before it was banned. When he came into office, he appointed a member of the Ennahda movement as Prime Minister and had a party coalition with the Ennahda.

### **Arab Spring in Tunisia**

In January 2011, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire after the government seized his vegetable handcart and was harassed by police officers. Bouazizi attempted to get his cart back, but there was no recourse. A few days later, on 17th December 2010, his self-immolation went viral and Tunisian protests went to the streets to demonstrate against government corruption that led him to set himself on fire. The Bouazizi incident was preceded by the lack of classified information on the corruption of the Tunisian government.

The protest in Tunisia inspired other countries to protest against their corrupt government and leaders, which led to the start of the Arab Spring. The media titled this as the “Jasmine revolution” and the Tunisians self-titled it as “Revolution of dignity”. This revolution was an outcome of much social, economic, and political unrest. Bouazizi’s act of political dissident became a sign of political grievance throughout the Arab world. The act itself reflected the

economic and social hardships felt by most Tunisians, they were unemployed, poor, hungry, and politically repressed. The local street vendor, a sole income earner, had his produce and his life earnings taken away from him for simply selling in the streets. He reflected the much-felt sentiment that their financial and social well-being is not theirs.

Between the 18th of December 2010 and the 13th of January 2011, a series of protests and civil disobedience led to ousting the 23-year long dictatorship, and authoritarian president, Ben Ali. The protests began in Sidi Bouzid, the hometown of the street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, and later spread nationwide. The protests were met by harsh repression, where hundreds of protesters were left to die on the streets. The head-strong president further reinforced the street with military and police; this further reflected the repression of the masses. The protests took to the streets chanting for the collapse of the government.

On 10th January 2011, President Ben Ali promised to complete his term that would end in 2014 and no longer run for election and a state of emergency, as well as some reforms like increasing subsidies for basic goods and freedom of the press. This triggered further dissatisfaction, the masses felt unheard, protesters continued to take to the street and were met with further violence and repression. Further unrest ensued when Abide offered an early election.

On January 14th, 2011, Ben Ali and his family fled Tunisia to Saudi Arabia, and he would begin his life of exile abroad. His exile would prompt the return of many Islamist political leaders like Rached Ghannouchi, founder of Enhad, who had been in exile for two decades

following Abdines rise to power and Anti-islamist throughout the Middle-east and North Africa during the eighthies.

### **Enhada Political Party**

Enhada movement, later Enhada political party was founded by Ghannouchi and Abdelfattah Mourou in 1981, reform-minded Enhada had transformed from al-Jama‘a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group), to MTI (Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique), to Enhada. The movement was inspired by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist movement of its time. Like the Brotherhood, the party had been banned and its member imprisoned or exiled abroad.

In the 1980s’ the Ben-Ali regime had systemically suppressed any form of Islamist thought in public life, leaving the party fairly inactive until its legalization in 2011. Enhada was a movement inherently based in Islamic reform, with Ghannouchi as one of his main pillars. His life journey inherently influenced the development of the party. Originally a student of philosophy, a nationalist and socialist; before transitioning into a traditionalists and Islamist. His ability to understand and be intune with the struggle of much of his counterparts had led to a smooth transition into the political circuit following the fall of the Ben-Ali regime.

When the Enhada was elected, they formed coalitions with secular political groups such as Congress for the Republic and the Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties. The main reasons for this powerful coalition were to avoid the restoration of the Democratic Constitutional Rally who ruled the country for more than 50 years before the Arab Spring. Nevertheless, shortly

afterwards Enhadat welcomed many high-ranking officials from the previous regime into the new government and inherited the deposed administration's approach of strangling key state institutions.

## **Democratic Transition & Aftermath**

Even in the 2014 presidential elections, the Enhadat movement did not endorse any candidates, but the president supported Beji Caid Essebsi, who won the elections. It is important to note that when the movement was founded, it was inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt but with minor differences of what an Islamic state looked like.

In 2016, Rachid Ghannouchi stated that “We would like to promote a new Enhadat, to renew our movement and to put it into the political sphere, outside any involvement with religion.” This statement came after Enhadat leaders realized that they must abandon their original purpose of reviving Islam, which was inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, and focus solely on democratic elections. That meant that they were no longer preaching for Islam’s revival and instead portraying the party as right-wing political movement that can manage both the political sector and public affairs and cooperate with other secular parties in Tunisia.

With this transition, Enhadat shifted from its original religious philosophy and focused solely on democratic elections which was a process they called specialization. It was based on reshaping the relationship between religion and politics, allowing for more freedom on both ends. At this point, the leaders of the party knew that the party had to adapt to keep up with the

transitions that were happening in Tunisia. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, Enhada had rebranded itself to a more digestible and acceptable version of democracy of Islam, instead of sticking to hardline radical interpretation of Islam it became more moderate.

The Enhada party today is not considered to be Tunisia's leading political party mainly because of the several newly founded political parties in Tunisia such as, Heart of Tunisia. After more than 9 years since the group emerged as Tunisia's leading political party, they have been losing votes and influence. "From a high of 1.5 million votes and 89 seats in 2011, it received 947,034 votes and 69 seats in 2014, but only 561,132 votes and 53 seats in 2019" (Meddeb).

## 4. The Case of Egypt

### Historical Background

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 by Hassan Al Banna, an Islamic scholar that intended to create a universal Islamic ruling system which focuses on the Sharia law and offers social services to engage with the Egyptian population. He formed the Muslim Brotherhood based on reforming existing political systems in the name of Islam and his ideology was based on creating Islamic states that allow social justice, eliminates sinful behaviour, and allows for a certain amount of political freedom as allowed by Islam. “The brotherhood believed that they will be able to gain power by participating in fair elections while maintaining their conservative Islamists culture.” (Lynch)

By the 1940s, the Muslim Brotherhood had more than half a million members in Egypt and started promoting their values and ideologies across the Arab world. By that time, Hassan Al Banna created a special wing in the brotherhood’s organization to fight against the British rule. As an opposition force, they means was carried out by acts of dissident throughout Egypt, an ideology which claims that if the ends are necessary the means is justifiable. Their way of doing this was through political violence, terror, and aggression, they conducted a series of bombings and assassinations throughout Egypt to the dismay of Egyptian officials.

This led the Egyptian government to dismiss the group for their aggression and the opposition of British interests, and outlaw the Muslim Brotherhood all together. In the aftermath



of their organized violence and their ban, one of the Muslim Brotherhood members assassinated Egyptian President Mahmud al-Nuqrashi Pasha. Shortly after, Muslim Brotherhood figure head, Banna, was assassinated by the Egyptian security forces. As tensions increased between the Egyptian Government and Muslim Brotherhood loyalist, the MB attempted assassination of President Gamal Abd El Nasser took place in 1954. The Egyptian Government carried out a harsher crackdown, imprisoning many of their members.

Subsequently, this led the Brotherhood to change their extremely violent, militant ideology, that was promoted by the writings of Sayed Qutb, a prominent Wahabi scholar, who was advocating for a more radical transformation of Islam and society. Qutb believed that Islam provided guides to morality, justice and governance, his aim was to promote jihad, offensive acts of aggression, as a way of dealing with the corruption of both Western and Islamic societies, spearheading the global jihadi movement. It is important to note that Qutb's writings are considered somewhat holy within the Brotherhood and that his works inspired several radical Islamic groups such as; Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

Following the failed assassination of Naser, Qutb was imprisoned and later executed in 1966. Qutb became a symbol of puritan martyr hood to all MB followers and sympathizers, which led to a increased and more radical violence. As that was the case, the Camp David Accords 1979 were unwelcomed, this further sighted the lack of purity of Egyptian society the Qutb had claimed. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, the signee of the treaty, was assassinated. The regime that followed would not take the risks of the predecessors, President Hosni Mubarak, who was adamant to push of harsher and stronger crackdowns on any form of Political Islam and

exiling, imprisoning, or executing any brotherhood followers. He dismissed them from all types of political life and engagement.

“The Muslim Brotherhood were aiming to take control of the country through politics” (Pioppi). Their goal in Egypt was primarily to restore, reshape Islam into a more puritan form to re-establish a society centred around Sharia. When the MB was exiled from political life losing the government and justice aspect of Qutb’s believes, they knew they could influence the morality and through of Egypt civilian. To achieve this, unable to partake in their aggressive actions, they instead indoctrinated much of the Egyptian population through civil society initiatives and aid.

Therefore, when the possibility of partaking in election came about in 2011, they knew needed public support to be able to be elected in the Egyptian government. They knew that their years of civil society and charity to the middle class and lower-class aid in the form of food, shelter, and money would yield them a large percentage of the popular vote. The Muslim Brotherhood were undoubtedly smart in the sense that they targeted the class that needs help the most so that when the time is right, which was in 2011, they would have their support.

Their values were not compatible with democracy historically and when they ruled, they couldn’t democratize the country because they were aiming for absolute rule, as Qutb’s Wahabi theory had claimed, there is no place for secularism, Sharia should govern, people, morality and justice and they had shown by their actions after the Arab Spring which will be mentioned below.

## **Arab Spring in Egypt**

Protests in Egypt went on for 18 days and were labeled as the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. The main reasons for the rapid spread of the revolts were similar in both Tunisia and Egypt. People were tired of the current circumstances that they had endured for over 20 years and were looking for better lives, but they knew that would not have happened while their governments were in charge. The common reasons for the uprisings across the Arab world were lack of freedom of speech, corruption, poverty, unemployment and authoritarianism.

Tunisians inspired Egyptians, and on January 25th, which is the national police holiday in Egypt, protestors took to Tahrir Square and demanded that Hosny Mubarak and his government step down. The masses mobilized with no distinct ideology or plan. The government fought back and harshly cracked down which left many casualties around the country. However, the government could not continue its attacks towards the non-violent civil resistance much longer.

Finally, on February 11, 2011, Hosni Mubarak stepped down and Egyptians were celebrating the end of an era that lacked civil rights, political freedom, and had major corruption. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees rated Egypt's status as not free in 2010 and 2011, while giving Egypt a political rights score of six out of 10 and civil liberties score of five out of ten. Furthermore, freedom of speech was almost nonexistent in the country for over 30 years. Following Hosni Mubarak's abdication, Egypt declared a state of emergency and created a new temporary government until the country could safely hold fair and free elections.

Fallen ex-president Mubarak was tried for the corruption that took place during his reign and his entire regime including his family members, and his former ministers were arrested and prosecuted. Moreover, two of the most important steps that were taken after Mubarak was overthrown were lifting the state of emergency that Mubarak implemented more than 30 years ago, dissolving the National Democratic Party that ruled Egypt before Mubarak was elected, and transferring all their assets to the state. Egypt held its first democratic elections after the overthrow of Mubarak in 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood presidential elect, Mohamed Morsi, won by popular vote and would become the fifth Egyptian President.

### **The Muslim Brotherhood**

Following the resignation of Hosny Mubarak, Egypt was experiencing a period of grace where people were celebrating their accomplishments, still the majority of Egyptians had no set ideology or plan, just a similar goal. The Muslim Brotherhood, who had previous experience in mobilizing and organizing, were the smartest political force at the time as they were able to obtain major organizational capacity that no other entity in the country possessed.

The next parliamentary elections in the country, which were held in 2012, saw the Muslim Brotherhood shockingly winning almost half of the seats in the lower house and more than 80 percent of the seats in the upper house. What allowed them to succeed was the dissolving of the National Democratic Party that led the country for more than 30 years. Additionally, the Supreme Council of Armed Forces moderated the control of the president by giving the military absolute rule over defense and security.

The Muslim Brotherhood issued a statement before Mubarak's resignation stating that they will not put forward any candidate for the presidential elections. Nevertheless, they designated one of their leaders to run for presidency and when he was disqualified, Mohamed Morsi appeared as the Muslim Brotherhood candidate for presidency. After Morsi won the elections in 2012, he had absolute control over both the executive and legislative branches of the government by declaring himself immune from judicial review. His reason for performing this act was that the judiciary branch of the government was still controlled partially by leaders from the Mubarak regime.

Further on, he annulled these laws because of the major backlash he received from the Egyptian population. However, he then issued a new constitution which was based on Islamic Law, yet he still received a lot of backlash from Egyptians. People were worried that the president was giving himself and his brotherhood absolute power to be able to justify all their actions, which was something that was seen in Egypt for years under the rule of Hosni Mubarak. This constitution was considered controversial by the masses because it won with 64 percent majority, yet the referendum was based on leaders from the brotherhood and only a third of the electorate voted to avoid any backlash by President Morsi.

Morsi then tried to issue a decree for earlier parliamentary elections, but it was overturned by the Supreme Administrative Court. A few days later, a movement called Tamarrod called out the president, branded his tactics as majoritarian, and gathered twenty-two million signatories to remove him from office. Considering Morsi won the previous presidential elections with only 51.73 percent of the votes, twenty-two million seems insignificant as almost

fifty million citizens of Egypt didn't want him in office to begin with, as the population of the country is estimated at one hundred million by the Worldometer. Citizens continued complaining about the actions of the newly elected president but that didn't stop President Morsi from appointing members of the Brotherhood as governors.

This ultimately brought the citizens to the same conclusion they had a year before, which was to go back on the streets and demand the removal of Mohamed Morsi as the President of Egypt. The Supreme Council of Armed Forces was listening to the demands of the citizens and a year after they forced Mubarak to step down, they gave Morsi forty-eight hours to meet the demands of the people. Finally on July 3, 2013, President Morsi was removed from office by Defense Minister Abd El Fattah Al Sisi. Furthermore, Morsi was put on death trial and his constitution was suspended.

### **Democratic Transition & Aftermath**

There was one main difference between Egypt and Tunisia that eventually aided in the removal of President Mohamed Morsi in 2013 by the military. This was the fact that military and religion in Egypt's political life were not neutralized in terms of political roles and interference, unlike their counterparts Tunisia. Mohamed Morsi had little power over the military, so he issued a decree giving himself powers as a license for his Brotherhood to act however they pleased in order to justify the lack of organization and a proper revolutionary agenda and the Brotherhood's incompetence, conservatism, and inexperience.

In August 2013, protesters supporting the Muslim Brotherhood were gathered in camps around Cairo. The Egyptian police force, under the command of Al Sisi raided the camps and killed many Morsi supporters. This came after 6 weeks of sit-ins and several tries by the government to peacefully dissolve the camps. The Human Rights Watch labeled these attacks by the government as “One of the world’s largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history”. The Muslim Brotherhood supporters were angered, and people witnessed several instances of violent retaliation all around the country.

This included multiple attacks on government headquarters to retaliate against the government’s crackdown on the organization. According to Al Jazeera, the party released a statement stating that “Despite the pain and sorrow over the loss of our martyrs, the latest coup makers' crime has increased our determination to end them". By August 20 of the same year, Mohamed Badie, the leader of the Brotherhood, was arrested and the emergency law was put back in place for a month.

The Egyptian government led by newly elected president Al Sisi outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood in 2014 and forced them to go back to how they were before the Arab Spring. The government crackdown on the opposition included imprisoning several members of the Brotherhood and exiling others. Furthermore, the government seized the Brotherhood’s assets and Morsi died in 2019 after being held in solidarity confinement. Several other countries have since then branded the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Russia.

## 5. Reflections

### Compatibility (Two Models of Political Islam Compared)

Huntington theory that he proposes in the "Clash of Civilizations" that the Muslim communities are inherent with an ongoing lack of agreement about the meaning of authentic Islamic culture was proven correct, as demonstrated by the 2011 Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia. Meaning that, Islamic organizations came to power in Egypt and Tunisia, and regardless of their results, they showcased that the meaning of Islamic culture is vague.

To begin with, both parties pride themselves in being Islamist. Nevertheless, each organization had different approaches towards Islam and how to implement it in each country. Even though both the Muslim Brotherhood and Enhadada wanted to implement the Sharia law, one made false promises and led the country to autocracy, while the other was able to reform their approach and mediate with the masses. Each organization wanted to implement the Islam that in their opinion was going to help them rule, in the way they saw fitting.

Furthermore, his point about cultural identity being the leading cause for the clash of civilizations was not valid in the case of the Arab Spring. During the Arab Spring, the cause was not focused on cultural identity as Huntington proposes; he argues that people conclusively looked for their dignity. The public demands were focused on human rights and not Islamic



enforcement. In both Egypt and Tunisia, people were peacefully expressing their opinions and calling for democracy.

They were going against their corrupt, authoritarian governments that shared the same cultural identity and were restraining their citizens, as was the case with Hosni Mubarak and Ben Ali. What is missing in this factor is that the demands had nothing to do with cultural identity, yet this does not mean that people in the streets disregarded their cultural identity. People were prideful in being Egyptian and Tunisian, but their demands were much broader than that.

In addition, Huntington limits culture to religion and language only, which was partially correct in the example of the Arab Spring since people were not looking to change their religion or language. His theory lacks that culture is much broader than he entails; it is a set of shared human values, ideas, and customs. People in Tunisia and Egypt were mostly Muslim Arabs, but they had extremely diverse cultures in the sense that they had different religious practices, Arabic accents and customs. Moreover, Huntington does not consider that freedom and democracy, which the civilians were fighting for, belong to all human beings and are limited to the West. Huntington's theory might have been correct before the Arab Spring, but afterward, some of his propositions have been challenged by the events of the uprisings and what came after.

The uprisings proved that new and improved propositions were needed to justify political altercations in the Muslim world and in general. Before the uprisings, political Islam was being implemented aggressively. However, the Islamist political parties realized that they needed to

modernize their approach to gain more votes and keep their populations content. Moreover, Huntington uses religion as the main factor to explain the rift between Western and Muslim communities.

In this regard, he underestimates human rights being the main force behind the uprisings. Huntington disregards that these uprisings were started by young civilians who wanted to see real change in their countries and not Islamic organizations or movements. These patriotic civilians were looking to open people's eyes to the problems in their internal national politics and were hoping to start a movement that would help them and their fellow citizens have a better life that allows for free speech and includes social justice.

Additionally, his idea of the "Holy war against the West" is not entirely correct since Huntington uses Qadhafi as an example when talking about leaders in the Muslim world while failing to acknowledge that Qadhafi was considered an extremist. The Libyan people ousted him during the Arab Spring for being a dictator and he was later killed for the many injustices he implemented in the country. It is important to note that there were no combative or aggressive declarations against the West during the uprisings, the uprisings were entirely national or concerned with the region, they had nothing to do with the West.

All the demonstrators in Tunisia and Egypt were asking for was their fundamental human rights which Huntington considered "Western values." Many Muslims died during the Arab Spring, not because they were clashing with the West, but because their Muslim governments killed them even though they had the same cultural identity, against Huntington's theory. It was

also evident that there were barely any calls for the implementation of Islam in both Tunisia and Egypt, even though Islamists participated in the uprisings in both countries. The implementation of Islam came after the Islamic parties were elected in free and fair elections in both countries.

Even then, people continued to ask for their fundamental human rights as they didn't see much change in that specific area. The conclusion that can be made here is that Huntington's Clash of Civilisations focuses too narrowly on the ideology of Islamic conservatives and not modern Muslims. What proves this is that in Tunisia, people were asking for a more secular system that moderate Islamists ran. They wanted to preserve their cultural identity and religion yet establish a more democratic system that preserves human rights.

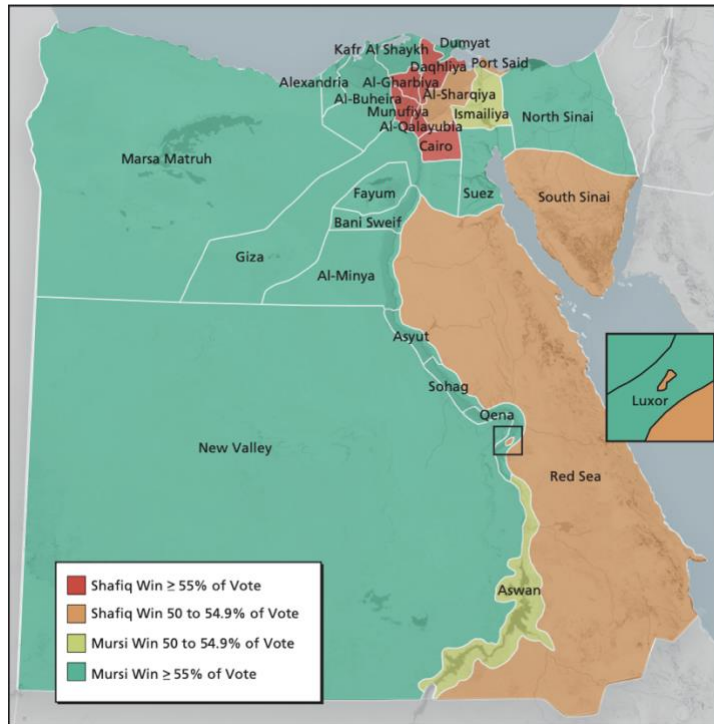
Tarek Masoud's point about the Arab world having an absence of tolerance was proven during the Arab Spring in Egypt when the Muslim Brotherhood was in charge due to the refusal to create a stable agreement with the army to serve in the citizens' best interests. They viewed the army as their enemies because the previous president, Hosni Mubarak, was a part of the army, and they imprisoned members of the Muslim Brotherhood and banned them for many years. That was not a logical tactic in their favor as the Egyptian army ousted the Muslim Brotherhood and their president in 2013. The Muslim Brotherhood wanted to implement the Sharia law in any possible way.

After the military removed them, their actions proved all these points. In 2014, Islamist radicals linked to the Muslim Brotherhood attacked and killed almost sixty Egyptian soldiers in Sinai due to the military's decision to remove them from office. A few months after, the Muslim

Brotherhood was banned in Egypt and was declared a terrorist organization. This can be brought back to the Muslim Brotherhood's history and how their absence of toleration didn't allow them to be reformists.

In the past, the brotherhood's actions like assassinating previous Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, proved that they weren't looking for allies but rather trying to eliminate the competition. They were unable to accept any change to their version of Islam or how it should be implemented as they had a specific ideology that they weren't willing to change. On the other hand, there is the Ennahda party who recognized the consequences of their past actions and were able to reflect and change their "old" ways of thinking and rebrand their organization to gain more support from the people of Tunisia.

Emily Matesean explains that the success of Islamists parties, especially in Egypt during 2013, was attributed to; their charismatic leader, connecting to the Egyptian citizens more than any other political party, and that the majority of the country was Muslim. Matesean fails to acknowledge that an essential factor that needs to be considered when describing the popular support that the Brotherhood gained was that when they were elected to govern, they won by 51.73% against Ahmed Shafik, a member of Mubarak's previous government. After the revolution, they realized they had to give up on their violent approach and consider a political process that would allow their victory to stand against the test of time, which did not happen.

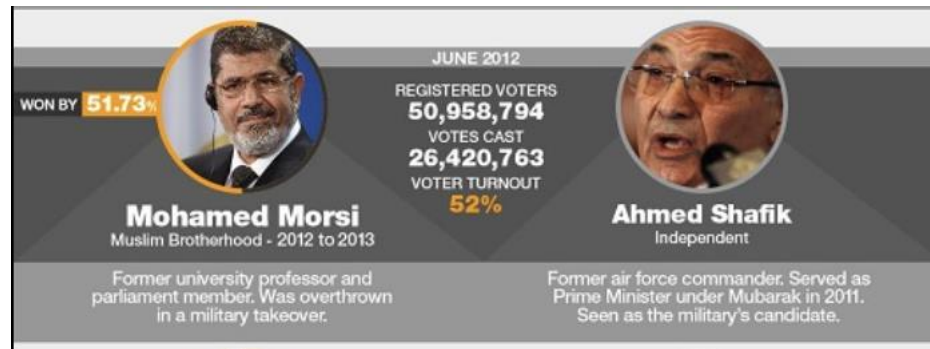


*Voting Patterns in Post-Mubarak Egypt, Rand Corporation (2013).*

Moreover, during 2012 people believed that political participation was the most vital tactic because the people were initially asking for a new democratic regime but not everyone acted to make a change. During the Egyptian presidential elections, there were only 25 million valid votes in comparison to the 51 million registered voters in the country. The division in the country was evident when the election results came out and Ahmed Shafik had 48.27% of the votes.

One of the main reasons Shafik was not elected was that he was part of the old regime of Hosni Mubarak. People were given a choice of voting for a member of the old regime, which could eventually mean going back to the same form of government that was ruling before the revolution and destroying everything that the revolution stood for. On the other hand, they could

vote for an organization that was previously banned but was promising political inclusivity, providing aid and giving hope for a secularized yet Islamic form of power.



*Egypt's Presidential Elections, Atlantic Council (2018).*

Regardless of the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood failed to deliver these promises, this division can be attributed to the fact that people were being exposed to a new experience of free and fair elections after being under the same leadership for more than 30 years. People were not familiar enough with politics or elections since their leaders had been choosing for them for 30 years, therefore no one was interested during that time in learning about something they couldn't possibly use.

Considering Egypt's literacy rates at the time, people were not informed enough to make that decision. It makes sense that people weren't able to agree on one candidate considering; their previous political situation, the choices they were given, and most importantly, their illiteracy rates. According to UNESCO, Egypt has an adult literacy rate of 71.17% which puts the country at number 121 worldwide. While the male literacy rate is 76.5%, for females is 65.51%, showing a gap between the sexes.

Egypt - Literacy rate						
Date	Adult literacy rate female	Adult literacy rate male	Adult literacy rate	Adult literacy rate 15-24 female	Adult literacy rate 15-24 male	Adult literacy rate 15-24
2017	65.51%	76.50%	71.17%	86.81%	89.48%	88.19%
2013	67.18%	82.63%	75.06%	90.33%	93.65%	92.02%
2012	65.76%	81.68%	73.87%	86.05%	92.36%	89.28%
2010	63.52%	80.27%	72.05%	84.31%	90.56%	87.51%

*Egypt – Literacy Rates, UNESCO (2017)*

Since the literacy rates were low, it made sense that people were less concerned with laws and regulations, but instead were more focused on receiving charity and aid. This explains why the Arab Spring was started by the younger population in both countries since this category of citizens was the most literate in both Tunisia and Egypt.

When Tarek Chamkhi examines the Islamists' rise in Tunisia and Egypt, he states that the Muslim Brotherhood's slogan was "Islam is the solution." Which makes it clear why human rights groups and Christian Egyptians feared that if the Muslim Brotherhood came to power, they would discriminate against them and impose strict rules that would limit their freedoms. This later proved accurate, as Morsi's one-year rule confirmed those fears since Christians could not find common ground with the Muslim Brotherhood.

These fears were later proven when Mohamed Morsi issued a controversial constitution that included many articles that infringe on people's rights. For example, Article 31 states that "insulting or showing contempt toward any human being shall be prohibited." During Morsi's presidency period, government officials including the President himself used this article to

criminate any person that criticized or went against them considering they get to decide whether the criticism is an insult. The Egyptian society witnessed this when an arrest warrant was issued for political satirist Bassem Youssef. The warrant stood on the basis that Youssef allegedly insulted Islam and the president. Youssef was questioned by prosecutors over these allegations but was later released on bail.

Moreover, President Morsi included several articles in the constitution that gave him absolute power over the government. Firstly, Article 128 stated that the President has the right to appoint one-tenth of the upper chamber, which gives him control over the legislative branch. Moreover, Articles 193 and 199 stated that the President is both the head of the National Security Council and the Supreme Chief of the Police Force. President Morsi also wanted to enforce his power over the military so that they would not overstep and remove him from power, which they ultimately did. Articles 176 and 177 stated that the President is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and he can also appoint and dismiss both civil and military personnel as he pleases without needing to give a valid reason.

While Chamki explains the differences between the Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahda and why the former failed while the latter succeeded, he labels the Ennahda organization as modern by changing its Islamic views and adopting a more semi-secular political system. What Chamki misses in his argument is the fact that the intentions of Ennahda were never clear; while they stated that they are more secular, at times, their intentions proved differently.



Rashid Ghanouchi, the co-founder of Tunisia's Enhad Party, came back to Tunisia after being exiled with a new view about Islam and politics in general. He called Enhad a democratic movement and stated that Islam is not a source of power instead a mere reference. This was not Enhad's preference, but it was more about the new political atmosphere post the revolution more than anything else. What proved their true intentions was when Enhad's Secretary-General referred to the party as the sixth Islamic caliphate after they won the elections in late 2011. This was when their true intentions came out, and it caused one of the parties they formed a coalition with to suspend its participation.

In addition, it is important to consider the previous regime's effects on why Enhad came to power. To begin with, under the rule of Abedin women who wore the hijab were denied access to education and jobs since 1981. They were stopped in the streets and had their hijabs stripped by government officials. Tunisian women would travel and wear their hijab abroad, but as soon as they would go back to Tunisia, they would have to take their hijab off. After the parliamentary elections on the 23rd of October, 2011, this rule was removed and women were able to wear their hijab in public again. This explains why Tunisians preferred an Islamic government considering that Ben Ali was extremely secular.

What makes it more of a win for Tunisians is the fact that an Islamic organization that accepted secularism was coming into power, which meant that the country could stay secular but still have Islamic rules implemented. Enhad made many promises that were appealing to the Tunisian population in that sense. Ghanouchi promised that if elected his party would not legalize polygamy and women would retain their right to dress as they pleased. They proved that

their promises were sincere when Enhada voted in favor of full gender equality in the October Elections of 2011. Thus, Enhada proved that they were in fact looking to secularize the country while maintaining their Islamist ideology.

### **Conclusions of Case Studies**

The following were the primary topics that I utilized in my criteria to assess each country's transition to democracy and whether they manage to adapt to it. To begin, I would evaluate the Islamist party to see if it was democratic or not, depending on its transition and longevity. Furthermore, this would enable the population's satisfaction to be measured. If the citizens are content, the next inquiry is whether they would be better off without the ruling party. If they are not better off, they may be willing to embrace a democratic culture. However, if the public is dissatisfied, a democratic culture will be difficult to adopt, and the country may return to authoritarian leadership. It would imply that the transition was a failure and that the Islamist party is incompatible with democracy.

Enhada and the Muslim Brotherhood had different approaches to the Arab Spring. There were diverse political circumstances that allowed each party to contribute to the Arab Spring. The way they wanted Islam to be involved in their approach to governance was simply not the same. The first factor that was different in each country was the time of the campaign period that led up to the presidential elections. In Egypt, that period was brief. Since the Muslim Brotherhood was already famous for being an opponent of the regime, people saw them as different from being a clean and non-corrupt organization. Egyptians widely accepted the

Brotherhood as they perceived them authentically Islamic and thought it had the appropriate values to lead this change.

Although members of the Muslim Brotherhood were vital parts of the success of the uprising in Egypt, one cannot disregard the fact that they were late participants in the revolts. The Brotherhood made some significant mistakes when it was campaigning and also after they won the presidential election. To begin with, its leaders stated that if an Egyptian citizen did not vote for them, then that person was simply against Islam and what it stands for. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt condemned the running of female citizens for president. In contrast, the new constitution in Tunisia aimed to expand gender equality and its rights as female citizens. Article 20 states that "All male and female citizens have the same rights and duties. They are equal before the law without discrimination."

Tunisia's success in the Arab Spring can help explain why Egypt's revolution resulted in minimal change and a return to dictatorship. To begin with, Tunisia had a middle class and vital civil service; while Egypt's middle class was the core of the revolution, the number of middle-class citizens was limited. In Tunisia, Islamists played a minimal role in the revolution, while the opposite occurred in Egypt. Furthermore, Tunisia is located in a less strategic position than Egypt and is smaller, which helped protect the country from external influences. (Beissinger)

Today, more than 10 years after the Arab Spring, the current state of each country still gives a slight explanation of why Tunisia was somewhat able to democratize, while Egypt

experienced several difficulties. Using the Fragile States Index, it becomes clearer that Tunisia had a better chance at democratization than Egypt due to several factors.

The Fragile States Index emphasizes the usual stresses that all governments face and measures when such pressures are bringing a state to the edge of failure. The Index uses 5 factors to determine the vulnerability of a state to collapse: cohesion, economic, political, social, and cross cutting. The Fragile States Index highlights some important factors under each category such as group grievances, factionalized elites, human flight, and brain drain, demographic pressures and external interventions. The Fragile States Index places Egypt at number thirty-nine and Tunisia at number ninety-four today out of one hundred and seventy-nine countries worldwide. That means that Egypt is twice as likely to be vulnerable to collapsing than Tunisia ten years after the Arab Spring. These scores have been mainly influenced by the revolutions in each country and the aftermath of the process. They were also highly influenced by the Islamic parties in each country when they were governing the states and after they were removed from power.

Some indicators that lead to a state having low ranking includes, a weak or corrupt government, criminality, and refugees. In both Egypt and Tunisia, the human flight and brain drain was a non-factor because it has been moderately constant in both countries since the beginning of the Arab Spring. On the other hand, group grievances are an important factor when comparing Egypt and Tunisia because during the time the Islamist political parties were in charge, people's happiness with the system in Tunisia exceeded Egypt. That was mainly due to the different actions taken by each party in their respective states.

The difference between the Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia played a considerable role in the future of their governance. The co-founder of the Enhad organization is considered a moderate Islamist, while Mohamed Morsi and his freedom and justice party were considered extremists until the revolution took place. For example, Ghannouchi, the co-founder of Enhad, has stated that "The type of state we want does not interfere in people's private lives," adding that "the state should not have anything to do with imposing or telling people what to wear, what to eat and drink, what they believe in, what they should believe in."

Morsi won the presidential elections in Egypt with only 51.73 percent of the vote because the Brotherhood was keen on interfering in people's personal lives, while the opposite occurred in Tunisia. Following the Arab Spring, the Muslim Brotherhood took various actions that reflected past preconceptions about the group, resulting in a gap between civilians and the government. After President Morsi changed the constitution and attempted to enforce more Islamic regulations because it was his main goal, there was a lot of disagreement about it. Morsi's regime was known for cracking down on the opposition, which was a major source of fear for Egyptian civilians that was like the way Mubarak was ruling.

This can explain that secular-minded people did not vote for the Brotherhood but voted for the Enhad party. Morsi was keen on making Sharia the main factor in the law, while Ghannouchi promised that it would not even be part of the law. Tunisia's first constitution article stayed the same even after Islamists took over; "Tunisia is a free, sovereign, and independent state. Its religion is Islam, its language is Arabic, and its form of government is a republic."

Enhada was able to focus on Islam as a concept that includes all aspects of life including; social, political, and societal rather than just branding Islam as a faith.

There were several reasons for the successful transition that Tunisia had which were not found in Egypt. Egypt was not democratized, not because Islam's compatibility with democracy, but because the transition process to democracy requires infrastructure and institutions that were present in Tunisia but not Egypt. There was no separation of state in Egypt and the army was not involved within the reformation of the government, which resulted in the opposition of several governmental institutions. Furthermore, the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt lacked democratic culture. Meaning that, the culture they created was not able to embrace change and they had major control of the culture. Although the literacy rates were low, civil society in Egypt at the time was weak and the Muslim Brotherhood provided aid for the low-class citizens to gain their support, which was why they controlled the culture.

However, by discussing the historical background of the Muslim Brotherhood, it was made clear that their core values were inherently Wahabi and based on Jihad. This was the criteria the Muslim Brotherhood had when it came to the process of politicizing Islam. This was different in Tunisia as Enhada were able to adapt to the wants of the general population while the Muslim Brotherhood were not willing to let go of their main values of Islamizing the country or modernize their approach. That resulted in Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood rule being stuck to the core values of the Islamist political party, unchanged and unwilling to embrace change. The Muslim Brotherhood wanted to bring back the enlightenment of Islam while being stuck to strict Sharia laws and they were more radical than Enhada.

Since Islam was applied and reapplied differently based on the party in charge, it can be stated that the conclusion of whether Islam is compatible with democracy depends on how the parties were involved in the political scene as mentioned above. Islam can be a part of a democratic system and active part of politics even on an individual level. For example, if a Muslim is living abroad and not in an Arab or Muslim country, they can still vote, adapt to democratization and be an active part of politics regardless of their religion. What was discovered through the case studies of Tunisia and Egypt was the fact that it was less about religiosity and more about the politicization of Islam because while in Tunisia, Enhadha was willing to give up certain aspects of the political goal to reach citizen satisfaction while the Muslim Brotherhood was not able to do so. Therefore, Islam is compatible with democracy but under certain circumstances that the Muslim Brotherhood lacked but the Enhadha party had.

## 6. Conclusions

This thesis aims to prove that Islam is compatible with democracy by using the cases of Egypt and Tunisia and Islam's influence on the Arab world post the Arab Spring. During the Arab Spring, both countries' leaders were deposed, and Islamic political parties were elected to power afterwards. This thesis effectively examined Islam and its relationship to politics, as well as how secularism is evident in the cases of Egypt and Tunisia. Throughout history, several intellectuals and scholars have questioned the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Using their work and case studies it was proven that Islam is compatible with democracy under certain circumstances.

Several authors have presented a conventional theory, accompanied by various arguments proving their incompatibility. Nonetheless, during the last decade, we have witnessed political parties with roots in Islam assisting and even leading democratization processes during the Arab Spring, such as Tunisia and the Enhad party. On the other hand, the case of Egypt demonstrates why the involvement of Islamic political parties is not always successful. Throughout this thesis, dictatorships and what they look like in Egypt and Tunisia have been addressed, as well as how they contributed to the Arab Spring. Furthermore, it examined the disparities between the two countries by looking at what they wanted to alter and what they requested. The dissertation then focused on the involvement of Islamic organizations in both nations and how they influenced the political culture. This thesis examined Islam's influence on dictatorships in the Arab world following the Arab Spring. It has contended that Islam is compatible with democracy by citing Egypt and Tunisia as examples.



The case studies on Egypt and Tunisia have informed the research topic: “How has political Islam influenced dictatorships after the Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia?” The two situations were investigated independently by studying four aspects (historical context, Arab Spring, Islamist political parties, and Arab Spring aftermath), which improved understanding of the extent to which political Islam influenced each country. First, each Islamist party's historical history was evaluated by determining when and by whom they were created. Members of the party were also identified, along with their motivations, points of view, and aims. This aided in determining whether their values are consistent with democracy.

Second, each country's Arab Spring was researched to determine why the revolutions occurred. Furthermore, the case studies examined how civilians in Egypt and Tunisia were able to depose their leaders, as well as the primary actors engaged and their motives, with an emphasis on the political environment and its ability to digest democracy. Third, Islamist political parties were explored, including how and where they were supported, as well as their engagement and actions leading up to, during, and after the Arab Spring. Finally, the aftermath of the Arab Spring was examined, as were the measures done by political parties while in power, as well as where the political parties ended up once they were no longer in office.

Following an examination of the case studies of Egypt and Tunisia, a deeper understanding was offered to validate the stated ideas and that Islam is compatible with democracy. By evaluating the four elements, it became clear why Egypt's transition to democracy failed whereas Tunisia's transition was viewed as successful. Considering the examples of Egypt and Tunisia, it is not incompatible; it requires infrastructure and institutions

that were existing in the separation of state, such as the army, as part of the government reformation.

There were various explanations for Tunisia's successful transition that Egypt did not have. Egypt was not democratized because Islam is incompatible with democracy, but because the transition to democracy necessitates the presence of infrastructure and institutions that Tunisia lacked. In Egypt, there was no separation of state, and the army was not involved in the government's reformation, which resulted in the opposition of numerous governmental institutions. Furthermore, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood lacked democratic culture. That is, the culture they built was unable to embrace change, and they had significant power over the culture. Although literacy rates were low at the time, civil society in Egypt was weak, and the Muslim Brotherhood provided aid to low-income residents to secure their support, which is why they controlled the culture.

However, after discussing the Muslim Brotherhood's historical history, it became evident that its primary ideals were essentially Wahabi and predicated on Jihad. This was the Muslim Brotherhood's criterion for the process of politicizing Islam. In Tunisia, Enhadha was able to adapt to the desires of the general population, whilst the Muslim Brotherhood was unwilling to abandon their core beliefs of Islamizing the country or modernize their approach. As a result, Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood administration has remained committed to the essential beliefs of the Islamist political party, remaining unaltered and refusing to embrace change. The Muslim Brotherhood, which was more extremist than Enhadha, sought to restore Islam's enlightenment while adhering to harsh Sharia regulations.

More research would be required to further comprehend political Islam's influence on dictatorships in Egypt & Tunisia after the Arab Spring. Research specifically on the political elites, the power they have, and how they were different in each country. Considering the elites have more power in Egypt, they could easily be a major deciding factor in how the country is affected. Furthermore, the elites in Egypt didn't trust the rest of the population, while in Tunisia they did, which requires more research to interpret if the difference they made in each country was vital.

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