

Guardians of Religion: Islam, Nation, and Democratization in Post-Revolution Tunisia

by

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DEDICATION

For Mom, Dad, & Alex (and the poezen).

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATIONS

There are many ways of transliterating Arabic and throughout this dissertation I use several forms. For Tunisian proper names, I have retained the form in which they are most commonly transliterated in Tunisia, which are based on the French method of transliteration, for example Ennahda rather than al-Nahda, as it is sometimes written outside of Tunisia. For Arabic terms that have entered common English usage, such as *hijab* or *Salafi*, I have employed commonly used transliterations that will be more familiar to the reader. When citing sources, I have retained the Arabic transliteration used in the original text. In instances where French and Arabic names are used interchangeably in Tunisia, for example *Place du 7 Novembre 1987*, I have opted for the French version or an English translation to make the text more accessible for non-Arabic speakers.

ABSTRACT

Why do some democratic transitions succeed while others fail? While most explanations focus on macro-level and structural factors, such as economic growth or institutional reform, I suggest two related factors that should be systematically examined. First, if and how democratizing states and societies address questions of national identity and belonging (*national reimagining*), particularly with respect to collective memory, legal & institutional reform, and pluralization. Second, to what degree is there a broad societal consensus concerning these issues of national identity (*national consolidation*). Through the case of Tunisia (2010-14) I examine how Islam in particular is constitutive of Tunisian national identity and how the post-revolutionary process of democratization has affected and been affected by this relationship. In examining Islam and nationalism in the post-revolutionary period, I describe a period in which debates over national identity initially threatened to derail Tunisia's democratization project with respect to addressing past grievances, reforming laws and the constitution, delaying elections, and nearly unseating Tunisia's first democratically elected government. I argue that it was only the presence of a violent, existential threat to the state that allowed for a national reimagining and consolidation necessary to continuing the democratization process.

CHAPTER 1 Introduction

The streets of Tunisia ran red, filled with Tunisians carrying their nation's red and white flag.

Following the December 17, 2010 self-immolation of street cart vender Mohammed Bouazizi in the interior town of Sidi Bouzid, protests spread across the country, reaching the capital by the year's end. Initially the protestors called for "work, freedom, and dignity," but as President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali either ignored these requests or deployed the police to quash them, the protestors began demanding his departure after twenty-three years in power.

Demonstrators filled Tunisia's main thoroughfare Avenue Bourguiba, named after the county's first president-dictator, waving flags, singing protest songs, and chanting "*dégage*," French for "get out."¹ Spectators from around the region and the world watched the protests unfold with the expectation that something significant would occur, either a massive government crackdown or, even more unimaginable, the end of the dictatorship.

However, for a reader of *La Presse*, one of Tunisia's most important pro-regime newspapers, they would know none of this, even though *La Presse*'s office sits just two blocks from the absolute center of what everyone knew to be the most significant protest in the country's modern history. The front page of the Tuesday, January 11, 2011 edition, however, projected stability and continuity: public outpourings of gratitude for Ben Ali's announcement to create 300,000 jobs; football analysis; and, just beneath a photograph of Ben Ali, the headline "Islamism will not happen Tunisia." By Friday, Ben Ali would flee to Saudi Arabia. Nine-and-

¹ Arabic is Tunisia's official language, however, as a result of being a French protectorate from 1881 to 1956, French is taught in Tunisian schools and spoken as a second language, particularly by the middle and upper classes.

a-half months later, birthed by the revolution, an Islamist² party would win Tunisia's first democratic election.



Figure 1: Front page of *La Presse*, January 11, 2011.

Note the article at the bottom: “L’islamisme ne passera pas en Tunisie” (“Islamism will not succeed in Tunisia”). Photo: *La Presse*.

² By Islamist I refer to an individual or group who advocates political decisions or laws grounded in and justified by *shari'a* Islamic law, particularly in reaction to a perceived secularization of society (Bokhari and Senzai 2013). I discuss this definition further in Chapter 2.

These unforeseeable events were not limited to Tunisia. Eleven days after Ben Ali's departure, protests, inspired by Tunisia's revolution,³ broke out in Egypt, followed by the wave of public uprisings across the region that would be labeled the Arab Spring, signaling the possibility for increased democratization and an opening for political Islam in countries where it had been repressed or tightly regulated. However, while the revolutions of 2011 were also successful in toppling dictatorships in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, by 2014 efforts at establishing democracies either slipped back into dictatorships or civil war, leading commentators to remark on an "Arab Winter" of increased regional instability and authoritarianism.⁴

³ In this text whenever I discuss the Tunisian Revolution, I am referring to the December 18, 2010 – January 14, 2011 popular uprising, also referred to, particularly in its immediate aftermath, as the Jasmine Revolution.

⁴ While they did not lead to regime change, Arab Spring-inspired protests took place across the region, most significantly in Bahrain and Syria, the latter of which descended into a protracted civil war. Protests on a more limited scale, some leading to government nods to reform or government reorganization, also occurred in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, and Sudan.



Figure 2: Graffiti along Avenue Bourguiba in downtown Tunis. Photographed immediately prior to the October 2014 Parliamentary elections, it reads “Tunisia is victorious. First democratic country in the Arab homeland.”⁵ The writer has notably ignored the case of Lebanon and, to a lesser extent, regional constitutional monarchies, instead emphasizing a view of Tunisian exceptionalism and Tunisia’s role as the vanguard of the Arab Spring. Photo: Elizabeth Young.

Why did Tunisia’s democratic transition succeed while other transitions, part of the same democratic “wave” (Huntington 1991), failed? How, if at all, did the dramatic transition from a system in which Islamists were jailed and portrayed by the government as an existential, terrorist threat to a system in which they led the government affect discourses over the nation and national identity?

It was this transition from a “secular” to Islamist government that become a primary narrative of the revolution. Particularly in the immediate aftermath of the revolution and 2011

⁵ Next to the Arabic version of this graffiti is a nearly identical French version that instead of “Arab homeland” chooses the expression “Arab world,” which seems closer to the intent the statement.

elections, many scholars of Tunisia and especially journalists wrote about the Tunisian political landscape as a conflict between religion and secularism.⁶ As I describe in this dissertation, there is a divide among Tunisians in the ways they situate themselves within the nation, not to mention whether they accept the nation to begin with or not, and what they envision the state looking like, particularly with respect to particular religious expressions. However, as I also discuss, to consider a sizeable number of Tunisians as secular is a mistake with respect to the ways they refer to and situate themselves.

When I first arrived in Tunisia in June 2013, my goal was to begin to deconstruct this binary of the religious and the secular and to better situate them in the Tunisian context socially and historically. However, over the next two years, which included ten months of fieldwork, I was increasingly struck not just by tensions between those I refer to as Islamists and Bourguibists, the later many others would term secularists, but rather the uncertainty of the democratization process itself. The 2011 Tunisian Revolution had ushered in hopes not just for Tunisia's democratic future, but also the entire region. However, by the time I arrived in Tunisia, optimism among Tunisians was significantly waning and the prospect of democratization seemed contingent: would the democratic transition progress or would Tunisia slip back into authoritarianism?

One of the key concerns was the ever-increasing delay in finalizing the constitution and holding a second set of elections. The Constituent Assembly, elected in October 2011, was intended to sit for only a year with the primary responsibility of writing and voting on a new constitution that would additionally lay the legal groundwork for presidential and parliamentary

⁶ For example, in one representative article *The Chronicle for Higher Education* describes the situation in Tunisia as “a clash between the religious and the secular,” December 18, 2011. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/In-Tunisia-a-Clash-Between/130120>.

elections. However, announced election date after announced election date had to be cancelled and further delayed because the constitution had not yet been finalized. Projected election dates included October 2012, June 2013, Fall 2013, and, finally, October 2014. Some Tunisians voiced concerns over both when and whether there would be future elections. As a result, they began protesting what they saw as a power grab on the part of the Ennahda-led government as it moved beyond its original constitutional mandate to take up other legislative tasks during its eventual three-year session to address immediate needs in the country that could not be postponed any further.

During this time period, the country faced numerous economic, security, and social challenges that led to further disillusionment with the democratization process. According to one longitudinal survey conducted by the International Republican Institute, a global democracy-promotion NGO, in March 2011, 79% of respondents felt that Tunisia was moving in the *right* direction and only 14% reported that it was moving in the wrong direction.⁷ However, by June 2013 these numbers were dramatically reversed into mirror images: 77% said that Tunisian was moving in the *wrong* direction and only 19% in the right direction.⁸ Little did anyone know that the situation was on the verge of becoming even worse.⁹

On July 3, 2013, I was eating dinner at a restaurant in Tunis as the news broke that in Egypt, after a week of anti-government protests dubbed the *Tamarod* or “rebellion” movement, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi had led a coup d'état to remove the democratically-elected Muslim

⁷ Each wave of the survey was conducted by a professional polling firm and included approximately 1,200 respondents. The face-to-face survey was conducted in all 24 Tunisian governorates using a multi-stage stratification method resulting in margin of error of plus-or-minus 2.8% of the 95% confidence interval.

⁸ In the June 2013 wave, 37% of respondents reported that they did not think that Tunisia was currently a democracy at all, 35% considered it a flawed democracy, and only 21% considered it either a full (7%) or nearly full (15%) democracy.

⁹ In October 2013, the numbers had slightly changed with 79% indicating the country was moving in the wrong direction and 16% in the right direction.

Brotherhood President Mohammed Morsi and had also suspended the constitution. Tunisia had its own *Tamarod* movement, modelled after the Egyptian movement, calling for the dissolution of parliament, calls that would become even more vocal three weeks later when Tunisian opposition leader Mohammed Brahmi was assassinated.

Watching the Egyptian coup from Tunisia, made me realize how truly contingent the democratization process was, a point that would be driven home as other promising transitions across the region, particularly in Libya and Yemen, failed and devolved into violence and civil war. It was also at this point that, rather than continuing to focus on religion and secularism, I began to explore a different academic and pragmatic question: why do democratic transitions begin in the first place, and, more importantly, why do some democratization processes succeed while others fail?

I. Theory and Contribution

Why do Democratic Transitions Succeed or Fail?

Over the past sixty years, the number of democratic states worldwide has more than tripled: by one count, the number of democratic states, defined as those holding contested elections for both the legislative body and chief executive office increased from 38 (out of 81 states) in 1950 to 118 (of 192) in 2008 (Cheibub, et al. 2010). However, many states have begun the democratization process only to fall back into authoritarianism or armed conflict. *Why do some democratic transitions succeed while others fail?*

Before exploring potential explanations, it is important to articulate what exactly is meant by a “successful” democratic transition. There are many competing definitions of what criteria are necessary for a state to be considered a democracy. These range from minimalist, procedural

definitions only requiring competitive elections (Schumpeter 1942), or also coupled with basic freedoms of expression and association (Dahl 1971), to more maximal definitions that, in addition to free and fair elections, also include state-sovereignty and the independence of the elected government from non-elected individuals or bodies such as the military (Schmitter and Karl 1991); or the robustness of civil society as a measure of democratic consolidation (Linz and Stepan 1996).

Here I use a more minimalist definition that treats a democratic transition as the period starting with which a state makes commitments to hold transparent, competitive elections and be bound by the results of those elections, and ending, that is being “successful,” once the state has held a second round of national elections in which the incumbent representatives (or party) leave or are prepared to leave power based on the electoral results. I choose not to focus on the *quality* of democracy, for example evaluating aspects of democratic consolidation such as the extent of specific legal reforms or the size of civil society, but on the likelihood of its endurance as evidenced by peaceful transitions of power. I base this decision on evidence showing that alternations of power by political parties or leaders are good predictors of whether future, democratic elections will happen (Przeworski 2015).

Returning to the overarching question of why countries undergo a democratic transition and whether those processes succeed or fail, numerous explanations have been proposed. Early theories of democratization were inextricably linked to modernization theory in which democratization, along with industrialization, capitalism, increasing education, and urbanization were an inevitable societal progression occurring together (Lipset 1959). The modernization theory of democratization has been challenged and refined, a process that has also led to a search to better understand factors in democratization and has touched on virtually every conceivable

variable ranging from the level of trade volume (Rigobon and Rodrick 2005) to whether the country is an island (Clague, et al. 2001; Anckar 2002). Teorell (2010) provides a helpful typology of various concepts that have been proposed to positively or negatively impact the likelihood of democratization:

- *Social determinants*: colonial legacy, religious heritage, social heterogeneity, population size, etc.
- *Economic determinants*: economic development, education levels, GDP, natural resources, income disparity, etc.
- *International determinants*: volume of international trade, neighboring democratic countries, participation in regional international organizations, foreign policy intervention, etc.

Almost invariably, studies of these factors have been based on regression models. While such analysis can suggest compelling evidence, it is limited by a number of factors inherent to many cross-national analyses. First, it is limited by the number of possible cases (even when looking at multiple years for a single country), especially when compared to the number of variables that have been proposed to affect democratization outcomes. Second, all these concepts must be operationalized in a standard measurement that is obtainable across the globe on a yearly basis. As a result, many of these variables examine structural factors, such as economic indicators, or population-level statistics, such as education attainment or the ethnic distribution of a population, that are measured typically by state governments.¹⁰ Additionally, they do not reveal causal mechanisms or ground these indicators from their relevant cultural, historical, and social contexts.

¹⁰ There are also the important questions of a) comparability of such statistics across states, and b) the reliability of self-reported data, such as economic growth.

This is not to say that structural indicators do not help to provide useful explanatory arguments for democratization. For example, structural factors such as the presence of a strong, independent military, almost certainly played a role in the differing outcomes in Tunisia and Egypt. In Egypt, the military, led by General el-Sisi, instigated a coup that toppled the democratically elected, Muslim Brotherhood-led government in June 2013.¹¹ As I previously described, Tunisia faced similar calls for the government to step down. However, Tunisia has a weaker, non-politicized military, a product of Bourguiba and Ben Ali's fears of a body that could be a separate seat of power and potentially capable of removing them from office. Ironically, it may have been this legacy of the authoritarian regimes that Tunisia's military did not play a role in the 2013 protests and enabled Tunisian political elites and the broader society to compromise and preserve electoral integrity and the democratic transition.

However, there are also structural factors that can't explain differing outcomes. In 2010, democracy scholar Larry Diamond, published a piece entitled "Why Are There No Arab Democracies?" a title that the following year seemed destined to be discarded, but which may have proven more prescient given the near universal failure of the Arab Spring with the relevant exception of Tunisia. In the piece, he rejects commonly proposed theories that Islam or "Arabness" are the key factors in understanding the lack of democratization in the Middle East and North Africa. Instead he proposes that the region suffers from two factors that hinder democratization. First, the presence of oil means that states do not rely on citizens for taxation and do not need to win broad public support, the "oil curse." Second, Arab states enjoy economic and political support from the United States and Europe, which enables authoritarian regimes to

¹¹ Similarly, in Turkey the military, maintaining its role as protector of the state, instigated either physical coups or the threat of coups, "coups by memorandum," to changed elected leadership in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997, in addition to a failed coup attempt in 2016.

endure. In the case of the Arab Spring, countries with similar backgrounds, in this case a lack of oil had differing outcomes. For example, while both Tunisia and Egypt, comparatively low oil producers in the region, did democratize as opposed to the oil rich Gulf States, the Egyptian democratization process ultimately failed. Additionally, both states, post-revolution, enjoyed broad support from the international community, however, this support did not translate into the preservation of democracy in Egypt. Here, the point is not that structural factors don't play a significant role in democratization outcomes, they certainly do, but that there are complex interaction effects among these factors and it is often insufficient to reduce substantial societal transition and upheavals to quantifiable or dummy variables.

More important in the context of this study, they focus on macro-level and structural factors, such as economic growth or institutional reform (Linz and Stepan 1996, Przeworski et al. 1996, Diamond 2011, etc.), and neglect the importance of cultural transitions, which help to illuminate the “meaning” of the transition for its participants (Zubrzycki 2006). In instances where studies have included cultural factors, such as religion, they have often been viewed as potential causal factors in whether states democratize, resulting in them being reified as a static variable (Anderson 2004, Driessen 2014).¹² They fail to capture the complexity of the democratization process itself, the societal-level social change as experienced and understood by citizens. For example, sitting in the restaurant in Tunisia watching the coup unfold in Egypt, I was surprised that it was Egypt and not Tunisia experiencing the coup. Both countries had Islamist parties win a plurality of elected seats, but the Egyptian authoritarian regime under President Hosni Mubarak had allowed members of the Muslim Brotherhood to stand for election since 2000, albeit as independent candidates, whereas Ben Ali had banned Ennahda from

¹² See for example the World Values Survey (World Values Survey Association 2014) where religion acts as a static, dependent variable.

political participation since 1992. Given the histories of political inclusion or lack thereof under the authoritarian regimes, I would have expected the reversed outcome.

This dissertation is motivated by a desire both to understand why Tunisia succeeded in its democratic transition by examining cultural factors, here national identity, that cannot be reduced to quantifiable, macro-level variables. As I discuss in the next section, I turn to Sewell's theory structural transformation as a means of developing the outline of a mid-range theory to explore the role national identity can play in the democratization process.

Eventful Approaches to Democratization

For many Tunisians, there was a clear break before Friday, January 14th and after, as Tunisia began its democratic transition from authoritarianism. After twenty-eight years in power, Ben Ali was gone overnight, destabilizing the institutions and systems of surveillance and punishment. After decades of abuse and repression, political dissidents were able to speak out against the oppression of the regime, and political representatives were freely elected for the first time in Tunisia's history. Islamists who had gone underground or into exile during decades of abuse were not only able to express themselves freely in public, but also to represent and make laws for the entire Tunisian public. How are we to understand how and why such significant social and political transformations took place when even a month prior, or even several days prior in the case of the *La Presse* coverage discussed that the start of this chapter, it seemed inconceivable.

Sewell's theory of events offers a useful theoretical framework to explore democratic transitions, such as Tunisia, that takes into account macro-level factors as well as cultural meaning to explain how structures are transformed. Sewell articulates a theory of how a

historical event, such as the storming of the Bastille, creates ruptures in society that “durably transforms previous structures and practices” that in normal circumstances would only gradually change (1996: 843).

For Sewell, structures have three components. First, cultural schemas that provide actors with meaning, guide behavior, and articulate norms. Second, resources, both material and incorporeal, that give individuals the means to take social action. Finally, modes of power privilege certain individuals or groups to act, both in obtaining resources and the legitimizing certain schemas above others. Because structures are, by definition, enduring, therefore any sudden change to such structures are unusual and the product of historical events. For Sewell, events are “1) a ramified sequence of occurrences that is 2) recognized as notable by contemporaries and that 3) results in a durable transformation of structures” (844). An eventful analysis, is particularly useful in examining transformations such as democratic transitions because it is attuned to the nuances of culture that are impossible to examine in the macro-level studies of democratization described in the previous section. In particular, Sewell points to the importance of emotion, symbolic interpretations, ritual, creativity, and the interconnectedness of events.

Mohammed Bouazizi’s self-immolation and the subsequent protests that led to Ben Ali’s overthrow were the impetus that led to the end of authoritarian rule and the beginning of the democratization process, which had previously been unimaginable. In this case, arguably the most significant structural transformation was Tunisia’s shift from authoritarianism to democratization, though it is not the only one. With Ben Ali’s departure and its domino effect on countries across the Middle East and North Africa, spectators and participants immediately lauded Bouazizi’s actions as being structurally transformative, an event that would be

remembered. However, the durability of these transformations came quickly into question as authoritarian regimes across the region held out against protestors and new democracies, such as Egypt, began to backslide into authoritarianism. In Egypt, this occurred dramatically in July 2013, less than two years after its first post-revolution election, with a coup that ousted the Islamist president, imprisoned hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood supporters, and suspended the constitution.

In Tunisia, there were many instances when Tunisians feared – due to terrorism, cultural transformations, and political infighting – that Tunisia’s “democratic experiment” might fail. In July and August 2013, at the same time as the Egyptian coup and massacres of Islamists, it seemed that Tunisia’s democratic experiment was at risk: elections had been delayed with no date in-sight; two political leaders were assassinated; protests called for the removal of the government and elections for a new parliament; and, parliamentary activity was suspended for several months. However, Tunisia did move beyond this democratic impasse, not only to finalize the constitution, but also to hold free-and-fair parliamentary and presidential elections the following year.

Why, to this point, has Tunisia’s democratic transition endured despite the obstacles? Using Sewell’s framework, I examine how the events of Bouazizi’s death and the revolution lead to structural changes in Tunisian society that facilitated the democratic transition. This dissertation focuses on expressions – existing, new, and re-articulations – of Tunisian national identity during the democratic transition, focusing on the period from Ben Ali’s departure in 2011 through the second set of elections in 2014. I do not suggest that national identity is the sole or primary factor in whether a state successfully transitions into a democracy, but one that acts in conjunction with other factors.

Democratization presents openings for new institutions, and also creates opportunities for structural and cultural transformations, particularly with respect to “national reimagining:” are previously marginalized groups integrated into views of the nation? Are other groups excluded? Do previously marginalized groups actively embrace a national endeavor of democratization? How do new laws and institutions reflect changes in understandings of the nation and national identity? How do democratic demands for pluralism negotiate national specificity? How is the nation’s experience under the previous authoritarian regime understood by citizens with respect to national narratives and identity? Do articulations of the nation and national identity by state institutions, elites, and ordinary citizens reflect the durability or rearticulation of pre-democratic forms, or are they altogether new inventions and formulations? Or, alternatively, are questions of nation and national identity altogether ignored during the democratic transition, and if so, why?

Democratization, frequently moving in parallel to increased pluralism, presents an opportunity for contestation over who comprises the nation and who has legitimacy to act in its interest. Therefore, one must also examine “national consolidation,” the degree to which there is a broad societal agreement on who and what are constituent of the nation, throughout the democratization process.

In the following chapters, I point to three types of “national reimaginings” that have the potential to take place during a democratic transition – re-narrativization, legal and institutional reform, and pluralization – and examine the extent to which they occurred in the Tunisian case and their impact, or lack thereof, on Tunisia’s democratic transition. Additionally, I explore by means of the 2014 Tunisian elections the degree to which there was “national consolidation.”

Religion & Tunisian National Identity

In examining these possible “national reimaginings,” I focus on *how and to what degree Islam constitutive of Tunisian national identity and how the post-revolutionary process of democratization has affected and been affected by this relationship*. In Bouazizi’s self-immolation and during the month-long protests that followed, religion played a relatively small role with respect to organized mobilization, symbolism, and protestor demands. However, religious interpretation and practice had been a key social cleavage both prior to and after the January 14, 2011 transition. The role of organized religion and religious discourse in public life, quickly became one of the most contentious political and social issues in the post-revolutionary landscape in what one journalist described as “a contest for [Tunisia’s] soul.”¹³ After nearly sixty years of strict control by two dictators, the democratic transition has provided an opening for religious institutions and practices that have challenged Tunisia’s reputation as a “secular oasis” in the region. There are ongoing legal and social debates ranging from whether women should be permitted to wear the full-face covering *niqab* to whether blasphemy of Islam should be criminalized. The assassination of two leftist politicians in February and July 2013 by a fundamentalist Salafi-jihadist organization led to concerns over religiously motivated terrorism that continue.

To understand the centrality of religion in Tunisian national identity in the democratic transition, I trace the process by which Tunisia’s president-dictators, Habib Bourguiba¹⁴ and Ben Ali, nationalized and institutionalized a very particular practice and way of understanding Islam in pursuit of state aims, *Tunisianité* (Tunisian-ness). In Arabic, there are references to “Tunisian

¹³ “Tunisia Faces a Balancing Act of Democracy and Religion”
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/world/africa/tunisia-navigates-a-democratic-path-tinged-with-religion.html>

¹⁴ I describe Bourguiba, his reforms, and his commemoration, in more detail in Chapter 2.

identity” (*al-hawiya al-tunisiya*). However, when referring to Bourguiba and his legacy, the French phrase *Tunisianité*, is almost always used, indicative of Bourguiba’s western oriented efforts at Islamic reform.

Habib Bourguiba (lived 1903-2000, President 1957 - 1987), a lawyer by training, was one of the most influential leaders of the Tunisian nationalist movement to end the French protectorate. After the end of both the protectorate and the client Tunisian monarch, he became the Republic of Tunisia’s first president. Through a state where he and his party (Neo-Destour and later the Socialist Destourian Party) held a monopoly on state power, he instituted sweeping reforms aimed at modernizing the Tunisian state, particularly through unilateral religious reforms, such as changes to women’s rights in the Personal Status Code. In doing so, he contrasted himself with conservative Islamists.

Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali (born 1936, President 1987-2011) was a military officer who also served as Prime Minister before deposing Bourguiba in a bloodless coup. He reformed the state party into the Constitutional Democratic Rally (*Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique, RCD*), which held a virtual monopoly over Tunisian politics during his rule. Ben Ali briefly offered increased freedoms to Islamists and religiously conservative Tunisians, but cracked down on these as it became apparent that Islamist political candidates had public support and could threaten his regime. Afterwards, he instituted repressive policies against Islamists and other dissidents.

In the post-revolution period, debates over national identity initially threatened to derail Tunisia’s democratization project with respect to addressing past grievances, reforming laws and institutions, delaying elections and the constitution, and nearly unseating Tunisia’s first democratically elected government. In particular, tensions arose between Tunisians advocating

for a general continuation of the status quo vis-à-vis the state's relationship with religion, whom I refer to as Bourguibists, after Tunisia's first president-dictator Habib Bourguiba, and those advocating for more expansive role for religion, Islamists, including the main Islamist political party Ennahda.¹⁵¹⁶

In the newly democratizing state, the shifting of structures and repertoires that had regulated society for decades were dislocating, both positively and negatively.¹⁷ For Islamists and those whose religious beliefs and practices were excluded during the dictatorship, Ben Ali's departure opened up an unimaginable future. Ennahda supporters returned from years of exile, including leader Rachid Ghannouchi¹⁸ who had fled threats of imprisonment and execution. Women could wear the *hijab*¹⁹ in public without fear of being stopped by the police.

Interpretations of Islam that ran counter to the state-controlled *Tunisianité* could be preached and

¹⁵ I do not mean to reify Bourguibists or Islamists as clearly defined groups nor to suggest homogeneity, but rather to be able to articulate the two predominant ends of the spectrum in debates over Tunisian Islam. In using the term "Bourguibist" I seek to avoid a pitfall common of commentators on Tunisia who describe Bourguiba and his policies as "secular". As, I describe in-depth in the second and third chapters, Bourguiba, who saw his role as President as "none other than the Imam, religious leader, whose investiture is a result of the suffrage of the national community," was not a secularist.

¹⁶ Ennahda literally means "the renaissance," a reference to the 19th and 20th century Islamist Modernist movement which sought to end the Muslim world's cultural and political stagnation and reform the state. As a result of changing socio-political structures and the increased heterogeneity of public discourse, Islamic Modernists became champions of religious reform in response to European critiques of Muslim society.

¹⁷ As Ajmi Lourimi, an Ennahda leader, describes, somewhat condescendingly: "The Islamist movements are afraid for Islam, and the secularists are afraid of Islam. And the secularists are afraid for their own individual way of life. They are afraid for their own individual rights. This is not about political rights, or citizenship rights, or religious rights. They are afraid not to be able to buy their wine at the cafe, not to be able to dress the way they want" (in Zeghal 2013: 10).

¹⁸ Rachid Ghannouchi (born 1941) is a Tunisian intellectual who, after studying in Syria, became active in the Muslim Brotherhood and other political Islamist movements. In Tunisia, he co-founded the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI), which would become today's Ennahda Movement. He was imprisoned multiple times by the dictatorship and ultimately went into exile in the United Kingdom, only to return to Tunisia in 2011 after the revolution. He is the head of the Ennahda movement and its primary political ideologue, though he has not held a government or parliamentary position.

¹⁹ The *hijab*, simply referred to as a veil or headscarf in English, is a cloth covering that some Muslim women wear that typically covers the entire head, neck, and hair while the face remains visible. There are variations in the *hijab* based on how exactly it is worn that can indicate geographic and religious differences. The *niqab* additionally covers the entire face except for the eyes. The *niqab* is most often black and typically worn with an *abaya*, a loosely fitting, full length robe-dress, while the *hijab* is worn with anything ranging from an *abaya* to a long-sleeved shirt and jeans, depending on the wearer's preference and religious convictions.

discussed openly. Additionally, both members of Ennahda and other members of the opposition could speak out against the human rights abuses, imprisonment, and torture they endured during the dictatorship.

However, for Bourguibists and those whose religious beliefs and practices were compatible with the dictatorship's articulation of *Tunisianité*, the revolution seemed, in part, like a dystopian vision of a future Tunisia that they had been warned could come to pass without the protection of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Islamists, whom Bourguiba and Ben Ali jailed and vilified as terrorists, were suddenly not only elected to parliament, but holding its highest offices. The *niqab*, which they presented as an anathema to Tunisian identity was suddenly visible and legal. And, for perhaps the first time for some, Bourguibists had to justify everyday practices – dress, art, consumption – that some Islamists, particularly Salafists²⁰, proclaimed as blasphemous.

As I describe in the body of the dissertation, this struggle over Tunisian national identity and who would define it threatened the democratic transition. In examining the relationship between nationalism and Islam during Tunisia's democratic transition, this dissertation's primary goal is to explore how cultural factors, primarily those concerning nationhood and national identity, influence and are influenced by the democratization process, particularly with respect to its consolidation and ultimate durability.

The Tunisian case is useful in exploring the relationship between national identity and democratization for two key reasons. First, with global decolonization and the fall of the Soviet Union, most new democracies are likely to be the products of democratizing authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes, rather than self-determination and independence movements.

²⁰ Salafism is a diverse religious, fundamentalist orientation that calls for a return to what it sees as authentic and unmediated religious tradition. It ranges in expression with respect to use of violence and participation in the state, nuances which I explore further in Chapter 3. In post-revolution Tunisia, Salafism and Salafi practices, such as wearing the *niqab* and protesting perceived blasphemy, became particular points of contention.

However, many sociological studies, whether focusing on democratization from a cultural or structural perspective, have utilized cases of states transitioning from socialist regimes following the collapse of the Soviet Union (e.g. Linz and Stepan 1996, Stark and Bruszt 1998, Kennedy 2002, Zubrzycki 2006). One key way in which post-authoritarian states, such as Tunisia, vary is the absence of an “external” power during the preceding, non-democratic period, whether a colonial state or a foreign dominant state. Unlike post-colonial or post-communist states, these states cannot attribute authoritarianism or abuses to outside “others.” Instead, part of the national reimagining that potentially occurs during the democratic transition is looking inward to explain or to take responsibility for problems of the past, a more fraught undertaking, especially with respect to obtaining a broad societal consensus.

Second, Arab Muslim states, such as Tunisia, face a particular challenge in democratizing with respect to national identity. Following the end of both the Ottoman Empire and European colonialism, the 20th century Arab world was caught between multiple ways of imagining communities –pan-Islamism, Arab nationalism, and territorial nationalism – which have affected contemporary articulations of nationhood. Furthermore, while territorial nationalism has become nearly hegemonic in the twenty-first century, Muslim states must compete with a small but vocal opposition of resurgent pan-Islamists comprised of groups such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, Hizb al-Tahrir, and Ansar al-Shari’a that not object to the state in its current form, but to the very idea of the nation-state as a legitimate, organizing body, as I describe in Chapter 3.

In addition to contributing to an understanding of the relationship between national identity and democratization, this dissertation furthers the understanding of the relationship between Islam, democratization, and nationalism by moving beyond the tendency of scholarly works that have focused on examining whether Islam is compatible or not with democratic

principles (e.g. Esposito and Piscatori 1991, Huntington 1996, Stepan 2000; Bayat 2007 being exceptions). In particular, it focuses on how multiple understandings of Islam (e.g. Bourguibist, Islamist, Salafi, etc.) interact with one another in defining national identity.

Finally, it contributes to the study of post-revolution Tunisia by examining the full spectrum of social and political actors rather than focusing on one particular segment. While much existing analysis has focused on either on the Tunisian secular elite (Ghorbal 2012, Hajji 2011, Moore 1965) or Tunisia's Islamist_(s)²¹ and Salafi movements (Hamdi 2000, Mabrouk 2012, Wolf 2017), this dissertation examines multiple segments of Tunisian society and their mutual influence on each other, and discourses on Tunisia's national identity without privileging one trajectory over the other.

II. Data and Methods

The data in this dissertation comes from extensive archival research, interviews, and participant observation. While only a fraction of the research is actively discussed in this dissertation, the body of it shaped my understanding and interpretation of Tunisian nationalism and history. I reviewed numerous newspaper accounts in Arabic, French, and English, as well as secondary historical accounts to reconstitute and analyze past events, providing a sociologically informed interpretation. I also paid particular attention to forms of cultural production – political cartoons, visual art, TV shows, graffiti, and theatrical productions – to trace issues of key public concern and as a form of non-state articulation of national identity. I examined Tunisian history textbooks

²¹ In Chapter 3, I discuss the importance in some instances of conceptually differentiate traditional Islamists_(s), such as Ennahda supporters, from Salafis in order to illustrate important distinctions in understandings of Tunisian national identity. In the places where it is important to draw a conceptual distinction between Salafists and the more standard and traditional usage of the term Islamist_(s), I include the subscript _(s) to indicate the standard usage.

to see how Bourguiba was portrayed before and after the revolution. I also analyzed electoral campaign materials, campaign platforms and advertising, from the 2011 and 2014 elections and attended campaign rallies for the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections.

In June-July 2014 and January 2014, six weeks in total, I participated in a political speaker series, the Tunis Exchange, that incorporated presentations from representatives across Tunisian society (politics, social justice, business, media, etc.) followed by a free-ranging Q&A discussion between the speaker and participants, primarily academics and journalists, on relevant current events. This resulted in approximately one to one-and-a-half hours of dialogue with each of the speakers. These meetings occurred primarily in and around Tunis, but also in Gafsa, Kairouan, Monastir, Redeyef, Sidi Bouzid, Sfax, Siliana, and Sousse, which allowed for additional perspectives from outside national centers of power and influence.

Meetings included representatives from major and minor political parties and elected government; national and regional government ministries and agencies; domestic civil society organizations; international NGOs: universities, research centers, and think tanks; and, independent actors. In total, I met with over eighty political and civil society leaders (*see Appendix 2 for a full list of speakers*).

The Tunis Exchange was conducted under the Chatham House Rule meaning that specific information cannot be attributed information to certain individuals, although participants did consent for their names to be publically listed as participating speakers on the Tunis Exchange's website. Because of this limitation, I do not include or analyze information from these talks. However, these discussions, covering topics ranging from economic marginalization to religious education, deeply influenced my contextual knowledge of Tunisia and the ways in which I understood and approached my research. Because of the range of speakers, with respect

to both the diversity of orientations and the range of sectors represented, it provided a cross-section of influential and knowledgeable Tunisians.

In addition to these formal engagements, my perception of Tunisian nationalism is also informed by numerous everyday interactions: casual conversations with Tunisians ranging from journalists to olive farmers; walking through the backroads of Tunisian towns and stumbling over multiple personal memorials to Habib Bourguiba; discussing immigration and integration; attending political rallies and national festivities; visiting museums and historic sites; going to see plays and musical events; listening to Tunisian radio and TV; watching *Star Wars*, filmed in Tunisia, with an LGBTQ Tunisian and an ex-Salafi-jihadist fighter; photographing graffiti; and, more generally living and socializing with Tunisians and politically informed foreign journalists and academics on a daily basis.

This collective field experience, formal and informal, allowed me to provide an examination of historical changes that took place in Tunisia, primarily from 2011 to 2015 through a cultural analysis of events and symbols to unpack their meaning both for Tunisian participants at the time and in the greater context of Tunisia's democratic transition through a synthesis of a variety of data sources. For example, in Chapter 2, I examine national reimaginings concerning a) re-narrativization in the context of Bourguiba's role and meaning in Tunisia and b) laws and state institutions through the writing of the 2014 Constitution. I first provide a historical background based on secondary histories to describe how Bourguiba and Ben Ali articulated and promoted *Tunisianité* during their rule and to demonstrate how Bourguiba became an integral part of Tunisian national identity. I then turn to analyze post-revolutionary representations of Bourguiba – in plays, political campaigning, public, non-state commemorations –, all collected through participant observation fieldwork, to demonstrate the

durability of Bourguiba's legacy and his continued importance in Tunisian public life and national identity. I then turn to examine and compare the written texts of the 1959 and 2014 constitutions, again in order to show continuity in cultural schemas and laws concerning the relationship between the state and religion.

In total I spent ten, non-consecutive months living in Tunis from June 2013 to May 2015. Visiting on multiple occasions allowed me to be more fully cognizant of changes in societal attitudes between my visits. Additionally, I was fortunate to be in-country during several socially and politically significant events. When I first went to Tunisia in June 2013 for two months, I arrived at a moment of extreme political and societal tension: the legislative elections had been postponed for a second time, there was a stalemate over the constitution, and growing frustration with the Troika government. I arrived on the heels of the conviction of FEMIN activist Amina and the government's decision ban the Salafist group Ansar al-Shari'a from meeting publicly.

Furthermore, the country was continuing to debate what to do about the increasingly visible Salafist movements, analyzed in Chapter 3. While I was in Tunisia, the Egyptian Islamist government was overthrown, an event watched with great attention – both by those seeking to emulate it and those to avoid it – in the country. On my final morning in Tunisia, the leftist, opposition member Mohammed Brahmi was assassinated, allegedly by Ansar al-Shari'a members, setting off nationwide protests.

When I returned for January 2014, the Tunisians I met expressed even more pessimism given delays in the constitution and elections (again), as well as growing concerns about declining service delivery and security. Just as I arrived, however, the constitutional process

unexpectedly resumed and I was present for its completion, as well as the celebration for the third anniversary of the revolution.

In September 2014, I arrived for my longest continual stay, until May 2015, in order to observe the legislative and presidential elections finally take place after repeated delays.²² Over the course of the three campaign months, I travelled to campaign rallies held by multiple parties in a variety of cities, occasionally crossing the country to attend multiple events in a single day; attended press briefings; and, observed the everyday atmosphere of the electoral period. Additionally, I volunteered with the National Democratic Institute (a political development NGO for whom I had previously worked in the United States and Yemen), writing summary reports, serving as an electoral observer, and helping to staff their election day headquarters. On a darker note, I also was also in Tunis when the Bardo Museum was attacked by terrorists, resulting in the deaths of twenty-two Tunisians and foreign tourists. Subsequently, I participated in a memorial march and also witnessed the increasing securitization of Tunisia.

While I spent most of my time in Tunis, I also travelled extensively, both for research and personal leisure, throughout the country to all of the main regions, with the exception of the far northwest along the Algerian border. Significant locations I visited included Bizerte, Dougga, Douz, Hammamet, Gabes, Gafsa, Jerba, Kairouan, Le Kef, Matmata, Metlaoui, Monastir, Nefta, Redeyef, Sidi Bouzid, Sfax, Siliana, Sousse, Tatouine, Teboursouk, Tozeur, and Zaghuan.

III. Organization

Chapter 2, *Nationalizing Islam: The Construction of Tunisianité*, begins with an overview of the religious landscape in Tunisia and presents “Bourguibists” and “Islamists” as ideal types to

²² They were legally mandated to occur two years earlier in October 2012.

better understand conflicts over national identity. It then provides a brief historical account of how Bourguiba and Ben Ali linked certain religious practices and discourses to the notion of *Tunisianité* and then instrumentalized it to legitimate their regimes. Afterwards, it turns to two examples to show how *Tunisianité* has persisted as a part of Tunisian national identity even in the democratizing state: commemorations of Bourguiba and the 2014 constitution. It addresses how commemoration happens in democratizing societies and how competing visions of the past are, or are not reconciled and to what effect.

Chapter 3, *Crises of Faith: “Old” Salafism in “New” Tunisia*, focuses on the tension between national homogeneity and democratic pluralism by examining conflicts between Bourguibists and Salafists in order to understand how conflicts over pluralism and national identity threaten democratic consolidation. It emphasizes elements of discontinuity and conflict in expressions of national identity, particularly in everyday practices and the arts. After providing a very brief overview of Salafism in Tunisia, it turns to examine the tension between national unity and pluralism in three arenas. First, it examines the hijab and the *niqab* as forms of “everyday nationhood,” using the lens of a dispute over the *niqab* at Manouba University in Tunis in order to discuss a lack of national empathy. Then, it moves to the sphere of cultural production looking at both Salafi protests against certain types of art, and also how artists use their art to critique Salafism, as being contrary to *Tunisianité* in order to highlight not just a lack of national identification, but how Tunisian Salafists came to be viewed as a national, existential threat. Finally, it turns to discuss jihadi-Salafism and to show how it has influenced public debates about Salafism more broadly. It also suggests that it was only the increase in jihadi-Salafism that enabled Bourguibists and Islamists to *consolidate* their national reimaginings into a shared, albeit vague, language about Tunisian Islam.

In Chapter 4, *Electing the Nation: Islamists vs. Bourguibists, Malikis vs. Salafis*, I show how this consolidation around “Tunisian Islam” played out in practice by examining the 2011 parliamentary and the 2014 parliamentary and presidential elections. By analyzing party platforms and political speeches, it demonstrates that while the 2011 elections focused heavily on questions of national identity and religious practice, these were almost absent during the 2014 elections, replaced with nearly identical language about Tunisian Islam and an anti-Salafi discourse. However, I also point to the contingent nature of this discursive convergence and the potential for these debates to reemerge in the future.

In the conclusion, I return to the question posed at the beginning of the dissertation: what enables a structural transformation to be durable, in this case the democratic transition? Why do some democratic transitions succeed while others fail? I conclude this dissertation by proposing the outline of a theory of the role nationalism, specifically “national reimagining” and “national consolidation,” plays in the democratic consolidation process and provide two examples to demonstrate the importance of examining nationalism.

CHAPTER 2 Nationalizing Islam: The Construction of *Tunisianité*

“Supreme combatant, builder of new Tunisia, liberator of women.” These three titles are engraved onto the monumental doors of Habib Bourguiba’s mausoleum in his hometown of Monastir. Each of these titles reveals a key element of *Tunisianité*, the specific discourse surrounding Tunisian nationalism, which was propagated by Bourguiba and later Ben Ali. Most importantly for this study, *Tunisianité* should be understood as deriving from a particularly religious frame, as illustrated by the titles Bourguiba assumed:

- “Supreme combatant” (al-mujahid al-akbar): literally the one who struggles the most to defend Islam, in this case a vision of a particularly Tunisian Islam – characterized by claims of modernity and tolerance – which Bourguiba viewed himself as responsible for defending;
- “Builder of new Tunisia:” founder of the modern state, freed from traditionalist and conservative views of Islam, and:
- “Liberator of women:” author of the modern Personal Statue Law that granted women sweeping liberties compared to other Muslim-majority nations.



Figure 3: Doors at the entrance to Habib Bourguiba’s mausoleum in Monastir. They read: “Supreme combatant, builder of new Tunisia, liberator of women.” Photo: Elizabeth Young.

The notion of *Tunisianité* is at the core of understanding the post-revolution tensions over re-imagining the Tunisian nation. At its heart *Tunisianité* claims to be an authentic interpretation of Tunisian Islam, which, it describes as modern, open, and, easily co-existing with the contemporary state. This chapter begins by briefly providing empirical polling evidence to highlight the societal divisions between “Bourguibists” or “Islamists,” used as ideal types. Then it provides a brief historical overview of how Bourguiba and Ben Ali linked certain religious practices and discourses to *Tunisianité* and then instrumentalized it to legitimate their regimes.

Then, I examine two potential avenues of “national reimagining” -- national re-narrativization and changes in laws and state institutions – in specific relation to *Tunisianité*. First, I interrogate Bourguiba as a Durkheimian sacred figure in the Tunisian national narrative and specifically look at how he has been treated, both publicly and privately, following the 2011

transition. Given that Bourguiba's legacy in Tunisia is divisive – to Bourguibists he is to be emulated, to Islamists he was not just a source of political and religious misdeeds, but also personal suffering – I highlight how new commemorations, without concurrent state efforts at reconciliation, such as truth and reconciliation commissions had the potential to hinder a lasting democratic transition.

I then examine a second form on “national reimagining” through the writing of the 2014 constitution, particularly Article 6 of the constitution which regulates the relationship between the state and religion. I point out that while Article 6 was not included in the previous Bourguiba-era constitution it follows directly from a tradition of *Tunisianité*. In this sense, there is little “national reimagining” taking place in the constitution; these are, in Sewell's parlance, schemas representing the durability of certain structures pre-and post-revolution. However, importantly for the for the overarching question of democratic transitions, there was ultimately consensus over this article from both Bourguibist and Islamist parties, a broadening of the modes of power, which helped to consolidate the transition.

I. Bourguibists and Islamists as Ideal Types

Tunisia is relatively religiously and ethnically homogeneous with approximately 99% of the 11 million inhabitants identifying as Sunni Muslims and 1% as Christian and Jewish (U.S. Department of State 2012). The remaining 1% of Tunisia's population consists of approximately 6,000 Christians and less than 2,000 Jews. Less than 1% of the population is estimated to identify as ethnically Berber Muslims, the indigenous population of North Africa. To date, neither the Jewish nor Berber communities are politically mobilized, though there are hints that the Berber community may utilize the post-revolutionary public sphere to advocate for the

institutional preservation of Berber language and heritage. While Tunisians from the interior of the country frequently contrast themselves with Tunisians living on the coast whom they believe to benefit from higher levels of government investment, this distinction is primarily raised in discussions of the national budget and regional development.

This is in contrast to most countries in the Middle East and North Africa that are either split between or have sizeable minorities of Sunni, Shiite, or other Muslim traditions, or minority populations of non-Muslim faiths or non-Arab ethnicity. Almost all of Tunisia's Muslims are from the Sunni Maliki tradition, one of four main schools of Sunni jurisprudence (*madhab*). The schools of jurisprudence differ among themselves on what sources and methodologies are used in legal rulings, resulting in variations on issues ranging from the proper way to pray to marriage contracts and inheritance laws. The Maliki school is the primary *madhab* in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, with the notable exception of Egypt. Tunisia's identity as a specifically Maliki country was presented to me by numerous Tunisian politicians and intellectuals as a distinguishing element *Tunisianité*.

However, despite its superficial homogeneity, there are significant differences in religious attitudes and practices within Tunisia representing two general schemas. On the one hand are "Bourguibists," Tunisians who broadly agree with Bourguiba's vision of society in which Islam has more limited role in the public sphere and more contemporary interpretations. For example, the veil being anachronistic and it being permissible to drink alcohol. In using the term Bourguibist I seek to avoid a pitfall common of commentators on Tunisia who describe Bourguiba and his policies as "secular". As I discuss, Bourguiba, who described his role as President as "none other than the Imam, religious leader, whose investiture is a result of the

suffrage of the national community,” was decidedly not a secularist (in Camu 1978: 270).²³

However, in my use of the term Bourguibist, I do not imply one’s support for Bourguiba’s administration; there were numerous Tunisians who broadly agreed with Bourguiba’s conception of *Tunisianité*, but disagreed with other policies or wanted him to step-down from office and give way to democratization.

On the other end of the spectrum are Islamists, who advocate for the implementation of *shari’a*, Islamic law, either through a caliphate or through the laws of a modern nation state and oppose what they see is the increasing secularization of society (Bokhari and Senzai 2013: 19). As with Bourguibist, I use the term generally and it encompasses a range of ideologies, including, Ennahda supporters and Salafists. My use of the term Islamist is to contrast with Bourguibist. However, as I discuss, particularly in Chapter 3, it is important in some instances to conceptually differentiate traditional Islamists_(s), such as Ennahda supporters, from Salafis, and also different types of Salafists, in order to illustrate significant distinctions in understandings of Tunisian national identity. In the places where it is important to draw a conceptual distinction between Salafists and the more standard and traditional usage of the term Islamist_(s), I include the subscript _(s) to indicate the standard usage.

In using the terms Islamists and Bourguibists I make reference to two, general cultural worldviews of the role of religion in Tunisia and how it is properly expressed. These worldviews also come with political implications for how religion should be function in the public sphere and the laws that should govern it. However, these do not necessarily translate to specific political groupings. Not all Islamists support Ennahda and many Bourguibists reject

²³ In a 1975 speech on the occasion of the Prophet Mohamed’s birthday, insinuating a comparison between the two.

aspects of Bourguiba's policies, similar to not all-American conservatives also identifying as Republicans.

I do not mean to reify Bourguibists or Islamists as clearly defined groups nor to suggest homogeneity, but rather to be able to articulate two ideal types when exploring Tunisian nationalism. While these are ideal types, the general bifurcation of attitudes towards religious practices and beliefs is born out in empirical data, which lends support to the usefulness of these ideal types as tools for analysis.

With respect to religious observance, 63% of Tunisian respondents in a Pew Forum of Religion & Public Life survey reported performing all 5 daily prayers, with only another 2% reporting praying some, but not all of the prayers daily.²⁴ 51% of respondents reported reading the Qur'an daily, and another 46% reading it a lower frequency. However, 96% of respondents fasted during the month of Ramadan (Pew Forum 2012).

With respect to religion and politics there is a significant bipolarization in attitudes, which I examine in this dissertation, between those who think there should be a close relationship between religion and politics, Islamists in this study, and Bourguibists who want a clearer divide. 58% of respondents believed that religious leaders should have an influence in politics and 56% favor making *shari'a* the official law of the country. This was an important issue early in the constitutional debates of whether *shari'a* should be "the" or "a" source of the law that I discuss later in this chapter. In a related question in the Pew Forum survey, 42% of respondents favored *shari'a* courts deciding family law and property matters.²⁵

²⁴ The survey consisted of 1450 Tunisian respondents in a nationally, representative sample of adults in urban and rural areas. The sample pertains both the Pew Forum's 2012 and 2013 reports.

²⁵ One might expect that a larger percentage of respondents would favor this more limited scope for *shari'a*, limited just to personal status issues. However, the fact that fewer respondents favor *shari'a* with respect to personal status laws is a testimony to the reforms Habib Bourguiba implemented shortly after independence that brought all these matters into civil courts and which increased the rights of women to marry, divorce, work, and own property.

Survey respondents were also almost evenly split into two groups with how they view the relationship between national laws and Islamic laws: 40% of respondents reported that Tunisian law follows *shari'a* "very or somewhat closely" while 56% said that they do not follow *shari'a* "too closely" or "not at all closely". Of those that didn't think the country's laws follow *shari'a*, 25% thought that this is a good thing and 54% a negative thing. This difference in attitude is felt among Tunisians: 51% said that "tensions between Muslims who are very religious and Muslims who are not very religious" is a very big or a moderately big problem. Only 12% said it's not a problem at all. Similarly, 83% of respondents described conflict between religious groups as a very big (65%) or moderately big (18%) problem in Tunisia, more than Iraq or the Palestinian Territories (Pew Forum 2013). From the survey instrument, it is unclear how "religious groups" might be interpreted by respondents given the country's overall religious homogeneity. It is possible that respondents might interpret this question as asking about conflict between a) secular Tunisians and their more religious countrymen or more probably b) Salafis and Tunisians who follow the Maliki tradition. I highlight this tension throughout the dissertation, but pay particular attention to conflicts between Bourguibists and Salafists in Chapter 3.

Of the 21 countries surveyed in the Pew Forum's study, Tunisia is notable with respect to the number of respondents who asserted that Islam is plural and tolerant within Tunisia.²⁶ Tunisia ranks the highest by far in saying that *shari'a* is open to multiple interpretations (72%) and not limited to a single interpretation (Pew Forum 2013),²⁷ indicative of the influence of *Tunisianité*, to which I now turn to.

²⁶ The Pew Forum report includes data from surveys conducted in South-Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Russia), Central Asia (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan), Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand), South Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan), and the Middle East & North Africa (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, and Tunisia).

²⁷ Morocco, with 60% of respondents agreeing that there are multiple interpretations, is the only other country surveyed where more than half of respondents agreed to this statement.

II. The Construction of Tunisianité during the Dictatorships

Debates over the proper practice of Islam have been at the center of many moments of contentious politics in Tunisia's modern history starting with anti-French protests in the 1930s over whether Tunisian Muslims who acquired French citizenship should be considered apostates and denied burial in Muslim cemeteries, an early indication of the importance of nationality – as expressed through formal citizenship and also perceived social solidarity – in Tunisia. Both Bourguiba and Zine Ben Ali claimed to be defenders of “Tunisian Islam” which they characterized as modern, pluralistic, and tolerant, in order to justify their state policies and silence political opponents. In doing so, they actively linked specific Islamic discourses and practices with Tunisian nationalism and positioned “alternative Islams” as threats to the nation, thereby creating a “hegemonic Islam” that is incorporated into state institutions and state nationalisms (Cesari 2014).

The history of Islam in the contemporary Tunisian state has been covered extensively elsewhere (Ghorbal 2012, Hajji 2011, McCarthy 2014, Perkins 2014) and this chapter does not break new ground with respect to the incidents discussed. However, understanding the ways in which Bourguiba and Ben Ali linked particular religious practices and discourses with Tunisian nationalism, is critical for analyzing debates over national identity in post-revolution Tunisia.

During their combined fifty-four years in office, Bourguiba and Ben Ali eradicated *shari'a* courts, mandated that mosques be closed outside of prayer times, required government approval of imams, and restricted wearing the *hijab* in public places. Bourguiba ordered Zeytouna University – the oldest and one of the most important institutions of Islamic education in the Islamic world – closed, its libraries emptied, and the millennium-old institution incorporated into the secular higher education system. However, both argued that they were

doing so in the name of Islam, citing Qur'anic verses and Islamic legal principles. Bourguiba, asserted that as president he was selected by the nation as its "Imam" and in such a role was able to engage in independent interpretation (*ijtihad*) of Islamic laws and doctrine.²⁸

For example, during Ramadan in 1964, Bourguiba infamously drank a glass of orange juice during the day on national TV, thereby breaking the Ramadan fast. He called on Tunisians to also break their fast as a means of *jihad*, religious struggle, so that they could work harder during Ramadan and improve the Tunisian economy. To justify this departure, he cited Islamic precedent that the Prophet Mohamed and his companions broke their fast during their capture of Mecca (Wolf 2017). The decision was not publicly popular and nearly all major Tunisian religious leaders objected to it, forcing Bourguiba to abandon the proposition for good.

The radical act of drinking the glass of orange juice cannot be understated. Fasting during the holy month of Ramada is one of the five pillars of Islam and is considered compulsory for all Muslims, except those for whom the fast would be physically harmful, such as the ill or pregnant women. Bourguiba, in exercising his self-proclaimed role as the nation's Imam, is not making a judgment about a minor or esoteric topic, but, rather, is trying to reconstruct one of the few tenants of Islam that is universally accepted by Muslims around the world. He does not simply use state power to outlaw or curtail fasting, but instead uses the religious metaphor of *jihad* to argue that a sacrilegious act is actually a sacred one in the service of the Tunisian nation. While unsuccessful, the fact that Bourguiba would attempt such an act is testimony to the degree of influence he believed he had on religious practice in Tunisia and the extent to which he thought Islam should be in service to the nation. For Bourguiba modernization and reform of Islamic teachings and practices was at the heart of *Tunisianité* (Hibou 2011).

²⁸ Bourguiba also styled himself with the religiously laden title of Supreme Combatant (*mujahid al akbar*). In this case the term used for combatant is etymologically related to *jihad* implying a religious struggle.

In effect, both Bourguiba and Ben Ali used religious discourses and religious institutions in the service of nationalism. However, they claimed to promote a progressive model of “Tunisian Islam,” *Tunisianité*, which they characterized as modern, pluralistic, and tolerant, in order to justify these reforms. They did not argue that they were trying to promote secularism and should not be understood as secularists in a strict usage, but rather articulating a form of religious nationalism that links particular religious interpretations and practices with Tunisian nationalism.

Also of significance, is the emphasis that Bourguiba placed on the *modernity* of *Tunisianité*. Bourguiba came to power at a time in which modernity was at the forefront of the global imagination, and people were using the term self-referentially ranging from art and furniture to everyday life, embodied through the “modern man” and woman. While “contemporary” merely refers to the current time, “modern” makes reference to how one situates oneself to all that has come before and contains a normative evaluation, best exemplified through modernization theory, which presents itself in a teleological, normative framework.

Islam, more so than Christianity or other religions, has had a fraught history with its relationship to modernity, which is inextricably linked to Western political and cultural colonialism. During the nineteenth and twentieth century Muslim philosophers and historians attempted to reconcile differences between Europe and the Muslim World, particularly to explain Europe’s domination and the Muslim World’s perceived “backwardness.” This resulted in examinations of nearly every aspect of life, including how religious texts were interpreted, the role of women in society, political structures, and the role of science (Moaddel 2005). For some scholars, this meant trying to bridge the divide between Europe and the Muslim World and resulted in justification for adopting “European” features, such as women’s education and the

concept of the citizen, by justifying them through Islamic texts. However, other Muslim scholars viewed this as a rejection of traditionalism, which it was, but also an embrace of the secular world.

For many observers, Bourguiba's ascension to power and his early reforms – including state seizure of religious endowments and the incorporation of Zeytouna, the renowned Islamic center, into the state-run University of Tunis – could be seen as confirmation of prevailing theories of global secularization. Secularization theory, a cornerstone of the Western modernization paradigm, deeply influenced early sociological theorists seeking to understand the rapid social transformations occurring around them in which they believed “the former gods [were] growing old or dying” (Durkheim 1995, 429) and that “the sacred [would] disappear altogether except, possibly, in the private realm” (Mills 1959, 33). As capitalism and democracy expanded, traditional religion's hold of both the individual consciousness and the public sphere would weaken (Berger 1967).

However, Bourguiba did not demand that religion disappear, rather he tried to have it to conform to his views of “the modern” and to further elements of modernization. For example, his justification to break the Ramadan fast was not that the fast wasn't meaningful, but that the more important *jihad* was to economically develop the country. He did not end the study of Islam in schools, a subject that is still part of the Tunisian curriculum. Instead he ended a dual, colonial system by which a student either perused a “religious” or a “secular” education and combined them into a single, unified curriculum, although certainly deemphasizing the centrality of both the subject and the authority traditional religious teachers in the process.

Bourguiba's reforms did draw strong challenges from the traditional, conservative elites. This was due not only to flaunting key tenants of Islam, such as the Ramadan fast, but also

because such reforms were associated with French colonialism and *laïcité*. As a result, Bourguiba's vision of Tunisianité would be associated by opponents as being an unacceptable secularization of Tunisian society.

Opposition to Bourguiba and Ben Ali

Bourguiba's radical reinterpretation of Islam, and its relationship to the state did not go unchallenged. In the late 1960s, the Islamic Tendency Movement (Mouvement de la tendance islamiste, MTI), a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, was founded initially as a space for intellectual discussions of Islam, but it quickly oriented itself toward political goals in order to counter Bourguiba's reforms and increase the role of traditional Islam in Tunisian society. Rachid Ghannouchi, one of its founders and the intellectual leader of MTI's successor party Ennahda, also adopted the discourse of a moderate and pluralistic "Tunisian Islam" but, unlike Bourguiba it did not include breaking the Ramadan fast, drinking alcohol, or discarding the veil or other religious traditions. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the MTI gained followers and expressed an interest in participating in elections, which they were denied.

In 1987, eighty-four-year-old Bourguiba ordered the execution of twelve members of the MTI, including Ghannouchi, on charges of inciting violence and civil unrest. Military and political leaders close to Bourguiba deemed that the planned execution would almost certainly ignite a civil war and decided to intervene before it could be carried out. With a doctor's evaluation that Bourguiba was no longer mentally capable to rule, Bourguiba was ousted during a "medical coup" in favor of his newly appointed Prime Minister Ben Ali. Following the November 7th "Change," as the coup is euphemistically called in Tunisia, Ben Ali initially made reconciliatory gestures towards Islamists, allowing them to legally organize and publish a

newspaper. He did this not out of affection for MTI or out of a belief in democratic practices, but rather as a form of appeasement in order to blunt what he saw as an Islamist threat to his authoritarian rule due to their popular appeal among religiously conservative Tunisians. While the MTI, by now rebranded as Ennahda, was not allowed to field candidates in the 1989 legislative elections, many members ran as independents and are believed to have won approximately 15% of the vote. However, due to Tunisian electoral laws designed to maintain a single-party government, this did not translate into any political seats for them.

In the wake of the election, Ennahda members questioned if there would ever be a true political opening and Ghannouchi left Tunisia in voluntary exile, which would last until Ben Ali's 2011 ouster. Subsequently, Ennahda centered their resistance to Ben Ali's regime in Islamic discourse and principles. Attending Friday prayers and wearing the *hijab* were not only religious acts, but also became acts of political resistance.

When members of Ennahda were accused of attacking a police station and murdering police officers, Ben Ali launched a massive crackdown on what he perceived as an Islamist threat to his regime, which associated religious observance with terrorist sympathies. Using the membership list Ennahda supplied the government in their attempts to legalize the party, the government arrested thousands of Ennahda members and supporters. For the next twenty years, Ben Ali's secret police and network of informants arrested anyone believed to be a threat to regime stability. While not the only targets, anyone perceived as having Islamist leanings – whether wearing a beard or lingering too long at prayer – was routinely arrested and tortured, often alongside their spouses. By the time of the 2010 revolution, which removed Ben Ali from office, organized Islam in Tunisia was firmly in the hands of the state with thousands of Ennahda members behind bars or in exile and mosques controlled by the state. However, as will be

discussed in the following sections, *Tunisianité* endured the demise of both Bourguiba and Ben Ali's regimes.

III. The Mantle of Bourguiba: Remembering a Dictator in a Democratizing State

In this section, I turn to the first type of “national reimagining” that has the potential to occur during a democratic transition: re-narrativization. How do the state and citizens understand and address the nation's past? Democratization processes often are a newly gained opportunity for historical revisionism to address past events that have been censored, or integrate the democratic transition into the national narrative. Collective memory, a commonly shared understanding of a groups past, is an import tool in nationalist projects (Olick and Robins 1998, Olick 2003, Schwartz 2000).

I examine the re-narrativization that has and hasn't taken place in post-revolution Tunisia by focusing on state and non-state treatment of Bourguiba as the embodiment of the principle of *Tunisianité*. In post-revolution Tunisia, Bourguiba acts as a Durkheimian sacred figure (1995) surrounded by informal, but prevalent, taboos on critique that, in what I observed, extended to Islamists as well. Additionally, there is a vocal nostalgia and public commemoration of Bourguiba by private citizens. However, the state has remained largely silent on how to treat the former dictator.

I highlight the underlying tensions in celebrating the memory of a dictator while simultaneously promoting democratization, and without addressing the suffering that still-living Tunisians endured under his policies. While other scholars have pointed out the potential in a democratizing process for “narrative shock” (Zubrzycki 2006) or amnesia/forgetting, the contrasting ways in which Ben Ali and Bourguiba have been publicly remembered represent an

example of national narrative dissonance, threatening to further polarize Tunisian society, with supporters celebrating him as embodying Tunisian Islam.

Habib Bourguiba, who lived in relative isolation from the 1987 coup until his death in 2000, has experienced a renaissance in post-revolutionary Tunisia, and is arguably the single individual benefiting most from a post-revolutionary rehabilitation. Ben Ali had presented his coup as an act of benevolence, a “medical coup” to remove the eighty-four-year-old, mentally aging president while praising Bourguiba’s service. Bourguiba retired, or was placed under house arrest according to his supporters, in his palatial home in Monastir until his death in 2000.

While Ben Ali refrained from outright attacks on Bourguiba and his legacy, he did seek to minimize Bourguiba as a symbol in the public sphere, without doing so too overtly. For example, Ben Ali removed or relocated to less prominent places statues of Bourguiba and, instead of replacing them with new ones of himself, installed large sculptures of the number “7,” the symbol of his regime commemorating November 7th, the day he took office in 1987 (Chomiak 2013). Similarly, Ben Ali issued new currency, not with his face as Bourguiba did, but featuring the number 7. While Bourguiba was not actively maligned, he and his supporters were removed from influence and visibility.



Figure 4: Five Dinar banknote from the Ben Ali era. The number 7 (and text reading “November 7, 1987”) form part of a boat labeled Tunisia and flying a Tunisian flag. In the background are mosaics from the Carthage ruins. Photo: Wikipedia Commons.

This treatment speaks to Bourguiba’s unique status in Tunisian society and his role as a, if not the, sacred figure in contemporary Tunisian history, around whom certain taboos against denigration exist. For example, unlike many dictators, Bourguiba was removed from office non-violently and allowed to remain in the country rather than be exiled or executed. While Ben Ali removed public images of Bourguiba, such as the statues, he did not destroy them; he merely moved them away from traditionally influential spots. He also did not replace Bourguiba’s image with his own on money, and only six postage stamps bore his image, compared to more than fifty for Bourguiba. Ben Ali also did not embark upon a campaign to slander his predecessor and, as I will describe below, certain taboos around speaking about Bourguiba still exist that have implications for Tunisia’s democratic transition.

Bourguiba in the Public Sphere

The revolution provided a new space and freedoms not only to discuss, but also venerate Bourguiba. In particular, there have been numerous public, but instituted by private citizen, acts of nostalgia and interest in Bourguiba. For example, following the revolution, an Institute for

Bourguiba Studies opened and numerous books have been published, not only about his life, but also at least three specifically re-examining his relationship with Islam.²⁹

Playwright Raja Farhat wrote, directed, and starred in a six-hour, one-man play, *Bourguiba, Dernière Prison* (2012). Celebrating Bourguiba's life, it was performed for several years across the country, including multiple performances in the National Theatre in the center of Tunis on the eponymous Avenue Bourguiba. I attended the play twice. On both occasions, the audience appeared to thoroughly enjoy it, laughing at the frequent jokes, and also giving it a standing ovation. Due to its length, the play, performed in Tunisian Arabic, was most often staged in two-hour blocks and on holidays or other events with national significance. For example, a performance was staged at the National Theatre in Tunis the evening before the 2014 legislative elections, a timing which was suggestive of encouraging viewers to consider Bourguiba's legacy when they voted the next day. The play was "retired" in 2015 so that the Farhat could write and perform other works, including two more plays about Bourguiba's years in office.³⁰

²⁹ *Bourguiba and religious issues* (Amal Mousa) - Arabic/French; *Bourguiba et 'Islam: Le Politique et le Religieux* (Lofti Hajji) - Arabic/French; *Orphelins de Bourguiba et héritiers du Prophète* (Samy Ghorbal) – French.

³⁰ The first *Bourguiba: Le Discours du Palmarium* (2015) recounts Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi's 1972 visit to Tunisia and Bourguiba's defense of Tunisian nationalism and rejection of al-Gaddafi's proposals for a pan-Arab union in North Africa. The second play, *Bourguiba in America* (2016) depicts Bourguiba's 1961 state visit with President John F. Kennedy in Washington, DC.



Figure 5: Scene from Bourguiba, Dernière Prison.

Raja Farhat stars as Habib Bourguiba in the play he also wrote and directed. Here he is visited by a nurse. In the background images from Bourguiba's life are displayed, including this one showing President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who overthrew Bourguiba in 1987, looking on. February 2015. *Photo: Elizabeth Young.*

During the 2014 election, Béji Caïd Essebsi, the leader of Nidaa Tounes and the ultimately victorious presidential candidate, presented himself not only as Bourguiba's political and ideological heir, but also sought to physically embody Bourguiba, imitating the dead leader's dress and mannerisms throughout the campaign. He opened his presidential campaign in front of Bourguiba's mausoleum and in an announcement for the event he stands with Bourguiba's ghostly image staring over his shoulder.



Figure 6: Campaign advertisement for Essebsi’s presidential campaign launch. November 2, 2014. Essebsi stands next to Bourguiba’s mausoleum in Monastir with a “ghostly” face of Bourguiba hovering behind him. Source: Nida Tounes Facebook page.

While not frequent, I also encountered a number of public homages to Bourguiba made by private individuals. Not surprisingly, two of these were in his hometown of Monastir, where Bourguiba’s face and name are ubiquitous. One was piece of graffiti, labeled “Grand Leader” with Bourguiba’s image, his birthday, and the symbol of the local football club, surrounded by laurels. An individual raises his arms in salute.



Figure 7: Graffiti of Bourguiba in Monastir, Bourguiba’s hometown. A figure waves what are possibly olive branches at a drawing of Bourguiba, the city symbol on Monastir, and Bourguiba’s birthday. The figure may be wearing a hooded sweatshirt, loosely associate with the Arab Spring protests, but it is not clear. The original text in English “Grand Leader” and French “August 3rd” renders the graffiti not just for a local audience, but also for the international community. January 2014. Photo: Elizabeth Young.

Also in Monastir, not far from the train station, is a private memorial, created by a man whose father had worked with Bourguiba, featuring original photos and prints spanning Bourguiba's life.



Figure 8: A private memorial to Bourguiba in Monastir. These photos form a personal memorial by one Tunisian man to Bourguiba's memory, which is also accompanied by a donation box for its upkeep. The photos span Bourguiba's entire life and include official portraits as well as action photos of Bourguiba interacting with Tunisian citizens. Photo: Elizabeth Young, January 2014.

Finally, in downtown Tunis, I found a street vendor selling copies of photographs mounted on hand-painted wood. In addition to movie stars and the Eiffel Tower, he had a large collection of Bourguiba photos spanning his lifetime – as a young lawyer, attending ceremonial events, dressed in religious garb, swimming in the ocean – which he reported to me were good selling items for him.³¹ As I stood, trying to decide which Bourguiba to buy for myself, two

³¹ I bought one of these photos and packed it in an outside pocket of my suitcase when leaving Tunisia along with several books and other items of insignificant monetary value. The Tunis-Carthage Airport has a documented issue with theft from unsecured luggage, and I later discovered that that pocket had been gone through after I checked-in.

elderly men paused next to me to look at the images and one commented simply to the other “Il était un bon homme” (“he was a good man”), a spontaneous acknowledgment of Bourguiba’s legacy.



Figure 9: Photos of Bourguiba for sale in downtown Tunis. March 2015.

These photos, mounted on a wooden backing, were sold along with other travel and celebrity images, however photos of Bourguiba constituted the largest single category. These include photos of Bourguiba as a young man, images from identity documents, Bourguiba’s leisure life, meetings with Tunisians, and Bourguiba fulfilling government duties. Of particular note for this study is the photo of Bourguiba at prayer (top center, Bourguiba is dressed in white religious dress). Photo: Elizabeth Young.

These public acts of commemoration by private individuals weren’t common by any means, and it was rare that Bourguiba was spontaneously brought up in daily conversation. However, they do point to Bourguiba’s enduring legacy, not just as an important figure in Tunisian history, but also a figure who resonates with their lives to the extent that Tunisian

However, the photo of Bourguiba was the only thing taken from the pocket, though I don’t know if this was out of a desire to keep the photo, destroy it, or merely not being able to squeeze it back into the bag.

citizens spend time creating and maintaining public memorials and also buy photographs of Bourguiba as personal items.

Why do Tunisians engage in these public displays of commemoration – books, plays, graffiti, photographs? Bourguiba, like other authoritarian leaders before him, through his project of modernization and promotion of his vision of *Tunisianité*, has become not just a symbol of the nation, but its embodiment. As one scholar describes the Bourguiba’s reform tradition, *Tunisianité*, it is the country’s “central myth” (Hibou 2011: 213). *Tunisianité* offered Tunisians a place of pride in the world and a self-vision of Tunisia as both modern and Muslim, particularly when compared to other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. “Tunisian exceptionalism” both with respect to *Tunisianité* and the Arab Spring is still frequently cited by Tunisians. Bourguiba, as the progenitor of the ideology of *Tunisianité*, has provide a segment of Tunisians, particularly those of the generations who came of age during his independence struggle and early years of the Republic, with a worldview that emphasizes Tunisia’s uniqueness in the world, a way to reconcile Islam with modernity, and also justifications for choices like not wearing the veil or drinking alcohol. Displaying photos of Bourguiba or sitting through a six-hour play, for these Tunisians, is an enactment of Tunisian-ness as much as attending Bastille Day celebrations are for the French.

In understanding Bourguiba’s place in Tunisian national identity it is useful to take a Durkheimian approach to how over time his memory has been treated. While he certainly could also be analyzed as a charismatic leader, I analyze him through a Durkheimian lens for two reasons. First, Weber’s analysis of charisma focuses primarily on leaders during the course of their lifetime, while a Durkheimian approach allows more traction in understanding how a leader may also be memorialized in a community after the death. Second, and more importantly, I

analyze specifically taboos around how Bourguiba is discussed or commemorated in post-revolutionary Tunisia that are more easily analyzed through Durkheim's sacred-profane dichotomy. As the embodiment of the nation, Bourguiba, as previously discussed, is a Durkheimian sacred figure around whom there are certain taboos. In all of the time I was in Tunisia, I never heard or saw anyone actively disparaging Bourguiba as individual, though plenty were quick to criticize Bourguiba's specific policies if asked. This is in contrast to Ben Ali who was universally criticized when discussed. The only negative displays towards Bourguiba, that I am aware of, were two attempts by alleged Salafis in 2012 and 2013 to vandalize his mausoleum in Monastir, one of them reportedly screaming "this is idolatry (*shirk*)" in reference to Bourguiba's Islamic interpretations and the mausoleum built in his honor. However even these acts point to Bourguiba as a powerful symbol of the nation that can be attacked in proxy.

The unwritten taboos around criticizing or insulting Bourguiba as a person, as opposed to his policies extends, to those whom were persecuted under his regime. Ennahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi's response to a reporter when pressed about his views on the re-erection of a statue of Bourguiba in the center of Tunis, embodies this taboo:

Ghannouchi: Yes. Bourguiba is a great personality. You cannot airbrush him out of our history. He guided a national movement which liberated Tunisia. I cannot negate that. It is a reality.

Reporter: So you support the re-erection of the statue?

Ghannouchi: I am not in favour of this statue. When I was in prison Bourguiba wanted to retry me, so that my sentence would be increased from life imprisonment to the death penalty. He wanted to repeat the behaviour of the sultans, but he was deposed within three days. But he has his place in Tunisia's history. In my speech at the opening ceremony of the party conference, I mentioned a number of national leaders and one of them was Bourguiba.³²

³² Rachid Ghannouchi Q&A: Thoughts on Democratic Islam. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/rached-ghannouchi-qa-thoughts-democratic-islam-1636082038>

It can't be determined whether Ghannouchi's comments about Bourguiba are his genuine feelings or a political calculation to not be seen as rejecting a figure many Tunisians revere. However, even if it is the latter, it demonstrates how taboos around Bourguiba, even today, regulate public speech in Tunisia.

Despite Ghannouchi's acceptance of Bourguiba's importance in Tunisian history and a lack of public critique, Bourguiba is a divisive figure and was responsible for exiling, imprisoning, and torturing a significant portion of the population, in particular Tunisian Islamists. By the time of the second elections there was not an active, public process at trying to reconcile these abuses.³³ Additionally, the state, with respect to Bourguiba's legacy, has chosen silence rather than to actively try to historicize him and decontextualize him. I suggest that this is a strategic silence rather than disinterest or passive approval. While Ben Ali's has a clear role as the foil of and antithesis to the newly democratizing Tunisia state, Bourguiba's legacy still remains unclear and it is not apparent that many Tunisians are eager to address it, except for those deeply supportive of Bourguiba, especially given more pressing societal issues such as terrorism and the economy. No new postage stamps have been issued portraying Bourguiba. History textbooks have not been revised since the revolution to address Bourguiba's administration or his legacy (Andrieu 2016). In 2013, the Ministry of Culture opened Bourguiba's palatial home as a museum. However, there are no historical details about Bourguiba's life or interpretation of his legacy. The only posted information details the material and origin of the 1960s-1970s furniture that fills the house, leaving it up to visitor to interpret what they see.

³³ Tunisia launched its Truth and Dignity commission in mid-2014, however, it did not begin collecting testimony until late 2015. Its role is to examine financial and human rights abuses since Tunisia's independence, but the body has remained marred in controversy.

In understanding the success of democratic transitions, I proposed that national re-narrativization could play a role particularly in trying to make national narratives and invocations of collective memory more inclusive. First, non-state actors have very publicly celebrated Bourguiba, while those that suffered under Bourguiba's regime look on. Second, by the time of the 2014 elections, the state had not taken a role, through education or other avenues of trying to reconcile different experiences and understandings of Tunisia's past, and particularly Bourguiba's role in constructing *Tunisianité* and exacerbating social divisions between Bourguibists and Islamists.

While the state's silence and non-state commemorations of Bourguiba did not create social cleavages, neither the state nor other actors have worked to alleviate the strong social divide in Tunisian society. As described in the following chapters the tension and distrust between Bourguibists and Islamists nearly derailed the democratic process in Tunisia, particularly in the summer of 2013. Tunisia did not undergo a significant re-narrativization in the post-revolution period and, while this fact alone did not derail the democratic process, it helped contribute to political instability by not providing a stronger basis for a shared national identity or national cohesion.

Bourguiba as Father of the Nation

Bourguiba joins the pantheon of other "fathers of the nation:" George Washington, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Ho Chi Minh, Kim Il-Sung, and many others. Some of these founders may be consigned to relative, contemporary obscurity, while others may take on a near deified status, quite literally in the case of Kim Il-Sung. Jansen (2007) offers a three-part framework for

their “reputational trajectories” that is useful in considering Bourguiba’s role in post-revolutionary Tunisia.

First, with respect to *salience*, the degree to which the individual is remembered at all in contemporary society, Bourguiba looms large, both figuratively and literally. Statues and busts of Bourguiba are returning to Tunisian public places. Major roads bear his name in nearly every town. His photo is sold and displayed by private citizens on the street. Even for those disliking Bourguiba, no Tunisian would not acknowledge him as the most salient figure in contemporary Tunisia, certainly above any of the current political leaders. While Bourguiba was more marginalized during the Ben Ali era, he was too important to be excluded from it.

Second, ownership: who can claim to be a legitimate heir. As described, Essebsi most clearly claims ownership of Bourguiba’s legacy in post-revolutionary Tunisia and explicitly utilizes that ownership to encourage voters to elect him.

Finally, is a leader’s “valence,” are they viewed nearly universally as positive or negative or neutral. Bourguiba, as described above is a polarizing figure, both do to his authoritarian implementation of his vision of Tunisianité and also his severe repression of political dissidents. Even more so than Ben Ali, he is a polarizing figure. However, as discussed, in Tunisian society only positive valences are expressed publically due to continuing, informal taboos. Here is the area in which there may be the greatest potential change in the future as, with the truth and reconciliation committees more Tunisians are likely to express the negative aspects of Bourguiba’s rule and legacy.

IV. “Guardian of Religion:” Renegotiating the Boundaries of State-Mosque Relations

A second potential avenue for national reimagining is through laws and state institutions. In this section, I examine how the Tunisian Constituent Assembly revised the Tunisian constitution to address the relationship between religion and the state. In contrast to attempts at re-narrativization, on first appearances it appears that the constitution underwent significant changes with respect to the state’s relationship with religion. However, upon further examination, I show that the constitution is another example of continuity rather than change with respect to Bourguiba’s legacy of *Tunisianité*.

Despite the importance of Islam, identity, and *Tunisianité* in Bourguiba’s political platform, these elements figures do not figure prominently in the country’s first constitution, which Bourguiba was instrumental in creating. The preamble of the 1959 constitution urges its citizens to “remain faithful to the teachings of Islam,” but also to the Maghreb, the Arab world, and all those who “struggle to achieve justice and liberty.” Like most Arab-Muslim constitutions, its Article 1 states that Tunisia’s “religion is Islam.” However, unlike many of these other constitutions, it doesn’t mention *shari’a* as being *a* source or *the* source of legislation as is common in many Muslim states. Article 5 reads that “The Republic of Tunisia shall guarantee the inviolability of the human person and freedom of conscience, and defends the free practice of religious beliefs provided this does not disturb public order.” Taken together this reading suggests that while Islam is a defining characteristic of Tunisia, it does not supersede freedom of belief and practice.

However, in an authoritarian state the contents of the constitution matter less than the dictates of the dictator, particularly one who styles himself as Imam of the nation. Bourguiba would demonstrate this in his attempts to regulate religious practice, contrary to the Constitution,

such as forbidding women to wear the *hijab* and punishing Islamists for their religious and political views.

After the 2011 elections, rewriting the constitution became a priority to address a number of issues stemming from the dictatorship: the balance of power between government branches, the functioning of the judiciary, electoral procedures, and the role of religion in the new state. The two articles concerning religion, Article 1 and Article 6, were particularly controversial. In January 2014, two years after beginning the post-revolution constitutional drafting process, Tunisia's legislative body, the National Constituent Assembly (NCA), met to cast the final votes on the constitution article by article.

The decision of whether to revise Article 1 to include a reference to *shari'a* as an inspiration for Tunisia's laws was heavily contested (see Zeghel 2013). Ennahda initially pushed to have *shari'a* referenced in the constitution, which Bourguibists worried would set the precedent for theocratic rulings that ran contrary to freedoms guaranteed elsewhere and precedent during the Bourguiba-Ben Ali era. After several constitutional drafts, it was agreed that Islam would be mentioned in Article 1 as the religion of Tunisia as a sociological fact, but within the context of a secular state, preserving the 1959 wording. Additionally, Ennahda eventually made the concession not to push for a reference to *shari'a* as *the* or even *a* basis for Tunisian law. Finally, Members of Parliament stipulated this article was immutable and could not be amended in future constitutional revisions.

At the final January 4th vote on this article 146 of the 149 voting MPs voted in favor, including all of the Ennahda MPs, signaling a broad consensus on the issue and Ennahda's acceptance that it would not be able to alter this aspect of *Tunisianité* now or in the future. In an amendment that didn't pass proposing that the article would reference the Qur'an and Sunna,

traditions of Mohammad, as principle sources of legislation the majority on Ennahda members either voted against it or abstained despite it better reflecting the party's initial positions. In the final voting on Article 1 we can see both exact continuity in the wording of the law from the Bourguiba era as well as Ennahda's ultimate decision to acquiesce to this wording and not to "reimagine" this law in a new political context, even when a sizeable number of Tunisians, 56% according to the previously cited Pew Study (2012), supported *shari'a* as being a source of legislation.

Even more contentious was Article 6, focusing on the relationship between religion and the state and religious freedom, which was passed and then unprecedentedly re-amended twice in the final days of debate (see Gullali 2014 for an overview history of the debates surrounding the article). The full text of the final version of Article 6 reads:

The state is the guardian of religion (*raa'iya li-ldeen*). It guarantees freedom of conscience and belief, the free exercise of religious practices and the neutrality of mosques and places of worship from all partisan instrumentalization. The state undertakes to disseminate the values of moderation and tolerance and the protection of the sacred, and the prohibition of all violations thereof. It undertakes equally to prohibit and fight against calls for Takfir and the incitement of violence and hatred (translated by Guellali 2014).

After an Islamist MP, unhappy with the initial article, accused a leftist MP of being an "enemy of Islam," NCA members angrily demanded returning to the article and included an amendment to the article prohibiting the practice of *takfir*, naming someone as an apostate.³⁴ In response, a coalition of imams and religious associations protested in front of the Assembly and demanded the NCA remove the prohibition against *takfir* and guarantees of "freedom of consciousness" from the amendment and to replace them with a prohibition against blasphemy.

³⁴ The act of *takfir*, naming someone as an apostate, has particularly severe ramifications as it can be interpreted as permitting and even endorsing their murder. The association between *takfir* and violence was particularly salient in the debates over Article 6.

The NCA returned to Article 6 for a third time, with some Ennahda members proposing an anti-blasphemy clause to “balance” the amendment. The fevered debate over the article resulted in one member of parliament fainting on the Assembly floor while decrying the article and another dying of a heart attack a few hours later, his untimely death ending what promised to be a more protracted debate. Article 6 was finalized without the blasphemy amendment and the entire constitution was passed shortly thereafter.

How has the constitution changed post-revolution? Both Article 6 and its counterpart in the 1959 constitution, Article 5, charge the state with protecting freedom of consciousness and religious practices.³⁵ However, the 2014 constitution goes further, making the state not just the protector of individual citizens’ rights, but of religion itself. As the “guardian of religion,” the state is tasked with protecting places of worship from being used for political ends, promoting messages of tolerance, preventing religion from being used for violence, and protecting “the sacred,” a reference that may remain ambiguous until tested in the courts. At first glance, the 2014 constitution vis-à-vis the 1959 constitution appears to greatly expand the role of the state with respect to its relationship with religion as both a concept and a practice in Tunisia, and it does so *legally*. However, I argue, that this is not a change in the way the state interacts with religious issues, but merely a codification of the status quo that existed under both Bourguiba and Ben Ali. In Bourguiba’s conceptualization of *Tunisianité*, the state, as embodied through him, was most certainly the “guardian of religion” and a promoter of the *Tunisianité* values of both moderation and tolerance. Furthermore, by also examining a portion of Ben Ali’s address on the second anniversary of his coup, one can see a clear conceptual lineage between the

³⁵ The portion of Article 5 concerning religion reads: “The Republic of Tunisia shall guarantee the inviolability of the human person and freedom of conscience, and defends the free practice of religious beliefs provided this does not disturb public order” (1959).

Bourguiba and Ben Ali’s conceptualization of *Tunisianité* and Article 6 of the 2014 constitution, emphasis added to note points of commonality:

Ben Ali 1989 (cited in McCarthy 2014)	2014 Constitution, Article 6
<p>There is no other defender of the religion of the Tunisians than the State, the State of all Tunisians, which seeks to preserve and protect the faith, to manage religious affairs, in faithfulness to its sublime teachings.</p>	<p>The state is the guardian of religion. It guarantees freedom of conscience and belief, the free exercise of religious practices and the neutrality of mosques and places of worship from all partisan instrumentalization. The state undertakes to disseminate the values of moderation and tolerance and the protection of the sacred, and the prohibition of all violations thereof. It undertakes equally to prohibit and fight against calls for <i>takfir</i> and the incitement of violence and hatred.</p>

Table 1: Comparison of state’s relationship to religion, 1989 and 2014.

While Ben Ali’s speech does not mention freedoms of consciousness or religion, the 1959 constitution does. What is new and novel about the 2014 constitution is the eleventh-hour addition about *takfirism* and violence, issues which can be traced not only to the increased profile of Salafism in Tunisia, in which non-Salafis were frequently accused of being apostates, but also the specific, contingent events of MP’s arguments with one another.

As with Article 1, Article 6 represents a continuity and a reaffirmation of Bourguiba’s vision of *Tunisianité* and a decision on the part of the Constituent National Assembly not to reimagine how Tunisia’s laws could differently reflect the Tunisian population, many of whom support a reference to *shari’a*. However, despite this lack of national reimagining, there are two reasons why it has not yet seemed a threat to Tunisia’s democratic transition. First, while Ennahda did not win on its initial position concerning the laws with respect to *shari’a* and blasphemy, it did ultimately agree to them in a democratic process which gives Ennahda some ownership in the amendments. Second, Article 6 is written in such a way that is vague and open to interpretation. For example, it is unclear what the exact legal ramifications are of the state

being declared the legal “guardian of religion” and “protector of the sacred” and how these designations may play out in practice, for example, possibly being used to justify blasphemy cases.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an overview of how *Tunisianité* was at the heart of Bourguiba’s national project and how he became the embodiment of it. Despite the potential of the revolution as an event to change structures, *Tunisianité*, as a cultural schema, has proven resilient in many areas, including collective memory and the constitution. Bourguiba’s legacy, including *Tunisianité*, has yet to be critically interrogated, especially by the state, and the 2014 constitutional revisions concerning religion are reflective of the vision of state-religious relations advocated by Bourguiba and Ben Ali, though in practice there is much more religious freedom for dissenters such as Islamists in post-revolution Tunisia.

In particular, the failure to critically reexamine Bourguiba, as a historical figure and as a symbol of *Tunisianité*, was a potential missed opportunity to try to bridge the divide between the two largest segments of the Tunisian population, Bourguibists and Islamists, and attempt to avert societal tensions over competing visions of the nation. The state, by the time of the 2014 elections, had avoided taking a position on Bourguiba’s legacy (e.g. textbooks, documentation in Museums, including on postage stamps/money, etc.). However, for those who suffered under Bourguiba both the silence and the lack of transitional justice had the potential to be divisive.

While this chapter has shown the durability of *Tunisianité* as an organizing structure in Tunisian society, the final discussion on the Constitution does point to an important structural change with respect to the role that modes of power play in Sewell’s theory of structural change.

Ennahda, through their electoral victories, gained a plurality of parliamentary seats and was able, for the first time, to voice opinions on the laws of Tunisia. While, primarily due to concerns over existential threats to Tunisian democracy, they chose not to significantly challenge the schema of Tunisianité, they did, by voting on the constitution, particularly Articles 1 & 6, alongside their political opposition. In doing so, Ennahda further helped to institutionalize and strengthen Tunisia's democratic transition by adding its voice of authority and political legitimacy to this version of the constitution.

CHAPTER 3 Crises of Faith: “Old” Salafism in “New” Tunisia

"I talked to them in the name of the law, they reply in the name of God.

*There are two visions of the world."*³⁶

- Habib Kazdaghli, Dean of Manouba University’s Faculty of Letters, Arts & Humanities on the *niqab sit-in*

This chapter addresses a third potential means of national reimagining: balancing the democratic precepts of pluralism with national specificity. Linz and Stepan point to the often-competing logics between nation-states that value homogeneity and democracies that prioritize pluralism (1996). As they describe, nation-states benefit from promoting national symbols, languages, education, and religions that increase an individual’s association with the nation, while in democracies there is a prioritization of equal rights for all citizens, especially taking into account minorities. The tension between nation and democracy is particularly acute for states transitioning from authoritarianism regimes, which used nationalism as a form of social control, to democracies.

The previous chapter examined how the concept of Tunisianité was addressed (or not addressed) and rearticulated through state mechanisms, such as the commemoration of Habib Bourguiba and the relationship between religion and the state in the constitution. This chapter

³⁶ “Tunisian students on hunger strike over right to wear niqab in class.”
<https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/tunisian-students-on-hunger-strike-over-right-to-wear-niqab-in-class-1.353565>

looks at disputes over religious beliefs and practice in public life, particular between Bourguibists and Salafis. If the previous chapter emphasized either continuity or rearticulations of previous repertoires of Islam and the state, especially as articulated through *Tunisianité*, then this chapter focuses on disjunctures, particularly in daily, public life. It seeks to further explain the social dislocation occurring in Tunisia following the revolution and highlights a key challenge of democratic transitions: how to accommodate pluralism and also promote national unity. More so than any of the other two forms of reimagining, I argue that the tension over pluralism and national identity, the perception “two worlds” that Dean Habib Kazdaghli describes in this chapter’s epigraph, nearly drove Tunisia to the brink of democratic backsliding in the second half of 2013 following opposition leader Mohammed Brahmī’s death.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Bourguiba and Ben Ali utilized the concept of *Tunisianité* to help legitimate their regimes. They first used state mechanisms to promote an interpretation of national Islam seen as authentic and natural to Tunisia with other interpretations and practices being “othered,” which effectively marginalized Islamists. Acts that elsewhere might be seen as forms of individual piety, such as wearing the *hijab* became acts of political resistance and rejection of the regime. Therefore, in the post-revolutionary landscape, Tunisians had to grapple with first, how practices, such as wearing the *hijab* fit into Tunisian national identity when it had long been presented as an anathema to it, and second, how to understand and accommodate different individual choices, as well as how the state should be involved in this pluralistic endeavor.

At the same time Tunisians were confronted with trying to negotiate a cohesive national unity to rectify divisions exacerbated during the dictatorship, they were also confronted with the increasing public presence of a small, but vocal minority of Salafists. Bourguibists were

repulsed the most by Salafi practices, though not always distinguishing between Salafis and Islamists(s), and Salafists also tended to object to key tenants of liberal democracies, such as toleration of differing lifestyles and viewpoints. Additionally, in its most extreme forms, jihadi-Salafism rejects the concept of a democratic, nation-state, willing to resort to violence to impose a theocratic state. In this environment Tunisians had to negotiate not only the tensions between national identity and pluralism, but also simultaneously navigate an existential threat to the Tunisian state and nation.

This chapter examines how the tension Linz and Stepan highlight was negotiated, and not negotiated, particularly in the two years immediately following the revolution. After providing a very brief overview of Salafism in Tunisia, it turns to examine the tension between national unity and pluralism in three arenas. First, it explores the *hijab* and the *niqab* as forms of “everyday nationhood” through the lens of a dispute over the *niqab* at Manouba University in Tunis in order to highlight the difficulties faced in accommodating competing lifestyles following the revolution. Then, it turns to the sphere of cultural production, looking at both Salafi protests against art and also how artists created art to critique Salafism. In doing so, it points to a lack of societal empathy and how Salafis, of all varieties, came to be viewed as an existential national threat. Finally, it discusses violent, jihadi-Salafism and how it has influenced public debates about Salafism more broadly in Tunisia. It concludes by arguing that it was finally Ennahda’s rejection of jihadi-Salafism and distancing from Salafism more generally that helped to prevent democratic backsliding in 2013 and for Tunisia to move forward with finalizing the constitution and holding elections the following year.

I. Salafism and Tunisia

Salafism along with other “legalistic-literalist” fundamentalist movements “claim[s] to restore social institutions according to the letter and law of the ancient community” in response to perceived social crises (Riesebrodt 2000: 272). For Salafists, their “idealized” reference frame is the early Muslim community, specifically the Prophet Mohammed’s generation and the subsequent two generations as documented in the Qur’an and *hadith* literature. The Arabic term *salaf* literally translates as “predecessors” and contemporary Salafis seek to emulate the theological “purity” of these early Muslims in as many spheres of life as possible, ranging from sleeping habits to reestablishing the Islamic caliphate. Salafists reject what they see as subsequent centuries of theological and legal interpretation (*ijtihad*). Contemporary Salafism arose from a nineteenth century scholarly movement within Islam attempting to understand the religion vis-à-vis both modernity and European colonialism. In particular Salafis reject what they see as any contestation to the unity of God (*tawhid*), meaning that they typically condemn the worship of saints or celebration of Mohammed’s birthday (*al-Mawlid*), and, in some cases, practice excommunication (*takfir*) of unbelievers (*kuffar*) and those they view as apostates (Wagemakers 2016).

As described below, Salafism spans a spectrum ranging from a disapproval of non-Salafi practices and lifestyles to outright violent attempts to impose their own interpretations of Islam and the world. Scholars generally understand Salafism to have three primary manifestations – quietist, political, and jihadist – distinguished by their method (*manhaj*) of interacting with broader society and politics (Wiktorowicz 2006, Wagemakers 2016 & 2017). The largest group, quietist Salafis, also called scripturalists or purists, avoid political engagement such as demonstrating, voting, or debates, believing that political action causes social discord (*fitna*).

Instead they believe that through personal piety, education, and missionary work, rather through direct political intervention, society will gradually and organically evolve to accept an Islamic state. In contrast, political Salafists actively engage in politics and public demonstrations to bring about social, legal, and political changes conforming to their religious convictions. Finally, jihadi-Salafis see a duty to violently expand and protect the lands of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) from both non-Muslims and apostate Muslim, as carried out by al-Qaeda, the Islamic States, and other contemporary violent extremist movements. Muslims typically distinguish between two types of *jihad* (“struggle”): the “greater *jihad*” a personal “struggle” to live a moral, religious life, and the “lesser *jihad*”, a military struggle to defend Islam. The terminology jihadi-Salafi only invokes the latter of these two meanings. (Wagemakers 2016)

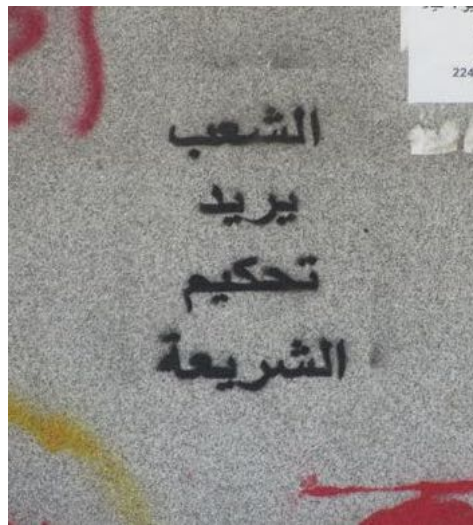


Figure 10: Graffiti in Bardo tram station. Tunis, July 2013.

It reads “The people want Shari’a rule,” a call for a theocratic state, likely painted by a Salafist. Produced from a stencil, I saw this graffiti at multiple locations in Tunis. Photo: Elizabeth Young.

Many social commentators, and even some scholars, have presented Salafism as a “foreign import” to Tunisia from the Gulf states, which is inaccurate (Marks 2013, Merone 2013, Pargeter 2012, Torelli 2017). The Salafist movement first started to gain followers as a more conservative and fundamentalist breakaway from the MTI, Ennahda’s precursor, in the

1980s. Due to Bourguiba and Ben Ali's control of religious expression, though, Salafism was largely hidden from the public sphere and there was little violent jihadi Salafism especially compared to the rest of the region (Pargeter 2012). However, numbers began growing by the new millennium. One potentially credible explanation argues that Salafism grew in the absence of conservative Tunisian religious leaders, who had either been imprisoned or forced into exile (Ayari 2013). Lacking Tunisian religious leaders who had not been selected by the dictatorship, youth were attracted to Salafism both by the spread of Salafi satellite TV stations from Saudi Arabia and due to concerns over the West's War on Terror, a perceived attack on Islam.

Following the revolution, Salafists were able to preach in public for the first time and actively recruit new members. Three small Salafi political parties formed and competed in the 2014 elections, though winning a fraction of a percent of the votes and no seats. Additionally, Salafi-jihadist attack on the security forces, particularly along the Algerian border, became increasingly prevalent, a phenomenon that I return to at the end of this chapter.

Before examining how Salafism has impacted discourses over Tunisian national identity, it is important to also problematize the term itself. Not all those who practice what scholars consider Salafism identify themselves as such, partially due to the term's recent associations with terrorism (Wagemakers 2016). Additionally, some object to the use of "Salafi" because it suggests there are different sects of Islam. During a conversation, a representative of a Tunisian Salafi organization rejected the notion that he was a Salafi, stating that he was a Muslim and rejected that there were multiple, legitimate interpretations of Islam. The terms "Salafi" and "Salafist" are commonly used in the Tunisian press in ways that would be familiar to scholars of Islam, particularly when describing public protests or violent events. However, the press' use of the term should not be uncritically accepted as fact since the designation frequently involves the

journalist interpreting motivations for a particular action³⁷, which may be contrary to how the actor would justify his or own actions, just as someone in the United States might object to being labelled as “alt-right.” In the Tunisian press “Salafist” is sometimes used in quotation marks, indicating an unverified assumption.³⁸ Additionally, some Islamists(s), who may agree with Salafists on particular issues but not their broader worldview, may be inaccurately labeled, by both the press and scholars, as Salafis. While problematic, Salafism remains a useful category of analysis, both because of its accuracy in reflecting empirical realities and also interrogating when and in what contexts the term.

Before turning to analyze how Tunisians dealt with the challenges of pluralism, I provide a short background of the societal frictions that had grown in Tunisia following the revolution in order to better situate the discussion in this chapter. The tension in Tunisia was palpable during the summer of 2013. What had been a general sense of possibility and pride following Ben Ali’s departure two years prior, had given way to frustration and increasingly fear for the future. The second parliamentary elections, legally mandated to occur one year after the first, by October 2012, had been delayed until June 2013. However, when I arrived in Tunisia at the beginning of that month they had been postponed yet again as there was no end in-sight to the drafting of the new constitution, a pre-requisite for any election. Many Tunisians were frustrated not only with the government’s slow pace at reforms but also at what many Tunisians saw as a failure to fulfill the promises of the revolution to increase their quality life.

³⁷ For example, the Tunisian press labeled both of the Bourguiba mausoleum attackers mentioned in the previous chapter as “Salafi,” but no additional support for this attribution was given.

³⁸ Additionally, it is increasingly common to see, particularly in French-language press, the term “takfiriste” (one who declares others to be nonbelievers or apostates) used as a synonym for Salafi.

Many of the most contentious changes centered around the role of religion and religious expression in public life. For Islamists, the post-revolution period provided freedoms that had previously been unimaginable, including the ability to freely practice religion, and, particularly for Salafi orientations, to openly criticize the practices of their less conservative compatriots. However, there also was a frequent tension with Islamists being able to exercise their newly won freedom of expression while balancing it against other's same freedom of expression and practice, particularly when they found the later blasphemous.

For Bourguibists, many hadn't encountered religious practices other than Tunisianité to any significant degree given state censorship and the imprisonment of dissidents. The revolution however, revealed a side of Tunisia that had been hidden and repressed: there were substantial numbers of their fellow citizens – almost half according to the Pew Forum surveys (2012, 2013) – who conceptualized Islam and its role in public life in radically different ways from them. Suddenly Bourguibists had to justify aspects of their life ranging from dress to cultural consumption that they had previously taken for granted as being “Tunisian.”



Figure 11: Graffiti in Sfax, January 2014.

The graffiti reads: “I am not an infidel, I am not an atheist,” highlighting concerns over charges of takfirism (apostasy) and blasphemy. *Photo:* Elizabeth Young.

Furthermore, there were increasing security concerns as Salafi-jihadist terrorist attacks, primarily targeting the police and military, began occurring across the country, particularly on the porous Algerian border. Terrorist attacks had been rare during the dictatorships and those that happened had been blamed on Ennahda and used by the dictatorships as another mechanism to shore up popular support and to present the government as the only thing separating the country from dangerous Islamist terrorists. Bourguibists blamed the increase in attacks on what they saw as Ennahda’s failure to actively pursue terrorists who they also viewed as not so different from Ennahda itself. In the minds of many Tunisians, particularly those with Bourguibist views on Islam and the nation, there was little meaningful distinction between Salafists and other Islamists_(s), such as Ennahda supporters.

II. Veiling and Everyday Nationhood

While the previous chapter focused on ways in which the Tunisian state has sought to define Tunisian national identity, this chapter examines the interaction between top-down and bottom-up forms of nationalism (Hobsbawm 1992), specifically veiling. In post-revolution Tunisia, there were conservative challenges to everyday life ranging from dress to eating during fasting hours of Ramadan. In their work on everyday nationhood, popular expressions of nationhood, Fox & Miller-Idriss layout four ways in which nationhood can be created and reproduced in everyday life: conversations, decisions, symbols, and consumption (2008). This section focuses on the *hijab* and the *niqab* – as both a decision to wear or not wear and as a potent symbol of identity in Tunisia – as a form of everyday nationhood (Brubaker, et al. 2006, Edensor 2002, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008).

Women's bodies – the spaces they occupy, the clothes they wear, the activities in which they participate – have long been the battlegrounds on which societal disagreements have been waged on a diverse array of topics, including gender equality, immigration, integration, the role of religion in public life, and geopolitics.³⁹ Debates over Muslim women's dress – the *hijab*, the *niqab*, and recently the *burkini* – have been particularly polemic in both majority and non-majority Muslim countries.

Keeping with this trend, women were at the forefront of Bourguiba's nationalist project, not as individuals or as a group, but rather as a symbol of *Tunisianité*. Since Tunisia's independence, Tunisian women have shared far more legal rights with their male co-citizens than

³⁹ Prior to and after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan it wasn't uncommon to hear the action justified, not just as a means to fight terrorism, but also as a way to liberate burka-clad women from the Taliban, paying particular attention to the trope of liberation through fashion (See for example, Stabile & Kumar 2005).

in other Muslim countries.⁴⁰ Bourguiba took so much pride in his efforts to modernize Tunisian society with respect to women's rights that he self-styled himself "the liberator of women," and he used this "regime feminism" (Charrad 2001) as a partial justification for his authoritarian rule.

Bourguiba particularly used the *hijab*, which he described as an "odious rag," as symbol of backwardness. In 1981, he formally banned religious dress, primarily the *hijab*, in public institutions, including primary and secondary schools, later extended to universities. While the law was laxly enforced during Bourguiba's rule, Ben Ali enforced it sometimes ruthlessly, including police interrogations of veiled women, forcibly removing veils, and suspending students wearing the veil (Woolf 2017).⁴¹

One of the most immediately visible consequences of the revolution, was a dramatic increase in the number of women wearing the *hijab*. In the absence of state regulation, wearing the *hijab* became a viable choice for Tunisian women, albeit one that had been conditioned by more than half-a-century of state socialization through *Tunisianité*. In this post-revolution atmosphere, the *hijab* became an expression of everyday nationhood, both as a decision to wear or not wear it. Women, by wearing the *hijab* could reject Bourguibist constructions of *Tunisianité*, which pitted veiled women as antithetical to Tunisian national identity, and present alternative forms of national identity vis-à-vis the *hijab*.

⁴⁰ However, there are many legal areas, and far more social areas, in which equality has not been achieved. For example, it wasn't until October 2017 that Muslim, Tunisian women were allowed to marry non-Muslim men even though Muslim Tunisian men were free to marry non-Muslim women, a prohibition with roots in Islamic law.

⁴¹ One Tunisian acquaintance recounted to me in the mid-2000s of being barred from her high school by the principal for wearing the *hijab*, climbing over the fence, and sneaking into her classes where her teachers didn't mind. After the principal discovered this he brought a dog onto the school ground to prevent her from entering the school grounds.

While the veil was not an uncommon sight in Tunisia, even prior to the revolution,⁴² the *niqab* was only associated with female visitors from the conservative Gulf states. In Tunisia, the *niqab* had strong associations with Salafism and, consequently, as being foreign to Tunisia. Therefore, the decision to wear the *niqab* was not only a rejection of Bourguibist Tunisianité, but also became a powerful symbol, empowering for Salafis and terrifying for Bourguibists, in the post-revolution state.

Immediately prior to the 2011 elections, a woman wearing the full-face *niqab* was refused entry to a public university due to a ban on the *niqab*, resulting in a protest between supporters and security forces (Murphy 2013). However, it was the *niqab* incident two months later at Manouba University just outside Tunis that received extensive national and international press coverage and brought the issue of the *niqab* to the forefronts of debates over what post-revolution Tunisia would look like.

In November 2011, two female Manouba undergraduate students asked to wear the *niqab* during exams and to have a prayer room on campus. The administration refused, citing concerns over pedagogy – arguing that a teacher could not effectively teach someone whose face they could not see – and security – a student could impersonate another student during exams. The administration proposed that students could wear the *niqab* on campus, but *not* in classrooms or during exams, a compromise that would be unacceptable to anyone who considered wearing the *niqab* a religious obligation.⁴³ Afterwards, over fifty young, male and female Salafists, some

⁴² This does not mean, however, that the *hijab* was absent from Tunisian public life, despite laws against it. In the 2000s there was an increase in public piety, particularly as evidenced by the number of women wearing headscarves, which has been viewed not only as a means of opposition to the dictatorship, but also an expression of Muslim rather than Western identities (Woolf 2017).

⁴³ At Tunis University, the same issue arose with the administration allowing students to take their exams wearing the *niqab*, but only in a separate room with only blind and visually impaired students. In this instance, the administration response clearly indicates that pedagogy and security were not the primary issues for the *niqab* policy, but rather having veiled women where they could not be publicly seen.

students at other universities, occupied a portion on the administration building, refusing to leave until their demands had been met.

Counter-protests at the Ministry of Education called for the government to intervene and eject those participating in the sit-in and to condemn their verbal harassment of faculty and administrators. In the words of Amel Gramel, a Manouba lecturer in Gender and Islamic Studies, they blamed Ennahda for “creat[ing]” an environment where these people feel comfortable imposing their will on us” (Marks 2012), linking the actions of Ennahda with Salafism, a tendency that I point to throughout this chapter. In response, the university closed and students were unable to take their final exams. The protests, which included a hunger strike, finally ended after a protestor climbed the university flagpole and replaced the Tunisian flag with the black Salafist flag, stirring both national outrage at the action and widespread praise, including from the parliament, for a female student who attempted to restore the Tunisian flag.

While the sit-in ended in the spring of 2012, the controversy remained in the public sphere for yet another year as the Dean of Manouba’s University Faculty of Letters, Arts and Humanities, Habib Kazdaghli, was charged with assaulting a female protestor who, along with another protestor, allegedly broke into and ransacked his offices. Kazdaghli fought the charges and a year later was found innocent. In a surprise decision, the student whom he was accused of assaulting was convicted of breaking into his office.⁴⁴

The previous chapter concluded by discussing Article 6 of the constitution, which established the state as “the guardian or religion” and responsible for “guarantee[ing] freedom of conscience and belief [and] the free exercise of religious practices,” an explicit mandate for

⁴⁴ “Dean Acquitted of Assaulting Veiled Student.” <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/05/02/dean-acquitted-of-assaulting-veiled-student/>

religious pluralism. However, as described with the Manouba sit-ins, enacting pluralism, especially when it goes against long held practices of *Tunisianité* is socially divisive. The Manouba case illustrates the extent to which wearing an item of clothing can disrupt large portions of not just a university but also a country, resulting in the university shut-down, involvement on the part of government legislators, protests, and multiple court cases.

It also illustrates the inherent tension between the national specificity of *Tunisianité* and democratic freedoms, such as personal freedom of expression. For Amel Gramel, the lecturer previously quoted, the women wearing the *niqab* were “imposing their will on us.” However, for one of the female students protesting to wear the *niqab* in class, the situation is not one of imposition, but the opposite. As she described “every girl has the liberty to wear whatever she wants” (in Marks 2012).

This is not a tension unique to Tunisia and debates and regulations over the *niqab* have occurred in numerous other countries, such as France and Belgium. Two things make the issue particularly divisive in the Tunisian case that are relevant for this dissertation. First, the *niqab* has become a potent symbol of rejection of Tunisian national identity in the tradition of Bourguiba. In the French case, it is also argued that wearing the *niqab* is contrary to French national identity resting on *laïcité*. However, the difference in Tunisia, and what makes the issue so explosive, is that both sides, Salafists and Bourguibists, lay claim to authentic, religious interpretation over the *niqab* as either religious duty, choice, or anathema.

Second, disagreements over acceptable levels of pluralism are more difficult for Tunisia as a transitioning democracy because, both at the time of the incident, and continuing today, Tunisia is in the process of reforming institutions such as the police and the courts. As discussed later in this chapter and the next, post-revolution Tunisia experienced multiple blasphemy cases.

Not only were the legal implications significant, but these cases were highly polarizing. For Islamists, they were examples of the state acting as the “guardian of religion,” protecting Islamic morality. However, for Bourguibists it represented what Bourguiba and Ben Ali had long warned against: an encroaching, fundamentalist, theocratic state that was facilitated through democratization.

As I describe in the final part of this chapter, these tensions between Islamists and Bourguibist, heightened by a perceived “culture war” over how to deal with pluralism after the revolution, was a prime contributing factor to the political stalemate and near backsliding of Tunisian democratic institutions that occurred during the second half of 2013.

III. Cultural Production and Protest

In this section, I expand upon issues of pluralism that were also brought up in the Manouba case: namely a failure for Salafists and Bourguibists to see themselves as members of a single nation by examining two sites of artistic and cultural production. The artistic sphere has long been a site of political and social contestation. “Aesthetic pleasure” from music, theatre, cinema, and the visual arts is a frequent target of fundamentalist religions and governments (Bayat 2007a, Otterbeck 2008, Steiner 1995). In the words of one Iranian cleric, “The most dangerous thing that threatens humanity is for men to forget devotion to God, to establish cultural centers instead of mosques and charges, and to be driven by film and art rather than prayer and supplication” (Bayat 2007: 436-7). Even more polemic is when the art involves religious subjects, such as the Danish Jyllands-Posten cartoons of Mohammed or Martin Scorsese’s *Last Temptation of Christ*.

In the immediate wake of the Tunisian Revolution, challenges to artistic production were some of the most prominent conflicts within Tunisian society, frequently spilling over into destruction of property or violence as different factions debated the boundaries between art and blasphemy. In this section, I examine two ways in which art has been instrumental in debates over Tunisian national identity. First, I explore a Salafi protest over an art exhibition to demonstrate a lack of empathy emerging between segments of Tunisian society. I then turn to an example of how art, particularly the play *Tsunami*, has been created to respond to the increased presence of Salafism in Tunisia. Namely, I show that not only have Salafis been “othered,” but also portrayed as existential enemies of Tunisian democracy.

In June 2012, the *Printemps des Arts* (Springtime of the Arts) exhibition opened to the public in La Marsa, a popular seaside community outside of the capital.⁴⁵ Given the events of the previous year, particularly Ennahda’s election, it is not surprising that many of the pieces exhibited interrogated conservative expressions of religion, frequently featuring veiled women, bearded men, black-clad “Salafis,” and other religiously suggestive imagery:

- A life-size boxing ring with punching bags depicting the faces of three women, their hair wrapped around them like a *hijab* each saying, “I am Christian”, “I am Jewish,” or “I am Tunisian”;
- The torsos of two veiled women rising from the floor, surrounded by stones, suggesting that they were about to be subjected to a public stoning;
- A trail of ants emerging from a child’s backpack to spell out “God be praised”;
- A series of posters for the “République Islāmique de Tunisie” playing on the idea of both a secular (laïc) and Islamist state. One poster featured Darth Vader saying, “Don’t vote for the Dark Side (a not so “veiled” reference to voting for black-clad Salafists, as well as a moral condemnation);
- A painting of a blindfolded, naked woman, holding a bowl of couscous over her genitals, surrounded by menacing black-clad figures.

⁴⁵ For a description of the events see “Artworks and Property Vandalized During A Night of Tension in Tunis” <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/06/11/artworks-and-property-vandalized-during-a-night-of-tension-in-tunis/> For photos of some of the artwork see: http://www.lemonde.fr/international/portfolio/2012/06/14/exposition-le-printemps-des-arts-2012-a-la-marsa-en-tunisie_1718066_3210.html

According to reports, instigators charged that the art exhibition was blasphemous, and at the close of the exhibition, several allegedly Salafi demonstrators came to complain and were turned away by the police. Later that evening, a larger gathering formed and protestors broke into the exhibition space burning and destroying what they deemed offensive pieces. Among the graffiti left behind, one read “with the authorization of the Ministry of Culture, God’s prophet is humiliated.” Eighty-six “Salafis” were arrested that evening, some in response to violence elsewhere in the Tunis metropolitan area.

What angered artists and those that sided with the artists as much as the vandalism was the government’s response. Ennahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi condemned the destruction of property, but also criticized the artists’ “attacks on the beliefs of Tunisians” and the need to “protect sacred symbols.”⁴⁶ Minister of Culture Mehdi Mabrouk condemned the artists’ work and two of the artists were charged with violating moral standards, though both cases were reversed three months later following public and international protest (Tripp 2016).

The attack and protest on *Printemps des Arts*, was not an isolated incident of Salafists protesting cultural production. While the Salafi attacks and protest worried many Bourguibist Tunisians, even more worrisome was the Ennahda-led government’s decision to either remain silent or to side, at least initially, with the Salafists. These incidents were frequently litigated in court, often with charges of blasphemy or disrupting the public order and morality. While the court cases were highly public, in many of them – Manouba University, *Persepolis*, *Printemps des Arts* and others – the charges were almost always later dropped or convictions overturned upon appeal.

⁴⁶ “Tunisia’s embattled artists speak out.”
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/06/2012615111819112421.html>

There are two important observations from the Salafi protests against artistic production that are important for understanding how efforts at pluralism can impact the success of democratic transitions. First, as with the Manouba protest, is a lack of empathy or attempt at understanding on the other sides' position, setting up a zero-sum approach to dealing with cultural conflicts. For the Salafi protestors, the response to art, which they viewed as potentially blasphemous was to destroy it rather than to critique it, stifling freedom of speech.⁴⁷ On the other hand, the artists created intentionally provocative pieces – showing veiled women being stoned and *Salafists* as menacing figures – but did not acknowledge that Salafis portrayed in these art works may have objections to them, pointing rather to the importance of freedom of expression as a justification for any art.^{48 49}

The tension between freedom of expression and offending cultural or political sensitivities is not particular to Tunisia. However, it is potentially disruptive in Tunisia in the wake of the revolution, which promised greater individual freedoms and liberties for Tunisian citizens. In this case, neither side acknowledges the legitimacy of the other.

⁴⁷ The same approach occurred in the *Persepolis* case when they chose to fire bomb the home of the TV station owner.

⁴⁸ For example, one of the artists, when asked whether any of their works could be seen as blasphemous replies “Absolutely not, there were no provocations from the artists” and goes onto suggest that one of the pieces, ants spelling out the name of God should be seen as the opposite of blasphemy: “Ants are noble creatures in our religion and are even mentioned in the Quran” cited in “Tunisia’s embattled artists speak out.”

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/06/2012615111819112421.html>.

In a similar case, at a 2012 Tunisian fashion show, a designer had models wearing religiously inspired clothing. One model wore a gauzy veil, suggestive of religious veils, with her breasts covered only by stickers and a male model wearing a *niqab*, a female clothing article, which he ripped off at the end of the show. However, the designer maintained that it was not a political statement, but merely freedom of expression. “On doit s’engager”- Fashion Design in the New Tunisia” <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/04/16/on-doit-sengager-fashion-design-in-the-new-tunisia/> and “Mode Special Fashion Week de Tunis 2012 AHMED TALFIT” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKYkAo36uYI>.

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Second, and more importantly, the Tunisian state was caught in the middle of these cultural debates. In the view of Salafis, the government, by funding the art exhibition and condemning the violent response, was promoting a position they view as blasphemous. However, for the artists the government was violating their freedom of expression by charging the artists with blasphemy. The state risks alienating one side or another if it makes a firm decision on blasphemy or freedom of expression, and it alienates both if it attempts a middle ground, as in the case of *Printemps des Arts*, highlighting the tenuous process of pluralization.

I now turn to how artists responded to the increased, visible and vocal Salafi presence in Tunisia. In doing so I emphasize that there was not just a lack of empathy between different sides, but also a feeling, on the part of Bourguibists, that the Salafis represented an existential threat to the nation.

During the summer of 2013, three major TV channels broadcast Ramadan TV shows – *Yawmiyet Imraa* (“Diary of a Woman”), *Njoum Ellil* (“Stars of the Night”), and *Layem* (“The Days”) – that addressed violent religious extremism or conversion to Salafism.⁵⁰ Conversion to Salafism at this time is becoming an increasingly serious issue as Tunisian Salafists were leaving to fight against Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Airing nightly during the month of Ramadan, after the breaking of the fast, Ramadan TV shows, filmed in Tunisian dialect, have some of the highest ratings of the year given that nearly the entire country is sitting in front of their TVs, breaking their fast, in effect creating an imagined community through the simultaneous practice of watching the same TV show (Anderson 1991).

Concerns over Salafism were also featured prominently the same summer at the staging of the play *Tsunami* at the International Festival of Carthage, a yearly, summertime music and

⁵⁰ “Salafists: Tunisia’s Newest TV Stars.” <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/07/24/religious-characters-a-new-addition-to-tunisian-ramadan-tv-shows/>

theatre festival held in the ruins of the Carthage amphitheater. The Tunisian playwrights Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi, married collaborators, authored plays that critiqued not only Islamic fundamentalism but also the authoritarian regime of Tunisia, most notably in their “Trilogy of Future Memory:” *Khamsoun* (2006), *Amnesia* (2010), and *Tsunami* (2013). *Tsunami* was written in direct response to the political and societal changes that emerged after the revolution with Baccar and Jaïbi highlighting the attacks on art and artists within Tunisia, including *Printemps des Arts*, as a source of inspiration for writing the play (Carlson 2014).

The titular tsunami is a metaphor for the rise of Islamist fundamentalism in Tunisia following the revolution in the near, dystopian future of 2015. In the closing passages, a child dreams of Tunisia’s future: “There is Tunisia... / That beautiful pregnant woman / with her generous breasts... / slowly, slowly disappearing from the map... / As the immense black wave swept over her...” (264). Here Tunisia is portrayed as a naked woman who has been covered up by “black wave,” an illusion to both the black Salafist flag and the black *niqabs* worn by Salafi women.

Tsunami follows Hayet, a retired professor, who is a stand-in for Bourguibist religious sensibilities: she studiously objects to religious fundamentalism, reads and cherishes her father’s Qur’an, and does not hold back on her disdain for the *niqab*.⁵¹ Hayet, played by Baccar herself, grew complacent after the revolution and failed to oppose the growing Islamist influence (within the play there appears to be no nuanced distinction between Islamist(s) and Salafist). However, she is unwittingly thrust from her quiet life into action, trying unsuccessfully to prevent an Islamist terrorist attack. The play features the assassination of a lawyer trying to prevent the attack (a stand-in for the opposition leader Chokri Belïd assassinated earlier that year), and ends

⁵¹ When a niqab-wearing Salafist chides her to wear one, Hayet rips the woman’s niqab off, defiantly proclaiming herself “Daughter and mother of unveiled women / I have lived and will die unveiled” (220).

with the Islamist government instituting a state of emergency, suspending all individual freedoms and closing universities, museums, theatres, cafes, and sports.

The play, rather unobtrusively, offers a dystopian vision of Tunisia and a sharp critique of recent events following the revolution. Hayet echoes audience member's frustrations that the sacrifices for the revolution resulted in a rise of Salafism: "We have exposed our bodies to bullets / for Liberty, Dignity and Justice... / and not over questions of identity... / trafficking in faith... / or a return to the darkness of the Middle Ages" (253-4).⁵²

The play represents an uncompromising critique of the rise of Islamism in post-revolution Tunisia. The Islamist characters of Baccar and Jaïbi's play are not merely Islamist who wear the *hijab*, or Salafis who burn artwork; they are all violent, anti-democratic Salafi-jihadists. Furthermore, the Islamist characters are not nuanced in ideology or practice, each is an antagonist, willing to kill anyone, even family members, who get in their way.

It is this view of all Islamists as existential threats to the Tunisian nation-state that reverberated in Tunisia during the summer of 2013 and the play seemed prescient of events to come. In an sad irony, the play was staged at the Carthage International Festival of Carthage on July 16, 2013, just nine days before Mohamed Brahmi was assassinated on Republic Day.⁵³ For audience members the events of the play they just viewed could be perceived to be playing out in real-life before their eyes: the assassination of opposition leaders, an Islamist government publicly portraying itself as moderate while actually secretly in league with terrorists, and ultimately extinguishing democracy in Tunisia.

⁵² Furthermore, Hayet expresses surprise that the Islamists, who had been tortured and censored under Bourguiba and Ben Ali would become suppressive themselves: "I was proud of your faith / and admiring of your struggle / against the opposition of the past, / in spite of torture, prison, and exile... / Never would I have believed it possible / that a day would come / when the oppressed would become / an oppressor in turn / and the victim a torturer" (229).

⁵³ A Tunisian national holiday commemorating Tunisia transitioning from a monarchy to a Republic on July 25, 1956.

I began this chapter by suggesting that one form of national reimagining potentially influential for a successful democratic transition is negotiating pluralism with national specificity. The Tunisian government, as evidenced by the Manouba *niqab* sit-ins and the *Printemps des Arts* vandalism and trials, failed first in creating spaces in which pluralistic practices could exist non-violently side-by-side; and, second, in fostering a post-revolution national identity in which all Tunisians – Islamists and Bourguibist – could feel part of a single “imagined community.” A post-revolution environment in which lack of empathy and distrust for one another dominated, culminating in a situation during the summer of July 2013, seeming mirroring the dystopian *Tsunami*, in which one segment of society viewed the other as an existential threat to the nation.

However, unlike the play, the democratic state did not collapse, even though there was the possibility. The next section examines how Tunisia managed to overcome this threat to democracy.

IV. Salafi-Jihadism

As described earlier in the chapter, due to restrictions by Bourguiba and Ben Ali, Salafism in Tunisia remained largely hidden from public view, only emerging occasionally in acts of violence, such as the 2002 al-Qaeda suicide bombing of a the Djerba mosque, the most important Jewish pilgrimage site in Tunisia, which resulted in indiscriminate government crackdowns of Islamists who had no association with Salafism, much less jihadi-Salafism. Following the Tunisian Revolution, Islamist who had been radicalized in prison were released providing a population ready to engage in terrorism in Tunisia (Torelli 2017) and also elsewhere, such as Syria. The most important Salafi-jihadist organization to emerge in post-revolution

Tunisia was Ansar al-Shari'a ("Supporters of Shari'a"), founded by Saif Allah Ben Hassine, a Tunisian who had fought in Afghanistan against the United States post-2001. Hassine, better known by his *nom de guerre* Abu Ayad, was released from Tunisian prison following the revolution and founded Ansar al-Sharia al-Shari'a in 2011.

Despite his jihadi past, Abu Ayad initially promoted Ansar al-Sharia as a non-violent organization focused on preaching (da'wa), proselytizing, education, and positioning likeminded Imams in Tunisia's mosques (Torelli 2017). However, the group quickly found its way into controversy. In September 2012, it led protests at the American Embassy in Tunis in response to the perceived American support for the film *Innocence of Muslims*, which it felt blasphemously portrayed the Prophet Mohammed. The protests turned violent resulting in damage at the Embassy, the neighboring American school being burned down, four deaths, and dozens of injuries.⁵⁴ While Ansar al-Shari'a had been involved in other acts of vandalism, it was this attack that drew widespread condemnation.

It also placed the Ennahda-led government in an increasingly difficult position. Sensitive of the dictatorship's repression on the basis of religious belief, Ennahda initially erred on the side of complete inclusion for all strands of Tunisian ideological beliefs, including Salafi beliefs that were more conservative than most of their membership. Ennahda continued to try to be inclusive in the face of increasing violence and radicalization from the far right. When a video was made public in which Ghannouchi referred to a group of Salafist youth as "my children" it went viral and was pointed to as proof of a "double discourse", a common secular fear of Islamist parties in which they advocate publicly for a democracy and in private a theocratic state.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ This was part of the same wave of protests against *Innocence of Muslims* that resulted in four deaths at the American Embassy in Benghazi, Libya.

⁵⁵ "Secret' video stirs Islamist fears in Tunisia." <http://www.france24.com/en/20121011-tunisia-secret-video-stirs-salafist-islamist-radicalism-fears-ghannouchi-ennahda>. Ghannouchi explained his comments that he felt Ennahda

The fear of a “double discourse” was further spread through multiple instances when the government appeared to side with Salafists in blasphemy cases or go “soft” on prosecuting Salafist-violence. One instance, frequently cited to me was a case in which a feminist activist who criticized Islam was sentenced to a longer prison sentence than the Ansar al-Shari’a members who attacked the American Embassy. This was further exacerbated by the assassination of opposition leader Chokri Belaïd in February 2013, an act which many suspected Ansar al-Sharia’a to be behind.

As I described throughout this chapter tensions continued to mount and reached a critical moment in July 2013. An anti-government protest movement, inspired by the July 3rd coup in Egypt that overthrew the democratically elected Islamist government, called for the Ennahda-led government to step down, accusing it of not only being politically ineffective, but also soft on terrorism. In this heightened tension, the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi on July 25th resulted in mass protests calling on Ennahda to resign and opposition leaders boycotting parliament, stalling the constitution writing process. At this moment, it seemed like a second democratically elected government might be forced to leave power, creating a legitimacy vacuum since Tunisia was still without a constitution and without a legal framework in which to hold elections.

However, Ennahda, seeking to avoid following in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s footsteps, declared Ansar al-Shari’a a terrorist group and agreed to step down from government leadership roles in favor of a technocratic government once the constitution had been completed.

The severity of the situation for Tunisia’s democratic transition should not be underestimated. A compromise was finally accepted in December 2013, leaving Tunisia without

should act as a positive religious role model for youth that had grown up during the regimes of Ben Ali and Bourguiba. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2013/05/21/01003-20130521ARTFIG00529-ghannouchi-en-tunisie-un-tri-se-fera-entre-les-franges-moderees-et-les-autres.php>

a sitting parliament for nearly five months in a crucial legislative period. In this chapter, I have highlighted how, of the three types of national reimagining – re-narrativization, legal reform, and pluralization – that it is the latter that proved most challenging to Tunisia’s democratic transition. While the Ennahda government would undoubtedly be criticized for not adequately preventing terrorism and for controversial legislative decision, it was the cultural tensions between Islamists and Bourguibists, it was the ones described in this chapter – blasphemy cases, the *niqab* sit-in, vandalism at the *Printemps des Arts* event – that led to a point at which Tunisian citizens could believe that Ennahda-led government was engaging in a “double discourse” and was acting as a covert Manchurian candidate whose ultimate goal was to overthrow the democratic state in favor of a theocracy.

V. Conclusion

This chapter highlights multiple problems post-revolution Tunisia faced in balancing democratic pluralism with a shared national identity. Repeatedly, these involved everyday practices such as clothing and cultural consumption, which were simultaneously attacked as blasphemous by one side and defended as freedom of expression by the other. Furthermore, as I discuss, there were not visible efforts on the part of the government to try build either empathy or shared national identification, a sense of shared national community, leading to continued societal divisions. It is in this polarized context that the Tunisian democratic transition almost failed, highlighting the importance of transitioning governments not only effectively manage societal pluralism, but also actively working to build a shared sense of national identity.

Tunisia in the summer of 2013 provides two useful observations on understanding structural change emerging after the Tunisian Revolution. First, given that Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation had nothing explicitly to do with religion or religious identity, the fact that the

revolution and subsequent democratic transition that his death inspired was nearly overturned in large part because of differences over religious expression is a testament to the fluidity of structural change: one change in the structure disrupting and bringing changes elsewhere, in this case specifically over the expression of religion in the public sphere. While the chants of the revolution were: “Work, dignity, and freedom,” nowhere was there an explicit appeal to religion.

Second and more importantly it is an important caution that one should not overestimate the “transformative power” of events. Structures, by definition, are relatively stable over long periods of time. While Sewell’s theory of events proposes a way for structures to undergo rapid change, we should also be cognizant of how these structures also push back against change even in the face of potentially transformative events.

Egypt offers a compelling counter-example for structures pushing back against events. The revolution in Egypt was perhaps only slightly less expected than Tunisia’s given that Egypt allowed opposition parties like the Muslim Brotherhood to compete for and win parliamentary seats. Egypt, like Tunisia held elections in which Islamist candidates won a plurality of seats and also elected an Islamist president. However, there was resistance with respect to modes of power – the army rejecting the Muslim Brotherhood government. Additionally, the army’s push to return the country to the previous structure, an authoritarian regime, met with virtually no resistance from the international community. By the end of 2013, the momentous “event” of the Egyptian Revolution had been virtually obliterated and the previous structure of the authoritarian regime entrenched even more firmly with the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood killed or imprisoned.

In the summer of 2013, Tunisia was poised to follow after Egypt. In Tunisia’s case the major structural resistance came from changes to cultural schemas: what does it mean to be

Tunisian? What expressions of Islam are authentic or permissible in the public sphere? As described in this chapter debates over religious expression pushed Tunisia nearly to the breaking point. Could Tunisians adapt to new schemas that broadened and altered the schema of Tunisianité to be more pluralistic and include Tunisians of a multitude of religious orientations and expressions from Bourguibists to Islamists? In this chapter, I highlighted the resistances to the change of this structural schema that had shaped Tunisian social and political life since independence, especially by Tunisians who under the dictatorships were able to give legitimacy to schemas such as Tunisianité, the best example in this chapter being Manouba University, one of the universities in Tunisia most aligned with the authoritarian regimes, a reproducer of cultural schemas such as Tunisianité and also producers to social elite who are able to give legitimacy to cultural schemas.

It is only because Ennahda made a number of concessions that the government wasn't forced out of power, leaving a legal vacuum. In addition to cracking down on Salafi-jihadis and agreeing to a technocratic government, Ennahda made two strategic concessions aimed at its own survival – distancing itself from Salafism more generally and softening some of its political positions with respect to religion. I discussed one instance of the latter in the previous chapter, with Ennahda's decision to not insist on including shari'a as a source of legislation in the new constitution. Additionally, Ennahda abandoned its initial insistence that Salafis also be part of "big tent" Tunisianité – a vision that would try to bring absolute pluralistic acceptance to Tunisians of all Islamic persuasions. Instead, Ennahda made a strategic concession to advocate for a more limited vision of pluralism that include more mainstream Islamists, including most members of Ennahda. Only by advocating for less radical structural change with respect to the cultural schema of Tunisianité was Ennahda able to keep the "event" of the Tunisian Revolution

from a potential backsliding from the democratic transition and a possible return to authoritarianism.

In the next chapter, by examining Ennahda's electoral discourse, I look at both of these strategic concessions. I demonstrate how Ennahda began to downplay itself as an Islamist party, a process that culminated in 2016 when it officially declared itself to no longer be a religious party, and to distance itself from Salafism. I argue that during the 2014 elections there was an increasing convergence and consolidation of discourses on religion and national identity between Islamist(s) and Bourguibists with Ennahda more strongly taking up the shared discourse of *Tunisianité* and Salafism being marginalized as not authentically Tunisian.

CHAPTER 4 Electing the Nation: Islamists vs. Bourguibists, Malikis vs. Salafis

While the slogans and demonstrations of the 2010 Revolution were framed around issues of economic inequality, dignity, and political inclusiveness rather than religious freedom, Islam and its role in post-revolutionary society became key issues almost immediately after Ben Ali's departure from Tunisia. As a cultural movement, Tunisian Islamists appeared as though they had the most to gain in a democratizing Tunisia: participation in electoral and party politics for the first time; relaxing of restrictions on religious practice and discourse; and, an opening for religious interpretations beyond those sanctioned by the state.

Some of these changes have materialized. For the first time Ennahda has been able to not only compete as a political party in democratic elections, but also to win the majority of seats in the parliament and govern, albeit as part of a coalition with non-Islamist parties. Tunisians have unprecedented freedom of religious practice in the modern state, independent of influence from empire, colonial power, or dictatorship, which had previously regulated religious life and organizations. The public sphere is unquestionably more diverse with respect to religious discourses, practices, and literature. The state is no longer the sole interpreter of religion for Tunisians with the emergence of a "market place" of religious options (Finke and Stark 1992, Iannaccone 1992, Fink and Iannaccone 1993).

However, as I will argue this apparent religious pluralism is more limited than it initially appears. In the Tunisian case, Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation and the subsequent protests were the events that lead to Ben Ali's overthrow function as a Sewellian event, a

recognized rupture in society that “that durably transforms previous structures and practices” that in normal circumstances only gradually change (1996, 843). These events were the impetus that led to the end of authoritarian rule and the beginning of the democratization process. Following the revolution, Tunisia faced an initially unregulated field of religious groups and discourses that had previously been banned and a vociferous public debate over how and if these discourses and groups would be integrated into Tunisian laws, institutions, and society.

In Tunisia, the window for the transformation of political, religious, and social structures remained open only briefly and by the 2014 election they had largely solidified. I use the 2014 elections, in comparison with 2011 elections and the events of the inter-electoral period to demonstrate that by 2014 there had been a “normalization” and convergence of religious discourse in the political and, particularly, the electoral sphere, in which the majority of Tunisian political actors adopted nearly identical discourses and policies with respect to Islam’s role in Tunisian public life. This discourse has centered around a defense of “Tunisian Islam,” portrayed as moderate, modern, and peaceful and represents a form of Bourdieusian symbolic capital for politicians and political parties.

As a result of this rapid convergence the opening of the religious field has been limited more than one might expect in a state emerging from decades of religious repression. In particular, more conservative Salafi strains of Islam have been marginalized and placed outside what is accepted as mainstream, Tunisian Islam. While Salafi discourses and practices were very publicly present between the 2011 election and the finalization of the Constitution in 2014, they were almost entirely excluded from the 2014 elections themselves, with the exception of key moments of tension during the 2014 presidential races. Furthermore, as Salafism has become increasingly associated with a number of violent and religiously motivated assassinations and

terror attacks, even the discourse and practices of non-violent Salafists have been marginalized and excluded from the Tunisian body politic.

At the end of the previous chapter, I suggested that post-revolutionary Tunisia struggled with many competing views – Bourguibist, Islamist, and Salafi – over what was constitutive of Tunisian national identity and that it was only the rise of Salafi violence that presented an existential threat that pushed Ennahda to distance itself from Salafism and more closely align with a discourse of Tunisian Islam characteristic of Tunisianité, for example their decision to acquiesce to not including shari'a as a source of legislation in the Tunisian constitution.

I argue that in 2014 Bourguibists and Islamists *consolidated* their national reimaginings into a shared, albeit vague, language about Tunisian Islam, in which Salafis were seen as oppositional to Tunisian national identity. In a Sewellian framework, we could understand that Bourguibists, the traditional modes of power, gave sanction to a slightly altered cultural schema of Tunisianité that was broadened enough to include Islamists such as Ennahda. I show how this consolidation played out in practice by examining the 2011 parliamentary and the 2014 parliamentary and presidential elections. By analyzing party platforms and political speeches, I demonstrate that while the 2011 elections focused heavily on questions of national identity and religious practice, these were almost absent during the 2014 elections. However, I also point to the limits of this convergence and the potential for these debates to reemerge in the future.

I. Elections, Political Campaigns, and National Boundary Making

Ernest Renan famously likened the existence of a nation to a “daily plebiscite” (1990: 19).

While his reference wasn't to actual democratic elections, the metaphor is apt for considering how elections relate to expressions of the nation. While not daily, actual elections provide sites

par excellence to examine citizens' views on the nation itself through the issues debated, the discourses used, and the symbols invoked. In Europe, many far right parties such as the United Kingdom Independence Party, the French Front National, and the Swiss People's Party (SVP) have negatively defined the nation by placing immigration at the forefront of their campaigns, both against economic (the "Polish Plumber") and cultural migrants, as well illustrated by a 2007 SVP campaign poster depicting a white sheep kicking a black sheep off the Swiss flag. During the American 2016 election, Republican candidates portrayed Muslim citizens as a potential fifth column and called for increased surveillance of Muslim-American communities. The legitimacy of candidates to represent the nation may be called into question on whether they can represent the nation, as illustrated by claims during the 2008 presidential elections that Barack Obama was a Muslim and during the 1960 election that John F. Kennedy's loyalty to the pope would override his loyalty to the American people. Additionally, issues of language and dress have served as markers of national symbolic boundaries (Lamont & Molnár 2002) in debates over the hijab in Europe and language politics in Spain and Turkey.

Through their campaigns, political parties and candidates attempt to tap into public concerns and shape public debates to their electoral advantage.⁵⁶ Because they are not acting as representatives of the state government (yet), campaigns discourses can be altered mid-election due to popular response. While some parties target narrow interest groups, most parties are "catch all parties" (Koole 1996) in the sense that they view the objective of the election as to secure the broadest public support possible and win the election with the most votes. In the

⁵⁶ Political parties occupy a unique role as an intermediate actor between state government and the broader society as a whole (Kreisi 1994, Duverger 1959 & 1972), simultaneously existing as internal and external to the state. Political parties serve as the main component of the legislative structure, ensuring the link between citizen preferences and policies within the state. However, political parties in many countries are independent from the state administration and therefore try to externally influence the state through policy pressures and political competition.

remainder of this chapter, I examine the policies, discourse, and imagery of Tunisian political parties and candidates in the 2011 and 2014 Tunisian elections as a means of exploring how Islam is conceptualized as a national issue, particularly who is included and excluded from the nation. I also examine how and why religion was a significant campaign issue in the 2011 parliamentary elections, but not in 2014. I begin by illustrating the changing role of religion between the 2011 and 2014 parliamentary elections.

II. Islam and Political Discourse Prior to the 2014 Elections

The 2011 Election Campaign

Following the revolution, Ennahda leaders, including Ghannouchi, returned from exile and the prisons were emptied of political prisoners in a general amnesty. However, while Ennahda supporters welcomed the return and release of its leaders and members, many Tunisians saw the events through years of conditioning, namely that Ben Ali and Bourguiba claimed that their state was all that had stood in the way of terrorism and the imposition of a theocratic state. It was in this context that the role of Ennahda and Islam in Tunisia's political future became the key issue in the 2011 election. It represented the first time that an Islamist party was allowed to freely compete in a Tunisian election.⁵⁷

The first post-revolutionary elections were scheduled for October 23, 2011 and the quick electoral cycle – both with respect to the establishment of new laws and parties – significantly affected the campaign period. The ability of political parties, many of them newly formed, and

⁵⁷ Members of Ennahda were permitted to run as independent candidates during the 1989 parliamentary elections. While the official numbers were never published, they were believed to have won approximately 15% of the vote, though members claim a much larger percentage, a strong result that prompted Ben Ali to crack down on the party and jail thousands of party members.

the media, newly freed from state censorship, to report on the electoral campaigns was curtailed, giving the advantage to the few political parties that had existed under Ben Ali's regime and Ennahda, which had an enduring organizational structure and national name recognition (Murphy 2013, 238). One newly formed Salafi party attempted, but failed to legally register itself to compete in the elections, leaving Ennahda the sole party of any size that portrayed itself as Islamist in the elections, resulting in an intense focus not just on the party itself, but the party as representative of any Islamic practice that had not been sanctioned during the Bourguiba-Ben Ali eras. In particular, there was widespread speculation on whether Ennahda's participation would pave the way for a theocratic state or at least a rollback of some of the hallmarks of the pre-revolution period, especially enshrined legal rights for women and the ostensible secular nature of the state in relation to Islamic law.

While these debates were likely to happen given Ennahda's inclusion for the first time as a legal party in an election, they were amplified by two events that happened immediately prior to the elections. In October, a woman wearing the full-face *niqab* was refused entry to a public university due to a ban on the *niqab*, resulting in a protest between supporters and security forces (Murphy 2013). The *niqab* and *hijab* had been banned by Ben Ali, though with varying levels of enforcement, as an anathema to women's rights.⁵⁸ The incident brought to the forefront questions about not only whether public institutions would remain secular, but also the rights of women in the new Tunisian state. Additionally, it raised the question of whether "Tunisian Islam," which, as interpreted by Bourguiba and Ben Ali, meant not wearing the *hijab* much less the *niqab*, would be supplanted by more conservative strands of Salafism seen as importations from the

⁵⁸ Bourguiba had gone far enough to call the *hijab* "an odious rag" that had no place in modern Tunisian society.

Gulf States. The incident wasn't isolated, but repeated with even greater intensity two months later at Manouba University outside Tunis, as described in the previous chapter.

The second event, the screening of the animated film *Persepolis* on Nessma TV (discussed in depth by Zeghal 2013 and Murphy 2013) played an even greater role in the pre-election debate and centered around not only cultural expression but also the influence of religious norms on the judiciary system. On October 7th, Nessma TV, Tunisia's first independent TV station, aired the animated film *Persepolis*, which follows a young girl's life in post-revolutionary Iran, as a warning of the dangers of a religious state. In a brief scene, which triggered protests and a protracted legal hearing, the film shows a physical depiction of God talking with the young protagonist.⁵⁹ The film had previously been shown at a film festival in Tunisia and its airing was meant not to be provocative in terms of theological stances on representations of the divine, but as a statement on the inherent dangers of political Islam. However, the airing resulted in protestors, generally described as Salafis attacking both the TV station as well as the person and home of the station owner Nabil Karoui. Karoui was later tried and fined for an "offence to good morals" in showing the film as well as jeopardizing the "public order".

The physical and verbal attacks on Karoui and Nessma became key events in the lead-up to election and Ennahda quickly issued a public statement in which it condemned the airing of *Persepolis* as "a repulsive attack on the divine," called for public order while supporting the protests against Nessma, and simultaneously accused Nessma of breaking the electoral law by "calling for hatred on the basis of religion."⁶⁰ Anti-*Persepolis* demonstrations across the country

⁵⁹ Islamic tradition prohibits the depiction of God, Mohammed, and, in general, other human beings or animals.

⁶⁰ Al-Hiwar 10/9/11).

in Bizerte, Sid Bouzid, and Tunis occurred after Friday prayer prompting another nation-wide counter protests with the slogan “liberty is a sacred expression.”⁶¹

Despite this charged climate that focused on suspicions of Ennahda’s political intentions, the party won a plurality of the popular vote, which resulted in a majority of the parliamentary seats (89 of 217 seats), marking the transition from a banned organization to the largest party in government.

Inter-Election Period Leading Up to the 2014 Elections

While Ennahda chose to form a coalition government with two other moderate, non-Islamist parties, Congrès pour la République (CPR) and Ettakatol, suspicion still hung over the party from those who did not vote for it and who had been taught during the dictatorship that it was a terrorist organization. Opponents continued to argue that the party would use its role in the constitutional writing process to impose Islamic law upon the country and reverse the liberal personal status code that enshrines numerous rights for women, a pillar of Bourguiba’s legacy. These suspicions were further fueled by several controversial acts on Ennahda’s behalf, including the appointment of a mufti, the official state religious leader, who had supported polygamy, currently outlawed, and banning eating or drinking in public during the fasting month of Ramadan.

For several months, the Ministry of Religious Affairs worked to replace many Imams, both those appointed by Ben Ali and Salafis who had gained control of mosques following the revolution. There were a number of public confrontations on the role of Islam in public life

⁶¹ “Tear Gas in Kasbah as Protests Over ‘Persepolis’ Persist.” <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/10/14/tear-gas-in-kasbah-as-protests-over-persepolis-persist/> and “A3ta9ni Spreading All Over Tunisia” <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/10/19/a3ta9ni-spreading-all-over-tunisia/>.

including what could be shown on television and whether the previously banned *niqab* could be worn in the classroom. In particular, the debates focused on how Salafism, frequently undistinguished from the more moderate Islam practiced by the majority of the Ennahda leadership, threatened the Tunisian way of life.

As described in the previous chapter, by the summer of 2013, many Tunisians had lost confidence in the “Troika-government,” a coalition of Ennahda and two secular parties, due to increasing economic issues, the protracted constitutional drafting period, and a belief that Ennahda was too soft on terrorism and the activities of the Salafi organization Ansar al-Shari’a, which resulted in attacks on Tunisian security forces and the assassination of leftist political leader Chokri Belaïd the previous February. The Tamrod protest movement and coup in Egypt sparked organized demonstrations in Tunisia demanding that the government step-down. In this already charged atmosphere, the assassination of MP Mohammed Brahmi on July 25th, allegedly by Ansar al-Shari’a, resulted in public demonstrations against the Troika-government, a parliamentary walk-out, and a five-month political deadlock. Only with the Troika’s agreement to step down from ministry positions, but not from elected parliamentary seats, was Tunisia able to finalize the constitution and pass the electoral law to pave the way for presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014.

In January 2014, two years after beginning the post-revolution constitutional drafting process, Tunisia’s legislative body, the National Constituent Assembly (NCA), met to cast the final votes on constitution article by article. It was agreed that Islam would be mentioned in Article 1 as the religion of Tunisia, but within the context of a secular state. Additionally, as a previously made concession Ennahda did not push for a reference to *shari’a* as *the* or even *a* basis for Tunisian law, as is common in many Muslim-majority constitutions. And, as described,

in Chapter 1, MPs passed Article 6 enabling them to vote on and enact the new constitution, which helped to legally pave the way for elections later in 2014.

Despite all of the contentious politics of the previous two years – the regulation of mosques, debates on the *niqab*, two political assassinations, the near collapse of the government, and the constitution drafting – Islam began to take an apparent back seat.

III. Convergence of Discourse in the 2014 Parliamentary Elections

As described in the previous chapter, religious and national tensions grew after the election as Salafism become increasingly prominent, culminating in the summer 2013 political crisis. Early on the 2014 parliamentary elections seemed as though they would be a referendum on the validity of Islamist politics in Tunisian society, particularly due to the creation of Nidaa Tounes (Call of Tunisia) by Béji Caïd Essebsi, a former minister and government official during the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes, as well as Tunisia's interim Prime Minister for the eight months prior to the 2011 elections.

Essebsi held numerous roles during Bourguiba's regime including Interior Minister, Defense Minister, and Foreign Affairs Minister. Following Ben Ali's 1987 coup, Essebsi was an Ambassador and President of the Chamber of Deputies before retiring from politics in 1991. His participation in the Ben Ali regime was widely criticized by opponents and would have prevented him from competing in the 2014 elections had the Exclusion law, which barred any members of upper-level positions in the Ben Ali regime from standing in office, been passed

Nidaa Tounes was officially registered in June 2012, though planned immediately following Ennahda's eight months prior, the party was created in direct response to Ennahda's

electoral success and from the beginning positioned itself as the most viable challenger in the 2014 elections.

While Nidaa Tounes criticized Ennahda for its lack of political experience and failures to improve the economy, differing views of Islam and its role in Tunisia were a central cleavage. At the party's official launch Essebsi declared, in reference to Ennahda, that "the Tunisian people, Muslims, don't need a government that acts like a guardian and delivers "sermons from mosques."⁶² In October 2013, Essebsi unequivocally distanced Ennahda from the Tunisian nation: "Nidaa Tounes's Islam is not that of the Ennahda movement. Our Islam is Tunisian" which Essebsi further described, invoking the tradition of Tunisianité as "a moderate Islam founded on a reformist approach" that "consecrates the values of tolerance, coexistence and wisdom and prohibits hate and violence."⁶³ In a previous interview commenting on the rise of terrorism in Tunisia, Essebsi went so far as to declare that "effectively, Nahdhaouis [Ennahda supporters] are from the same family as the Salafists. It's just a difference of degrees."⁶⁴ In these two statements, Essebsi clearly "others" Ennahda as not practicing Tunisian Islam and aligns them with Salafism, frequently characterized in Tunisian society as being a foreign import from the Gulf states (Pargeter 2012, 83-4).

Given both Nidaa Tounes's explicit founding in opposition to Ennahda and Essebsi's ongoing condemnation of Ennahda on a religious basis, spectators could expect that the party's electoral rhetoric would focus on the role of religion and, immediately prior to the October 1st

⁶² Béji Caïd Essebsi: Pourquoi fait-il aussi peur ? Business News. June 19, 2012.
<http://www.businessnews.com.tn/impression/519/31802/>

⁶³ Tunisie: laïc, séculier, anti-islamiste... comment qualifier Nidaa Tounès? France24. October 28, 2014.
<http://www.france24.com/fr/20141028-legislatives-tunisie-nidaa-tounes-laique-seculier-anti-islamiste-liberal-ennahda>

⁶⁴ "BCE: Les Nahdhaouis sont de la même famille que les Salafistes. Business News. June 21, 2013.
<http://www.businessnews.com.tn/impression/534/38864/>

start of the campaign season, it seemed as though Nidaa Tounes would make religion one of their key campaign platforms.

At Nida Tounes's press conference to announce the launch of their parliamentary platform, journalists and other attendees were given the published proceedings of two conferences on religion it had hosted with a German political organization to read as they waited for the press conference to begin. These conference papers included pieces discussing the history of Islam in Tunisia and critiques of Wahhabism.

Additionally, Nidaa Tounes was the only major political party to issue a separate "religious platform" in addition to a more general electoral platform. In this twenty-page document, Nidaa Tounes critiqued the Troika's actions, particularly the relationship between Ennahda and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and put forward its own platform. In its foreword, then presidential candidate Béji Caïd Essebsi drew a distinction between two opposing views on Islam. The first, represented by Nidaa Tounes, is "an authentic, national view based on *ijtihad*, renewal, and reform" is contrasted with a second view of Islam "based on tradition, inertia, violence, and terrorism" (Nidaa Tounes 2014, 3) which the campaign associated with Salafi jihadism that Ennahda failed to stem.

As a result of both Nidaa Tounes' pre-electoral statements and the pre-campaign material they had distributed, attendees of the press conference may have been expecting religion to play a significant role. However, it was not until nearly eighty-minutes into a ninety-minute presentation that religion was mentioned for the first time, during a series of sometimes rambling remarks made by Essebsi referencing Tunisia's Islamic character, but making no direct references or challenges to Ennahda.

This trend, in deemphasizing religion as a central campaign platform in the 2014 elections, is not unique to Nidaa Tounes. In the next section, I provide evidence of a substantial shift in how Tunisian national identity is discussed in a number of major political party platforms and also explain *why* Islam was not a significant issue in the 2014 elections while it had previously been expected to be.

Comparing 2011 and 2014 Political Party Election Platforms

Directly comparing the two political campaigns is difficult due to the number and complexity of the electoral systems in Tunisia. The 217-member Tunisian Assembly of the Representatives of the People, the national legislative body, is elected through a multi-constituency, ranked, closed-list, proportional representative system.⁶⁵

In practice, this system has resulted in a plethora of options for Tunisian voters. In 2011, there were 1,519 lists approved by the Tunisian electoral authority (830 political party lists, 655 independent lists, and 34 coalition lists). Only five parties had lists in all 33 of the electoral constituencies (Ennahda, Ettakatol, PDP, CPR, and PDM).⁶⁶ In 2014, there were a comparable number of lists (1,327), with six parties competing nation-wide (Ennahda, CPR, the Popular Front, Al Joumhour, Nidaa Tounes, and UPL).⁶⁷

⁶⁵ In each of the country's 33 electoral constituencies (27 in Tunisia and six overseas), voters can select a single pre-determined list of candidates (up to the number of parliamentary seats allocated to the constituency). This list might be composed of candidates from a single political party, candidates from multiple political parties creating a coalition list, or a list of independent candidates with no formal political affiliation. The seats are then divided proportionally among the lists based on vote totals. For example, in a 10-seat constituency, if List A received 40% of the total votes then the top four candidates from their list would be elected, List B with 20% would receive 2 seats, and so on with no minimum electoral threshold.

⁶⁶ Pg.8-9. UNDP. 2014. Promoting Gender Equality in Electoral Assistance: Lessons Learned in Comparative Perspective, Country Report for Tunisia.

⁶⁷ Of these 1,327 lists, 737 were political party lists, 334 independent lists, 159 coalition lists, and 97 lists that only competed overseas. There was an average of 40 lists per electoral district with a maximum of 69 and a minimum of 27. Pg. 27-28. Final Report on the 2014 Legislative and Presidential Elections in Tunisia. National Democratic Institute. 2014.

This means that voters were exposed to widely varying campaigns based on their electoral constituency of residence, with some parties and coalitions competing only in a single electoral constituency. Even for national parties, the central party leadership varied in the amount of direct influence they held over constituency-level party offices. Furthermore, the party landscape of Tunisia changed in between the two electoral periods. In 2011, 19 parties and eight independent lists secured parliamentary seats and in 2014, 15 parties and three independent lists won seats. However, the exact composition of these parties has changed with political parties being created, rebranded, merged (and unmerged), and suspended and elected parliamentarians switching parties between elections.

Unlike stable party systems with strong national leaderships, it is difficult to directly compare the electoral campaigns both due to the variations at the constituent level and the flux in the national party landscape from 2011 to 2014. Of all the parties elected both in elections, Ennahda was the only party both to not undergo any party transitions (e.g. experience breakaway parties, participate in multi-party coalitions, etc.) and not to have any of its members defect to other parties.

While it isn't possible to conduct a one-to-one analysis of the two elections, there are important conclusions that can be drawn by comparing the electoral platforms issued during these elections, both by examining the general content in a single election and comparing the changes in single party platforms between the two elections, which I do below. Major political parties nearly universally issued political party platforms. For some, this was a bullet-pointed list of platform items on their website or Facebook pages.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Facebook played a large role in the electoral campaign. Facebook enabled parties with less technical capacity to quickly reach constituents without investing resources in creating a formal website. Additionally, Facebook was a more constituent friendly medium to communicate with constituents than webpages, as the platform could be easily accessed by mobile phone.

Party platforms in and of themselves should not be reified. The platforms are not an exact set of policies that every member of the party supports or pursues. They vary significantly both in how they are formulated and how important they are in practice. Furthermore, few constituents are likely to every read the documents themselves. However, political platforms, like constitutional preambles, offer a symbolic space in which define and present a party's vision not only of itself but also of an idealized nation (Zubrzycki 2001). In this way, party platforms occupy a liminal space between concrete policies that may be pursued in the future and a performative space, providing fruit for understanding how debates over national identity.

In this section I examine the 2011 and 2014 political party platforms three parties:

- Ettakatol: Leftist, secular: 2011: 20 seats, 2014: 0 seats
- Congrès pour la République (CPR) : Social democrat, secular 2011: 29 seats, 2014: 4 seats
- Ennahda: Islamist_(s), 2011: 89 seats, 2014: 69 seats

From examining the political party platforms, there are three observations that can be drawn. First, the party platform discourse during the 2011 elections generally focused on concerns over the role of Islam in the future of Tunisia, specifically the nature of Islam in Tunisia and the state's involvement. Second, in comparison, the discourse of parties during the 2014 elections focused mostly on generic statements concerning Tunisia's "Arab and Islamic" identity, with other references to religion mostly focused on reducing religiously motivated terrorism. I illustrate these points with examples from several political party platforms.⁶⁹ Third, religion not only occupied a less central role in the 2014 elections, but the discourse between

⁶⁹ In all instances, bolded text is my emphasis and not part of the original text.

parties converged with few significant differences that are identifiable for a particular political party.

For many parties in 2011, addressing the issues of Tunisian national identity was a key part of their electoral platforms. Many reaffirm in their platforms of the Article One of the Tunisian constitution: “Tunisia is a free, independent, sovereign state; **its religion is Islam**, its language is Arabic, and its system is republican.” This served as a basic identity statement.

Ettakatol: In its 2011 platform, Ettakatol issues 100 campaign positions. The very first of these is the issue of Tunisian identity, reiterating Article 1 from the Constitution verbatim. However, it also expands upon this basic definition, adding that “the **identity of the Tunisian people is rooted in their Arab-Muslim values** and enriched by its different civilization; it is **fundamentally modern and open to the cultures of the world**” (5), stressing a view of Tunisian Islam as modern and moderate.

Ettakatol also expresses a concern over mosque-state issues, highlighting that “the Tunisian Republic **separates the political field and the religious field** and is open to universal values” (4). Furthermore, “the state watches over the preservation of religious sites and assures the neutrality in order to avoid the instrumentalization of the political in the religious field and religion in the political field” (7), though Ettakatol also adds that another function of the state is to “**preserve the identity of the Tunisian people** and guarantee the freedom of belief” (7).

However, by 2014, Ettakatol mentions religion a single time in its entire program and then only in its fiftieth and final point on fighting extremism. Ettakatol proposes that Islamic thought taught in schools be revamped in order to focus “on the thinkers and philosophers advocating tolerance and openness all while emphasizing the contribution of the **Tunisian**

Islamic school, specifically on the values of “openness and tolerance.” Furthermore, it advocates increased support for families dealing with radicalization (30).

The Congress for the Republic (CPR), In 2011, (CPR), called for “radical and complete rewriting of the social and political contract” in the constitution, specifically concerning **identity**, rights and liberties, and the political system. First and foremost, CPR asserts that it must “**reaffirm the Arab-Muslim identity of the Tunisian people who remain open to other civilizations.**” The document goes further in addressing the importance of this identity, stating that the party is “conscious of the impact of the question of identity on **strategic choices** which lead to the **consolidation and preservation of this identity in accordance with historic roots and collective memory,**” for example the importance of Arabic as a national language and unity with other Arab nations, in addition to the need to create “a culture capable of stimulating the creativity rooted in its Arab-Muslim context” (2011:8, 18).

However, by 2014 the emphasis on the fundamental nature of identity had weakened with a note at the beginning of the platform that the party’s positions stem from Tunisia’s “**Arab-Islamic history** and [its] human history” (2015, 3), with no further references to Islam.

Ennahda: Being an Islamist party one would expect to find religious references in its platform, however, there are striking differences between how Islam is addressed in the two platforms.

In 2011, Ennahda focused on the importance of Islam both with respect to national identity and its platform. Like other political parties it reiterates Article 1 of the Constitution. Ennahda directly links itself to the Islamic aspect of Tunisia’s national identity: “**Ennahda’s programmes are firmly rooted in national identity, mainly in Islam’s values,** objectives, and

civilizational heritage and in our national experience and that of mankind” (12). It further emphasized the distinctly Tunisian aspect of its ideology: the “Ennahda Movement considers itself an **extension of the reform school elaborated in our country** in the nineteenth century aiming at political, social and cultural reform and opposing colonialism and subservience. In this context, the Movement considers that Islamic thought is in need of **constant innovation** so that it can keep up with **progress** and contribute to it, stemming from its belief that Islam accepts anything that is beneficial and encourages it such as the international conventions on human rights, and which are generally compatible with Islamic values and objectives” (10). It emphasizes Tunisia as an important **home of North African Islam** “with Kairouan as its centre, played a significant role in staging Islamic expansion throughout the region and the Zeitouna mosque made significant contributions to Islamic sciences and knowledge, the propagation of Arabic language, and the shaping of the reform movement” but also a blending of “Arab, Islamic, Mediterranean, and African” identities (8).

Unsurprisingly, for an Islamist party, Ennahda emphasizes the role Islam plays in the development of its program, however it does so in a very careful manner that distinguishes it from other political parties. In their analysis of 48 Islamist party platforms, Kurzman and Naqvi (2010) find that half call for the implementation of *shari'a* in some form. Ennahda never mentions the word *shari'a* in its platform, instead it merely mentions **Islam [as] a supreme point of reference**” and its “confidence in the validity of Islam and its heritage as a value and cultural reference” in its work (2, 3). However, in both instances Ennahda also qualifies its vision by emphasizing the importance of *ijtihad*, or independent interpretation. It also adds that its project is for “**reform and modernisation through ijtihad**, *tajdid* (renewal), and the activation of dialogue with the contemporary concerns, sciences, and achievements of the

modern age” (2). Through this language Ennahda is attempting to separate itself from public perceptions that an Islamist(s) party will implement a rigid and archaic vision of *shari’a* law that many Tunisians would view as incompatible with their view of Tunisia as modern and pluralistic.

With respect to platforms that specifically concern or reference religion, Ennahda mentions implementing zakat and waqaff funds, Islamic financing for banks, increasing Islamic tourism in Tunisia, “bringing up children with Arab and Islamic values and characters (70), and **Islam as a source of its protection of women’s rights and equality**, a nod to the importance of women’s rights in *Tunisianité*.

In short, references to Islam, both with respect to identity and programming, runs throughout the document. Throughout the 2011 platform, the terms “Islam” or “Muslim” were included 34 times. However, there is a noticeable shift in the 2014 platform, where these terms were mentioned only 17 times, with 10 of these concerning Islamic banking.

In the 2011 platform, Ennahda mentions its “awareness of, and confidence in, the validity of Islam and its heritage” for its political project in the opening paragraph of the platform. Ennahda repeats the same assertion in the 2014 platform but not until the third section of its platform, the eleventh page. Gone entirely is the 2011 reference to Islam as “a supreme point of reference.”

Ennahda does mention Islam in the opening page of the 2014 platform, but in a very different manner from 2011. Instead of emphasizing Ennahda’s relationship to Islam, it highlights how Tunisia has consensually, incorporated Islam in the post-authoritarian state: “Tunisia has succeeded in **uniting all Tunisians around a great and widely acclaimed consensual constitution that combined the principles of Islam and the essence of modernity**

and laid the foundations for the rule of law and respect for individual and public freedoms and human rights” (5), in effect asserting to readers Ennahda’s accomplishments and its ability to compromise with non-Islamist parties.

Finally, while not part of the platform text, Ennahda’s 2014 platform cover includes a photo (there was no cover photo for the 2011 platform) the of Tunisians from all backgrounds including those wearing religious dress and non-religious dress, as well as veiled and unveiled women. Such a decision shows a strategic choice to project Ennahda as a representative of the entire nation no matter how one chooses to express their religion.



Figure 12: Front cover of the 2014 Ennahda campaign platform.
Photo: Ennahda

Why do we see the three primary observations that I highlighted at the start of this section?

- a) Party platform discourse during the 2011 elections generally focused on concerns over the role of Islam in the future of Tunisia, specifically the nature of Islam in Tunisia and the state's involvement.
- b) The discourse of parties during the 2014 elections focused mostly on generic statements concerning Tunisia's "Arab and Islamic" identity, with other references to religion mostly focused on reducing religiously motivated terrorism.
- c) Religion not only occupied a less central role in the 2014 elections, but the discourse between parties converged with few significant differences that are identifiable for a particular political party.

There are two key contextual reasons. First, the 2011 election came at a moment of extreme change, and the first test of democratic structural change in Tunisia. As described in previous chapters, there were deep divisions between Bourguibists and Islamists over what their visions for Tunisia's future entailed. On the one hand, Ennahda was able to fairly compete in elections for the first time and their platform mirrored the religious values and sensibilities of its voters. Ennahda through their platform was also demonstrating that if elected it would include a vision of national identity that Islamists also recognized themselves in unlike during the Bourguiba and Ben Ali eras. In contrast, many Bourguibists were scared that, if elected, Ennahda might enact sweeping religiously conservative laws or even refuse to give up power. In their platforms Ettakatol and CPR go to pains to emphasize that they wanted to conserve the religious identity that they saw as authentically Tunisian, one open to other faiths and values.

All of these were debates that did emerge during the process of writing the constitution, concerns over Salafism, and the political crisis during the summer and fall of 2013.

However, the finalization of the constitution in January 2014, described in Chapter 2, resolved many of these key concerns expressed in the 2011 platforms: the legal future of the state had been settled. Additionally, with Ennahda taking a harder stance on Salafi-jihadists, as described in Chapter 3, the importance of religion as a campaign platform became less important than other issues, such as the economy and security.

Second, Ennahda moderated its platform stance to resemble other parties. A year prior, it was almost forced from power, so political moderation was in its interest if it was to retain a plurality of seats. Ennahda's 2014 campaign focused on portraying the party as a responsible, consensus-oriented actor that shepherded the country through a difficult period of institutional change. Unsurprisingly in the wake of both political tensions in Tunisia and the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahda focused on presenting itself as a mainstream political party rather than as an *Islamist* political party. In addition to this mainstreaming, the party affirmed both before and after the election its willingness to continue working with other parties, including Nidaa Tounes.⁷⁰ At the end of the election Ennahda won 69 seats (27.8% of the popular vote) and Nidaa Tounes won 89 seats (37.6% of the vote) respectively in the 217-seat parliament and ended up forming a government together. The next closest party, was the self-proclaimed “non-ideological” UPL with 16 seats 4% of the popular vote. CPR finished with 4 seats (down from 29 – 2.14%) and Ettakatol lost all twenty of its seats, outcomes which were seen to be referendum on the two parties' performance as governing partners with Ennahda in the Troika government (2011-2014).

⁷⁰ In 2016, Ennahda formally declared that it no longer was a religious party.

In this section I have pointed to how political parties, representing both Bourguibist and Islamist orientations have increasingly used common language and themes in their political platforms. I argue that this was due first to religion being a less controversial issues as a result of the constitution being finalized, but secondly a strategic decision on Ennahda's part to embrace a discourse of *Tunisianité* in order to distance itself from previous associations with Salafis and a "double discourse." Through both of these events, Bourguibists and Islamists have come closer to common discourse on Tunisian identity, one that, in the language of their collective electoral platforms is modern, open, and tolerant.

IV. Limits of Convergence: The 2014 Presidential Election, Second Round

By the start of the Presidential campaign on November 2nd, it seemed as though the tensest political competition between Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes was over. Ennahda had conceded the parliamentary elections and all indicators pointed to a peaceful and democratic transition of power. Furthermore, Ennahda was not running a candidate nor had it endorsed any of the other twenty-seven candidates.

However, issues around national identify and religion emerged at points of tension as evidenced during the presidential campaigns of November and December, particularly as Nidaa Tounes' leader Essebsi (with 39.46% of the first-round vote) and incumbent President Moncef Marzouki (33.43%) passed to the second round. I highlight two instances to show that despite the seeming consolidation of discourse that occurred in the parliamentary elections that there still remain deep societal divisions between Bourguibists and Islamists that emerge at moments of tensions, such as the presidential campaign for which leadership of the state was at stake.

In the previous chapter I argued that it was the rise of jihadi, salafi violence that ultimately helped Bourguibists and Islamists to move past their many differences by defining Salafis as a national “other” who had to be contained at any cost.

First, during the presidential race, Essebsi’s campaign released a highly produced video using over a dozen actors and explosives.⁷¹ The video opens with ISIS fighters in Syria engaged in a tense and graphic firefight with cars burning around them. One young fighter with a long beard is hit in the crossfire and then again in the back. He falls to his knees as the fighting continues around him and dies. A comrade reaches his body and picks up the young man’s Tunisian passport, which has fallen to the earth beside this gun.

The video then cuts to a Tunisian woman answering the phone, presumably to learn of her son’s death in Syria. She turns to a photo by the phone of her deceased son, dressed in street clothes and without a beard and her other son sitting in the background who embraces her as she cries. Both are dressed in non-religious garments suggesting that the deceased son was radicalized outside of the family.

The video cuts again, this time to Election Day with the mother and son solemnly standing in-line to vote. Once the mother receives her ballot, she is shown very deliberately marking her ballot paper for Essebsi and placing it in the ballot box and the film closing with the slogan “Our destiny is in our hands.”

There are two important things to note in understanding how this video fits into the Tunisian landscape. While security and preventing terrorism in Tunisia was a key campaign issue, this video does not focus on threats in Tunisia and never raises the issue of threats at home. However, it does stress the danger of increased conservative, religiosity as a pathway to

⁷¹ “Our Destiny is in our hands.” <https://www.facebook.com/TunisTribune/videos/10153371440207926/>

terrorism and its potential to rip families apart. The deceased fighter is shown to previously not practices Salafism, but to have been “converted,” growing out his beard, changing his clothing, and travelling to Syria to fight.

In this video Salafis are a campaign tool, acting as an enemy and national “other.” Essebsi’s video suggests, not so much that he can protect Tunisia from terrorism – the fighting is happening and Syria and there is not a suggestion that it will come to Tunisia – but rather that he can protect families and prevent jihadi-Salafi radicalization from happening in the first place. He can stop the pain that the mother and brother feel because their son not only left Tunisia geographically, but because he also symbolically left Tunisia by abandoning Tunisianité for Salafi-jihadism.

Second, discussion on religion and identity were nearly absent during the first-round of the presidential elections, in which Ennahda had decided not to field a candidate. However, in a radio interview immediately following the first presidential round, Essebsi accused his competitor in the run-off, then-incumbent President Moncef Marzouki, of only making it to the second-round due to the support of “Islamists, Salafi jihadists, and those prone to violence”, a pointed criticism that Marzouki’s second place finish was a result of Ennahda supporters choosing to support him in the absence of an Islamist candidate.⁷² Essebsi’s comments sparked a wave of protests and rioting in southern Tunisia, where Marzouki and Ennahda both had their largest bases of support. While Marzouki undoubtedly benefited from the support of the Ennahda constituency, as evidenced by attendees at his campaign rally and the overlap of Ennahda-Marzouki supporters on social media, Essebsi’s comment portrayed one set of voters as

⁷² There is some truth to the Islamist aspect of this comment. Many Ennahda supporters did vote for Marzouki as their presidential candidate because he had worked with Ennahda as part of the Troika Government and they saw him as a means of preventing Essebsi, who they saw as part of the Bourguiba and Ben Ali era, from winning the presidency.

desirable and another “Islamists, Salafi jihadists, and those prone to violence” as being outside of the acceptable body politic, a potential fifth column prepared to challenge Tunisian Islam and society. Through his comment one can see how Essebsi attempts to portray Ennahda as illegitimately Tunisian by associating it in the same breath with Salafists and violent extremists.

Essebsi’s comments reveal an underlying tension over competing views of society that is unlikely to diminish in the immediate future. However, there are several signs that it is becoming a less important or explosive issue than it was in the period leading up to the 2014 elections. First, as mentioned previously, we can see this first in the broad convergence of discourse that parties used surrounding the issue with both Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes largely echoing each other on the centrality of a moderate, reformist, national Tunisian Islam to counter violent extremism. Rather than being monopolized by Islamists alone, this discourse is being normalized by major political actors who have shifted their attention to more immediately pressing public issues such as the improving economy and national security.

V. Conclusion

In the previous chapters I highlighted how the failure to undergo certain forms of national reimagining, namely renarrativization and pluralization, paved the way for the summer of 2013 crisis in which Tunisia’s democratic transition was at stake. Given the tensions surrounding religion, it seemed as though religion would be an extremely important role in the 2014 elections, particularly given an increase association of Ennahda with salafi-jihadists and the accusation of a double discourse, as well as the creation of the Bourguibist Nida Tounes party to counter them. However, as I discussed in this chapter, religious tension eased for two reasons. First, while the Tunisian constitution reflected continuity in how Bourguiba and Ben Ali had

articulated *Tunisianité* vis-à-vis the relationship between religion and the state, Ennahda, largely due to its politically precarious situation, decided in the end not to press a challenge to reimagine the constitution, and in doing so enabled it to be completed, leading to an easing of political and societal tensions, and, paving the way for the 2014 elections. Second, Ennahda moderated many of its positions to more closely match those of Bourguibist parties. Rather than a more expansive structural change, a broadening of the cultural schema of *Tunisianité* that would also include Salafis, Ennahda accepted a more limited transformation in order to remain a political player and also to prevent the democratic gains from being lost entirely. However, the fact that both Ennahda and Bourguibist parties, such as Nidaa Tounes, embraced this same cultural schema, as evidenced through their political platforms and parliamentary electoral campaigns, gave it enough legitimacy to be accepted and increasingly solidified as part of a new cultural structure in Tunisia.

In this chapter, by discussing the political platforms of the 2011 and 2014, I showed a general consolidation of discourses on Tunisian national identity, utilizing the discursive language surrounding *Tunisianité*: modernity, openness, and tolerance – even if these principles do not appear always in practice. It also highlights the continuing power of *Tunisianité* as a form of political and electoral capital with all major political parties, even Ennahda, emphasizing it. However, this convergence over expressions of national identity comes at the cost of excluding quietist and political Salafis from a national identity that embraces a language of openness, modernity, and tolerance.

As shown, political consolidation was a long process and largely due to Ennahda's strategic decisions to transform its positions and to more closely resemble other political parties,

including no longer considering itself an Islamist party. However, having made its way through two electoral cycles, the durability of Tunisia's democratic transition is becoming more assured.

CHAPTER 5 Conclusion: From Salafis to Selfies

I. Electoral Post-Script

On December 31, 2014, Béji Caïd Essebsi was sworn in as Tunisia's first democratically-elected president.⁷³ For his supporters, they hoped this would represent a transition from the sometimes chaotic Ennahda-led Troika administration, a strengthening economy, a return to law and security, and also a return to the “dignity of the state,” a euphemism for the era of Bourguiba, both with respect to public order and the image of the President himself as a modern and capable statesman.⁷⁴

Hopes of a quiet transition were quickly dashed. On March 18, 2015, two terrorists attacked the Bardo Museum in Tunis, the former palace of the Tunisian monarch that sits immediately adjacent to the Tunisian Parliament.⁷⁵ In total, twenty-two individuals, primarily European tourists, were killed, and scores were injured, plunging Tunisia into a heightened security state and further damaging the already weakened tourism industry, upon which Tunisian economy depended.

The attack, the worst since the 2002 Djerba synagogue attack, left Tunisians in shock about the security of the country and immediately there was an increase in security presence

⁷³ Moncef Marzouki, the first president after the Revolution, had been elected by the new members of the Constituent National Assembly in December 2011.

⁷⁴ Essebsi supporters maintained that their candidate looked like a statesman, whereas the previous president Moncef Marzouki was well known for wearing suits without ties.

⁷⁵ ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, although the Tunisian government blamed an al-Qaeda affiliate.

from traffic circles to grocery stores. Simultaneously another transformation occurred: a public outpouring of support for the Tunisian security apparatus.

At Tunisia's Independence Day celebrations on March 20th, just two days after the attack, there was a public demonstration of sentiment that would have been unimaginable a few years prior. On Avenue Bourguiba in Tunis, there were dance troupes, musical performances, and photographic displays of Tunisian history for the holiday. Additionally, there was a heavy security presence all along the festival area, with officers wearing black balaclavas and carrying machine guns, a much more armed and intimidating presence than at previous events. However, there was also a new feature: Tunisian citizens waiting in line to take photographs with the security officers.

Not only had this not happened at previous national holidays I attended, but it was a significant break with Tunisia's past. These same security officers had sparked fear in the hearts of many Tunisians, particularly Islamists and others in the opposition. These were the security officers responsible for arresting, detaining, and torturing political opponents during the dictatorship.



Figure 13: Tunisians taking photographs with Tunisian security forces. March 20, 2015. Note the mother in the bottom left-hand corner wearing a *hijab*. *Photo:* Elizabeth Young.

However, on March 20th, I witnessed lines of Tunisians at every group of security officers, waving flags, and taking photos. Most notably, there were multiple Tunisian Islamists that also participated in this act of national pride and appreciation for the security apparatus. In the photograph above (*Figure 12*), three children waving Tunisian flags stand next to a masked Tunisian police officer. In the bottom corner, a veiled woman, possibly a female relative, snaps a photograph of them. While we can't know for certain her current or past political affiliations, because she wears the *hijab*, she would likely have been harassed by these same police officers and security forces. And, if her family were members of Ennahda, her relatives could have been harassed or even tortured as well.

Such public outpourings of both national pride and support, are further evidence of the impact of national, external threats such as terrorism on consolidating expressions of national identity, such as the association of the security forces with the nation that occurred at the Independence Day celebrations. However, unlike the terrorist attacks during the summer of 2013 these were unifying rather than dividing, at least at the Tunis Independence Day celebrations.

I explore one final expression of nationalism that stands in contrast to the 2011 to 2014 period examined in the body of this dissertation, before explaining the significance of these two events with respect to theorizing the structural transformation that Tunisia underwent after the revolution.

Bourguiba Rides Again

The post 2014-period also saw one of, if not the first state embrace of Bourguiba, unlike its silence, discussed in Chapter 2. On June 1, 2016, Tunisian President Béji Caïd Essebsi publicly unveiled a statue in downtown Tunis to a small crowd, as well as a small group of protestors. While not an unusual occurrence for a head of state, the ceremony was notable with respect to the subject, the timing, the location, and also as a symbol of Tunisia's democratic transition.

Resting on a marble base over ten meters from the ground, Habib Bourguiba sits on a prancing horse, his hand raised. Equestrian statues are not a common choice for twentieth-century heads of state, and this one, with both the movement of the horse and Bourguiba's hand raised as if greeting the public, evokes a triumphant parade through the city.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ The statue is also somewhat unusual in Tunisia. Islamic tradition is generally understood to prohibit artistic depictions of God and Mohammed and, by extension, human beings or animals. Consequently, Bourguiba's decision to install statues of himself around the country could be seen as a form of idolatry. There are other human statues in Tunisia (e.g. historian Ibn Khaldun, nationalist Mohammed Daghbaji.) but these are not common forms of public art and none are as large as the Tunis statue of Bourguiba. Ben Ali, after removing Bourguiba's statues, also engaged



Figure 14: Statue of Habib Bourguiba at *Place du 14 Janvier* 2011.

The obelisk clock tower built by Ben Ali stands in the background. Photo: Tunisie Numerique (<https://www.tunisienumerique.com/retour-de-la-statue-equestre-de-bourguiba-pourquoi-lhorloge-a-conserve-sa-place/>)

Indeed, the statue's instillation is a victory for the memory of Habib Bourguiba. During Bourguiba's rule the statue stood a few meters away at the center of a roundabout, *Place d'Afrique*, in the eponymous Avenue Bourguiba, the physical and symbolic heart of the contemporary city. However, when Ben Ali deposed Bourguiba in 1987, he quickly removed the statue;⁷⁷ renamed the roundabout *Place du 7 Novembre, 1987* in honor of the day he came to power; and erected a clock tower, "the alarmclock," with an oversized number "7" on its face, removing the "6" entirely in order to make room, in honor of November 7th (Chomiak 2013).⁷⁸ Ben Ali's clock tower, symbolizing a new era of modern Tunisia, had both physically and

in a program of public art work, but instead of installing statues of himself he opted for statues of the number "7", the symbol of his rule, in honor of November 7, 1987 when he deposed Bourguiba to become president (Chomiak 2013).

⁷⁷ Along with numerous other statues throughout the country.

⁷⁸ The original clock tower was later removed and replaced with a large, more modern "obelisk", with a clock at its top, which still stands in downtown Tunis.

symbolically replaced the equestrian statue of Bourguiba and his era. While Ben Ali would not use his own facial likeness as Bourguiba had, he would stamp symbols of his regime through Tunisia in the forms of the clock tower and statues of the number 7 which could be found across Tunisian towns.

Bourguiba's statue remained nearly forgotten in La Goulette, a suburb of the capital, for thirty years. However, Essebsi made a campaign promise to return the statue to its original location and, despite criticisms of the cost to the taxpayer to move it, he finally did so on June 1st, the anniversary of the day in 1955 when Bourguiba returned to Tunisia from exile and imprisonment in France, and, as the statue depicts, rode triumphantly through Tunis's streets. The statue's symbolic return from "exile" in La Goulette was not lost on commentators who made specific note of the fact that the day of the statue's unveiling was also the date of Bourguiba's 1955 return to Tunisia.⁷⁹

However, this is not just a cycle of one dictator's monuments replacing another's. Following Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation in December 2010, protests calling for Ben Ali's resignation spread around the country. In Tunis, Avenue Bourguiba and Ben Ali's clock tower were the primary sites of these protests both due to the location's symbolic significance at the center of downtown and also its location next to the Ministry of the Interior where some of the worst human rights abuses of Ben Ali's regime occurred. Following Ben Ali's departure from Tunisia, the square was renamed yet again as *Place du 14 Janvier 2011* in honor of the day he stepped down from power.

⁷⁹ June 1st is also the date the first Tunisian constitution was adopted in 1959. However, commentators focus only on the date's significance with respect to Bourguiba's return from exile. I have yet to see news coverage mentioning the anniversary of the constitution. For example, see: "La statue équestre de Bourguiba réinstallée au centre de Tunis" (6/1/17) https://africanmanager.com/51_la-statue-equestre-de-bourguiba-reinstallée-au-centre-de-tunis/ and "Bourguiba, de La Goulette à Tunis, comme le 1er juin 1955 » (5/23/17) <http://www.leaders.com.tn/article/19674-bourguiba-de-la-goulette-a-tunis-comme-le-1er-juin-1955-album-photo>.

The clock tower has become part of the post-revolutionary “national aesthetic” (Zubrzycki 2006), appearing in artwork as a visible symbol not just of the 2010 Revolution, but also of the Arab Spring itself, as shown in the image below of protesting youth representing the Arab Spring in Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia.



Figure 15: Photo of Arab Spring protestors in the Ennahda Party Monastir headquarters. Protestors represent (from left to right) Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia with the Tunis clock tower in the background. The Tunisian protestor wears a hoodie with the Facebook logo, a nod to the importance of social media in helping to organize activism during the protests. Artist unknown. July 2014. *Photo:* Elizabeth Young.

As a result, the statue has not just reclaimed the space where it previously stood, but Bourguiba, as a dictator, physically occupies the symbolic heart of both the Tunisian Revolution and the entire Arab Spring. Essebsi, an extreme Bourguiba devotee,⁸⁰ also made more difficult, if not impossible, a proposed monument to the revolution on the same site (Coslett 2017).

⁸⁰ As described elsewhere, Essebsi has taken great pains to associate himself with Bourguiba and Bourguiba’s legacy. He permanently enshrined this association, by including a carving on the granite base of the Avenue Bourguiba statue indicating that he was responsible for restoring the statue to its original location on June 1, 2016.

The resurrection of Bourguiba's statue in Tunis has also occurred alongside similar statues in Sousse and Monastir and point to the potential difficulties of commemorating a dictator in a democratizing state where the two eras compete in the post-revolutionary landscape both for physical space and also for places in the national consciousness.

II. National Reimagining and National Consolidation

In this dissertation, I examined *how Islam is constitutive of Tunisian national identity, Tunisianité, and how the post-revolutionary process of democratization has affected and been affected by this relationship* in order to understand the how the Bouazizi's death and the revolution could affect structures in Tunisian society. In doing so, I examined moments of contention and the interactions of a variety of groups advocating different visions of national identity – Bourguibists, Islamist(s), and Salafists – both within and without formal state structures.

As described in the body of the dissertation, this struggle over Tunisian national identity and who would define it threatened the democratic transition. In examining the relationship between nationalism and Islam during Tunisia's democratic transition, this dissertation's primary goal was to explore how cultural factors, primarily those concerning nationhood and national identity, influence and are influenced by the democratization process, particularly with respect to its consolidation and ultimate durability.

Having examined these issues, I return to the question posed the beginning of the dissertation related to Sewell's theory of events: what enables a structural transformation to be durable, in this case the democratic transition? In the first chapter, I outlined various theories as

to why democratic transitions occur and why some, but not all, succeed. Nearly all of these theories revolved around macro-level, structural factors such as the economy or geo-political relations. These factors certainly have an influence. For example, in Egypt, the existence of a strong, independent military was instrumental in stepping in to remove the Muslim Brotherhood from power and to return the country to an authoritarian regime.

However, these macro-level factors do not capture the cultural transformations that occur alongside the political transformation, which I examined throughout this work: the wording of new laws; commemorations of the past; debates over what it means to be Tunisian. As I demonstrated, particularly debates over Islam and national identity in the summer of 2013 had the potential to be nearly as influential as the presence of the Egyptian army with respect to the success or failure of the democratic transition.

Additionally, such macro-level analysis does not allow us to understand the societal transformation that I described in the case of the “selfies” with the police security services. In a space of less than five years, how did the security services go from being feared and reviled by Islamists to being embraced and held up as symbols of the country with children of Islamist taking photos with them on Tunisia’s Independence Day celebrations?

Nationalism and national identity are poorly captured in these types of analysis as they cannot be easily, or at least in a credible manner operationalized into a standard variable that can be used across countries. Instead, instances such as this call for a more interpretive analysis to understand national identity within a particular national context and its relationship to the democratization process. I conclude this dissertation by proposing the outlines of a theory of the role that national identity, specifically through “national reimagining” and “national consolidation,” plays in the structural durability of democratization based on the examination of

the Tunisian case. To evaluate its theoretical usefulness, it must be tested with other cases of democratic transitions.

I view this model as complimentary to Sewell's theory of events and structural transformation, but one which pays particular attention to national identity during democratic transitions. Mohamed Bouazizi's death and the subsequent Tunisian Revolution were clearly, to both scholars and observers, events that would impact both Tunisia and the broader Middle East and North Africa region. I have highlighted the contingency of such events to be truly transformative in structural change by comparing the current success of Tunisia to the relapse of authoritarianism that took place in Egypt. In particular, I deconstruct aspects of national identity – collective memory; laws; acceptance of pluralism – which have the potential to impact structural change. By deconstructing articulations of national identity, cultural schemas, I am able to better identify which specific aspects have changed and which have demonstrated resilience and their relationship to the overall structural change. For example, in the case of Tunisia I showed that of these three national reimaginings, only pluralization changed in a meaningful, but limited way, allowing for the inclusion of non-Salafi Islamists. Additionally, I build on Sewell by pointing to the importance and mechanism of national “consolidation” – the embrace of articulations of national identity – both continuity and changes, which is important to the durability of structural changes.

Why do some democratic transitions succeed while others fail? From the evidence presented on the Tunisian case, I suggest that *two factors should be systematically examined: a) if and how democratizing states and societies address questions of national identity and belonging (national reimagining); and, b) the degree to which there is broad societal consensus concerning these issues (national consolidation)*. I do not suggest that national identity is the

sole or primary factor in whether a state successfully transitions into a democracy, but one that acts in conjunction with other factors. For example, a state that has worked to consolidate its national identity during its democratic transition may be able to weather an economic or political crisis that a state with competing views may not be able to. As I argue elsewhere (2010), the failure to produce a cohesive national identity after the 1990 unification and democratization of Yemen, coupled with an economic crisis, was one of the factors that led to civil war and the reestablishment of an authoritarian regime. However, in contrast, a state that has a robust economy or a strong civil society may be able to democratically transition without engaging in national reimagining or with a low level of national consolidation. Rather than assert the primacy of any single factor, we should seek to understand how they each function to aid or impinge democratization.



Figure 16: Graffiti in Tunis listing the Arab Spring protests.

This image lists the countries and dates where Arab Spring protests occurred, in order: Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria. Viewing this image in April 2015 it begs the question: Why did the democratic transition in Tunisia succeed while the others failed. *Photo: Elizabeth Young.*

In order to theorize the role of national reimagining on the outcome of democratic transitions, I focused on three potential areas, which I addressed in this dissertation: national re-narrativization, changes in laws and state institutions, and balancing pluralism with national identity.

The first area “national reimagining” that I theorize as being potentially integral to the democratization process is the often newly gained opportunity for historical revisionism to address past events that have been censored and historical traumas, or integrate the democratic transition into the national narrative. In the Tunisian case, no significant attempts, had been made by the time of the 2014 elections, particularly on the part of the state to examine Bourguiba and his legacy, for example through textbooks. Nor by that point had the state instituted processes, such as truth and reconciliation committees to address crimes committed during the dictatorships. In and of itself, the absence of attempts to comprehensively or systematically address the past did not seem to directly undermine Tunisia’s democratic transition. However, in other cases, depending on the severity of past societal divisions, for example a civil war, a lack of re-narrativization could be critical element in a successful democratic transition.

In the Tunisian case, the lack of re-narrativization did not create social cleavages, however, efforts at re-narrativization and understanding a shared past could have helped to alleviate the distrust, lack of empathy, and fear between Bourguibists and Islamists that nearly derailed the democratic process in Tunisia, particularly in the summer of 2013. Therefore, attention should be paid in other cases as to how re-narrativization could aid democratic transitions through a stronger basis for a shared national identity or national cohesion.

Second, I turned to look at how laws and political institutions could be reimagined in order to reflect new or pluralized understandings of nation and national identity. These could

include primarily symbolic acts, such as the writing of constitutional preambles (Zubrzycki 2006), as well as non-symbolic reforms such as changes to citizenship laws or protections to freedom of religion & speech.

In the Tunisian case, I illustrated the divisiveness over how Islam should be addressed in the Tunisian constitution and argued that, while even though Article 6 appeared to be a drastic change to the relationship between the state and religion, it actually was a legal codification of the principles of *Tunisianité* that governed during the Bourguiba and Ben Ali eras, and represented continuity. However, as I discussed, Ennahda's strategic decision to accept and vote for both Article 1, which it had previously opposed, and Article 6, allowed it to become an active participant and owner in the constitution. It also, as discussed in Chapter 4, seems to have allowed for divisive issues over national identity to be less contentious, and to not dominate the 2014 electoral platforms. This points to how even continuity in laws and institutions can be positive factors in democratic consolidation merely by the act of multiple parties or stakeholders participating in the democratic process. However, this may be context specific depending on the particular nature of the laws and institutions.

The third form of national reimagining I pointed to is how the democratic precepts of pluralism are balanced with national specificity. In the Tunisian case, the state's inability to adequately protect religious pluralism, including freedom of expression, while simultaneously expanding conceptions of national identity to include all Tunisians was significant and these tensions were heightened even by everyday practices, such as wearing the *niqab* as well as violent attacks on freedom of expression. This contributed not only to a lack of empathy and sense of shared national identity, but even more significantly, Bourguibists viewing Salafis as a national, existential threat. While Tunisia faced many challenges during the democratic

transition, including economic and security challenges, it was a failure to adequately manage the competing demands of pluralism and shared national identity that nearly led to a democratic backsliding in the summer of 2013.

However, despite these challenges, Tunisia was able to undergo a degree of *national consolidation* in which it moved beyond the 2013 crisis and was able to further consolidate its democratic transition by completing the constitution and holding the 2014 elections. How then do we account for Tunisia's continued democratic consolidation despite these challenges to both a shared national identity and progress in finalizing the constitution? Democratization, frequently moving in parallel to increased pluralism, presents an opportunity for contestation over who comprises the nation and who has legitimacy to act in its interest. Therefore, one must also examine *national consolidation*, the degree to which there is a broad societal agreement on who and what are constituent of the nation, throughout the democratization process.

In the Tunisian case, I argued that a key factor in preventing democratic breakdown or backsliding in Tunisia was the presence of violent, jihadi Salafis who threatened not only the current order, but also provided an existential challenge to the Tunisian state itself. In the face of a mounting crisis, Ennahda made a strategic decision to acquiesce on certain points: outlawing Ansar al-Sharia, relinquishing power won through elections, and finally not only acquiescing, but voting for constitutional amendments that had previously been objectionable. It was only after Ennahda made these concessions the Tunisia's democratic transition stabilized. Additionally, as demonstrated through the 2014 electoral platforms, all of the major parties, including Ennahda had adopted a language of *Tunisianité*, suggesting a national consolidation on certain issues of religion and national identity.

However, given economic paralysis, the continued threat of terrorism, and the failure to address past grievances, this process of national consolidation threatens to fray and threaten democratic consolidation, which can be seen with a renewed protests and demonstrations in Tunisia. Second, while some pluralization of national membership occurred, non-violent Salafis were excluded alongside violent, jihadi Salafis, a move that stands to lead to further isolation and radicalization. As a result, the Tunisian case helps illustrate how national reimagining and consolidation can potentially facilitate and hinder democratic consolidation.

In using this model of national reimagining and national consolidation in other cases it is important to acknowledge the significance of contextual factors, such as, in the Tunisian case the threat of terrorism. However, it provides a potential model to begin to systematize our understanding of the role that culture and national identity play in democratic transitions and democratic consolidation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Timeline of Major Events in Contemporary Tunisian History

1881	French troops take control of Tunisian affairs.
1883	Tunisia becomes a French protectorate.
1933	Anti-French cemetery protests begin.
March 2, 1934	Habib Bourguiba founds Neo-Destour, a nationalist political party, which would subsequently lead the Tunisian independence movement.
June 1, 1955	Bourguiba returns to Tunisia from exile.
March 20, 1956	Tunisia gains independence from France.
1956	Personal Status Code is promulgated increasing women's rights.
July 25, 1957	Tunisia becomes a republic.
1981	Rachid Ghannouchi co-founds the Islamic Tendency Movement, precursor to Ennahda.
1981	First multi-party parliamentary elections (not-free-and-fair).
1987	Rachid Ghannouchi is accused of inciting unrest and is sentenced to ten years in prison, which leads to Ben Ali's coup.
November 7, 1987	"Medical coup" deposes Bourguiba and brings Ben Ali into power.
1989	Ennahda competes in parliamentary elections, winning an estimated 15%. Ben Ali jails many Ennahda supporters and Ghannouchi goes into exile.
1992	Ennahda is officially banned.
1999	First multi-party presidential elections (not-free-and-fair).
April 6, 2000	Habib Bourguiba dies in Monastir.
April 11, 2002	Djerba synagogue bombing by al-Qaeda, killing 21.

December 17, 2010	Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation, start of the Tunisian Revolution.
December 25, 2010	Protests against the government spread to many parts of the country.
January 14, 2011	Ben Ali flees Tunisia. Start of the democratic transition.
October 9, 2011	Protests over the TV broadcast of the animated film "Persepolis" for depicting God. Five days later the station owners house is fire bombed.
October 23, 2011	First democratic parliamentary elections (Tunisian Constituent Assembly). Ennahda wins a plurality.
December 2011	Moncef Marzouki selected as President.
January 2012	Niqab protests at Manouba University.
June 11-12, 2012	<i>Printemps des Arts</i> exhibition. Attack on exhibition by Salafis.
September 14, 2012	Attack on US Embassy ostensibly over the film "Innocence of Muslims."
August 2012	Protest in Tunis against Ennahda proposal to include a constitutional clause declaring women are "complementary to men."
February 6, 2013	Opposition leader Chokri Belid is assassinated by jihadists.
July 25, 2013	Opposition leader Mohamed Brahmi is assassinated by jihadists. His death sparks a repeated series of protests throughout the late summer and fall.
August 23, 2013	Opposition leaders call for Ennahda and the Troika government to step down before they participate in negotiations leading to a political stalemate and crisis.
August 27, 2013	Ennahda Prime Minister Ali Larayedh declares Ansar al-Sharia a terrorist organization.
January 27, 2014	Tunisian constitution is passed.
July 17, 2014	Seventeen soldiers are killed in a terrorist attack in the Chambi Mountains along the Algerian border.
October 26, 2014	Second parliamentary elections (Assembly of the Representatives of the People). Nida Tounes wins a plurality.
November 23, 2014	First round of Tunisia's first presidential election. Essebsi (39%) and Marzouki (33%) move onto a run-off.

- December 21, 2014 Second round of presidential election. Essebsi wins (55.7%).
- March 18, 2015 Seventeen foreign tourists and four Tunisians are killed during an Islamic State terrorist attack at the Bardo Museum in Tunis.
- June 26, 2015 Islamic State terrorist attack kills 39 and wounds 40 at a beach resort in Sousse.

APPENDIX 2: Tunis Exchange Political Seminar Talks

In June-July 2014 and January 2014, six weeks in total, I participated in a political speaker series, the Tunis Exchange, which incorporated presentations from representatives across Tunisian society (politics, social justice, business, media, etc.) followed by a free-ranging Q&A discussion between the speaker and participants on relevant current events. This resulted in approximately one to one-and-a-half hours of dialogue with each of the speakers. The Tunis Exchange was conducted under the Chatham House Rule meaning that specific information cannot be attributed information to certain individuals, although participants did consent for their names to be publically listed as participating speakers on the Tunis Exchange's website. Because of this limitation, I do not include or analyze information from these talks. However, these discussions, covering topics ranging from economic marginalization to religious education, deeply influenced my contextual knowledge of Tunisia and the ways in which I understood and approached my research.

Political parties and elected government:

- Taieb Bakkouche (Nidaa Tounes), Tunis, January 17, 2014
- Lotfi Al-Beida (Ennahda Local Headquarters Sfax), Sfax, January 14, 2014
- Mohamed Belkhoujra (Founder Salafist Reform Front), Tunis, June 27, 2013 and January 10, 2014
- Zied Boumakhla (Leader of Ennahda Student Movement), Tunis, July 1, 2013
- Meriam Bourguiba (Republican Party and Habib Bourguiba's granddaughter), Tunis, July 8, 2014

- Najib Chebbi (Leader of Republican Party), Tunis, July 3, 2014
- Imed Daimi (Congress for the Republic Party), Tunis, January 16, 2014
- Hamida Ennaifer (Ennahda Party), Tunis, January 9, 2014
- Mohamed Salah Ennasri (Director of the Competitive Pole of Gafsa), Gafsa, June 23, 2014
- Noomane Fehri (Republican Party), Tunis, June 28, 2013 and January 17, 2014
- Walid Haddouk (Congress for the Republic Party), June 25, 2013
- Hama Hammami (Head of Tunisian Workers' Communist Party and 2014 Presidential Candidate), Tunis, June 27, 2013 and January 10, 2014
- Abdel Wahhab el-Hani, (Al-Majid Party), Tunis, January 17, 2014
- Lubna Jeribi (MP Ettakatol Party), Tunis, June 26, 2013
- Fatihi Jerbi (Deputy Leader Wafa Party), Tunis, January 10, 2013
- Maya Jeribi (Republican Party), Tunis, January 8, 2014
- Ommezzine Khalifa (Ettakatol and Senior advisor, Minister of Finance), Tunis, June 11, 2013
- Rashi Khambi (City government of Siliana), Siliana, July 6, 2013
- Mehrzia Labidi (First Vice-President of the Constituent Assembly and member of Ennahda Party), Tunis, June 24, 2014 and January 8, 2014
- Zied Laadhari (Ennahda Party), Tunis, July 5, 2013
- Mabrouka Mbarek (Congress for the Republic Party MP), Tunis, July 4, 2013
- Abdelfateh Mourou (co-founder of Ennahda Party and First Vice-President), Monastir, July 7, 2013
- Osama el-Saghrir (Ennahda MP for Italy), Tunis, January 8, 2014
- Omar Shabou (Movement of Free Constitutionalists), Monastir, July 7, 2013
- Suad Shabani (Member of Ennahda Student Movement Committee), Tunis, January 16, 2014

- Haythem Slimani (Ennahda Office in Gafsa), Gafsa, January 12, 2014
- Mohamad Sironi (Salafist Reform Front), Tunis, January 10, 2014
- Amara Tijani Governor of Sidi Bouzid) Sidi Bouzid, June 22, 2013

National and regional government ministries and agencies:

- Rafea' ben Achour (Nidaa Tounes and advisor during transitional government, former Ambassador to Morocco), Tunis, June 27, 2014
- Slim Amamou (Former Minister of Information), Tunis, June 19, 2013
- Amour Boubakri (Independent Higher Board for Elections, ISIE), Tunis, July 1, 2013
- Samir Dilou (Cabinet Minister of Human Rights and Ennahda member), Tunis, July 4, 2013
- Sadiq al-Fawi (Adviser, Moderation in Religious Discourse, Ministry of Religious Affairs), Tunis, January 20, 2014
- Ridha Ferchiou (Tunis Dauphine University and former Minister of Education and Minister of Statistics and Planning), Tunis, July 9, 2013
- Kalthoum Kenou (Head of Tunisian Judges Syndicate and 2014 presidential candidate), July 4, 2013
- Ommezzine Khalifa (Senior Advisor, Minister of Finance and Ettakatol member), Tunis, January 17, 2014
- Noureddine al-Khademi (Minister of Religious Affairs), Tunis, January 20, 2014
- Kamel Labidi, National Independent Authority for Information & Communication), Tunis, June 19, 2013
- Akremi Med Lazhe (Nida Tounes), Tunis, January 14, 2014
- Abu Yaareb Marzouki (Former Advisor, Office of the Prime Minister), Tunis, June 28, 2013.

Domestic Civil Society Organizations:

- Ibtihel Abdellatif (Founder of Tunisian Women, representing former female political prisoners), Tunis, June 25, 2013 and January 14, 2014

- Samir Annebi (National Committee to Investigate Corruption and Wrongdoings), Tunis, July 4, 2013
- Ahlem Belhajj (Femme Democrat), Tunis, January 15, 2014.
- Faisal Bilmabrouk (Leagues to Protect the Revolution in Kabaria), Tunis, January 9, 2014
- Fahem Boukaddous, Tunisian Association Against Torture/Co-founder of the Tunisian Committee for the Protection of Journalists), Gafsa, June 23, 2013
- Amel Bouchamaoui (Executive Director Tunisian American Chamber), Tunis, January 15, 2014
- Intissar Ghannouchi (Jasmine Foundation, Ennahda member, and Rachid Ghannouchi's daughter), Tunis, January 9, 2014
- Adnen Haji (Leader Redayef Tunisian General Labour Union, Teacher's Union, UGTT and activist in Redayef Protests), Redayef, June 23, 2013 and January 12, 2014
- Abdel Wahhab el-Hani (Islamic Trade Union), Tunis, June 20, 2013
- Ahmed Hamza (Women Enterprise for Sustainability), Kairouan, January 11, 2014
- Mohamed Taher Khelifi (Association of Action Citoyenne), Sidi Bouzid, June 22, 2013
- Sliman Rouissi (Member of the UGTT regional Sidi Bouzid office), Sidi Bouzid, June 22, 2013
- Abdelkadar Sassouki (Leagues to Protect the Revolution in Kabaria), Tunis, January 9, 2014
- Rabah Warda (Sfax Tunisian General Labour Union, UGTT), Sfax, January 13, 2014

International NGOs:

- Michael Ayari (International Crisis Group), Tunis, June 20, 2013
- Abdelbasset Belhsan (Arab Institute of Human Rights), Tunis, July 5, 2013
- Wim Borresmans (Senior Program Officer for Political Parties, National Democratic Institute), Tunis, January 6, 2014
- Rim el-Ganri (International Center for Transitional Justice), Tunis, January 6, 2014

- Amna Guellali (Human Rights Watch), Tunis, January 6, 2014
- Nicolas Kaczorowski (International Foundation for Electoral Systems), Tunis, January 6, 2014
- Stephen C. Kochuba (US Embassy in Tunisia), Tunis, January 15, 2014
- Nicole Roswell (Country Director, National Democratic Institute), Tunis, June 13, 2014
- Oussama Turki (Deputy Director, IFES), Tunis July 10, 2013
- Jacob Walles (US Ambassador to Tunisia, US Embassy), Tunis, January 15, 2014

Universities, research centers, and think tanks:

- Alaya Allani (Professor, Manouba University), Tunis, July 2, 2013
- Laryssa Chomiak (Director, Centre d'Etudes Maghrébines à Tunis), Tunis, January 5, 2014
- Isabelle Feuerstoss (Paris University), Tunis, June 18, 2013
- Jérôme Heurtaux (University of Paris-Dauphine), Tunis, January 15, 2014
- Najib Jridi (Westminster Foundation for Democracy), Tunis, January 16, 2014
- Tarek Kahlaoui (Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies), Tunis, June 18, 2013 and January 7, 2014
- Habib Kazdaghli (Dean, Manouba University), Tunis, June 20, 2013 and January 7, 2014
- Monica Marks (Researcher, Oxford University), Tunis, June 17, 2013 and January 5, 2014
- Radwan Masmoudi (Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy), Tunis, June 20, 2013 and January 16, 2014
- Rory McCarthy (Researcher, Oxford University), Sousse, January 13, 2014
- Fabio Merone (Researcher, Ghent University), Tunis, July 9, 2013 and January 8, 2014
- Robert P. Parks (Director, Centre d'Etudes Maghrebines en Algerie), Tunis, July 8, 2013 and January 5, 2014
- Deborah Perez (Ecole Normale Superior), Tunis, July 10, 2013

- Hamadi Redissi (Tunisian Observatory for a Democratic Transition), Tunis, June 18, 2013 and January 5, 2014
- Hatem Sebei (University of Tunis), Tunis, January 7, 2014
- Omeyya Seddik (HD Centre), Tunis, June 19, 2013

Independent actors:

- Yassine Ayari (Blogger and human rights activist), Tunis, January 4, 2014
- Adel Elmi (Moderate Association for Awareness and Reform, Salafi association), Tunis, June 27, 2013
- Sami Ben Gharbia (Journalist, Naawat), Tunis, January 16, 2014
- Taieb Ghozi (Imam of Okba Mosque in Kairouan), Kairouan, June 23, 2014 and January 11, 2014
- Mariem Kada (Producer Nessma News), Tunis, July 2, 2013
- Omar Mesteri (Human rights activist and Kalimat Radio Editor-in-Chief), Tunis, June 26, 2013 and January 16, 2014
- Mohamed Rammeh (Blogger and radio activist), Kairouan, January 11, 2014.
- Youssef Seddik (Philosopher), Tunis, June 26, 2013
- Ichraf Smaoui (Director of Programs, Nessma News), Tunis, July 2, 2013

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